

## **MEDIATING ROLE EXAMINATION OF SELF-ESTEEM ON CAREER DECISIVENESS AND CAREER COMMITMENT; AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON THAI YOUNG ADULTS**

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### *Abstract*

*The self esteem plays very important role in shaping thought process and respective aspirations of one's professional career and personal lives. The present study aims to examine the mediating role of students' self esteem on career decisiveness and their commitment to actualize their desired career. The study incorporates the survey on 444 students of secondary education for observing the conceptual relationship. The quantitative research approach has been applied with the application of structural equation modeling. The findings reveal that self esteem mediates the career decisiveness and career commitment. The empirical observation has suggested behavioral modeling, counseling and mentoring interventions during different stages of career path.*

Keywords: self esteem; career decisiveness; career commitment

### **Introduction**

The self esteem plays very important role in shaping the thought process and respective aspirations of one's professional career and personal lives. The level of self-esteem low, high or medium affects the one's life (Mcleod, 2012). People with low self esteem are more troubled by failure and tend to exaggerate event on being negative. They are more likely to experience

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social anxiety and low level of interpersonal confidence (Rosenberg & Owens, 2001). Insecurity, underachieving, negative attitude, unhappy, socially inept, angry, hostile, unmotivated, depressed, poor self-image, lack of self confidence are some of the characteristics of low self esteem people where as over boasting, extreme self proud, feeling of superiority depict high self esteem. Self esteem often gets fluctuations with respect to life situations and environment. On the one side where low self esteem give negative consequences, the high self esteem with ethical behavioral execution may give good results (Baumeister, 2003). Strong career choices and its respective decision making often relate to the level of self-esteem. One of the major influences on adolescents' development of self concept is their anticipated occupational role (Issacson, 1993). Researchers claim that many of the people approach adulthood with state of confusion and unclear career goals and aspirations (Anderson, 1995; Chiu, 1990; Marcia, 1994; Vodracek, 1995). The youngster often being confused with their career decision; are prone to indulge in unethical practices and unwanted life conditions, less interaction with career counseling experts and less exploring for possible career options make adolescence unable to make career decision, along with appropriate commitment and they cannot fully establish their self concept (Dusek, 1996). Starica (2012) stated academic self-esteem as predictor of the career indecision among adolescents. Teenage pregnancy, high risk driving behaviors and internet game addictions are major indicators for the young adults in Thailand (UNICEF Report, 2013). The youngster often start with uncertain career choices which they eventually adopted on the basis of situation influence and then they move towards the specific career choices with a commitment to develop themselves for the desired competence. This leads towards appropriate time involvement and occurrence of gap to raise the expertise and career satisfaction. Therefore there is earnest need of appropriate self esteem with sound decisiveness and commitment to achieve the aspired career. To summarize the entire rationale it is worth mentioning that self esteem signifies one's life situations, career options, decisive ability and commitment to make the dream come true. The objectives of the present study are two-fold; first, to explore the relationship of career decisiveness and respective commitment in the context of Thai young adults, second; to examine the mediating effects of self esteem on career decisiveness and commitment. This study has also

attempted to observe the difference of self esteem, career decisiveness and commitment between the two genders.

