



Navigating Career Transitions: The Relationship Between Perceived Social Support, Personality Traits, and Career Anxiety Among Final Year Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the interplay between perceived social support, personality traits, and career anxiety among final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students. Recognizing that the transition from college to work is accompanied by uncertainty and stress, previous research has highlighted the buffering role of social support, while the influence of personality traits remains underexplored, particularly in the Indian context. A quantitative design was employed with a convenience sample of 315 final-year students from diverse academic programs. Data were collected using online surveys incorporating the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), the Big Five Inventory (BFI-10), and the Career Anxiety Scale (CAS). Statistical analyses included correlation, multiple linear regression, mediation analysis, and non-parametric tests. Results revealed a statistically significant but weak negative correlation between perceived social support and career anxiety ($\rho = -0.159$, $p = .002$). Regression analysis indicated that conscientiousness significantly predicted lower career

anxiety ($\beta = -1.250$, $p = .002$), whereas neuroticism predicted higher anxiety ($\beta = 1.624$, $p < .001$). Moreover, perceived social support significantly predicted reduced career anxiety ($\beta = -0.083$, $p = .037$), though personality traits did not mediate this relationship. Group comparisons showed no significant differences in career anxiety across academic levels, while female students reported significantly higher levels of perceived social support than male students. Implications of the study are discussed, with recommendations for further research on managing career anxiety.

Keywords: *Perceived Social Support, Personality Traits, Career Anxiety*

Introduction

It has been established that the transition period from college to work is highly associated with anxiety, with common features including fear, somatic tension, and a high degree of alertness among those who are in this state. As reported by Barlow (2002) and Spielberger (1972), career anxiety is common and tends to rise as one approaches the transition stage; the students face problems such as job security, the making of career choices, and financial stability. It is also widely acknowledged that social support received from family, friends, and mentors reduces stress levels (Cohen & Wills, 1985); however, it remains vague as to what specific mechanism this relationship functions with individual differences affecting the same.

Anxiety is a pervasive emotional state characterized by heightened physiological arousal, tension, and persistent worry about uncertain future events (Barlow, 2002; Spielberger, 1972). It arises from perceived threats to one's future, self-worth, and ability to navigate life challenges (Dobson, 1985; Epstein, 1985). Spielberger (1972) distinguished between state anxiety, triggered by specific stressors, and trait anxiety, reflecting an individual's general tendency toward anxiety.

The transition from college to the workforce is often marked by career anxiety due to uncertainties in job prospects, career decisions, and financial stability (Hirschi, 2010). Social

support has been identified as a crucial buffer against such stress, though its exact mechanisms remain unclear (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This study explores the relationship between career anxiety, personality traits, and social support among final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Career Anxiety

Research has found that career anxiety tends to increase during adolescence as students face growing concerns about their academic and professional futures (Mallet & Vignoli, 2005). Studies have established a strong correlation between anxiety levels and career indecision (Campagna & Curtis, 2007; Öztemel, 2013; Santos & Ferreira, 2012). Söner & Yılmaz (2022) examined 710 high school students in Turkey, revealing that personality traits, career decision-making self-efficacy, and career anxiety are significantly related, with adjective-based personality traits predicting both career anxiety and self-efficacy. Mutlu & Esen (2022) analysed career-related worries in 65 associate degree students in the tourism industry using projective methodologies. Findings indicated that career anxieties stem from indecision, familial influence, personal competency, professional factors, and economic instability. Similarly, Tuli (2024) found a significant positive correlation between career anxiety and academic procrastination among college students.

Müceldili et al. (2023) explored the impact of career anxiety on life satisfaction in undergraduate students, identifying self-efficacy as a moderator. While greater meaning in life enhanced life satisfaction, career anxiety had an adverse effect, emphasizing the role of self-efficacy in mitigating its negative impact. Career anxiety arises from complex societal and personal influences. Social expectations regarding career success create pressure to secure prestigious positions and stable jobs (Heslin, 2005). Economic uncertainty further exacerbates anxiety, as job insecurity due to corporate restructuring, outsourcing, and globalization heightens stress (Chakraborty, 2024). Coping strategies depend on personality—those high in

neuroticism may benefit from cognitive behavioural therapy or mindfulness, while highly conscientious individuals may need training in realistic goal-setting (Chakraborty, 2024). Building a strong support system through peer groups, career counselling, and mentorship can provide guidance and motivation, helping individuals navigate career uncertainties (Hill et al., 2022). Additionally, adopting a growth mindset fosters resilience and adaptability in professional challenges (Dweck, 2015).

