



Perceived career congruence between adolescents and their parents as a moderator between goal orientation and career aspirations [☆]



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ABSTRACT

We surveyed 601 Indonesian high school students (57.6% girls, mean age = 16.4 years) and investigated whether perceived career congruence between adolescents and their parents served as moderator between goal orientation (i.e., mastery-approach, performance-approach, and performance-avoid) and career aspirations. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that perceived congruence moderated the effects of mastery-approach and performance-approach, but not performance-avoid, on career aspirations. Mastery-approach orientation was more strongly related to career aspirations when perceived congruence was higher; whereas, performance-avoid orientation was more weakly related when perceived congruence was higher. These findings highlight important roles for approach orientations and perceived career congruence between adolescents and their parents in career aspirations of adolescents in collectivist contexts.

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1. Introduction

Career aspirations are an individual's expressed choices or goals in the vocational domain (Rojewski, 2005). Setting career goals is important to the development of vocational identity (Erikson, 1968), and is a crucial part of career preparation, as these goals are the forerunners to adult career choices and life successes (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). Having a clearer understanding of how adolescents strive to meet these goals will contribute to the adolescent career development literature, and assist those who help adolescents manage their goal striving strategies. We examined goal orientation as an important antecedent to adolescent career aspirations, and assessed whether perceived congruence with parents regarding career matters moderated this relationship. We tested our hypotheses using a sample of Indonesian high school students. Indonesia is ranked highly on aspects of collectivism, and perceived congruence with parents is especially salient for young people from this country, as they rely heavily on parents and respect obedience (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

1.1. Goal orientation and career aspirations

An important dimension of career aspirations, which we focus on in this study, is "the level to which individuals aspire within a given occupation" (O'Brien, 1996, p. 264). This reflects aspirations to being promoted when in work, taking on leadership roles, and continuing with education to further one's career. Goal orientation is an important standpoint from which to understand these aspirations, as it reflects how individuals approach achievement situations (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot, 2005; Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Two main types of goal orientation have been identified: mastery-approach and performance-approach (Elliot, 2005). First, mastery-approach individuals focus on developing and improving their skills, they persist with tasks, and gain enjoyment from the challenge. As they hold an incremental theory of ability (i.e., ability can be developed), they focus on developing their competencies. Thus, a mastery-approach orientation encourages individuals to set and work towards goals that are personally valued and challenging.

Second, performance-approach is considered to be of two types: performance-approach and performance-avoid. Performance-approach individuals hold an entity theory of ability (i.e., ability is difficult to develop), and thus strive to demonstrate their capacity to attain favourable judgments. A performance-approach orientation will lead individuals to set higher goals, especially where success is likely, as this can elicit positive feedback from others.

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Finally, performance-avoid individuals, who also hold a fixed view of ability, try to avoid being seen as incompetent by setting lower goals, which reduces the risk of negative outcomes and feedback. Some authors consider there are two components to mastery-approach (i.e., mastery-approach and mastery-avoid; Elliot & McGregor, 2001). However, while there is meta-analytic support for a 3-component model (Payne, Youngcourt, & Beaubien, 2007), which we used, there is less support for examining four orientations (Cellar et al., 2011).

In the career area, studies in both individualist (i.e., Western) and collectivist contexts (e.g., Indonesia, the Philippines) show that mastery-approach is associated positively with career-related variables such as exploration, self-efficacy, decision-making, job-seeking intensity, commitment, and aspirations (Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009; Creed, King, Hood, & McKenzie, 2009; Garcia, Restubog, Toledano, Tolentino, & Rafferty, 2012), and studies in individualist contexts reveal positive or null associations between performance-approach and career outcomes of exploration, aspirations, and self-efficacy (e.g., Creed, Fallon, & Hood, 2009). In collectivist countries, both mastery-approach and performance-approach predict positive outcomes in the academic domain, such as better grades and performance on exams (Ho & Hau, 2008; Lee, Tinsley, & Bobko, 2003). Mastery-approach and performance-approach are adaptive in collectivist cultures due to the close relationship between achievement and social comparison, and the fact that achievement motivation in these cultures is socially rather than individually oriented (Bernardo, 2008). In addition to understanding what they learn, collectivists are taught to create a social reality that makes their performance outcomes noticeable to their collective (Urduan, 2004). While individualists endorse performance-approach goals for the sake of personal pride, collectivists adopt these goals to bring honour to their in-group (e.g., making one's parents proud and satisfied; Urduan). However, the correlates of performance-approach in a collectivist situation have not been documented in the career domain, and the conditions under which mastery-approach and performance-approach orientations will be more useful for collectivist adolescents to progress in a career also warrants further investigation.