### **Review of literature**

#### *Self-esteem and career decisiveness*

The extensive literature has explored and discussed the concept of self esteem in different conceptual frames; Rosenberg (1965) defined the concept in terms of favorable and unfavorable attitude towards self. Hethornton and Wyland (2013) assert that those with fragile sense of self esteem respond extremely favorable to positive feedback and extremely defensive to negative feedback. This mostly effects from our early childhood that has been generally positive or negative, the view of self is considered (Network, Elasser, & Stieglitz, 2012). The career decisiveness is the widely discuss topic in the context of career development and career decision making studies. Career decisiveness is the last state in the career decision making process where the person has final discretion regarding his choice, his aspired career (Osipow, 1999). Osipow (1999) defines career decision-making as the thought processes by which an individual integrates self knowledge and occupational knowledge arrive at an occupational choice. Wiesman (1976) defined decisiveness as of the ability of individual to engage in decision making process. While relating self esteem with career decisiveness; Crook, Healy, and O'Shea (1984) has given classic concept where he established the relationship between self esteem to career maturity and work achievement. The self esteem also got related to social skills and employer attraction. The higher level of self esteem allows on individual to possess higher level of social skills, impressing an employer in recruitment stage (Ashforth & Saks, 1999). Schmit, Amel, and Ryan (1993) have found in their research that self esteem is significantly correlated to assertive and self confident career seeking behaviors. Reno (2011) found the similar finding where she examines the American female college student with the self esteem and career decision making. The study propagates that extrinsic motivation along with the self esteem act as predictor for career decision making. Al Darmaki (2003) quoted that high self esteem graduates are quite reluctant to take career counseling. Devidson, Metcafe, Muller, Molony, and Vodourious (2012) performs study in Canadian perspective where they examined the effects of self esteem on career path and found that high self

esteem people intend to search job in labor market and they possess positive outlook towards the labour market conditions, where as low self-esteem people tend to take time off, they also found positive correlation between grades and self esteem.

*Career decisiveness and career commitment*

Ngunjiri (2013) stated that decisiveness/decidedness in career choices - refers to the degree of certainty or how capable a person is in making career decisions. They used interchangeable these words i.e. career decisiveness, decidedness and career certainty. Decisiveness comes with a process where as commitment comes after the decision. Career Commitment reflects the involvement of one's into his or her individual career choices, his intension to value his or her goals of aspired career. Blau (1988) asserted that career commitment is the individual's attitude to his profession or one's motivation to work in chosen vocation. Gault and Singh (2002) reflect that career commitment is characterized by the amount of time and effort spent acquiring relevant knowledge. Blusteine, Devenis and Kidney (1989) have given definition of career commitment to a career choice as, the point at which individual has clear sense on his or her occupational preferences. The extensive discussion with respect to career commitment has been done so far. The commitment has been explored in relationship, moderation effects and in personal and organizational context (Aryee & Tan, 1992; Blau, 1988; Wallace, 1993; Chang, 1999; Ballout, 2009; Jin & Watkins, 2009; Weng, 2012).

Ballout (2009) relates career commitment with career success in his study on white collar employees in Malaysian context, he found commitment as strong predictor of career success, Wang (2006) found the moderation effect of efficacy on career choice and commitment in the context of white and colored students.

*Mediation of self-esteem on career decisiveness and career commitment*

Self esteem is an important inbuilt characteristic for having healthy situations for all the personal and professional dimensions of life. In uncertain and ambiguous market situation self esteem plays vital role in sustaining into employment (Coetzee, 2008). Coetzee and Potgieter (2014) have examined the mediation effects of self esteem on the link between the career self management and career resilience and found the significant moderation in

context of business and management staff. The concept of self esteem as mediation effects had widely discussed for several concepts such as attachment style and self concept clarity (Robert, Gotlib, & Kassel, 1996), self-esteem in cross cultural perspective (Farrugia, 2004), physical activity and depressive symptoms (Mcphie & Rawana, 2012), social support and life satisfaction (Kong & You, 2013), perfectionism and depression (Cha, 2016), personality traits and body esteem (Skoorek, Song, & Dunham, 2014), corporate social responsibility and team performance (Chien, Baruch, & Shin, 2012). The mediation effects of self esteem on career decisiveness and career commitment has not been performed especially for the school going early adulthood person. The young adults who are pioneer for the economy has not been taken as serious concern as the career foundations should usually be lay down in the age of early adulthood.