Perceived Social Support

Research has shown a strong connection between perceived social support and psychological well-being. Stephen (2023) studied 81 young adults (18–24 years) and found a positive correlation between perceived social support and overall happiness, as measured using MSPSS (Zimet et al., 1988) and PWIA5 (Cummins et al., 2013). Öztürk and Doğanülkü (2023) examined how social support perceptions mediate the link between perfectionism and career-related stress among 433 university students (71.8% female, 28.2% male). Their findings revealed that while perfectionistic traits significantly increased career stress, perceived social support partially buffered this effect, highlighting its role in mitigating stress.

Wu et al. (2022) explored the impact of perceived social support on life satisfaction among 533 medical staff in Shaoguan, China. Their results indicated that social support positively influenced life satisfaction, both directly and through its effects on resilience and depression. The study suggested that enhancing social support could improve well-being and healthcare quality. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2022) found a negative correlation between anxiety and perceived social support among Chinese college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings suggest that lower levels of general anxiety are associated with higher perceived social support, implying that career-related anxiety may also be influenced in a similar manner.

Personality Traits

Personality traits significantly predict psychological outcomes such as career anxiety, job stress, and social anxiety. Neuroticism is linked to higher anxiety and job stress, while extraversion and agreeableness negatively predict social anxiety and protect against depression (Abbasi-Asl et al., 2016; Gramstad et al., 2013). Söner & Yılmaz (2022) found that adjective-based personality traits predict adolescent career anxiety and decision-making self-efficacy. Adaptive coping strategies and social support mitigate the negative effects of neuroticism and stress (Roohafza et al., 2016). Self-criticism, an external locus of control, and perfectionism contribute to career anxiety (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016; Chen & Silverthorne, 2008). Highly conscientious individuals may struggle with anxiety due to their perfectionism, while those high in openness may experience anxiety from frequent career transitions (Campagna & Curtis, 2007). Research also suggests that social support can moderate the relationship between career stress and perfectionism (Zhou et al., 2013). Kautish, Walia, & Kour (2021) found that students with strong social support experienced lower anxiety, reinforcing its protective role against perfectionism-induced stress. Sami & Naveeda (2021) studied 302 university students, revealing that neuroticism predicts depressive symptoms, whereas extraversion, conscientiousness, and social support are negatively associated. Similarly, Penn & Lent (2019) demonstrated that career decision-making self-efficacy mediates the link between personality traits and career decidedness. Social support also moderates the effect of perfectionism on anxiety and depression (Zhou et al., 2013), while emotional intelligence and personality factors further explain subjective social support (Fabio & Kenny, 2012).

The Big Five personality traits agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, and neuroticism significantly impact career anxiety. Neuroticism amplifies anxiety due to tendencies toward fear and insecurity, leading to excessive worry about career stability. Highly conscientious individuals, while dedicated and disciplined, may develop career anxiety due to

perfectionism and fear of failure (Chakraborty, 2024). Recognizing these factors can help develop tailored interventions to support students in managing career anxiety effectively.

There is limited research specifically addressing career anxiety among postgraduate students. While studies have explored anxiety in general, research on career anxiety remains scarce. This study aims to examine the relationships between perceived social support, personality traits, and career-related anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students, focusing on how these factors interact and whether personality traits influence career anxiety and perceptions of social support.

Hypotheses of the research study

- **H1:** There is a significant negative correlation between perceived social support and career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- **H2:** Personality traits significantly impact career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- **H3:** Perceived social support has a significant impact on career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- **H4:** Personality traits do not mediate the relationship between perceived social support and career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- **H5:** There are significant differences in perceived social support, career anxiety, and personality traits between undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- **H6:** There is no significant difference in career anxiety levels and perceived social support levels between male and female students.

Methodology

Research design

A quantitative method was employed to allow for the statistical examination of numeric data in order to uncover patterns and connections among the variables being studied.

