

# Role Of Career Conversation In Developing Career Competencies: An Empirical Insights From Marketing Graduate At Tertiary Level

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## **Abstract**

Career conversation increases the chances of carer competencies among students. This study investigated the impact of career conversation on marketing students' career cmpetencies. Career competences was measured under the dimensions of career reflection, career networking, career job related performance, career planning & shapping. Causal comparative design under the quantitative approach was used. Survey technique was used and questionnaire were distributed to collect data. 372 marketting graduates of public and private universities of karachi, Pakistan were investigated on career conversation and career competencies scale. Positive significant result was found between the variables and it has been determined through the analysis that the more the career conversation activities being carried out by the teachers, the higher will be the development of career related competencies among tertiary level students graduating in marketing. Teachers training related session on career conversation was highly recommended.

**KeyWords:** Career Competencies, Career Conversation, Career Networking, Career Planning & shaping, Career Reflection, Job Related Performance.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary world of work, job security and lifetime employment are no longer the norm (Blokker, Akkermans, Tims, Jansen, & Khapova, 2019). An individual

has to be prudent in selecting a career, as it is a critical decision (Crossley & Mubarik, 2002). A wrong career selection by an individual affect not only his personal and professional life but it

also has a negative impact on the economic situation of his country, (Kuijpers, Meijers & Gundy, 2011). Therefore, Internationally, schools for vocational education in response to the changing demands of the society and the labor market acknowledge their role in providing guidance to the young people in development of a career (Mittendorff et al. 2008; Kuijpers and Meijers 2009; Mittendorff et al., 2012 ; Draaisma, Meijers & Kuijpers, 2018).

In the learning space, it becomes difficult for the teachers to conduct reflective conversation on career with students and provide them with guidance on career selection (Mittendorff, 2010). According to the findings, only 65% in a conversations teacher talk is about job vacancy with students, teachers talk about the student 21% and with the students teachers talk for only 9% (Winters et al., 2009). In the education system, most of career guidance specialist lacks training in career. This statement is supported by Kuijpers, & Meijers, (2017) according to them, the situation is due to the lack of teachers' skill of maintaining a dialogue along with the specific career choice, which leads to the related information and positive remarks. Furthermore, Teachers who have the duty to

provide careers guidance are forced to participate in a career dialogue (Winters et al., 2009). However, if the training teachers become proficient in career guidance and in conducting a career dialogue to transform the career identity which can solve the situation. Teachers will then be required to construct new strategies in having a career dialogue with the students. As, teachers play a significant role in providing guidance to the students to make "a good career choice", and share authentic information regarding future career trends. Teacher is capable to convince students to elect a career, which is suitable to their career competency. During daily interaction, teachers may inquire from students about their interest and create awareness about career choices (Mittendorff et al., 2011). According to Draaisma et al., (2018), that it is the responsibility of an individual to be conscious of having a promising career in today's labor market. (Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017).

It has been observed that global job market needs highly skilled and competent labor force along with self-management competencies to cope with the challenges of economy (Kuijpers et al., 2011). Students should acquire career competencies and life long learning skills along

with professional and technical qualification which influences in students' career selection and career advancement (Mittendorff, 2010). According to Jarvis and Keeley (2003), educational and vocational institutes should develop career competencies and life long learning skills among students, however many students drop out of education without acquiring skills to compete in the trade world.

However, in Pakistan due to low literacy rate (Sarwar & Azmat, 2013) and lack of career guidance and counseling, people are not educated enough to choose right career for themselves (Bilal & Malik, 2014), most of their decisions are taken by their elders (Sarwar & Azmat, 2013). Conventionally, Students were guided by teachers towards the specific fields in schools and colleges neglecting the student's aptitude and interests (Khan, Murtaza, & Shafa, 2012). In recent times of professionalism and jobs, job surety and lifespan engagement in any job is not being exercised. In this scenario students' job selection is vehemently based on perceptions, advices and motivation of others and they have ignored their own competence and potentials. There is no trend of career counseling at school, college and even university level with an exception of a few

private sector universities (Khan, 2010; Bilal & Malik, 2014). It has been observed that in private universities the counselling is provided to an individual based on a face-to-face interaction. This setup minimize the potential to respond to all learners need. The career guidance staff mostly have scarce resources, which includes a dedicated space for interviews; an updated career information in the library; a desktop; telephone extension; assistance of a secretary.

