



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



The impact of proactive personality and self-esteem on career decision making self-efficacy of university students in Botswana: A mediation analysis

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Abstract

The university period is where students make career related decisions and preparations to transition from the school to professional settings, however, studies show that some students face some degree of career indecisiveness and decision making difficulties. Therefore, this study examined the impact of individual proactive personality and self-esteem on the career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE) of students. Data was collected from a sample of 120 participants from 5 different universities across Botswana. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale, Career decision self-efficacy Short form (CDSE-SF) and the Proactive Personality (PP) scales were administered to assess the variables under study. The data collected was analyzed using the Pearson's correlation, regression analysis and Hayes' mediation model. The results indicate that proactive personality had a significant positive impact on the career decision making self-efficacy levels of students. Secondly, self-esteem had a significant positive correlation and impact with the career decision making self-efficacy of student. Moreover, mediation analysis indicate that proactive personality significantly mediated the relationship between self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy of university students. Further analysis reveal a significant positive correlation of student's age with their self-esteem levels but no gender disparities were found. In conclusion, students with higher levels of proactive personality and self-esteem are more likely to have higher levels of career decision making self-efficacy. Further results, implications and limitations are discussed.

Keywords: Career decision making self-efficacy; Proactive personality; Self-esteem; Botswana university students

1. Introduction

Making a career decision is one of the most important decisions students make in their life [1], but some students often face some degree of difficulties and indecisiveness when it comes to making career decisions [2]. For most students, the university period serves as a preparation time for the transition from school to work environments and it is during this time that students have to make career related decisions [3]. According to Jungen [4] career decisions have the potential to affect future life success and opportunities. Nowadays there many career paths with new emerging career fields for students to choose from which adds on to career decision making confusion and difficulties [5], despite this big decision that students have to make, there is limited basis in which students can use to make their own career decisions and young people often face hardships that contribute to their career confusion and difficulties [6].

Sometimes students have their career paths dictated by external factors [7] such as their family, peers, teachers, etc. [7]. The personality of a student's plays an important part in overcoming external dictators and influences thus enabling students to make autonomous career decisions that are at the best of their interest [8]. Students need to have self-efficacy so their career choices are not dictated by others [7, 9]. It is therefore important for students to nurture confidence and trust in their capabilities so they make career decisions best suited for them, this is called career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE).

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University graduates are currently facing unemployment issues and they often have to stay long period before they can find suitable jobs [9], it is thereby important for students to gain the right skills necessary for making career decision best suited for them which will allow them to adapt to career changes [9, 5].

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Proactive Personality and career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE)

Bateman and Crant [10] describe Proactive personality as a tendency of an individual to take initiative in influencing their environment and according to them, proactive people tend to cope better with career change, identify promotion opportunities and adapt well to their work environments. There has since been numerous exploration of proactive personality with various career concepts. One of those studies was conducted by [9] who indicated that individuals with high proactive traits are likely to easily adapt to their career environments.

Jiang [11] describes high proactive individuals as change and action oriented and this allows them to better analyze and challenge the status quo. Wang et al. [5] also concurs as he also states that individuals with high proactive personality can better identify opportunities and act through until they attain their desired outcome. Students can make efforts to facilitate the career decision making process by gathering information, exploring their interests and working towards attaining the necessary skills and this in turn develops the self-efficacy of students towards their career decision making process [1].

Yu et al. [3] conducted a study among 783 Chinese college students with the aim of examining the effect of proactive personality on career decidedness and their results indicated a significant positive relationship between proactive personality and career decidedness via career exploration. Since career decidedness, a variable closely relate to CDMSE, had a significant relation, using this train of thought we may also assume that proactive personality and career decision making self-efficacy may yield similar results.

2.2. Self- esteem and Career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE)

Self-esteem is one of the oldest explored personality traits with regard to career decision making of students, however few research explores the role of self-esteem when paired with another personality. As such, this study seeks to explore the influence of self-esteem on CDMSE of students in the presence of another personality trait such as proactive personality. The first step in this direction is to establish the influence of self-esteem on CDMSE. Outbir [12] defines self-esteem as an individual's image or view about oneself, while Javed and Tariq [2] define self-esteem in terms of the presence of a continued sense of personal worth or worthiness.