Participants

The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years, aligning with the study's criteria. The sample demonstrated diverse gender representation, reflecting the demographic composition of the institution's student population. Participants were enrolled in various academic programs, including Bachelor of Science (BSc), Bachelor of Commerce (BCom), Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Master of Science (MSc) in Psychology, Counselling Psychology, Biotechnology, and Master of Computer Applications (MCA). This diversity in educational backgrounds facilitated a comprehensive examination of the relationships among perceived social support, personality traits, and career anxiety within the student population. The study utilized convenience sampling and data was collected from 315 participants. The sample comprised approximately 160 undergraduate and 155 postgraduate students, ensuring diverse data collection. Eligibility criteria required participants to be final-year students aged 18 to 24, enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programs. Individuals with diagnosed personality or anxiety disorders were excluded to maintain data confidentiality and minimize potential biases. This approach ensured a representative sample while enhancing the study's reliability.

Tools used

Three standardized tools were used to evaluate the factors of interest in this study: the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), the Big Five Inventory (BFI-10), and the Career Anxiety Scale (CAS).

- ***Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)***

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) was used to gauge how supportive friends, significant others and family members were perceived by the participants. Higher ratings on this 7-point Likert scale, which has 12 items, indicate greater perceived support. MSPSS demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with a reported reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.88, demonstrating strong internal consistency (Zimet et al., 1988).

Additionally, construct validity has been supported through factor analysis, affirming the scale's effectiveness in measuring perceived social support.

- ***Big Five Inventory (BFI-10)***

The Big Five Inventory (BFI-10) was utilized to assess personality traits across five dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The BFI-10 consists of 10 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale. This inventory has exhibited a reliability coefficient of 0.90, indicating strong internal consistency (Rammstedt & John, 2007). The BFI-10 is widely recognized for its validity in measuring the Big Five traits, making it a reliable tool for personality assessment.

- ***Career Anxiety Scale***

The Career-Anxiety Scale, created in 2016 by Çetin Gündüz and Nalbantoğlu Yılmaz, consists of two dimensions: the family influence factor, which includes 5 items, and the professional choice factor, comprising 9 items. In total, the scale has 14 questions. Responses to be scored using 5-point Likert scale, that range from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)." Greater degrees of career anxiety associated with each dimension are represented by higher scores in that particular area, while lower scores suggest less anxiety. Using Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient, the scale's reliability was assessed, which resulted in coefficients of .80 for the family effect factor and .74 for the choice of profession factor.

Procedure

The study utilized standardized scales compiled into a Google Form for online data collection. A cover letter and consent form informed participants about the study's purpose, eligibility criteria, and data confidentiality. The survey link was distributed to final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students across various programs to maximize participation. Participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire, ensuring ethical compliance. Responses were securely compiled in a Google spreadsheet, where data accuracy was verified

before statistical analysis. This method facilitated efficient and reliable data collection. The raw data collected was thoroughly evaluated followed by the analysis using various statistics.

Results

Table 1. *Normality of variables*

	Perceived Social Support	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Care Anxiety
	315	315	315	315	315	315	315
Shapiro-Wilk's p	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	.107

Table 1 presents the normality of the study variables. The sample comprised 315 participants. The Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the distributions of Perceived Social Support, Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism significantly deviated from normality ($p < .001$). Care Anxiety, however, did not show a significant deviation from normality ($p = .107$).

Table 2. *Correlation Matrix*

		Perceived Social Support
Career anxiety	Spearman's rho	-0.159
	df	313
	p-value	0.002

Note. H_a is negative correlation

Table 2 presents the correlation between Perceived Social Support and Career Anxiety. A statistically significant, weak negative correlation was observed between Perceived Social Support and Career Anxiety ($\rho = -0.159$, $p = .002$), indicating that higher levels of perceived social support are associated with lower levels of career anxiety.

Table 3. *Linear Regression of Personality Traits and Career Anxiety*

Model Coefficients - Career anxiety					
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	
Intercept ^a	39.286	5.376	7.308	< .001	
Currently in UG PG:					
2 – 1	0.749	1.129	0.663	0.508	
Openness	0.385	0.397	0.971	0.332	
Conscientiousness	-1.250	0.398	-3.144	0.002	
Extraversion	-0.663	0.349	-1.899	0.058	
Agreeableness	0.225	0.382	0.589	0.557	
Neuroticism	1.624	0.326	4.980	< .001	
^a Represents reference level					