*Conceptual gap identified*

The extensive investigation of literature has given an understanding that, although self esteem has been widely discussed in several regimes, its relatedness with career decisiveness for early adolescence age has not been studied so far specially in the context of Thailand's early adulthood. A person who has decided his career choice; would certainly give efforts to obtain that career and he would therefore gives commitment to each task related to the self improvement, learning and study involvement, aiming to gain skills and expertise of his chosen career roles. This profound relationship would certainly be affected with the level of self esteem being imposed in different stages of career development. Hence this may mediate the relationship of career choice and career commitment. The career decision making has also not been conceptualized with career commitment especially with the late adolescences and young adult age. The current study would bridge the conceptual gap with analyzing the relationship with career decisiveness and career commitment for the respective career choice among the Thai young adults. The mediation effects of self esteem on career decisiveness and career commitment has not been performed especially for the school going early adulthood person. The young adults who are pioneer for the economy should be taken as serious concern as the career foundations usually be lay down in the age of early adulthood. Hence the current study would examine the mediation effects of self- esteem on career decisiveness and career commitment. While studying the

gender difference between the variables, self esteem has widely examined with respect to gender difference (Kling, Kristen, Shibley, Shewers, Crolin, Buswell, & Brenda, 1999; Gentile, Grabe, Dolan-Pascoe, Twenge, Wells, & Maitino, 2009) but the gender difference for career commitment and career decisiveness has not given due investigation in the literature. The current study is bridging the above mentioned conceptual gaps and intended to contribute to the literature of self-esteem.

## **Objectives**

The study proposes following objectives and hypothesis: 1. to examine the relationship between self esteem and career decisiveness; 2. to establish the relationship between career decisiveness and commitment; 3. to investigate the mediating effects of self esteem on the relationship of career decisiveness and career commitment; and 4. to explore the gender difference for the self-esteem, career decisiveness, career commitment.

### *Hypothesis of the study*

- (1) There is significant relationship between self esteem and career decisiveness.*
- (2) There is significant relationship among career decisiveness and career commitment.*
- (3) Self esteem significantly mediates the relationship of career decisiveness and career commitment.*
- (4) There is significance difference between male and female for self esteem, career decisiveness and career commitment.*

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The participants were the senior pass out students of schools who are seeking admissions in higher educational institutions in Thailand. 500 students were approached in the public and private schools of north east and central part of Thailand on the basis of convenient sampling. 443 sample size has been obtained after the application of sample formula Zikmund (2003) hence 500 respondents have been approached out of which 444 complete surveys are included in the analysis. The survey has recorded 80 percent participation for

female and 20 percent for male. Table 1 gives the details of demographic information of the respondents.

Table 1. Descriptive of demographic variables

	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16-20	444	100%
	20-25	0	0
Gender	Male	89	20%
	Female	355	80%

### *Instruments*

The instrument consist of 4 parts observing the measurement of demographic information along with students' dream career field, self esteem, career decisiveness and career commitment. The first part has basic demographic information of the student along with their career field and desired career choice where as second, third and fourth part consist the scale of self-esteem and career decisiveness and career commitment respectively. The total item consist in the survey is 24. The sample adequacy has been obtained with Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and validity has been observed through chi-square difference test, all the scale have reported with above 0.7 for KMO values and significance also have been observed for all the scale, the Chornbach alpha obtained for entire scale is .80 considered as adequate score of reliability. Table 2 gives the summary of reliability and validity score obtained for all the scale. The detail of each scales is as follows.

*Self-Esteem Scale.* The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) with 10 items coding as "on the whole, I am satisfied with myself" and "all in all, I am inclined to feel that I am failure", has been incorporated with 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. Some of the items were reversely coded. The Chornbach's alpha coefficient were .71, which shows acceptable reliability score.

*Career Decisiveness Scale.* As the career decisiveness depicts the capability of making decision with respect to person's career, career decision making concerns, attitude and feelings has been used to construct the measure the scale. The scale developed with a view to measure the self clarity and career information adequacy. The 6 item such as "I feel I have enough information

about my career I intend to enter” has been taken with 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. The Cronbach’s alpha Coefficient has been recorded as 0.63 for the current scale.

*Career Commitment Scale.* Balu’s (1988) seven item has been taken to measure the student career commitment. The items has slightly modified as it was observing on the students’ career commitment, hence item like “If I could decide again I would not choose to work in selected profession”, “I definitely want a career into my professions and hence working persistently to gain skills and knowledge”. The scale has observed into 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. The reliability coefficient obtained for this scale was .73.

