



Future time perspective and career decisions: The moderating effects of affect spin[☆]



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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of future time perspective on two career decision-making variables and the role of affect spin as a moderator. 98 Korean undergraduate students completed questionnaires of future time perspective, career decision-making self-efficacy, and career choice anxiety. Using experience sampling method (ESM), we also collected students' affective experiences during 7 consecutive days and computed affect variability, namely affect spin. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that career decision-making self-efficacy and career choice anxiety were positively predicted by future time perspective and that affect spin moderated the relationship between future time perspective and both career decision-making self-efficacy scale and career choice anxiety respectively. We discussed the implications of the moderating role of affect spin, advantages of the ESM method, and practical suggestions for career counseling and supervision.

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1. Introduction

Career decisions appear to carry a heavy burden, as they are believed to exert a significant impact on one's life. People generally spend more time at work relative to their engagement in any other activity, and as a result, their lifestyles, financial and social status, mental health, and well-being are, to a great extent, determined by which jobs or careers they choose (Hackett & Betz, 1995; Saunders & Fogarty, 2001). Despite the growing number of career transitions individuals make during their lifetime (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996), changing one's job or occupation in the midst of a career path involves considerable risk taking and psychological burden. Therefore, college students' initial career decisions, or more specifically, their first job choices following graduation, are perceived to be very important in building their long-term careers successfully. This could be one of the reasons that many college students report difficulties in making career decisions (i.e., career indecision) and actively seek help from university counseling centers (Daniels, Stewart, Stupnisky, Perry, & LoVerso, 2011; Morgan & Ness, 2003).

Two variables that are closely related to career decision making are career decision-making self-efficacy and career choice anxiety. Individuals differ with respect to the levels of confidence and anxiety they experience with regard to making career decisions (Crites, 1969; Germeijs, Verschueren, & Soenens, 2006; Goodstein, 1972; Walker & Tracey, 2012). What makes some people confident and others anxious? An interesting factor that has recently garnered attention from researchers is future time perspective (FTP). Individuals high in FTP tend to place more value on goals in the distant future and exert greater effort in current activities that are

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perceived to be instrumental in achieving their goals (Thoms & Blasko, 2004). In a recent study conducted by Walker and Tracey (2012), FTP reported by university students was positively related to career decision-making self-efficacy and negatively related to choice anxiety.

Given that FTP represents one's *cognitive* construal of future goals and present tasks, it could be interesting to examine the ways in which our *emotional* experiences influence the relationship between FTP and career decision-making variables. We know that students who focus on their future goals and work hard on their current tasks are more likely to make career decisions with greater confidence and less anxiety. However, their future-oriented efforts could be affected by their emotional experiences over time. Some people experience more dynamic and fluctuant affective states across time relative to those whose experiences are rather monotonous and qualitatively similar. Affect spin is known to be one of the most representative and comprehensive measures used to capture individual differences in emotion variability over time (Eid & Diener, 1999; Kuppens, Mechelen, Nezlek, Dossche, & Timmermans, 2007). As a stable affective characteristic, affect spin is expected to impact career-related decision making in individuals with high or low FTP.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Affect spin

Based on the affect circumplex model (Gerber et al., 2008; Russell, 1980; Watson & Tellegen, 1985), one's affective experiences can be assessed via two core affect dimensions: valence and arousal. Valence indicates how pleasant or unpleasant a particular emotional experience is, while arousal describes how activated or deactivated it is. We can draw a two-dimensional space defined by these two dimensions, in which the horizontal axis represents valence (between -4 and 4), and the vertical axis represents arousal (between -4 and 4). A score of zero indicates a neutral state in each dimension, and absolute scores reflect the intensity of the dimension. Within this space, each episode in our emotional experiences can be located according to valence and arousal levels.

People differ in many aspects of their emotional experiences. The average or baseline level of each individual's emotional experiences varies (Lykken, 1999). That is, relative to others, some people tend to experience more positive or activating emotions. Alternatively, the variability of one's emotional experiences could be used as an emotion-related individual difference variable. For example, if Person A feels both positive and negative emotions in a fluctuant fashion across time, and Person B feels negative emotions on a more consistent basis, we can say that Person A shows higher variability in emotional valence. Prior research using the within-person standard deviations of single-dimension affective measures as variability indices demonstrated that individual differences in affect variability were stable (Eaton & Funder, 2001; Eid & Diener, 1999; Kuppens et al., 2007).

On the other hand, this earlier measure of affect variability only reflects affective change along a single dimension involving either valence or arousal. Kuppens et al. (2007) adopted the framework employed by Moskowitz and Zuroff (2005) to measure variability in interpersonal behavior and developed a new measure of affect variability, affect spin, which captures trajectory in a space defined by two core affect dimensions. Specifically, affect spin is measured by employing the experience sampling method (ESM), in which participants repeatedly report their feelings for a certain period of time (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987), and calculating "the standard deviation across time of the angles of the vectors described by the individual's core affect space positions" (Kuppens et al., 2007). This can be defined as intraindividual variability in the quality of core affect, regardless of the intensity of the individual's feelings. As illustrated in Fig. 1, individuals with high affect spin report feelings that are qualitatively different and widely spread around the affect circumplex, while individuals with low affect spin experience feelings that are relatively more similar and remain within a particular region.

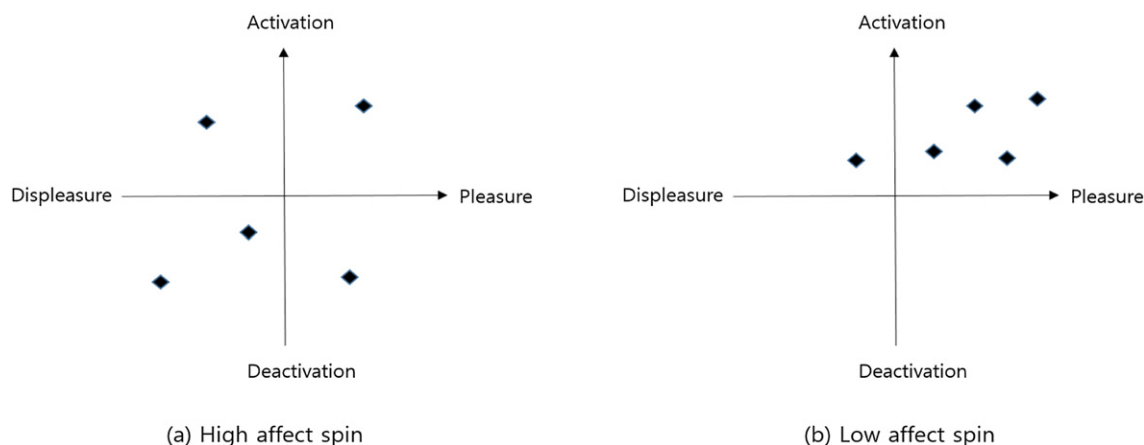


Fig. 1. Examples of high affect spin vs. low affect spin.

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