In individualist contexts, performance-avoid orientation has a null relationship with several outcomes such as job-seeking intensity and self-regulation strategies (Creed, Fallon, et al., 2009; Creed, King, et al., 2009), and has negative associations with self-efficacy and aspirations (e.g., Creed, Tilbury, Buys, & Crawford, 2011). In contrast, performance-avoid in collectivist contexts has not been explored in the career domain. In other areas, the absence of negative outcomes for performance-avoid in collectivists was attributed to the fact that avoidant goals matched with the collectivist emphasis of fitting-in with others (i.e., avoiding negative outcomes such as failure, family shame, and losing face, which might lead to group disharmony; Heine & Butchcel, 2009). Sideridis (2008), for example, found that, out of duty to their parents or teachers, collectivist adolescents were likely to feel obligated to do well or not to fail, with the former related to more adaptive outcomes than the latter. Therefore, the correlates of performance-avoid by collectivists in the career domain need further investigation.

1.2. Person and contextual factors from a social cognitive career theory perspective

Schoon and Parsons (2002) contended that both individual factors and the constraints of the environment need to be considered to understand the development of career aspirations, and previous studies have demonstrated that person and context do have an influence on adolescent career development (e.g., Garcia et al., 2012; Sawitri, Creed, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2014). The interaction

between these two domains can be viewed from a social cognitive career theory (SCCT) perspective (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). SCCT seeks to explain the developmental processes of interests, choice, and performance outcomes in the career and education domains. The theory highlights several specific person mechanisms that operate as co-determinants of behaviour, which are particularly relevant to career development. It also identifies contextual influences, such as cultural variables, in the implementation of career action behaviours. Contextual variables shape the learning experiences that promote personal interests and choices, and reflect the real and perceived opportunity structure within which plans are developed and implemented. This means that contextual supports and barriers are expected to moderate the relationship between person factors and outcomes. For example, the relationship between goal orientation and career aspirations is expected to be stronger in the presence of favourable versus restrictive environmental conditions (Lent, 2005).

For collectivists, parent-related contextual variables are critical factors that restrict or empower the individual (Sawitri et al., 2014). Additionally, culturally shared meanings and values guide how individuals approach achievement situations when meeting culturally valued outcomes (Erez, 2008). Collectivist cultures more highly respect conformity and reliance on authority figures such as parents, and meeting these values are related to subjective well-being (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). However, few studies have examined the role of parents in the relationship between individual factors (e.g., goal orientation) and career outcomes (e.g., aspirations) based on the SCCT framework. One exception is Garcia et al. (2012), who found that the relationship between mastery-approach and self-efficacy in Filipino students differed depending on whether adolescent or parent ratings of support were considered, suggesting that adolescents and parents have different perceptions of parental support and these differences have implications for career decision-making.

We expected a moderating role for parental influences, because goal orientation is a person factor and perceived congruence with parents is an important contextual factor that affects how individuals in a collectivist setting set their goals. We operationalized parental influences as perceived congruence with parents on career matters (which, for simplicity, we will refer to as perceived congruence with parents or just perceived congruence), which reflects adolescents' perceptions that they and their parents have similar and corresponding career interests, aspirations, and plans for the adolescent (Sawitri, Creed, & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2013). As mastery-approach and performance-approach are encouraged in collectivist contexts (Urduan, 2004), we expected that an approach orientation would be more strongly related to career aspirations in adolescents who already have a well-developed perception of congruence, and it is possible that the relationship between the avoidance orientation and career aspirations would not depend on adolescents' perceived congruence, or be weakened by it as agreement with parents would allow avoidant students to reduce personal risk by aiming lower. Mastery-approach and performance-approach oriented adolescents who have higher levels of perceived congruence might set higher career aspirations as these orientations are more responsive when support and interest is forthcoming, which is less the case for avoidant-oriented individuals (Régner, Loose, & Dumas, 2009). Approach-oriented adolescents who perceive that they have a high degree of congruence can draw on these personal resources to develop and progress higher career aspirations; whereas, avoidance-oriented adolescents do not utilize these resources, but fit in passively with parents, as this leads them to reduce the risk of negative outcomes by retaining their lower aspirations (Elliot, 2005). Thus, we tested perceived congruence as a moderator between goal orientation and career aspirations.

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