Table 2. Summary on reliability and validity

Dimensions	No of items	Cronbach’s Alpha	KMO values	Chi-square	df	p
Entire	24	.81	.79	2253.23	276	.00
Self Esteem	10	.74	.80	722.98	45	.00
Career Decisiveness	6	.66	.76	305.05	15	.00
Career Commitment	8	.73	.79	588.7	28	.00

#### *Procedure and design*

The data has been analyzed through SPSS version 21 and AMOS Version 21. The descriptive statistics and mediation analysis have been taken for testing the presumptions and furnish the findings. The measurement model of three latent variables was tested through goodness of fit indicators. The mediation has taken into two step processes, first it has observed the relationship between dependent variable (Career Commitment) and independent variable (Career decisiveness), later mediating variable (Self-esteem) has been introduced to observe the difference in significant beta values. Causal step approach by Baron-Kenny (1986) has been applied to test the mediation with testing for significance of different path.

## **Results and discussion**

### *Career Fields and Career Choice*

Table 3a shows the career field and career choice of the participants and the highest frequency observed for the career field is service followed by self



employment, where as majority of the students are inclined towards business and administration job profile followed by health care and pharmacy. Table 3b gives the gender differences among the career choice and career filed opted by the students. The statistics score found that there is major difference between male and female participants for their selected career choice and career fields ( $t=2.19, p<.01$  and  $6.3 p<.01$ ) where male has reported more than female.

Table 3a. Career field and career choice

		Frequency	Percentage
Dream Career Field	Service	149	33.6
	Self employment	140	31.5
	Social service	108	24.3
	Other	47	10.6
Dream Career Choice	Education	54	12.2
	Business and	187	42.1
	Defense	33	7.4
	Health Care and	91	20.5
	Social Welfare	16	3.6
	Engineering and	10	2.3
	Others (Films and media)	53	11.9

Table 3b. Gender differences between career field and career choice

	Career Field					Career Choice		
	N	df	M	SD	t	M	SD	t
Male	89	442	2.35	1.35	2.19*	4.21	2.26	6.3*
Female	355		2.08	.96		2.89	1.60	

Note: \* $p<.01$

#### *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis*

Table 4a represents the Means, Standard Deviations and inter-correlations for all the variables used into the current study. The result shows that self esteem has positively correlated with the career decisiveness ( $r=.23, p<.01$ ) and career commitment ( $r=.17, p<.01$ ), where as career decisiveness has

also found positively correlated with career commitment ( $r=.53, p<.01$ ). The correlation coefficients observed for all three variables supports the hypothesis 1 and 2. That is self esteem is significantly correlated with career decisiveness and career decisiveness also found significantly correlated with career commitment. Table 4b shows that there is no major difference between male and female students for self esteem, career decisiveness. Whereas career commitment has shown the difference ( $t=-2.6, p<.01$ ) and male has reported more than female.

While analyzing the significance difference between the two genders, observed mean score have not given major differences for both the genders all though the career commitment has shown the difference between the genders ( $p<.01$ ).

Table 4a. Means, SDs and correlation

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
Self-esteem	4.28	.34	1		
Career Decisiveness	4.32	.28	.23**	1	
Career Commitment	4.34	.27	.17**	.53**	1

Note: N=444; M-mean; SD-Standard Deviation; \*\* $p<.01$

Table 4b. Gender comparison on self esteem, career decisiveness and career commitment

	N	df	Self-esteem			Career Decisiveness			Career Commitment		
			M	SD	t	M	SD	t	M	SD	t
Male	89	442	4.23	.22	-.74	4.31	.29	.49	4.27	.27	-2.6*
Female	355		4.27	.44		4.30	.26		4.34	.26	

Note: M-mean; SD-Standard Deviation; \*\* $p<.01$

*Measurement Model.* To observe the model fit, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) has been conducted on 24 observed variables and three latent variables. The test has given satisfactory fit between data.  $X^2_{(247, N=444)}=709.72$ ;  $X^2/df= 2.87$ ;  $p<.001$ ; RMSEA=.06; CFI=.91 indicating that latent variable are well measured by their respective items.

