Distinct Paths to Protean Career Attitude: Family and Peer Support as Mediated by Grit Among Emerging Filipino Adults

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Abstract

Although career development is almost identical to personal development, emerging adults have been more active in finding the best career for themselves in recent years (Benardo & Salanga, 2019). Social cognitive career theory (SSCT) offers concepts such as social factors and personal factors that can explain the dynamics of career attitudes. Following the arguments of the theory, 415 respondents answered a scale on social support, a measure of grit, and a scale of protean career attitude to test the assumption of the hypothesis derived from SSCT. Although personal factors such as grit and social support correlated with protean career attitude, the results showed a different path of career attitudes depending on its source. Although grit fully mediated family support and protean career attitudes, peer support directly predicted protean career attitudes without any mediation from grit. This suggests that there are different kinds of support emerging adults need when it comes to their family and that of their peers. The outcome of this study can serve as a basis for career development programs that both workers and employers can benefit from.

Keywords: Social support, grit, protean career attitudes, emerging adults, career development

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Following the completion of their academic degree, the demand on building one's career has been enduring and has pressured emerging adults internally and externally. Furthermore, emerging adulthood is a time of opportunity and possibilities (Wood et al., 2017), while it is also a time of distress associated with establishing one's career (Matud et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2017). This is reflected in the increased incidence of job hopping reported among emerging adults (Daud, 2016) implying uncertainty in career development. Internally, career development is an outcome of one's persistence to achieve goals despite hurdles. Likewise, external pressures from society also thrust the need for development in one's career. Therefore, studies analyzing the dynamics of career development are worthwhile and necessary to create programs or guidance in career development.

Social Cognitive Career Theory attempts to explain the connections among social support, cognitive factors, and career development by attributing relationships and subjective interpretations as a precursor to one's career. Following this theory, social support from both the family and peers determines how one would improve the conditions of their career, vocation, or occupation. Similarly, success from career endeavors was perceived in seminal research (Stoffel & Cain, 2018) as an outcome of grit, the capacity to persist in exerting effort in the face of challenges, setbacks, and stagnant development, fueled by a strong and enduring passion (Duckworth et al., 2007). However, how would social factors move towards persistence of goals, then later, towards a more specific scheme for building one's career? This study tested a path model of protean career attitude from social support as mediated by their levels of grit.

Protean Career Attitude

PCA is defined as an aspiration for individual development and fulfillment (Volmer & Spurk, 2010). Hence, it enhances underlying professional achievement and job efficiency, as well as improves interest in work (Deci & Ryan, 2008, as cited in Sultana & Malik, 2019). Furthermore, PCA refers to individuals accepting responsibility for their career advancement and adapting to the changing dynamics of the job industry. This

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construct has been renowned for its comprehensive viewpoint, forward-thinking characteristics, and acknowledgment of a career as both a source of passion and personal fulfillment (Hall, 2002, as cited in Volmer & Spurk, 2010).

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Testing models of protean career attitude expands substantiation of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). This theory expounds that there are influences such as personal predispositions and social factors that determine how a person shapes one's career (Lent et al., 1994, as cited in Thompson & Dahling, 2012). As SCCT is built upon the tenets of social cognitive theory (Wang et al., 2022), people's self-efficacy, a key concept in Bandura's (1977) theory, expresses as self-directed attitude toward one's career. Moreover, values, such as persistence in one's goal, are one of the cognitive facilities of individuals. As such, we extracted the hypothesis that social support influences an individual's career management such as protean career attitudes.

Social Support Predicts Protean Career Attitude

Aside from the theoretical bases, the hypothesis that protean career attitude develops from social support has already been supported through various literature and models (Lent et al.,

1994, as cited in Thompson & Dahling, 2012). Advocating social support among adolescents can lead to enhancing their general well-being and success in their careers (Cobo-Rendón et al., 2020). Support from colleagues aids employees in adapting to and overcoming job-related difficulties and limitations (Campos & Distor, 2022). However, literature has been limited in comparing the influence of support coming from family and support coming from peers in career development. Family and peer support should have a different impact in one's career choices is an argument that Erikson's psychosocial development theory supports.