Table 3 presents the results of the linear regression predicting Career Anxiety. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of personality traits on career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students. The overall model was statistically significant, ($R = .379$, $R^2 = .144$) indicating that the predictors explained 14.4% of the variance in career anxiety. The regression analysis showed that conscientiousness was a significant negative predictor of career anxiety, ($\beta = -1.250$, $p = .002$), suggesting that higher levels of conscientiousness are associated with lower career anxiety. Additionally, neuroticism was a significant positive predictor, ($\beta = 1.624$, $p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher neuroticism tend to experience greater career anxiety. The other personality traits-openness ($\beta = 0.385$, $p = .332$), extraversion $\beta = -0.663$, $p = .058$, and agreeableness ($\beta = -0.225$, $p = .557$) were not significant predictors of career anxiety. Similarly, academic level being in final year of under graduation postgraduation ($\beta = 0.749$, $p = .508$) did not significantly predict career

anxiety. Since at least two personality traits (conscientiousness and neuroticism) have a statistically significant effect, the hypothesis is partially supported but not fully accepted in a broad sense. However, since the overall model is statistically significant, we can accept the hypothesis with limitations, noting that only some traits have a significant impact.

Table 4. *Linear Regression Perceived Social Support and Career Anxiety*

Model Coefficients - Career anxiety						
Predictor		Estimate	SE	t	p	
Intercept ^a		47.2409	2.4602	19.202	< .001	
Perceived social support		-0.0831	0.0397	-2.092	0.037	
Currently in UG PG:						
2 – 1		0.3104	1.1846	0.262	0.793	
^a Represents reference level						

A linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of perceived social support on career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students. The model was statistically significant, $R=.118$, $R^2=.0139$, indicating that the predictors explained 1.39% of the variance in career anxiety. The regression analysis revealed that perceived social support was a significant predictor of career anxiety, ($\beta=-0.083$, $p=.037$). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in perceived social support, career anxiety decreased by 0.083 units. While statistically significant, the effect size suggests a relatively small practical impact of perceived social support on career anxiety. The negative coefficient suggests that higher levels of perceived social support are associated with lower levels of career anxiety. However, academic level (undergraduate vs. postgraduate) was not a significant predictor of career anxiety, ($\beta=0.3104$, $p=.793$), indicating that differences in educational level did not significantly contribute to variations in career anxiety.

Table 5. *Mediation analysis*

Personality trait	Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	Z	p	% Mediation
Openness	Indirect	$a \times b$	0.00363	0.00409	0.886	0.376	4.05
	Direct	c	-0.08595	0.03935	-2.184	0.029	95.95
	Total	$c + a \times b$	-0.08232	0.03941	-2.089	0.037	100
Conscientiousness	Indirect	$a \times b$	-0.0142	0.00863	-1.64	0.101	17.2
	Direct	c	-0.0682	0.03888	-1.75	0.08	82.8
	Total	$c + a \times b$	-0.0823	0.03941	-2.09	0.037	100
Extraversion	Indirect	$a \times b$	0.00677	0.00787	0.861	0.389	7.06
	Direct	c	-0.08909	0.03872	-2.301	0.021	92.94
	Total	$c + a \times b$	-0.08232	0.03941	-2.089	0.037	100
Agreeableness	Indirect	$a \times b$	0.00654	0.00955	0.685	0.494	6.85
	Direct	c	-0.08885	0.04049	-2.194	0.028	93.15
	Total	$c + a \times b$	-0.08232	0.03941	-2.089	0.037	100
Neuroticism	Indirect	$a \times b$	-0.0191	0.0126	-1.52	0.127	23.3
	Direct	c	-0.0632	0.0377	-1.68	0.093	76.7
	Total	$c + a \times b$	-0.0823	0.0394	-2.09	0.037	100

A series of mediation analyses were conducted to determine whether each of the five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) mediates the relationship between perceived social support and career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students. Across all five models, the indirect effects (i.e., $a \times b$) were nonsignificant (all p values > .05). For instance, in the model testing Openness, the indirect effect was ($\beta=0.00363$), accounting for only 4.05% of the total effect. Similarly, the indirect effects for Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism did not reach statistical significance.