*Structural Model.* Structural equation modeling has been taken to observe the mediation effects of self esteem. The mediation is observed when

the mediating variable intervention affects the relationship between dependent and independent variable or predicting and outcome variable. Kenny (2015) asserts that the one reason for testing mediation is trying to understand the mechanism through which the causal variable affects the outcome. At the onset, the direct effect of career decisiveness on career commitment has been tested without entering the mediating variable. The test has given validated standardized path ( $\beta=.62, p<.001$ ). Then mediation model has been tested with entering the mediating variable self esteem. The test showed the adequate model fit with  $X^2_{(249, N=444)}=728.5; X^2/df= 2.92; p<.001; RMSEA=.06; CFI=.91; RMR=0.01$ . The figure 1 shows the final model. The table 5 gives the summary of estimates before and after the entering of mediating variable.

Table 5. Summary of estimates

Before entering the mediating variables					
	Estimate	SE	CR	p	Result
CC ← CD	.62	.108	5.79	.00*	Significant
After entering Mediating variables					
SE ← CD	.50	.097	5.211	.00*	Significant
CC ← CD	.62	.111	5.643	.00*	Significant
CC ← SE	-.037	0.49	.76	.447	Not significant

Note: \*p<.05

In order to ensure the indirect effect more adequately Bootstrap estimation procedure in Amos has done with sample specification 2000 at 95 percent confidence interval. Mackinnon (2002) suggested that the bootstrap method is appropriate to obtained accurate confidence intervals for indirect effect; the study had taken bias corrected percentile method of bootstrap to ensure the power in the model. Bias bootstrap is best to perform when the researcher is concerned with the power (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013). Table 6 shows the full mediation effects of self esteem on career decisiveness and commitment. Direct effects has given estimates which are significant and showing consistency in results where as indirect effects has been found as not significant at  $p<.001$ .

Table 6. Direct and indirect effects and bootstrap confidence intervals

Model Pathways	Estimate effects	95CI UBC	95CI LBC
Direct effects			
CD → CC	.50**	.77	.43
CD → SE	.62**	.72	.34
SE → CC	.37**	.05	-.16
Indirect Effect			
CD → SE → CC	-.019(NS)	.26	-.09

Note: \*\*significant at P<.001; (NS)=Not significant; (CI)=Confidence interval; UBC=Upper bond Bootstrap Confidence; LBS=Lower bond bootstrap confidence