According to Udayar et al. [13] Self-esteem and self-efficacy are considered to be personality related. Individuals with high self-esteem tend to view themselves as highly capable, significant and worthy while those with low self-esteem often doubt their abilities and self-worth [2, 14]. Individuals with high self-esteem are often self-motivated to pursue challenging careers and often engage in activities that allows them to achieve these goals [14].

When we explore studies relating to self-esteem, Javed and Tariq [2] examined the relationship between career decisions, self-efficacy and self-esteem of students in government and private educational institutions. They collected data from a sample of a 100 male and female students and used scales of using the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the general self-efficacy scale and the career decision making questionnaire to measure the variables of interest. Results in regards to gender revealed that females had lower self-efficacy and lower self-esteem compared to males, however self-esteem across the genders was statistically insignificant. Moreover, results of their study indicated that both self-esteem and self-efficacy negatively correlated with decision making difficulties. Their study found out that there were gender disparities between males and females when it came to self-esteem, male students were more confident about their future and had less career difficulty compared to females.

In another study relating to self-esteem, Abomah and Tagoe [14] conducted a study that examined the influence of self-esteem and peer pressure on the career choice of adolescents. The aim of their study was to establish various relations between self-esteem, career choice and peer pressure. The authors adopted a cross sectional and descriptive research design and used cluster sampling to select four school to be included in the sample. The sample was later stratified by proportions and 200 participants from senior high schools in Ghana were randomly selected. The data collected was analyzed using Pearson's correlation and regression and the results indicated that both self-esteem and peer pressure positively correlated with career choice. Students with high self-esteem are intrinsically motivated, they decide their

careers based on their interest, curiosity, personality and enjoyment, while students with low self-esteem are externally motivated and they tend to decide on jobs that offer prestige, status, and salary or job availability [15].

2.3. Proactive personality, Self-esteem, and CDMSE

The term self-efficacy is linked to the level of confidence an individual has in performing a certain task [16]. Self-efficacy often nurtures self-confidence thus ensuring the execution of intended tasks [2]. Some research has shown that personality constructs such as healthy personality [17] and the five factor model traits [18] can be used to predict career decision self-efficacy. Given the high prevalence of external environmental factors that can influence the CDMSE of students, it is important to also consider the influence of personality.

Although there has been few studies that have explored proactive personality, self-esteem, and CDMSE altogether, there has been past studies that prove the relation of these variables. Studies have established the relation between low self-esteem and high levels of career decision making difficulties [2] and some few studies on proactive personality has also been linked to career concepts closely related to CDMSE [3, 5]. Given the missing knowledge gap this study aims to explore the relationship between these three variables.

2.4. The current study

There has been studies on proactive personality with career variables such as career adaptation but little studies have embarked on exploring CDMSE with self-esteem and proactive personalities. Studies have explored proactive personality with variables such as career planning [19] and career choice commitment [20], however there has been few studies of proactive personality with CDMSE. In the past there has been several studies that explored self-esteem with career decision and choice making, however, few studies have explored self-esteem in the presence of another personality such as proactive personality. As such the aim of this study is to study the interactions of proactive personality with self-esteem and how they ultimately affect the CDMSE of students.

This study takes into account the social cognitive career theory proposed by Lent et al., [21] that perceive personality (such as proactive personality) to be an antecedent towards the formation of self-efficacy believes. The concept of self-efficacy was first proposed by Bandura [16] and since then the theory has been widely adopted in understanding the career decision making process. When people have high confidence in their ability to perform a certain task with expected positive outcomes, they are more likely to repeat the behavior [22].

The relevance of this study is to draw attention to the personality factors involved in student's CDMSE and how these factors shape and influence student's decisions. The inclusion of personal factors such as proactive personalities and self-esteem enables students to realize how it is important to work and cultivate their individuality, confidence and self-belief in order to nurture a personality that can help them build their CDMSE. As such, the current study seeks to propose and examine a comprehensive analysis of self-esteem and its effect on career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE) using proactive personality as a mediating variable.

The study proposes the following hypothesis.

