CAREER GOAL SETTING AND PURSUIT IN YOUNG ADULTS: WHAT IS THE INFLUENCE OF SES?

Creed P. A.¹, Sawitri D. R.², Hood M.¹, Hu S.³

¹School of Applied Psychology, Griffith University, Australia
²Faculty of Psychology, Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia
³School of Education Science, Nanjing Normal University, China

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Background and Aims: Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the most influential contextual variables for young people; yet we know little about how SES affects the career development and identity of young people. Informed by goal-setting/self-regulatory theories, we tested the mediating role of career-related effort (i.e., goal striving) in the relationships between career-related indecision (i.e., lack of goal clarity) and career-related stress (i.e., affect) and perceived employability (i.e., career-related attitude), and examined the effect of subjective SES as a moderator in these direct and indirect relationships.

Method: The study was survey-based, cross-sectional, and used latent variable analyses. The sample contained 202 young adults (mean age 19.8 years, 81.7% female).

Results: We found indecision to be related to effort, stress, and perceived employability, and effort mediated between indecision and stress, and indecision and perceived employability. Explained variance ($R^2$) was .31 (career-related effort), .72 (career-related stress), and .39 (perceived employability). The standardised indirect effects of indecision on stress was .09, and on perceived employability, was -.24. Additionally, SES influenced these relationships. Lower SES young adults exerted less effort and had lower perceived employability, compared to those with higher SES; whereas higher SES young people experienced more stress with career indecision.

Conclusions: The study contributed by testing a mechanism for how career indecision relates to other career variables, and by showing how subjective SES affects this underlying mechanism.