Grit Predicts Protean Career Attitudes

External influences from family and peers are not the only factor that leads to career development. Personal factors, such as one's persistence in one's goal have its impact in job enrichment, enlargement, and design. Individuals actively managing their career paths through self-directed career management deviate from conventional trajectories and organizational norms (Sirén et al., 2018). Grit serves a versatile role in domains like career adaptability, self-regulated learning, and academic success. Notably, individuals with high levels of grit were more inclined to exhibit enhanced career adaptability (Li et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021). Workers may enhance their

careers because it is their own personal responsibility to develop the progression of their jobs. People with high levels of grit and resilience are more likely to fulfill their job responsibilities, resulting in a feeling of personal career success and satisfaction (Koekemoer et al., 2023). Enhanced productivity, well-being cultivation, and active workplace participation have also been ascribed to grit (Niemiec, 2017; Ting & Datu, 2020). In addition, the concept of grit encompasses the individual's steadfast dedication to pursue goals that are related to obtaining the highest levels of performance (Datu, 2021).

Present Study

We built the hypothesis of the present study on a theoretical foundation and a review of the relevant research literature to understand and suggest how workers could develop their career. Although grit may be an impetus to achieve career progression, within a collectivist culture, grit may play a middle role between social support and protean career attitude. Grit develops as an outcome of support from the relationships a worker has. In its very nature, collectivist cultures consider a task successful if they attribute those successes to their relationships such as family, peers, and their community. Notably, grit can positively impact an individual's life purpose, career motivation, and adaptability throughout their career path (Li

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et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021). As such, we hypothesized that social support, both from family and peers, serves as a predictor of protean career attitudes values driven and self-directed career management while being mediated by grit.

Methods

Participants

Participants comprised 415 Psychology graduates, who were preparing to take their licensure examinations as Psychometrician, of which 360 (86.7%) were female, participated in the study. The group's mean age was 23.22 (SD = 2.27) years old, consisting mostly of fresh graduates from Batch 2023 (82.2%), Batch 2022 (10.4%), and Batch 2021 (7.5%). Most of them were single and first-time takers, accounting for 410 (98.8%) and 409 (98.6%) respondents, respectively. More than half of the sample, 217 respondents (52.3%), were full-time reviewees, while the remaining 198 (47.7%) were part-time reviewees, denoting that they had either a part-time or full-time job alongside. In addition, it is worth noting that the respondents came from all 17 regions of the Philippines.

Instruments

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)

MSPSS is a 12-item self-report questionnaire developed by Gregory D. Zimet, Nancy W. Dahlem, Sara G. Zimet, and Gordon K. Farley in 1988 (Zimet et al., 1988). It purports to measure PSS from family, peers, and significant other, with each source of social support consisting of four items (e.g., "My family really tries to help me," "I have peers with whom I can share my joys and sorrows," and "I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me"). These three subscales are treated as separate scales, so the PSS of the respondents were represented by their total score for each subscale. Since most of the respondents were single, we also omitted the significant other subscale. The instrument utilized a seven-point Likert-type scale, wherein the options range from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). In the present study, the family and peer subscales exhibited an internal consistency of $\alpha = .919$ and $\alpha = .927$, respectively. These values indicated that the items accurately measured PSS from peers and family.

Grit Scale

The Grit Scale is a 12-item self-report questionnaire developed by Angela L. Duckworth, Christopher Peterson, Michael D. Matthews, and Dennis R. Kelly in 2007 (Duckworth et al., 2007). It has two dimensions (i.e., consistency of interest and perseverance of effort) that intend to measure the grit of adolescents and adults across life in general. These dimensions are not treated as separate subgroups, making it suitable for measuring grit as a general construct, which the current study proposed. As the instrument adopted a five-point Likert-type scale, the respondents rated how well each item (e.g., "I have achieved a goal that took years of work" and "My interests change from year to year") applied to themselves from 1 (not like me at all) to 5 (very much like me). The total score of the respondents in the two dimensions, with the items about consistency of interest being reverse scored, represented their level of grit. In the present study, the scale yielded an internal consistency of $\alpha = .809$, denoting that the items highly measure the construct they claim to measure.

Protean Career Attitude (PCA) Scale

The PCA Scale is a 14-item self-report questionnaire developed by Jon P. Briscoe, Douglas T. Hall, and Rachel L. Frautschy DeMuth in 2006 (Briscoe et al., 2006). It measures PCA in terms of two dimensions: self-directed career management and value-driven decision-making. Items 1-8 encompass the former dimension (e.g., "When

development opportunities have not been offered by my company, I've sought them out on my own"), while items 9-14 encompass the latter one (e.g., "It doesn't matter much to me how other people evaluate the choices I make in my career"). These items were slightly modified in the study by assuming a future verb tense to make them suitable for the respondents, who are yet to develop and navigate their career paths. The instrument also adhered to a five-point Likert-type scale, which required the respondents to rate each item from 1 (to little or no extent) to 5 (to a great extent). Since the current study adopted the two dimensions of the scale to assess PCA, the respondents had two separate scores catering to these dimensions. In the present study, the scale yielded internal consistency coefficients of α = .844 for self-directed career management and α = .813 for values-driven decision-making. These values proved that the items highly measure the dimensions of PCA.

