

ISSN: 2584-0142

PSYCHOPEDIA
JOURNALSInternational Journal of
Interdisciplinary Approaches
in Psychology (IJIAP)

Self-Efficacy, Career Indecision and Anxiety among College Going Students

¹**Aanchal Choudhary**, *Masters of Arts, Clinical Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, India*

aanchalchoudhary@gmail.com

²**Dr. Roopali Sharma**, *Professor, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India*

rsharma13@amity.edu

Abstract: The present study investigates the relationship between self-efficacy, career indecision, and anxiety among college students, with an emphasis on gender differences. A sample of 200 students (100 males and 100 females), aged 18 to 24, participated in the study. Standardized tools including the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), Career Decision Scale (CDS), and Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) were administered. The study employed a cross-sectional, comparative design and utilized independent samples t-tests and Pearson correlation for data analysis. Results revealed no significant gender differences in levels of self-efficacy, career indecision, or anxiety. However, significant correlations were observed: higher self-efficacy was associated with lower levels of anxiety and career indecision, while higher anxiety correlated with greater indecision and lower certainty. These findings underscore the interconnected nature of psychological factors in academic and career development and highlight the importance of strengthening self-efficacy to reduce anxiety and indecision among college students. The study offers valuable insights for psychological support services, career counselling, and future research.

Keywords: *Self Efficacy, Career Indecision, Higher Education, Anxiety, College Student*

1. Introduction

1.1 *Self-Efficacy*

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capacity to act in the ways necessary to reach specific goals. The concept was originally proposed by the psychologist Albert Bandura in 1977. Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behaviour, and social environment. These cognitive self-evaluations influence all manner of human experience, including the goals for which people strive, the amount of energy expended toward goal achievement, and likelihood of attaining levels of behavioural performance. Unlike traditional psychological constructs, self-efficacy beliefs are hypothesized to vary depending on the domain of functioning and circumstances surrounding the occurrence of behaviour.

Choi (2005) used the Self-Efficacy Scale to evaluate the impact of general self-efficacy on academic performance in college students. The study examined general, academic, and specific self-efficacy. Choi discovered that generic self-efficacy does not influence academic achievement, highlighting its importance in understanding trait efficacy.

Among all the factors that influence career self-efficacy, the academic stream deserves special consideration. Komarraju et al. (2013) evaluated the relationship between career self-efficacy, college students' motivation to study, and major satisfaction with their studies. They discovered that career self-efficacy significantly influenced self-determined motivation, course, and major satisfaction.

1.2 *Career Indecision*

Career decision-making is the process by which a person's mental processes integrate their professional and personal knowledge to make decisions about their career (Brown & Brooks, 1996). People with self-identification skills and abilities, as well as those who are secure in their passion, can use their occupational knowledge to guide them towards the vocation that best fits them. Many young individuals now view choosing a career as a crucial developmental responsibility (Citarella, 2018). However, being unsure about one's desired job path leads to career indecision, which is frequently seen as a serious problem among high school and college students (Gyarteng-Mensah et al., 2022; Lipshits-Brazilier et al., 2016).

Career indecision is common among college students, resulting from both personal and external factors. It comprises job ambiguity, a lack of confidence, and perplexity as a result of various possibilities. Psychological qualities such as low self-efficacy and anxiety, as well as cultural expectations and inadequate career guidance, all contribute to this problem. Research has linked job indecision to higher stress, poor academic achievement, and long-term

professional challenges. Addressing this involves interventions such as career counselling, skill development, and psychological support to improve decision-making and boost students' career confidence.

1.3 Anxiety

Anxiety is characterised by feelings of tension, concerned thoughts, and bodily changes such as elevated blood pressure. Anxiety is not the same as fear, but the terms are frequently used interchangeably. Anxiety is regarded as a future-oriented, long-acting response to a diffuse threat, whereas terror is an acceptable, present-oriented, and brief response to a clearly defined and specific threat. Anxiety is a typical emotion. If you deal with a problem at work, attend an interview, take an exam, or make a significant decision, you can experience anxiety or nervousness. A certain amount of worry can even be helpful since it helps us focus our attention and recognise potentially dangerous circumstances, keeping us safe.