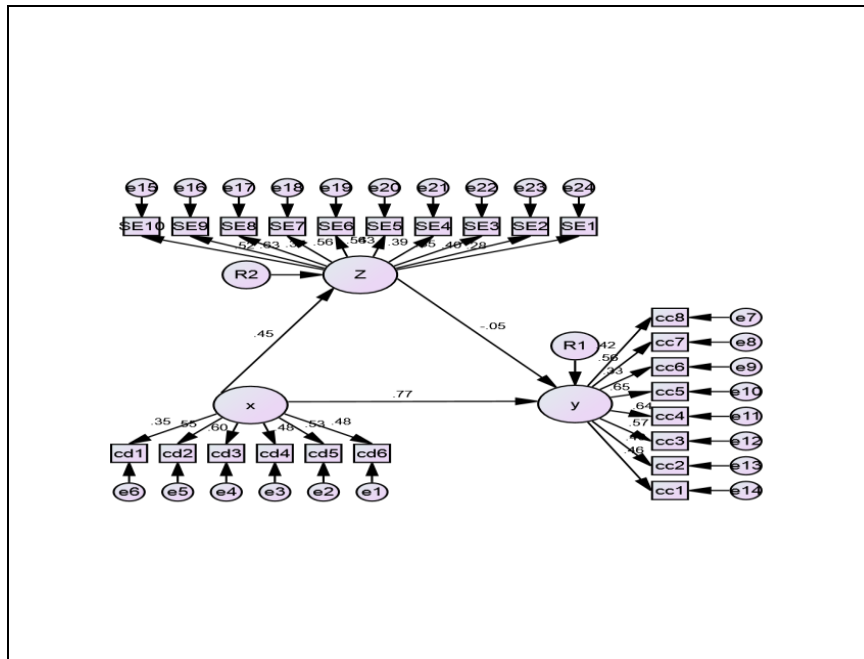


Figure1. Mediation Model. Factor loading are standardized (p<.05). X=Career Decisiveness, Y=Career Commitment, and Z= Self Esteem

### Conclusions

The present study has investigated the mediation effects of self esteem on career decisiveness and career commitment. 444 students and early adults of northeast Thailand have been approached to participate in the survey. The

statistical inferences obtained after the analysis have supported the theoretical model and it has found that career decisiveness is significantly correlated with the career commitment where as the mediation has also reported into the causal model. The analysis reflects that self esteem mediates the relationship between career decisiveness and career commitment. The result could not have clear literature support but the study on self efficacy and career commitment partially support the results (Jin, Watkins, & Yuen, 2009; Chung, 2002).

The study has reported that career decisiveness can dramatically predict the career commitment, this reflect that a student who has decided his dream career would certainly contribute in the form of favorable achieving attitude and would show commitment to obtain that career. Majority of the participants has shown their interest for the career field as service. Although, the study also reveals, that young adults are inclined towards their self employment. The professions in health care, education, defense etc has given average score. While comparing the results between genders, it has found that boys are more determined than to girls for career choice. The current study therefore contradicts the research of Chung (2002) who performed the study on university graduates. The study reported no difference between the self esteem level observed for male and female participants. The finding is similar to the Jain and Dixit (2014) research which has performed on Indian College students and contrary to the findings of King, Kristen, Shibley, Shewers, Crolin, Buswell, and Brenda (1999), who have meta analysis on gender differences in self esteem and found that male has reported higher standards of global self esteem then to female, although he has also reported that the deviation is not so high.

The young adults of Thailand has reported with clarity in career opting and putting efforts to operationalized and actualize the career aspirations. While comparing the male and female responses, this has been observed that both the gender has not shown difference in self esteem and career decisiveness but the commitment has given possible difference with respect to the gender. Male participants have shown more commitment to the female. The finding of the study also reveals that students self esteem are quite satisfactory and giving direct effect on the students' career decisiveness and career commitment. This reflects that the students has shown the favorable indication towards the gaining the knowledge and skills of their desired career. The current study has revealed that self esteem may mediate the student's performance with respect to their

career commitment. Hence, this indicates various needs of behavioral modeling, counseling and mentoring interventions during different stages of career path. The findings also contribute theoretically with establishing the mediation effects of self esteem on career decisiveness and career commitment.

#### *Limitation of the study*

At the onset, very less literature with respect to the Thailand's school going young adult was found, hence literature review is comprised of studies performed outside of Thailand. Being focused on the conceptual investigations researcher also found limiting with the factors influencing of career decisiveness and commitment such as parent's involvement, teachers and mentor support, career counseling sessions and counselor interfaces. The study has obtained the survey from the few part of the Thailand i.e. Northeast and central. Therefore it aggravates the need to take the sample from different part of the Thailand. At last study also encountered limitation with finance, time and other logistic constraints.

#### *Further scope of future Research*

The current study has investigated the mediation of self esteem on students' career decisiveness and commitment, though this may take the mediating role investigation of culture and school environments, the career counselor's role and students perceived image of aspired career may also moderate the effects on career commitment. The study may further be taken at country level analysis or comparative multi-national analysis. The trends in the labor market have shown change, as the shift from stability to mobility has been observed in this generation. Career construction theory responds to the need of 21<sup>st</sup> century labor market as this focus on meaningfulness in chosen vocational career, hence the concept of vocational career meaning-fullness can be related to career commitment.

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