

**THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PERCEIVED EMPLOYMENT SELF-CONFIDENCE AND
PERCEIVED EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES - A
POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO
YOUTH CAREER COUNSELLING**

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Abstract: *This paper is focused on analyzing youth perception on employment self-confidence, in order to best anticipate their behaviour and action pattern related to perceived employment challenges. The main purpose of current study is to analyze the dynamic relationship between perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges in career counselling of 432 last year students and young graduates from 4 European countries. The dynamic relationship identified, demonstrates that extreme scores (low and high) on perceived employment self-confidence hamper perceived employment challenges, making clients much more vulnerable in the face of future professional uncertainties, creating a vicious circle which outputs reflect an active/passive professional opportunities searching behaviour pattern. In the end, this inconsistent behaviour will only damage clients perceived employment self-confidence. Meanwhile, balanced perceived employment self-confidence will trigger healthy perceived employment challenges, engaging youth clients in a positive search behaviour quest for professional opportunities.*

Keywords: *positive youth development, youthcareer counselling, dynamic relationship, perceived employment self-confidence, perceived employment challenges.*

1. Introduction

As the scientific literature depicts, Positive Youth Development (PYD) refers to intentional efforts of other youth, adults, communities, government agencies and schools to provide opportunities for youth to enhance their interests, skills, and abilities. PYD most commonly refer to programs specifically designed to optimize youth developmental progress.

As one of the most important researcher in the PYD topic states, the youth development field has incorporated the perspective of ecology of human development: the mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the immediate setting in which the developing person lives, and has sought to understand and describe adolescent development in the context of the critical social systems in which youth grow and learn (Cahill et al., 2002).

Karen Pittman, one of the first advocates for positive youth development, best described this strategy in the phrase „Problem-free isn't fully prepared” (Pittman, 1999), developing the model of 5 Cs as a framework for understanding positive youth development outcomes (Pittman et. al. 2003):

- **Confidence** - a sense of self-worth and mastery; having a sense of self-efficacy (belief in one's capacity to succeed),
- **Character** - taking responsibility; a sense of independence and individuality; connection to principles and values,
- **Connection** - a sense of safety, structure, and belonging; positive bonds with people and social institutions,
- **Competence** - the ability to act effectively in school, in social situations, and at work,
- **Contribution** - active participation and leadership in a variety of settings; making a difference.

As one can see, self-confidence is extremely important in almost every aspect of our existence, representing also a core process in any career counselling theoretical approach or practice. Scientifically literature depicts the fact that people who lack self-confidence can find it difficult to face challenges, especially young people addressing career development issues. Being a dynamical concept, building up a healthy self-confidence requires a permanent willing act and needs external positive feed-back, coming in terms of professional counselling for constant confirmation, up to a point when client's mindset is ready to be autonomous and develop by its own, in terms of self-empowerment.

When practicing building up self-confidence in career counselling, PYD theories suggest priorities to be addressed. First of all, clients should particularly understand the difference between conceit (bragging about self)

and confidence (being self-aware), the last requiring reality constant checking and honest and accurate self-assessment (Tan, H. K. K., et. al., 2011). The other aspects to be regarded for refer to: building assertiveness, seeking small victories instead of manifesting failure avoidance behaviour, mentorship, pursuing a healthy lifestyle.

2. Methodology

The objective of the present research is to test the dynamical relationship hypothesis between two core concepts: perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges, a dynamic career counselling approach.

The project under which study has been performed was focused on the needs of the unemployed youth in the countries of the participating organizations aiming to improve the quality and accessibility of educational and training provisions through the use of ICT as well as to provide new skills for gaining long term employment and for entrepreneurship. The aim of the questionnaire used was to point out young people's identification of vocational counselling needs, unemployment statistics, relevant competencies on the labour market, and current knowledge on active national policies in offering employment opportunities for young people.

The main purpose of current study is to highlight the relationship between perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges of 432 last year students and young graduates from 4 European countries.