College students frequently struggle with anxiety, which has an impact on their wellbeing, social lives, and academic performance. Anxiety levels are raised by a number of factors, including lack of social support, employment instability, and academic pressure. Excessive concern, trouble focusing, and physical symptoms including exhaustion and irregular sleep patterns are some of its manifestations.

Anxious students have poorer reasoning skills, a shorter memory span, difficulty focusing, and lack confidence. When engineering students experience anxiety in challenging study conditions, they may exhibit feelings of remorse and rage. Overall, among students with low ability, a high level of anxiety was more strongly linked to poorer performance (Sena et al., 2007).

2. Review of Literature

Aminah et al.'s (2025) aim was to find out what factors lead students in high school to be undecided about their careers. The Career Decision Scale (CDS) was used to collect data from 413 students from the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Central Java, and East Java. The results show a wide range of career hesitation levels across people, with demographic factors having a substantial impact. Furthermore, every student said that choosing a career was challenging. The study emphasises the necessity of enhanced career counselling services and all-encompassing support networks to help students make professional decisions. It also highlights the importance of a supportive atmosphere, more chances, and family participation in reducing career indecision.

Nguyen et al. (2024) examined high school students' career anxiety and its influence on decision-making. The study, conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, discovered that females had higher levels of professional anxiety than males, particularly considering profession features. Tenth graders were more anxious about their personal talents than eleventh graders, and academic achievement influenced vocational decision-making anxiety, with average and above-average performers exhibiting distinct anxiety patterns. Anxiety levels differed depending on professional interests. The study emphasises the importance of targeted career advising interventions that address gender, academic, and field-specific concerns, resulting in more informed decision-making and overall well-being.

Elfina and Andriany (2024) investigated the relationship between career self-efficacy and future career anxiety in Indonesian fresh graduates. The study used a quantitative, correlational technique and polled final-year students picked at random. Data were gathered using the Career Self-Efficacy and Future Career Anxiety questionnaires and analysed using product moment analysis. The results demonstrated a negative connection, implying that people with better career self-efficacy had lower levels of future career worry. The study emphasises the importance of self-efficacy in assisting recent graduates to negotiate job uncertainties, particularly during difficult times such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sengupta and Datta (2023) examined the relationship between career decision-making issues, college self-efficacy, fear of Covid-19, and future worry among college and university students. Standardised questionnaires were used to collect data from 200 students (63% of whom were female). The results showed that fear of Covid-19 had a negative link with career decision-making difficulties, whereas future worry had a positive correlation and was the largest predictor, accounting for 35% of the variance. College self-efficacy had a small link, but it did not predict career decision-making difficulties. The study emphasises the importance of future concern on students' job decisions, rather than fear of Covid-19.

Udayar et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the relationship between career decision-making difficulties and self-evaluations. After reviewing 86 papers, they discovered that process-related self-efficacy was highly linked to decreased career indecision, whereas self-esteem was more related to indecisiveness. A secondary analysis of 19 research found that process-related self-efficacy was adversely correlated with a lack of information and inconsistent information, while self-esteem had very weak connections with career selection issues. The study emphasises the importance of self-evaluation in career decision-making.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aim

To Study the relationship between Self efficacy, Career Indecision and Anxiety among College going Male and Female Students.

3.2 Research Objectives

- a) To find out the relationship between Self Efficacy, Career indecision and Anxiety among Male and Female College going Students.
- b) To measure the difference on the level of Self Efficacy, Career indecision and anxiety among Male and Female College going Students.

3.3 Hypothesis

- 1) There will be significant relationship between Self Efficacy and Career Indecision among college going Students.
- 2) There will be significant relationship between Self efficacy and Anxiety among college going students.
- 3) There will be significant relationship between Anxiety and Career Indecision among college going Students.
- 4) There will be significant gender difference on the level of Self Efficacy among Male and female College going students.
- 5) There will be significant difference on the level of Career indecision among Male and Female College going Students.
- 6) There will be significant difference on the level of Anxiety among male and female college going students

3.4 Research Design

This study employs a quasi-experimental, comparative, cross-sectional design to investigate gender differences in self-efficacy, career indecision, and anxiety among college students without randomisation, using a one-time data collection method.