Teachers have limited understanding of labor market and the requirements of different types of jobs. There is no interaction with the public employment service. Work experience opportunities are not open to students. Students seldom get a chance to talk to the employers similarly; the involvement of the parents' in career program is little. Events on career development in which employers gather at a location to facilitate students to provide information to students are rarely organized.

Therefore, students fail to make career choices during their studies (Geurts & Meijers, 2009) and choose professional career without knowing their interest, attitude and skills. According Bilal and Malik (2014) , most of the employees choose or opt career

without guidance. Scholars are of the opinion that higher education institutes should be career oriented, which can not only be beneficial for individual growth and career competencies of individuals but also helpful for the economic growth (Jarvis & Keeley, 2003; Sarwar & Azmat, 2013). “If educational institutes train and educate their teachers in career guidance, counseling tools and techniques then the need for career counseling and guidance could be filled. Stories related to career are an expression of distinct characteristics of an individual, which explains the choices they make and what led to those choices. The stories of career capture the journey of an individual of yesterday, moving in today, progressing into tomorrow” (Savickas, 2005, p. 58).

In conclusion, the formation of a constant career guidance space is required to have conversations related to career with students. A collated learning of teachers of an organization is important to nurture an environment of learning. To begin with, collective learning process on a management level for teachers' modification in leadership is needed (Draaisma et al., 2018). In this study, the researchers aimed to explore the relationship between career conversation at tertiary level

of education and student's career competency in which reflection on career, networking in career will be measured. Moreover, the impact of career conversation on career competencies will also be explored.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the relationship between Teachers' career conversation activities on marketing graduates' career competencies (career reflection, career networking, career planning and shaping and job related performance effectiveness)

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there any relationship between teachers' career conversation activities and career reflection among marketing graduates?
2. Is there any relationship between teachers' career conversation activities and career networking among marketing graduates?
3. Is there any relationship between teachers' career conversation activities and career reflection career planning/shaping among marketing graduates?

4. Is there any relationship between teachers' career conversation activities and job related performance effectiveness among marketing graduates?

### **Literature Review**

In organizations of work drastic changes have given rise to new 'career realities' that keeps an individual's focal point to take responsibility of the development of their career. Due to this, researchers looked into career strategies (Anakwe, Hall & Schor, 2000) while some explored set of competencies related to career (Kuijpers, Schyns & Scheerens, 2006).

Hackett, Betz and Doty (1985) used the term Career Competencies to draw the competencies required for the academic career development of women. The interviews with 50 working women of an academic institution displayed eight categories namely; interpersonal skills, political skills, organizational skills, general-career planning and management skills, communication skills, career-advancement skills, adaptive cognitive strategies and job-specific skills.

The smart career model is named as CCs (Arthur, Claman and DeFillipi, 1995). Arthur, Inkson and Pringle (1999) have had explained

CCs are personal strengths and competences that only work for the interests of the organization they work for. With the course of time they gain more productive knowledge that makes management for smooth running (DeFillipi & Arthur, 1994). Arthur explained CCs as three domain of knowing: knowing-why (what are reasons of doing a job), knowing-how (how a job do is facilitated) and knowing-whom (whom with us are working). Knowing-why is an individual coming across with the working culture of that working environment and surrounding that may internal or external as well (Arthur et al., 1995) and based on norms, perception, values (DeFillipi & Arthur, 1994). It incorporate elements have a huge impact on individual's devotion and flexibility of the working environment and conditions e.g. incitement and purpose. It also embodies other elements which are family and non-working environment factors. Knowing-how is skillfulness and potentials of an individual he offers to an organization. Glaring examples are career based prowess and know-how related to the profession an individual supposed to perform in an organization and based on gaining experience and skillful learning. Knowing-whom related to person's

addition in communicating within or outside of the organization (DeFilippi & Arthur, 1994). It further explain that social bonds, established communications, stern relationships are built internally or externally of the organization while chasing job (Inkson & Arthur, 2001). These areas form the basic structure of CCs and have been seconded by different studies, e.g. Eby, Butts and Lockwood (2003).