- Hypothesis 1: Proactive personality has a significant impact on CDMSE.
- Hypothesis 2: Self-esteem significantly influences CDMSE.
- Hypothesis 3: Proactive personality significantly mediates the relationship between self-esteem and CDMSE.
- Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relation between self-esteem, proactive personality and CDMSE of university students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Procedure

The authors created an online survey platform for participants to complete the questionnaire. The link of the questionnaire was shared to universities platforms with the help of university administrators. Before the formal investigation the first author approached various university personnel across to explain the purpose of the project and to obtain permission to collect the data from students. The lecturers and educators helped the authors to share the link with their students during their class meetings. Consent was obtained from all participants in the study and participants were informed that participating in this study was voluntary and all data was collected anonymously.

3.2. Participants

The study was carried out among university students in Botswana. A total of 151 students responded to the questionnaire but some questionnaires were excluded from the final analysis due to missing responses of key variables. The sample of study consisted of 120 university students from 5 universities across Botswana. There were 45 number of males and 75 females. The age range of the participants was 18 to 48 years with 25.4 being the mean age of the participants (SD = 7.021). The study included students from various levels of study. The table below provides a summary of the basic information of participants.

Table 1 Basic information of participants

	Group	N (percent)
Gender	Male	45 (37.5%)
	Female	75 (62.5%)
Level of study	Undergraduate	67 (55.8%)
	Masters	36 (30%)
	PhD	7 (5.8)
	Vocational certificate	10 (8.3)
Major	STEM	18 (15%)
	Education related majors	11 (9.2%)
	Arts & sports related majors	3 (2.5%)
	Business and commerce related majors	43 (35.8%)
	Social sciences, Law and humanities	13 (10.8%)
	Agriculture related majors	3 (2.5%)
	Health and medicine related majors	19 (15.8%)
	Vocational and technical majors	10 (8.3%)

3.3. Measures

3.3.1. Career decision making self-efficacy

Career decision making self-efficacy of students was assessed using Betz, Klein, and Taylor's [23] Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form (CDSE-SF). Career decision making self-efficacy scale- short form (CDMSE-SF) consists of 25 items that assesses career related self-efficacy. The CDMSE-SF is one of the commonly used scales in assessing the level of career related self-efficacy and numerous validly tests have been conducted on the scale and found valid [24]. Participants indicated their confidence of the given item on a 5 point scale (1 representing no confidence at all, and 5 representing complete confidence). High scores indicated high levels of CDMSE.

3.3.2. Proactive personality

Proactive personality of learners was assessed using Bateman and Crant's [10] Proactive Personality Scale. The scale consists of 17 items measuring proactive tendencies using the 7 point scale (1= strong disagree, 7= strongly agree). According to the scale, high scores indicate high levels of proactive personality and vice versa. Various validity tests have been conducted and deemed it to be a good scale with good reliability [25].

3.3.3. Self-esteem

Self-esteem was measured by The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale [26]. The scale composes of 10 items that assess the person's overall view about themselves. This scale is one of the oldest reliable scales with good validity in assessing self-esteem [27] The items were measured using the 4 point scale, (1= strongly disagree and 4= strongly agree). The higher the score the higher the level of self-esteem.

3.4. Statistical analysis

Information gathered was analyzed using SPSS version 22. The Statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) SPSS was used to calculate descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, regression and mediation analysis using PROCESS SPSS macro by Hayes [28]. The results of the analysis are given below.

4. Result

4.1. Common Method Bias

In order to mitigate the issue of common method bias as participants completed self-administered questionnaires, some of the questionnaire items were reverse scored and had different Likert scales. The Harman single factor method was used to test the valid data and explore whether a single common factor could account for most of the variance in the study. The variable explained by the first factor accounted for 37.2% which is below the crucial standard (<40%). This suggests there is no significant issue with the common method bias.

