

Career development social cognitive perspective

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- Individuals develop their sense of self-efficacy from personal performance, learning by example, social interactions
- Interests are developed through activities in which individuals view themselves as competent.
- Stronger self-efficacy beliefs and more favorable outcome expectations promote more ambitious goals that help people mobilize and sustain performance or behavior.

When each individual embarks on their career journey, the outcome is hard to determine because one will experience encounters that they will not have anticipated. In a country like Zimbabwe where the social, economic and political atmosphere is full of uncertainties many have opted to land jobs that can just put food on the table. This particular approach to the aspect of work has left many employees disengaged. This aspect of work has to be looked at with a wider perspective. Given the long stretch of instability, one has to be strategic in their career. Career development is defined as the process that identifies a person's work, the process which begins when someone becomes aware of how people make a living. Hence career development isn't achievable overnight, but rather it is a work in progress that needs constant reviewing throughout professional life.

Career development is marked with success markers such as getting a promotion, securing a pay rise or excelling at a performance review. Most importantly it also includes putting strategies in place that help you manage the more testing or demanding moments in one's career. Being particularly invested in career development helps in reflecting your professional aspirations and ambitions, and guides you through your career. Hence it is undoubtedly important to adopt the thoughts of Lent, Brown, and Hackett of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). It is part of a revolution in psychology that believes people are an active agent in shaping their career development. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposes that career choice is influenced by the beliefs that the individual develops and refines through four major sources. These major sources include personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, physiological states, and reactions. This theory is grounded in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and explores how career and academic interests mature, how choices for careers are developed, and how these choices are turned into action. This is achieved through a focus on three primary tenets (Lent et al., 1994) the Person, Behaviour, and Situation interaction.

Taking into consideration the highly volatile environment that we are in Zimbabwe, the situation interaction is mainly ending up influencing the person and the behavior. The situation interaction mainly focuses on the Socio-economic aspects that a person is being exposed to. If the situation interaction is poor the 'Person' becomes demotivated, uninspired and their self-efficacy greatly diminishes. Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs people have about their ability to successfully complete the steps required for a given task. Individuals develop their sense of self-efficacy from personal performance, learning by

example, social interactions. It is surprising how many of us have strong beliefs about careers "we know we cannot do,". Where do these thoughts come from? They come from specific behaviors formed through past experiences, either direct or vicarious, and the perceived results of these experiences. (e.g. what will happen if I do this?).

It is thus very hard for an individual to be able to develop their career in volatile environment. One has to focus on the outcomes of each factor that they have control over. Human beings tend to lean towards outcomes that are strong and positive. Strong and positive outcomes should be expected from each career development activity. The pathways to career choice or development in SCCT are as follows:

1. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations
2. Interest in turn influence goal,
3. Goal related actions lead to performance experiences,
4. The outcome determines future paths,
5. A career decision is established

Interests are developed through activities in which individuals view themselves as competent. Individuals with negative expectations fail to develop the right interest. Interest questionnaires can be used to reflect individual's liking or preferences for engaging in specific occupations. Choices are also influenced by one's value systems that positively reinforce themselves when involved with a particular activity, for example money, status or autonomy. Values arise from people's needs.

The individual's socially constructed world is the focus of gender and race in this theory. It focuses on social, cultural and economic conditions that shaped learning opportunities to which individuals were exposed and interpersonal reactions experienced for performing certain activities. Gender and ethnicity on career interests, choice and performance are associated with different learning experiences. Individuals who experience supportive environments take their goals into action.

Stronger self-efficacy beliefs and more favorable outcome expectations promote more ambitious goals that help people mobilize and sustain performance or behavior. Performance goals refer to the level of attainment towards which one aspires within a given performance domain. Qualitative research on self-efficacy has had some consistent, general findings which include being predictive, having a causal relationship with other variables and that gender differences are very influential. A focus on the person helps to tap into the self-efficacy of each individual. Acknowledging the psychosocial goal of generativity and its virtue, care, through the use of Social Cognitive Career Theory can allow each individual to clearly plan their career development regardless of the situation they are in and are more successful in applying themselves at work

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