Although some direct effects for instance, ($\beta = -0.08595$, $p = .029$) in the Openness model suggested that perceived social support has a negative impact on career anxiety, the nonsignificant indirect paths confirm that none of these personality traits mediate the relationship. Moreover, the total effect of perceived social support on career anxiety remained significant (e.g., $\beta = -0.08232$, $p = .037$), reinforcing the notion that perceived social support directly influences career anxiety without operating through these specific personality traits. Taken together, these findings support the hypothesis that personality traits do not mediate the relationship between perceived social support and career anxiety. While perceived social support appears to have a direct, negative association with career anxiety, this effect is not explained by individual differences in Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, or Neuroticism.

Table 6. *Independent Samples T-Test*

		Statistic	df	p
Career anxiety	Student's t	-0.108	313	0.914
Note. $H_a \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine differences in career anxiety between undergraduate and postgraduate students. The results indicated no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($t(313) = -0.108$, $p = 0.914$). This suggests that career anxiety levels did not significantly vary based on student status.

Table 7. *Independent Samples T-Test*

		Statistic	p
Perceived social support	Mann-Whitney U	11505	0.268
Openness	Mann-Whitney U	11524	0.258

Conscientiousness	Mann-Whitney U	10227		0.006	
Extraversion	Mann-Whitney U	12364		0.964	
Agreeableness	Mann-Whitney U	10744		0.036	
Neuroticism	Mann-Whitney U	11996		0.612	
Note. $H_a: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$					

Non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests were employed to compare perceived social support and personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) between undergraduate and postgraduate students. The analysis revealed no significant differences for perceived social support ($U = 11505$, $p = 0.268$), openness ($U = 11524$, $p = 0.258$), extraversion ($U = 12364$, $p = 0.964$), or neuroticism ($U = 11996$, $p = 0.612$). However, statistically significant differences were observed for conscientiousness ($U = 10227$, $p = 0.006$) and agreeableness ($U = 10744$, $p = 0.036$). This indicates that while perceived social support and certain personality traits did not differ significantly between the two groups, traits like conscientiousness and agreeableness did show statistically significant variations between the Undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Table 8. *Independent Samples T-Test showing Gender Differences in Perceived Social Support and Career Anxiety*

		Statistic	p	
Perceived social support	Mann-Whitney U	10247	0.036	

Career anxiety	Mann-Whitney U	11159	0.345
Note. $H_a: \mu_3 \neq \mu_4$			

Table 9. Group Descriptives

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Perceived social support	3	189	60.9	64.0	14.2	1.036
	4	126	57.2	58.0	15.7	1.402
Career anxiety	3	189	43.0	42.0	10.7	0.779
	4	126	41.7	42.0	10.2	0.911

An independent samples Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to examine whether there is a significant difference in perceived social support and career anxiety between male and female students. female students ($n = 189$; $M = 60.9$, $SD = 14.2$) reported significantly higher levels of perceived social support than male students ($n = 126$; $M = 57.2$, $SD = 15.7$), $U = 10,247$, $p = .036$, suggesting that gender influences perceived social support levels.. In contrast, there was no significant difference in career anxiety scores between females ($n = 189$; $M = 43.0$, $SD = 10.7$) and males ($n = 126$; $M = 41.7$, $SD = 10.2$) (ref Table 9), $U = 11,159$, $p = .345$. The results partially reject the null hypothesis (H_0), indicating that perceived social support significantly differs between genders, with Females reporting higher perceived support levels. However, career anxiety does not significantly differ between male and female students.

Discussion

The main aim of the study was to explore the relationship between perceived social support, personality traits, and career anxiety. The study employed a quantitative method. Data collection was done through Google Forms, scrutinized, and analyzed using various test statistics. The findings support the hypothesis that perceived social support is negatively correlated with career anxiety among undergraduate and postgraduate students. The weak but

statistically significant negative correlation ($\rho = -0.159$, $p = .002$) suggests that students who perceive greater support from their social networks tend to experience lower levels of career-related distress. This aligns with previous research (Hannah Stephen, 2023; Öztürk & Doğanülkü, 2023; Zhao et al., 2022). However, the weaker correlation in this study compared to past findings may be due to sample differences, cultural variations, or students relying more on internal coping mechanisms. Economic uncertainty (Chakraborty, 2024) might also amplify career anxiety beyond what social support can mitigate. These findings highlight the role of supportive networks in alleviating career-related stress and emphasize the importance of career counselling and peer mentoring.