3.5 Sample

In the present study, the population comprises college-going students within the age range of 18-24 years. A total sample of 200 students (100 males and 100 females) was selected using a purposive sampling method. The study employs quantitative data collection

3.6 Measures

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) is a widely utilized assessment tool designed to measure an individual's confidence in managing various challenging circumstances. Schwarzer

and Jerusalem developed the scale, which assesses a person's self-confidence in carrying out the behaviours required for achieving the specific objectives. It consists of ten items, each assessed on a Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater self-efficacy, Cronbach's alpha for the GSES has often ranged from 0.76 to 0.90 across different samples, indicating strong internal consistency. The scale has demonstrated excellent construct validity and has a negative correlation with anxiety and depression and a positive correlation with coping, optimism, and self-regulation.

Career Decision Scale (CDS) (Osipow's, 1987)

The Career Decision Scale is designed to assess career decision-making challenges. The Certainty Scale, which measures clarity and confidence in career decisions, and the Indecision Scale, which measures ambiguity and confusion, were especially used in this study. Higher scores on the indecision subscale indicate greater difficulty. Items are assessed on a 4-point Likert scale. Depending on the subscale and sample population, the CDS's internal consistency varies between 0.70 and 0.90. The measure is commonly used in academic and career counselling studies and has shown strong construct and criterion-related validity.

Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) (Beck et al., 1988)

The BAI is a 21-item self-report tool designed to measure the intensity of anxiety symptoms in adolescents and adults. Items focus on somatic and cognitive symptoms of anxiety and are rated on a 4-point scale from 0 (Not at all) to 3 (Severely – it bothered me a lot). It has shown high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92) and good test-retest reliability over one week ($r = 0.75$). It demonstrates strong convergent validity with other anxiety measures and discriminates well between anxiety and depression.

4. Statistical Analysis

Table 1: *Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Career Indecision among College Going Students*

Variable	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	p
Self-Efficacy	200	-0.187	Sig ***
Career Indecision	200		

Table 1 shows a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.187$, $p < .001$) between self-efficacy and career indecision among college students, indicating that higher self-efficacy is associated with lower levels of career indecision.

Table 2: *Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Anxiety among College Going Students*

Variable	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	p
Self-Efficacy	200	-0.409	Sig
Anxiety	200		

Table 2 indicates a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.409$, $p < .05$) between self-efficacy and anxiety among college students, suggesting that higher self-efficacy is associated with lower levels of anxiety

Table 3: *Relationship between Anxiety and Career Indecision among College Going Students*

Variable	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	p
Anxiety	200	0.277	Sig
Career Indecision	200		

Table 3 reveals a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.277$, $p < .05$) between anxiety and career indecision among college students, indicating that higher anxiety levels are associated with greater career indecision.

Table 4: *Mean, Standard deviation and t value on the level of self-efficacy among Male and female college going Students.*

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Self-Efficacy	Male	100	29.73	6.26	-1.377	Insig
	Female	100	28.65	5.30		

The table shows no significant gender difference in self-efficacy levels among college students ($t = -1.377$, $p > .05$), indicating that male and female students exhibit comparable levels of self-efficacy.

Table 5: *Mean, Standard Deviation and t value among Male and Female college students on the level of Career Indecision*

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Certainty	Female	100	5.93	1.58	-0.645	Insig
	Male	100	6.07	1.49		
Indecision	Female	100	37.18	11.37	-1.065	
	Male	100	38.83	10.52		

Result in table 5 indicates no significant difference between male and female on the level of Career Indecision

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviation and *t* value among Male and Female college students on the level of Anxiety

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Self-Efficacy	Male	100	15.07	13.64	1.077	Insig
	Female	100	17.14	13.53		

Result in table 6 shows no significant difference between male and female on the level of Anxiety.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between self-efficacy, career indecision, and anxiety among college-going students aged 18 to 24. One of the primary objectives was to assess gender differences in these psychological constructs, along with understanding how these variables interrelate in the context of career decision-making.