4.2. Correlations

Pearson's product correlation was used to test for correlations of variables under study. The results of the data indicate a statistically significant positive correlation of proactive personality with CDMSE ($r = 0.599, p < 0.001$). There was also a positive significant correlation of self-esteem with CDMSE ($r = 0.417, p < 0.001$). Self-esteem and proactive personality positively correlated with each other ($r = 0.386, p < 0.001$). When we consider the demographic variables, A positive correlation between age and self-esteem was found ($r = 0.238, p > 0.001$). This positive relationship between gender and self-esteem may indicate the increase in self-esteem as one progresses through the ages. With regards to gender, there was no significant correlation between gender and the variables under study. The table below provides a summary of the correlations.

Table 2 Correlation analysis

		CDMSE	Self-esteem	Proactive personality	Age
CDMSE	Pearson correlation	1	0.417**	0.599**	0.035
	Sig (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.705
	N	120	120	120	120
Self-esteem	Pearson correlation	0.417**	1	0.386**	0.238**
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.009
	N	120	120	120	120
Proactive personality	Pearson correlation	0.599**	0.386**	1	0.151
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.100
	N	120	120	120	120
Age	Pearson correlation	0.035	0.238**	0.151	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.705	0.009	0.100	
	N	120	120	120	120

4.3. Regression analysis

The following depicts regression analysis where the dependent variable (CDMSE) was regressed on predicting variables of proactive personality and self-esteem. Further results are discussed below.

4.3.1. Proactive personality on career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE)

This analysis tests if proactive personality carries a significant impact on CDMSE. The dependent variable CDMSE was regressed on predicting variable proactive personality to test the hypothesis. Proactive personality significantly predicted CDMSE $F(1,118) = 65.932, p < 0.001$, which indicates that proactive personality can play a significant role in

shaping CDMSE ($B= 0.554, p<0 .001$). These results clearly report the positive effect of proactive personality. Moreover the R squared 0.358 depicts that the model explains 35.8% of variance in CDMSE.

4.3.2. *Self-esteem on career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE)*

The analysis tests if self-esteem carries a significant impact on CDMSE. The dependent variable CDMSE was also regressed on predicting variable self-esteem. Results indicate that Self-esteem significantly predicted CDMSE $F (1,118) = 24.910, p< 0.001$. These results indicate that self-esteem can play a significant role in shaping CDMSE ($B= 1.264, p< 0.001$). Moreover the R squared was 0.174 depicts that the model explains 17.4% of variance in CDMSE.

4.3.3. *Proactive Personality and Self-esteem on career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE)*

The dependent variable CDMSE was regressed on predicting variables of proactive personality and self-esteem. The results indicate that the independent variables under study significantly predicts CDMSE $F (2,117) = 38.889, p< 0.001$. Moreover the R squared 0 .399 depicts that the model explain 39.9% of the variance in CDMSE. Table 3 shows summary of findings

Table 3 Regression analysis summary

Hypothesis	Regression	B	t	p-value
H1	Proactive personality on CDMSE	0.476	6.620	0.000
H2	Self-esteem on CDMSE	0.663	2.821	0.006
H3	Proactive personality and self-esteem on CDMSE			0.000
Model supported?	Yes			
R	0.399			
F (2, 117)	38.889			

4.4. Mediation Analysis

From a simple mediation analysis conducted using ordinary least squares path analysis Performed by the PROCESS SPSS macro [28] support was found for the hypothesis that proactive personality significantly mediated the relationship between self-esteem and CDMSE. Self-esteem was positively associated with proactive personality (a path= 0.386) and proactive personality was positively associated with CDMSE (b path =0 .514). A bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect (ab = 0.198) based on 5000 bootstraps resamples was entirely above zero (0.078 to 0.393) suggesting that proactive personality mediates the association between self-esteem and CDMSE. Table 4 below shows a summary of the mediation analysis and image 1 below provides a summary of the mediation model.