Procedure

Initially, we sought the approval from an institution's ethics review committee to conduct the study. Upon approval, a pilot test was done to assess the quality of the instruments and prepare for the actual data-gathering process. We then proceeded to recruit respondents by distributing the informed consent form and the research instruments through a Google Forms link and a generated QR code. After gathering sufficient respondents, we collated and transferred their data to a password-protected folder before employing appropriate statistical techniques for analysis and interpretation.

Results

Table 1 shows the correlation among grit, support from peers and family, and the two components of protean career attitudes: self-directed career management and values-driven decision-making. Although grit was positively associated with support from family, r (413) = 0.186, $p < .001$, it was not observed to be correlated with support from peers, r (413) = 0.084, $p = .08$. Both protean career attitudes correlated with grit; self-directed career management, r (413) = 0.226, $p < .001$, and values-driven decision-making, r (413) = 0.210, $p < .001$.

As also illustrated in Table 1, support from family was associated with self-directed career management, r (413) = 0.137, $p < .01$, but not with values-driven decision-making, r (413) = 0.047, $p = 0.341$. On the other hand, both protean career attitudes; self-directed career management, r (413) = 0.235, $p < .001$, and values-driven decision-making, r (413) = 0.150, $p < .01$, were associated with support from peers.

Table 2 shows significant models of self-directed career management explained 11% of the variance in self-directed career management scores, F (6 ,408) = 9.56, $Adj\ R^2$ = .11, $p < .001$. Likewise, the variance from

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Social Support (PSS), Grit, and Protean Career Attitude (PCA) of BLEP Reviewees

	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha, α	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perceived Social Support	Family	0.919	4.85a	1.48
	Friends	0.927	5.51a	1.25
Grit		0.809	3.46b	0.58
Protean Career Attitude	Self-directed Career Management	0.844	4.16b	0.54
	Values-driven Decision-making	0.813	3.92b	0.66

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Perceived Social Support (PSS), Grit, and Protean Career Attitude (PCA) of BLEP Reviewees

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
PSS from the family	-				
PSS from friends	0.339***	-			
Grit	0.186***	0.084	-		
Self-directed Career Management	0.137**	0.235***	0.266***	-	
Values-driven Decision-making	0.047	0.150**	0.210**	0.534***	-

Note: **p < .01 ***p < .001

values-driven decision-making model, $F(6, 408) = 4.96$, *Adj R²* = .05, $p < .001$, can be explained from demographic variables, social support, and grit only at 5%. It shows that grit predicted both self-directed career management, $B = 0.15$, SE = .03, $p<.001$, and values-driven decision-making, $B = 0.12$, SE = 0.03, $p<.001$. High score of grit was correlated with an increase in protean career attitudes. As shown in table 2, support from peers indicated an increase in both factors of protean career attitudes: self-directed career management, $B = 0.18$, SE = 0.04, $p<.001$, and values-driven decision-making, $B = 0.12$, SE = 0.04, $p < .01$. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that career management is shaped by an individual's grit and social support.

We found the hypothesized model of protean career attitude and the gathered data from the licensure examination reviewees were of excellent-fit: $\chi^2 (3) = 1.76$, p = 0.623, GFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.018, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.000 (p = .873), SRMR = 0.010. The model, as shown in Figure 1 and Table 3, exhibits that support from family significantly predicts grit among reviewees, $B = 0.19$, SE = 0.06, CI = 95% [0.1067, 0.3280], $p < .001$. On the other hand, support from peers increases both dimensions of protean career attitude: self-directed, $B = 0.22$, SE = 0.04, CI = 95% [0.1062, 0.2630], $p < .001$, and values-driven career management, $B = 0.13$, SE = 0.04, CI = 95% [0.0314, 0.1800], $p < .01$. Correspondingly, grit also predicted an increase in both self-directed, $B = 0.25$, SE = 0.03, CI = 95% [0.0973, 0.2100], $p < .001$, and values-driven career management, $B = 0.25$, SE = 0.03, CI = 95% [0.0601, 0.1670], $p < .001$.