Contrary to this social context as mentioned above, those organizations which are in process of development of its functionality of CCs, Kuijpers et al., (2006) structured a multi-pronged evaluation method of CCs for modern world career. This method included text, open ended questions of qualitative interviews and analysis of factors which is obtained from a big margin or workers in an organization in the Netherlands, in the same token, those who conducted research are decipher 6 CCs workers of any organization need to focus of managing career orientation, gaining career actualization potential, work and incitement reflections. This research elucidate CCs as potential which are pertinent for all workers shun aside particular job workers have had. Contrary to this, Mittendorff (2010) convinced to belief that CCs may diverges in

different situations like person to person, different groups and social dynamics. The demands state of art market labour force which underscore on an individual's dynamism and activism in her or his job. This is presented in notions such as individual resourcefulness (Frese & Fay, 2001), employability (e.g., vanDam, 2004). Contemplating factors of guidance based on self-perception, and job potential could be seen through the prism of self-based managerial skills of coming across with new knowledge and work experience for furnishing a career which he opt for. Career progress and growth is taken as active career-actualization, has seen as understanding of personal aims and objectives facilitation and constraining conditions of the work situation. Career capabilities can also be adopted at learning place as they are part of partial life and work. This transformation from elementary to higher school are very grim for their career. Hence counselling for their career and professional life is productive for this transformation (OECD). At school level, a student can be encouraged to reflect on his future ambition, motivating factors, and take initiatives to channelize the development of their career (Kuijpers & Meijers, 2009). Research indicates that in career

guidance is mainly to help students in achieving academically and not to help them into preparing for the work dynamics (Meijers et al., 2013).

Researches done by Kuijpers and Meijers (2009) and Mittendorff et al. (2008) shows that the integral element of career guidance is having a career conversation. The absence of these conversations leave students in a difficult situation to assess their own learning or to construct their career choice (Mittendorff et al., 2008). McIlveen and Patton, (2007), expresses that, “career conversation” is a constituent of matter, reason and strategies contained in a dialogues. According to them Conversations related to career engages in an exchange of information regarding management of a career, manifestation of workplace skills, knowledge related to career options in an organization, trainings available for career building, opportunities regarding career guidance, setting a career goal, and having a plan of action. The ultimate goal of career conversation is to provide students with guidance into creating a professional identity and to enable them to correlate their learning for the improvement of their vocation (Mittendorff, 2010). To create an identity with respect to a vocation is a correspondance of an individual in which he or she

connects their interests , competence and motivation regarding a career choice (Meijers et al., 2013).

The Systems Theory Framework (STF) is based on a variety of intrapersonal characteristics, which influences career development such as aptitude, gender and personality. A human in his surroundings is known as a social being who is connected with the different interpersonal components: local (family, friends, and educational institutions) and international factors (international events). In order to examine the interrelationships between internal and external variables on the career development of the people the Systems theory employed. Career development is a vigorous process as presented by the STF. Through its process, it depicts the influence on change over the course of time and chance. (Patton & McMahon, 1999). System theory framework based on social constructivist approach of learning in which individual is involved in constructive conversation. In career conversation, the individual is given information and exposure about future career opportunities and equipped with apt information and accurate skills required for job market.