Table 4 Mediation analysis

	M (Proactive personality)				Y (CDMSE)					
Antecedent	b	Se	p	Beta	b	se	p	beta		
X self esteem	a	0.386	0.085	0.000	0.386	c	0.219	0.078	0.006	0.632
M proactive	-	-	-	-	b	0.514	0.078	0.000	0.632	
	R squared	0.149			R square	0.399				
	F (1,118) = 20.640, p< 0.001				F (2, 117) = 38.889 p< 0.001					

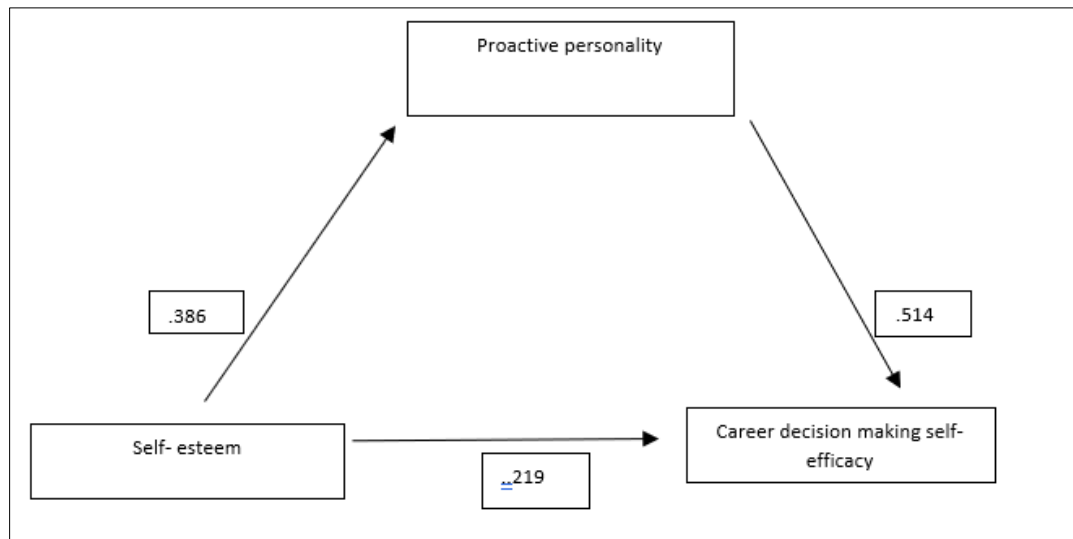


Figure 1 Mediation analysis

5. Discussion

5.1. Proactive personality as a predictor of CDMSE

The first hypothesis stated that proactive personality has a significant impact on career decision making self-efficacy of students. The results of the study revealed a positive correlation of proactive personality with CDMSE. Moreover, regression analysis indicated that proactive personality had significant impact on student's CDMSE. The results are in support of the hypothesis. The results indicate that students that exhibit proactive personalities and qualities have more self-efficacy when it comes to their career decision making.

The results of this study are similar to the findings of Hsieh and Huang [29] who found out that proactive personality significantly predicted CDMSE of students. The results of this study are also in-line with the work of Preston and Salim [1] who indicated that proactive personalities positively influenced career decision self-efficacy of gifted students. These results are indication that higher levels of proactive personality in students allows them to have higher confidence levels in making their own career decisions. Bateman and Crant [10] concurs as they believe that proactive personality is necessary in building student's self-efficacy specific to making career decisions.

People who exhibit proactive personalities and tendencies often take initiative and perseverance in influencing their desired outcomes [10]. As such having a proactive personality is important for students. Proactive personality has the potential to reduce career indecision and difficulties of students. This statement is supported by Yu et al., [3] as their study showed that proactive personality reduced the career indecision of students. This then suggests the need to foster and nurture the development of proactive tendencies and behaviors of students from a young age so they can the best prepared for the career preparation and decision making process.

5.2. Self-esteem as a predictor of CDMSE

The second hypothesis of the study states that Self-esteem influences CDMSE of students and the results of this study support this hypothesis. There results of this study revealed a significant positive correlation of self-esteem and CDMSE. Moreover, regression analysis results indicated that self-esteem had a significant influence on the CDMSE of students. These results thereby support the hypothesis. The findings of this study are consistent with findings of Park et al., [6] who found out that self-esteem was positively related to CDMSE. Similarly, Javed and Tariq [2] explored career decisions, self-efficacy and self-esteem and they found a negative correlations of self-esteem and self-efficacy with career difficulties.