Interestingly, as seen in Figure 1, the two sources of social support have varying effects on the protean career attitudes. Although support from peers directly predicted both self-directed and value-driven career management, support from the family required grit to increase the respondent's protean career attitude. Grit fully mediated support from the family and self-directed career management, B = 0.03, SE = 0.01, CI = 95% [0.0120, 0.0540], p < .01. Likewise, grit fully mediated family support and value-driven career management, B = 0.03, SE = 0.01, CI95% [0.0080, 0.0420], p<.01.

Discussion

The analyzed path from social support, grit, and protean career attitude exemplifies two general paths of career development: one from family support and another from peer support. Both paths enrich the understanding of career establishment among emerging adults and, likewise, support SCCT.

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Table 3

Multiple Linear Regression of Self-directed Career Management and Values-driven Decision-making of BLEP Reviewees

	Self-directed Career Management		Values-driven Decision-making	
	B	**SE**	**B**	**SE**
Sex[a]	-0.10	0.59	-0.49	0.56
Age	-0.03	0.09	-0.01	0.09
Review Status[b]	0.69	0.40	0.44	0.38
PSS from the Family	0.01	0.04	-0.03	0.03
PSS from Friends	0.18***	0.04	0.12**	0.04
Grit	0.15***	0.03	0.12***	0.03
Model Summary	$F_{(6,408)} = 9.56^{***}$, *Adj* R^2 = .11		$F_{(6,408)}=4.96^{***}$, *Adj* R^2 = .05	

Note: [a] (0 = male, 1 = female)
[b] (0 = part-time review, 1 = full-time review)
**p < .01 ***p < .001

Indirect Effect of Family Support on Protean Career Attitude

Family support had a subtle impact on career development. Although there was no direct path between support from the family and career attitudes among emerging adults, it was suggested by McMahon and Watson (2022) that career development starts as early as 14 years old. This impact does not translate directly to protean career attitudes in emerging adulthood. Alternatively, it may have been translated into a trait that could bolster career development.

Turan et al. (2014) found that social support has a direct relationship with career exploration. This implies that the more high school students receive substantial support from their families, friends, and significant others, the more they scout for career opportunities. Among these three sources of social support, however, social support from friends has the greatest influence on career exploration. Accordingly, Chan (2017) argued that social support from the family affects career development. This reflects on the proclivity of emerging adults to consult with their parents when it comes to making career-related decisions and to anchor their career beliefs on the experiences of their parents and other social networks. Notably, these two studies yielded contrasting results with the present study, which could be explained by the unique feature of Protean Career Attitude that entails self-directed career management and

values-driven decision-making as opposed to relying on others about career-related matters (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Despite no clear impact on career attitudes, family support triggered the need to persist in one's overall goal. In past research, goals of emerging adults could vary from securing employment and having good health to building their own families (Hill et al., 2011; Salmela-Aro et al., 2007). An alternative view would be that the foundation of an emerging adult's persistence in their goal leading to their career development would be their family. This finding fully supported the collectivistic orientation that the Filipino respondents embrace (Garcia et al., 2012, as cited in Bernardo & Salanga, 2019; Salazar-Clemeña,

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Figure 1

A Path Analysis of Perceived Social Support (PSS), Grit, and Two Dimensions of PCA: Self-directed Career Management and Values-driven Decision-making
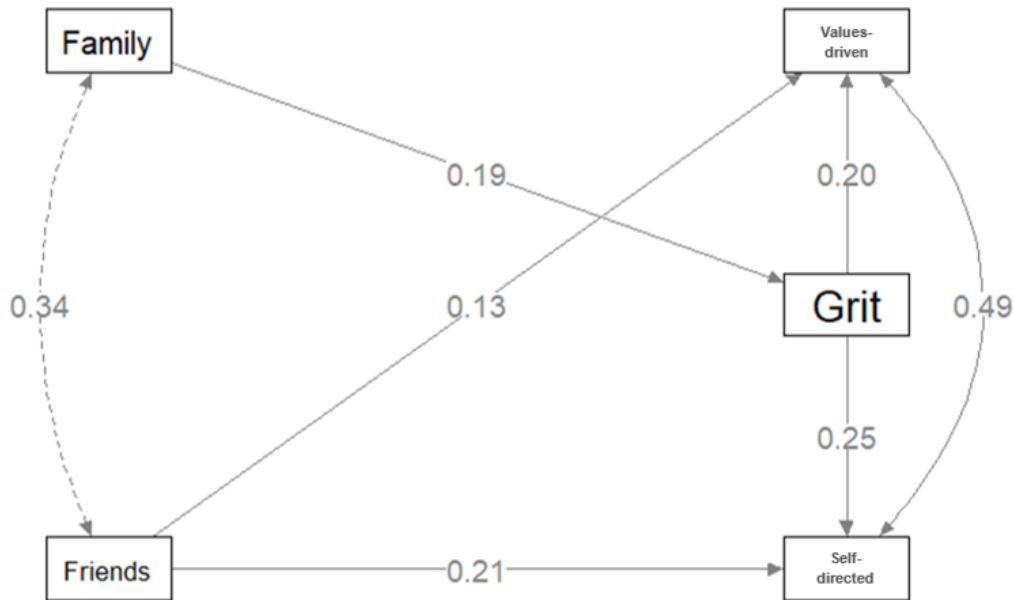
2002, as cited in Bernardo & Salanga, 2019).