The findings partially support the hypothesis that personality traits significantly impact career anxiety. Neuroticism emerged as a strong positive predictor ($\beta = 1.624$, $p < .001$), consistent with prior research (Abbasi-Asl et al., 2016; Gramstad et al., 2013). Conscientiousness was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -1.250$, $p = .002$), supporting studies highlighting its role in self-discipline and resilience (Campagna & Curtis, 2007). However, contrary to some prior research (Söner & Yılmaz, 2022; Penn & Lent, 2019), extraversion, agreeableness, and openness did not significantly predict career anxiety. This may suggest that their influence is mediated by other factors, such as self-efficacy or coping mechanisms. Future research should explore the indirect pathways through which personality traits affect career anxiety, as well as possible cultural or contextual influences. Additionally, interventions should focus on addressing neuroticism-related vulnerabilities while strengthening goal-setting skills among students with lower conscientiousness.

Perceived social support had a statistically significant yet small negative impact on career anxiety, aligning with previous research (Hannah Stephen, 2023; Zhao et al., 2022). However, the effect size ($R^2 = 1.39\%$) suggests that while social support plays a role, other factors may be more dominant, such as personality traits, economic uncertainties, or career decision-

making self-efficacy (Müceldili et al., 2023; Chakraborty, 2024). The lack of significant differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students suggests that career anxiety is a persistent concern across academic levels. While social support is beneficial, it may not be sufficient as a standalone intervention, reinforcing the need for career counseling and self-efficacy training.

The study found that personality traits do not mediate the relationship between perceived social support and career anxiety, aligning with prior research emphasizing the direct impact of social support (Hannah Stephen, 2023; Eldeleklioğlu, 2006). This suggests that social support buffers career anxiety through external reassurance rather than altering personality-based vulnerabilities (Hill et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2022). Given that extraversion did not significantly predict career anxiety, future studies should investigate whether self-confidence or coping mechanisms moderate this relationship. Furthermore, exploring the role of resilience or emotional intelligence as potential mediators could enhance our understanding of how students navigate career anxiety beyond personality traits.

While there were no statistically significant differences in career anxiety and perceived social support between undergraduate and postgraduate students, significant differences emerged in conscientiousness and agreeableness. Postgraduate students exhibited higher conscientiousness ($U = 10227$, $p = 0.006$) and agreeableness ($U = 10744$, $p = 0.036$), possibly due to the demands of advanced studies and increased collaborative experiences. The similarity in career anxiety levels suggests that career-related stress remains a concern regardless of education level, supporting the idea that transitioning into the workforce triggers uncertainty for both groups. These findings underline the importance of tailoring career support interventions based on personality profiles rather than just academic levels.

Gender differences revealed that while career anxiety levels did not significantly differ, female students reported higher perceived social support, consistent with prior research (Lent et al.,

2002; Saka & Gati, 2007). This suggests that while social support networks may vary by gender, career anxiety may be influenced by other factors that operate similarly across genders. Future interventions should focus on enhancing social support for male students while addressing broader stressors affecting all students.

The study reaffirms that social support alleviates career anxiety (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Zhao et al., 2022) and confirms strong correlations between career anxiety and personality traits, particularly neuroticism and conscientiousness (Abbasi-Asl et al., 2016; Gramstad et al., 2013). Importantly, personality traits do not mediate the effect of social support, suggesting that support networks provide direct benefits independent of individual personality differences. Consequently, universities and workplaces should prioritize mentorship programs, structured counseling, and support groups to enhance career decision-making and well-being.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inferences, and reliance on self-report measures may introduce biases. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs and multi-method assessments to improve reliability. Additionally, expanding the sample to diverse cultural contexts would enhance generalizability. Investigating indirect effects of extraversion, coping mechanisms, and economic factors on career anxiety could further clarify these relationships, guiding more effective academic and workplace interventions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that perceived social support is significantly and negatively associated with career anxiety among final-year students, while specific personality traits, notably neuroticism and conscientiousness, play distinct roles in influencing anxiety levels. Although perceived social support has a modest impact on reducing career anxiety, its effect remains direct and independent of personality differences. Moreover, gender differences emerged in perceived support, with female students reporting higher levels than males, while

career anxiety was comparable across genders. These findings emphasize the importance of robust support systems in alleviating career-related distress and suggest that tailored career counselling and mentoring interventions can benefit both academic and professional transitions. This research contributes valuable insights into the interplay of social support and personality factors in shaping career anxiety, offering practical implications for educational institutions and workplaces alike.

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