Donald super's career model [30] suggests that the experiences of people as they progress through development stages shapes and influences their choices and this choice might change as one progresses through various experiences and stages of life. This theory supports the findings of the study as results indicated that self-esteem positively correlated with age, so the older one get the higher the level of their self-esteem. Self-esteem seems to be altered by different experiences and stages of life and can have different influences on a person's CDMSE.

5.3. Mediating effects of proactive personality

The third hypothesis of the study suggested that proactive personality significantly mediates the relationship between self-esteem and CDMSE of students. The mediation analysis results indicate that proactive personality significantly mediated the relationship between self-esteem and CDMSE and as such, the hypothesis was supported. These results are clear indication of the contribution of proactive traits towards learner's CDMSE. Qualities of proactive personality allows students to persevere towards their goals and even change their situation to achieve their desired outcome. This study was able to produce a comprehensive analysis of the mediation effect of proactive personality on the relationship between self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy.

5.4. The relationship of variables under study

The fourth hypothesis hypothesized that there was a positive relation between proactive personality, self-esteem, and CDMSE of university students. This hypothesis was supported as the results indicated that both proactive personality and self-esteem have significant impact on the CDMSE of university students in Botswana. The results of this study confirmed findings from previous studies on proactive personality and self-esteem with regards to how they influence CDMSE. Based on findings of this study we can conclude that students with higher self-esteem and higher levels of proactive behaviors and tendencies will have higher CDMSE. Students with higher proactive personalities and tendencies have more confidence in their ability to make their career decision. The positive relation and correlation between the variables suggests that these variables positively influence and relate with each other.

This study explored the relationship of proactive personality, self-esteem, and CDMSE. The results confirmed a positive relation and influence of proactive personality and self-esteem on CDMSE of students. This study supports the view that career decisions are determined by internal personal factors. From the results of the study we can conclude that self-esteem and proactive personality have a positive significant impact on the CDMSE of university students.

5.5. Implications

Findings indicate that self-esteem and proactive personality have a role to play in the CDMSE of students. Career counsellors, parents and schools should encourage students to persevere in every situation in order to reach their goals. Students can be nurtured to take initiative and seek help or guidance in difficult situations so they can learn the art of overcoming life challenges and hurdles. Such activities foster the development of proactive personalities which students can use for their career decision making self-efficacy in the future.

Students who believe that their career decision making is beyond their control will have a decrease in their CDMSE. Parents, career counsellors and schools should therefore help students to be more optimistic and change their negative perception about their career possibilities.

Botswana has made efforts towards quality education but there is still a lack of practice in areas of career development and guidance but it is important that schools should help students to pick up their major with confidence and self-efficacy. If students have stronger proactive personality traits and qualities they can resist environmental pressures and have a higher career decision making self-efficacy. With a higher level of proactive personality students can actively use it to solve problems and create favorable conditions to them pursuing their ideal major and career path.

5.6. Strengths and limitations

The study was able to prove that proactive personalities and self-esteem and have a significant impact on the CDMSE of students. Furthermore this study was able to prove the mediating role of personality on the relationship between self-esteem and CDMSE. This study was able to bring a different perspective of investigating self-esteem in the presence of another personality.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the validity of the study depends on student's honesty. The researchers made assumptions that students provided honest answers which may not always be the case. Secondly, the study also had fewer male participants and this can affects some analysis of the study. This study has only considered personality factors that affect CDMSE. Lastly, this questionnaire was self-administered online using an online survey platform that could easily be completed using your mobile phone. Unfortunately mobile phones can often have a lot of distractions especially with lengthy questionnaire as such some questionnaires were incomplete and often had redundant responses which led to a large number of respondents not included in the final analysis.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion results of this study indicate that proactive personality and self-esteem increased career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE) of students. This study confirmed that there is a significant positive correlation between proactive personality, self-esteem, and CDMSE of university students, moreover, proactive personality plays a mediating role in the relationship between self-esteem and CDMSE. Further analysis revealed that the self-esteem levels of students increased as students' progressed through the age. Students with higher levels of proactive personality and self-esteem will most likely have higher levels of CDMSE which they can apply towards pursuing their career of interest.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors would like to report no conflict of interest. The researchers did not receive any sponsorship or financing for this study.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study sample. Participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study at any time without any implications.

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