Findings from the correlation analysis revealed significant relationships among the three variables. A negative correlation was observed between self-efficacy and career indecision ($r = -0.187$, $p < .01$), indicating that students with higher self-efficacy reported lower levels of career indecision. This supports the first hypothesis and aligns with findings from Pignault, Rastoder, and Houssemand (2023), who reported that higher self-efficacy helps reduce career decision-making difficulties. According to their study, students confident in their abilities are more likely to make clear career decisions, reflecting stronger planning and reduced doubt about future paths.

Similarly, self-efficacy was found to be negatively correlated with anxiety ($r = -0.409$, $p < .01$). This suggests that students with greater belief in their capabilities experience less anxiety, supporting the second hypothesis. These results are consistent with the work of Purwanti et al. (2020), who observed a significant inverse relationship between self-efficacy and academic anxiety. Their findings emphasize that self-efficacy serves as a protective psychological resource, particularly relevant in career contexts where uncertainty can lead to emotional distress.

In support of the third hypothesis, a positive correlation was found between anxiety and career indecision ($r = 0.277$, $p < .01$). This suggests that students who experience higher anxiety levels tend to face more difficulty in making career decisions. This finding resonates with the study by Yang et al. (2024), which identified anxiety as a partial mediator between indecisiveness and career decision-making ability. Their results emphasized that anxiety

undermines students' confidence in evaluating career options, contributing to delayed or conflicted decision-making.

Contrary to the fourth, fifth, and sixth hypotheses, no significant gender differences were observed in self-efficacy, career indecision, or anxiety. In terms of self-efficacy, male students reported a slightly higher mean ($M = 29.73$) than females ($M = 28.65$), but this difference was not statistically significant ($t = -1.317$, $p = .189$). This aligns with the findings of Dumanjug and Serato (2024), who reported no significant gender effect on self-efficacy or academic performance. Their study instead highlighted that differences in academic streams had more influence on self-efficacy than gender.

Similarly, gender did not significantly affect levels of career indecision ($t = -1.065$, $p = .288$) or anxiety ($t = 1.077$, $p = .283$). Although males scored marginally higher in career indecision and females reported slightly higher anxiety, these differences were not statistically meaningful. These results are supported by Sharma (2019), who found no gender differences in career indecision among undergraduate students, and Naceanceno et al. (2021), who emphasized that situational factors, rather than gender, play a larger role in influencing anxiety levels.

Overall, these findings indicate that psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, anxiety, and career indecision are interrelated but do not differ significantly by gender in this sample of college students. The negative correlations between self-efficacy and both anxiety and indecision highlight the protective role of self-efficacy in navigating career-related stress. Conversely, higher anxiety appears to undermine decision-making confidence, contributing to indecision. These insights underscore the importance of fostering self-efficacy and providing emotional support to students as part of career guidance programs. Integrating psychological skills training with career services could reduce anxiety and indecision while helping students build a confident approach to future planning.

6. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to find the relationship between Self efficacy, Career Indecision, and anxiety among College Students for this a sample of 200 College Going Students (100 male and 100 female) between the ages of 18 and 24 were selected. Data were collected using standardised methods such as the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem), Career Decision Scale (Osipow), and Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck et al.). To assess the relationships between variables and explore gender differences, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and independent samples t-tests were used

6.1 Limitations

Limited Geographical Area: Since the study was limited to the Delhi-NCR region, the findings may not be generalizable. Students from different sections of the country may display varying psychological and academic patterns due to cultural, socioeconomic, or institutional differences. The sample size was only 200 college students, which may not be representative of the overall student population. A bigger sample size could have increased the reliability and application of the findings.

6.2 Future Recommendations

The study explores the psychological factors of self-efficacy, career indecision, and anxiety in college students, highlighting frequent emotional and decision-making issues experienced by students in their academic and employment paths. The results can help educators, counsellors, and institutions create interventions aimed at improving self-efficacy and reducing fear and hesitation. Additionally, the study suggests investigating further factors such as academic stress, family expectations, and socioeconomic position in relation to career anxiety and decision-making. Finally, it promotes the development of equal support networks for all students, regardless of gender.

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