The career dialogue with the teacher and the career conversation

with students has proven to be crucial particularly in a workplace (Meijers, Kuijpers, Gundy, 2013). Constructivist learning theory has offered an approach (Savickas, 2005) on the aspect of learning as an activity in which the student transmutes details into substantial knowledge. In this process, an individual becomes aware of one's own implied presuppositions, expectations and rationale (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4). In the constructivist, perspective meaning is formed with the help of a story constructed from an exchange of real-life experiences in a dialogue. (Bruner, 1990; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

In the context of education, stories related to career (Savickas, 2005) surface in a personal dialogue related to work experiences: the learning space should be based on practice and communicative (Bailey, Hughes & Moore, 2003). To create an environment of conversation, weightage should be given to the feelings and perception of an individual related to job experiences. (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2006). The exercise of having a dialogue should be an ongoing support system rather on a single occasion (Harrington & Harrigan, 2006). Research of Mittendorff (2010) suggests of a

learning space where students have freedom to make a selection which provides a motivating factor to direct their careers. However, students show reluctance in participating in a career dialogue. They seem less motivated while engaging in reflective practices regarding careers especially when it is a prescribed curriculum (Mittendorff, 2010).

Research indicates that individuals having a perception of obtaining and maintaining an employment that is, to perceive positive chances of finding employment, are capable to maneuver better through the complexities of today's job market (De Cuyper et al., 2014). However, empirical evidence about the earlier phrase of employability is missing (Forrier, Verbruggen, & De Cuyper, 2015) which is performance based (De Cuyper et al., 2014) and welfare (De Cuyper et al., 2012),

Career conversation is relatively an emergent concept at tertiary level; therefore, there is a dearth of research in this area. In this paper the importance of career conversation for enhancing the career competencies of students at tertiary level is discussed. Through this study, students will develop a positive correlation between career competencies and a career identity,



which will enable them with a sense to target their career choice.

### **Methodology**

This research is quantitative and causal comparative design was used. The population of this study was constituted by all students who are pursuing their studies while doing their job at tertiary level. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed to the marketing students of Public and Private sector universities by using convenience sampling technique, 372 questionnaires were returned so response rate was 74.4%. Out of 372 participants, 36% were female and 64% were male. 77% students were from private sector and 23% were from Public Sector University. Researcher used two scales for measuring career conversation (Mittendorff , Brok, & Beijaard , 2011) and career competencies

(Francis-Smythe, Haase, Thomas, & Steele, 2013) based on a five point score gage (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Reliability of tool was 0.959. Researchers employed survey technique to collect the data and questionnaire was distributed to the participants during non-teaching hours. This study aims to find the relationship between independent and dependent variable. Correlation techniqie has been used to analyze the data.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Model Measurement**

The following results had been generated through Smart PLS 3 software for validation of hypothesized model. The below figure 1 is a graphical representation of the analysis of constructed model.



**Figure 1.** Graphical Representation of the Model

**Convergent Validity**

The Table 1 represents the convergent validity of the model. Quantitative analysts suggest the use

of outer loadings, Cronbach’s Alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) values to establish the convergent validity of the constructs.

**Table 1.** Reliability and validity of the Constructs

Construct	Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Career Conversation	CCBP1	0.74	0.961	0.964	0.514
	CCBP2	0.77			
	CCBP3	0.75			

	CCCI1	0.77			
	CCCI2	0.74			
	CCCI3	0.77			
	CCPI1	0.69			
	CCPPCS3	0.66			
	CCPPCS4	0.65			
	CCTAPI1	0.73			
	CCTAPI2	0.75			
	CCTAPI3	0.74			
	CCTAQ2	0.72			
	CCTAQ3	0.72			
	CCTAQ4	0.69			
	CCTAQ5	0.71			
	CCTARP2	0.76			
	CCTARP3	0.73			
	CCTARP4	0.70			
	CCTARP5	0.66			
	CCTARP7	0.67			
	CCTASSD1	0.69			
	CCTASSD2	0.71			
	CCTASSD3	0.70			
	CCTASSD4	0.69			
<b>Career Networking</b>	CN2	0.84			
	CN3	0.81			
	CN4	0.84	0.855	0.895	0.632
	CN5	0.76			
	CN1	0.72			
<b>Career Planning/ Shaping</b>	CPS1	0.82			
	CPS2	0.84	0.799	0.870	0.628
	CPS3	0.82			
	CPS4	0.68			
<b>Career Reflection</b>	CR1	0.83			
	CR2	0.79	0.892	0.917	0.650
	CR3	0.79			