Among other questions that are not the subject of this current research, young people were asked to rate (1=lowest, 5=highest) 6 issues that they consider bringing them self-confidence in finding a job (Item 26). Aspects regarding perceived self-confidence referred to: a clear sense of what can be accomplished, validation through past examples of success, testimony from others, friends and family support, stories of successful campaigns, mentors and role models.

Regarding perceived employment challenges, young people were asked to rate (1=lowest, 5=highest) 4 issues that they consider to represent challenges in their future job (Item 14). Aspects referred to: over-enthusiasm about the new job, overwhelmed with work-load, not feeling part of the team, feeling confused, unsure about tasks.

A total of 432 youth have voluntarily responded to our online questionnaire in four languages, 38,2% is represented by male respondents and 61,8% by female youth respondents. Regarding respondents' age, 46,1% are aged between 15 and 19, representing last year high school teens, 20,4%

are aged between 20 and 24, representing bachelors and 33,6% are aged between 25 and 29, representing students enrolled in master programs.

3. Results

The present study assumes that there is a dynamical relationship between perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges in youth career counselling process.

In curvilinear relationships variables grow together until they reach a certain point (positive relationship) and then one of them increases while the other decreases (negative relationship) or vice versa. This relationship can be easily identified graphically by a Scatterplot, choosing additional two representations of the regression line: Linear and Quadratic model.

The Scatterplot diagram presented in Figure 1, demonstrates curvilinear relationship between perceived employment self-confidence on the horizontal axis and perceived employment challenges, represented on the vertical axis.

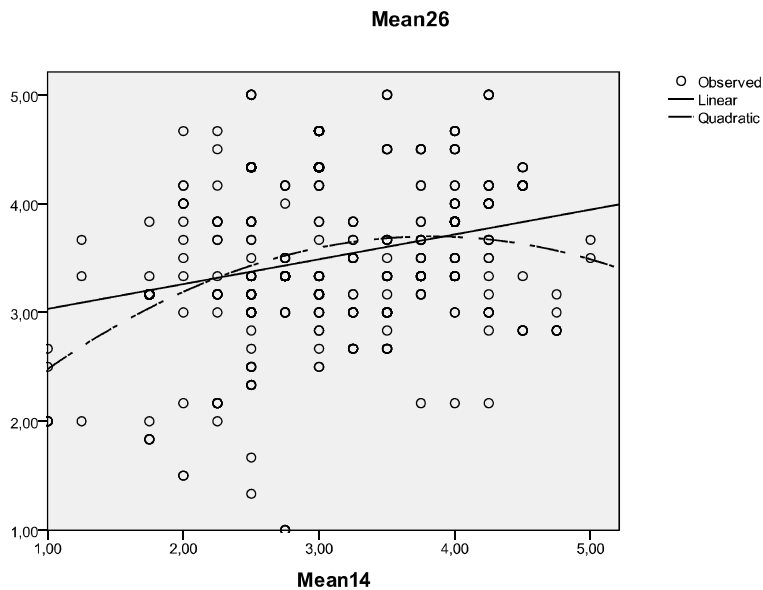


Fig. 1. The dynamic relationship between perceived employment self-confidence (Mean 26) and perceived employment challenges (Mean 14)

In order to test our hypothesis that states that between perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges there is a significant dynamic relationship, we have used a confirmatory factor analysis, based on multiple regression analysis for curvilinear effects.

There is a very high correlation between perceived employment self-confidence – Item 26 (MD=3,512, SD=0,735) and perceived employment assistance – Item 14 (MD=3,101, SD=0,837) of $r = 0,260$ significant at a $p < 0,01$ which methodologically allows us to proceed with confirmatory factor analysis.

Testing for curvilinear relationship, we have used the hierarchical multiple regressions, the dependent variable being perceived employment self-confidence, and the dependent variable in step 1 perceived employment challenges, and in step 2 squared perceived employment challenges.