As such, several factors could explain why family support bolsters goal persistence that later leads to career development. First, early socialization from the family could have oriented career development. Career development may also have a lifelong foundation from the workers' experience from their family. Next, collectivistic culture reflected the influence of family support on career development through one's grit. The influence of these factors is reinforced by the SCCT, providing a perspective that both social and cognitive factors have an impact on career attitudes.

Direct Effect of Peer Support on Protean Career

It is notable to observe, unlike family support, that peer support is not a predictor of grit. Although supported by peers, their persistence in achieving their goals, which may be greater than that of their career progression, would not be enhanced. In a study among students in Chicago Public Schools, Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) found that perceived peer support did not predict grit. However, it is noteworthy that being Asian, together with teacher support, demonstrated the cultivation of grit among the high school juniors. This contradicts the findings of Kim and Lee (2022), which suggest a significant correlation between social support and grit. Likewise, this current

paper dissected the impact of peer support in career attitudes using a path model.

Although peer support did not predict grit, it directly predicted the protean career attitude. Their socialization with their friends affects whether they like or dislike a certain career. Specifically, peers may support each other in terms of information regarding occupations. For instance, Angeline and Rathnasabapathy's (2021) study shed light on the weight of the viewpoints and advice of adolescents' peers and family before committing to a particular decision. The peer can provide a realistic job preview as well as the levels of expectations on a certain career (Lahif et al., 2021; Salim et al., 2023). Lahif et al. (2021) described peers as authors of

actual and relevant experience and that the familiarity and similarity among peers appeared to improve the openness and preference of individuals to listen to their peers over advisers. In past literature, there was observed peer support influence in career in terms of career decision self-efficacy and career development (Hirano et al., 2022; Salim et al., 2023). It was established that the higher the peer support, the greater the capacity to create career-related decisions.

Additionally, the peer's influence on career may be that of fear of missing out (FoMo). Dou et al. (2021) found a negative association between college students' perceived social support and FoMo. This is supported by Brown and Kuss (2020) who found that FoMo has a negative relationship with a similar construct, social connectedness. However, Davis et al. (2023) discovered no correlation between the two. With that, it is apparent that socialization with peers dictates the career trends (Chan, 2017), and even the economic advantages of one's career (Corcoran & Clark, 1984). Emerging adults can share what careers would be in demand and create peer referrals. Peer support can also serve as a career network emerging adults can use to build their career. Even though peer support did not predict grit, which we viewed as cognitive component of SCCT, peer support in one's career may still be cognitive through informational support peers can provide in career

development (Chui et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the results emphasized the description of key individuals in the career development of fresh graduates. That is family support enhances grit which can contribute to increased protean career attitude. On the other hand, peer support directly increases protean career attitudes. This result expounds SCCT by providing a dynamic on the social, from family and peers, and cognitive factors that lead to career development. Nevertheless, the results of the study can be utilized, both by academic institutions and organizations, as a springboard for programs that would support fresh college graduates to enhance their career.

Despite the statistical strength of its result, this study is not without its limitations. Mainly, as the study respondents were from a single program, its results cannot be generalized to all other programs, such as those without licensure examinations. Hence, we recommend to future researchers to include other fields of study, higher or lower educational programs such as vocational tracks and graduate levels, and those who have been working in a company for a longer tenure compared to the respondents of this research.

Likewise, the social support in this paper has been studied with an overall measurement system which cannot identify best practices of support system or which specific support, either financial, emotional, or informational support were

needed by the respondents. We recommend an exploratory inquiry would resolve these limitations.

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