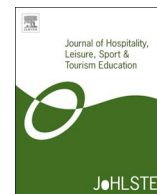


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## The relationship among social support, career self-efficacy, career exploration, and career choices of Taiwanese college athletes

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine relationships between social support, career self-efficacy, and career exploration on career choices of college athletes. 703 college athletes were recruited as participants in the study. They were asked to complete a questionnaire, which included Social Support Scale, Career Self-efficacy Scale, Career Exploration Scale, and Career Choice Scale. Measures translated and validated for use with Chinese students and confirmatory factor analysis and internal consistency results indicated valid and internal reliable scales. The result indicated that social support, career self-efficacy, career exploration, career choice were positively correlated.

### 1. Introduction

The demands of playing, training, and traveling generally compete with sufficient career preparation, rendering many student athletes ill-prepared for career choices (Chan, 2013). Relevant research has widely documented that the career decision-making of college athletes differs significantly from non-athlete college students (Demulier, Le-Scanff, & Stephan, 2013). Cheng, Tsai, and Kuo (2016) argued that numerous college athletes lack sufficient knowledge for their career development and thus face considerable challenges when deciding about their career choices. Nevertheless, numerous college athletes lack a sense of urgency regarding their career development and do not actively learn another specialty in preparation for their future (Demulier et al., 2013). Consequently, it appears few college athletes make plans regarding post-sport lives and future career choices in college.

Career choice played a crucial roles in optimizing the quality of adjustment to retirement from elite sport for college athletes (Chan, 2013). However, research focusing on the psychological factors that facilitate career choice is scarce. To date, research has not yet based itself upon an appropriate theoretical framework which could ultimately provide the backdrop for interventions designed to support college athletes in career choices making process.

### 2. Literature review

Social cognitive career theory is most clearly understood as the interplay among individual agency, cognitive factors, and the contextual factors of structure and culture that enhance or construct a person's social world (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). To date, the Social cognitive career theory has been widely supported by research focusing on the prediction of career choices in the academic domain, and the examination of the career choices making process of college students (Chan, Chen, Lin, Liao, & Lin, 2016; Cunningham, Bruening, Sartore, Sagas, & Fink, 2005). However, despite its contributions, this frame work is yet to be applied in an

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attempt to identify the determinants of college athletes' career choices.

Recently, researchers have shown a renewed interest in studying social-contextual factors that facilitate or impede career development (Lent et al., 2001). Previous studies have supported the assertion that high perceived levels of social support positively associate with beliefs about their ability in a particular vocational area (Chan, 2013). Cox, Sadberry, McGuire, and McBride (2009) found that interacting with parents, coaches, peers and receive support from them can enhance the confidence of college athletes in handling problems pertaining to career development. Vilanova and Puig (2016) found that family support had a substantial influence on athletes' career choices and self-efficacy. In addition, Rogers, Creed, and Glendon (2008) indicated that when adolescents face goal decisions regarding continuing studies or beginning careers after graduation, the support from parents and teachers affect career exploration and choice positively. Barbel (1997) indicate that more child-centered, supportive, and reciprocal parent-adolescent relationships relate to more active career exploration.

In career decision-making, self-efficacy has received the most research attention relative to other domains of career preparation because it is central to successful career outcomes (Choi & Kim, 2013). Career self-efficacy denotes a person's degree of confidence that she or he can successfully engage in tasks associated with making career decisions and committing to a career (Lent et al., 1994). Tsai, Hsu, and Yang (2017) reported that high career self-efficacy is related to various outcomes including career preparation. Blustein (1989) found that college students with higher levels of self-efficacy are more inclined to engage in career exploration. Betz and Vuyten (1997) found a significant positive correlation between career self-efficacy and career exploratory intentions in undergraduate students. In addition, Nachmias and Walmsley (2015) argued that self-efficacy will affect college students' beliefs to make effective career decisions. Chen et al. (2016) found a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and career choices in college students.

Career exploration involves exploring career options by collecting information on education, occupations, and industries for making decisions that are more informed (Zikic & Richareson, 2007). Crites (1978) maintained that for a person to develop a mature career plan, she or he must actively engage in exploring career options and occupational preferences as well as making subsequent career choices. Chan (2013) indicated that college athletes who primarily focus on their athletic role may struggle to engage in degree exploration processes that consider their long-range career plans and may commit to a degree path without adequate exploration of the available opportunities. Regarding career exploration and career choice-making, empirical evidence shows that adolescents with higher levels of career exploration are more inclined to engage in career decision-making and planning (Roger et al., 2008).

As shown in Fig. 1, on the basis of the Social cognitive career theory theoretical structure and the findings of recent studies, the author hypothesized all variables positively correlated. Social support is positively related to career self-efficacy (Hypothesis 1), career exploration (Hypothesis 2) and career choices (Hypothesis 3); career self-efficacy is positively related to career exploration (Hypothesis 4), and career choices (Hypothesis 5); career exploration is positively related to career choices (Hypothesis 6).

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants and procedures

In this study, we conducted a questionnaire survey of 703 Taiwanese college athletes. Before conducting the questionnaire survey, informed consent forms describing the research purposes were distributed to the participants, who signed and returned them prior to participating in the study voluntarily. In the formal study, a total of 800 questionnaires were distributed; 703 valid questionnaires were returned. Among the valid questionnaires, respondents were mostly men ( $n = 383$ ; 54.4%) and 320 questionnaires were collected from women (45.6%) and had a mean age of 20.20 years ( $SD = 1.78$ ).

#### 3.2. Measures

The instruments were all translated from English to Chinese. Back-translation was also undertaken to ensure that the translation did not alter the meanings of the original measures. In addition, we conducted a pilot study before the formal survey to confirm the instrument's validity and reliability.

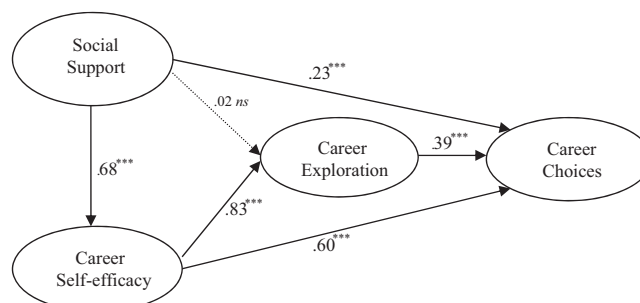


Fig. 1. Standardized path coefficients for the hypothesized model. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

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