Table 1 presents the fitting of the two models, linear – Model 1 and curvilinear/ quadratic – Model 2. As we can see in Model 1 the model that supposes linear relationship, perceived employment self-confidence accounts for 6,5% of the variance in perceived employment challenges with an $F = 31,062$ significant at a $p < 0,01$. In Model 2, the model that supposes curvilinear relationship, perceived employment self-confidence accounts for 9, 2% of the variance in perceived employment challenges with an $F = 13,931$ significant at a $p < 0,01$.

Table 1. *Linear and curvilinear regression models for perceived employment self-confidence depending on perceived employment challenges.*

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,260 ^a	,067	,065	,71125	,067	31,062	1	430	,000
2	,311 ^b	,097	,092	,70080	,029	13,931	1	429	,000

a. Predictors: (Constant), *Perceived employment challenges (Mean14)*

b. Predictors: (Constant), *Mean14, Perceived employment challenges squared (Mean14sqrt)*

ANOVA^c

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15,714	1	15,714	31,062	,000 ^a
	Residual	217,530	430	,506		
	Total	233,244	431			
2	Regression	22,556	2	11,278	22,964	,000 ^b
	Residual	210,688	429	,491		
	Total	233,244	431			

a. Predictors: (Constant), *Mean14*

b. Predictors: (Constant), *Mean14*, *Mean14sqrt*

c. Dependent Variable: *Perceived employment self-confidence (Mean26)*

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,804	,131		21,330	,000
	<i>Mean14</i>	,228	,041	,260	5,573	,000
2	(Constant)	1,463	,382		3,829	,000
	<i>Mean14</i>	1,169	,255	1,330	4,579	,000
	<i>Mean14sqrt</i>	-,153	,041	-1,084	-3,732	,000

a. Dependent Variable: *Perceived employment self-confidence (Mean26)*

All standardized coefficients of Beta (B= 0,260; B= 1,330 and B= -1,084) are significant at p values < 0,01 which gives a high consistency to our both models. Changing Beta coefficient's sign from + to - means that the effect is growing in the opposite direction, which clearly demonstrates the curvilinear relationship between perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges. The additional incremental predictive capacity of 3 percents, added by including the squared perceived employment challenge

variable which is accounting for the band in the regression line, clearly prove that there is a dynamic relationship between perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges. Although the data clearly demonstrate collinearity, the tolerance threshold is well below the permissible limit, this result is somewhat expected, given the almost perfect correlation between one variable and its square.

4. Conclusions and implications

This research brings a dynamical view of understanding the market of career counselling services, mostly dedicated to youth. Perceived employment self-confidence and perceived employment challenges prove to be crucial concepts when designing client's employment decision making pattern.

The dynamic relationship identified, demonstrates that extreme scores (low and high) on perceived employment self-confidence hamper perceived employment challenges, making clients much more vulnerable in the face of future professional uncertainties, creating a vicious circle which outputs reflect an active/passive professional opportunities searching behaviour pattern. In the end, this inconsistent behaviour will only damage clients perceived employment self-confidence. Meanwhile, balanced perceived employment self-confidence will trigger healthy perceived employment challenges, engaging youth clients in a positive search behaviour quest for professional opportunities.

The dynamic aspect of the self-confidence construct mainstreams from the fact that even maintaining personal confidence when professional life is relatively normal can also be demandingly challenging. When bumping into unexpected professional challenges, like in our case short-term or long-term youth employment, it is becoming a very difficult task to avoid giving in to self-doubt and uncertainty and cope with self-confidence. When clients feel confident, they are more resourceful, challenges seem less threatening and have much less impact on their self-security issues. On the other hand, when clients feel unconfident, they become unsteady in their ability to make decisions and eventually take action. As in all areas of personal and professional development, finding balance is always the answer, the challenge for career counsellors becomes developing in clients a special set of unique abilities that refer to having a realistic, balanced view of one's own abilities and in the same time having enough self confidence to visualize themselves managing unexpected challenges. And most of all, clients need to acknowledge that [self confidence](#), as a personal perception, is an inner feeling of certainty and capability of accomplishing specific tasks.

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