	CR4	0.82			
	CR5	0.82			
	CR6	0.79			
<b>Job Related Performance Effectiveness</b>	JRPE1	0.86			
	JRPE2	0.81	0.863	0.907	0.709
	JRPE3	0.85			
	JRPE4	0.85			

As per the criteria, the outer loadings value of the indicators has to be greater than 0.5. In the Table 1, all the values of related items are greater than 0.5; additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) value for all the constructs is greater than 0.5. This ensures the convergent validity among the hypothesized constructs. Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha value has to be more than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1974) and composite reliability value is supposed to be more than Cronbach's Alpha value of the respective construct. It is revealed from the above table that the Cronbach's Alpha value of all the constructs is more than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2012) and the composite reliability value is greater than respective Cronbach's Alpha value. This ensures the reliability of the

hypothesize constructs. In conclusion, the above table implies and ensures the reliability as well as validity of all the hypothesized constructs.

### Discriminant Validity

Table 2 represents the Fornell and Larcker Criterion for testing the discriminant validity of the hypothesized model. As per this criteria, the average variance extracted value of a construct has to be more than square root of the correlations among the constructs (Fornell-Larcker, 1981). In the table 2, the average variance extracted value is more than the respective correlations among the constructs; therefore, discriminant validity is certified.

**Table 2.** Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	<b>Career Planning / Shaping</b>	<b>Career Conversation</b>	<b>Career Net working</b>	<b>Career Reflect ion</b>	<b>Job Related Performance Effectiveness</b>

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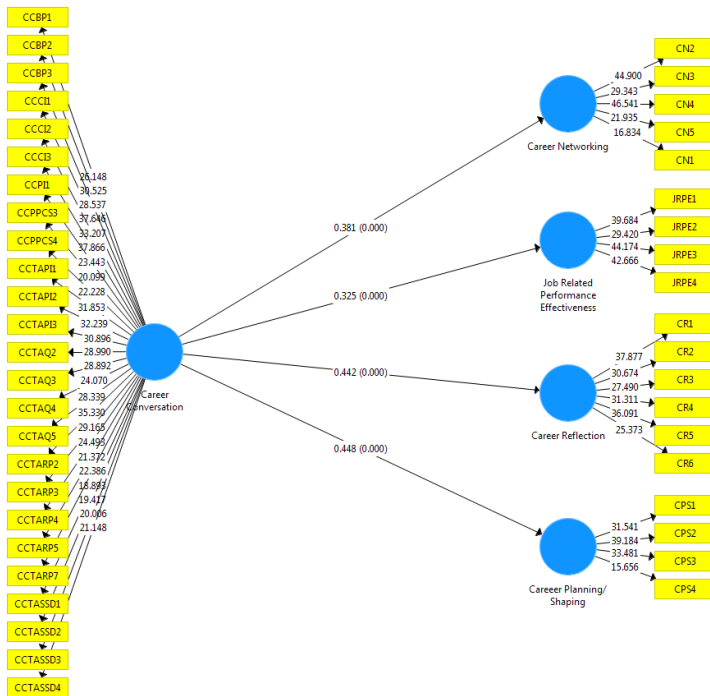
<b>Career Planning/Shaping</b>	0.792					
<b>Career Conversation</b>	0.448	0.717				
<b>Career Networking</b>	0.558	0.381	0.795			
<b>Career Reflection</b>	0.552	0.442	0.522	0.806		
<b>Job Related Performance Effectiveness</b>	0.527	0.325	0.538	0.562	0.842	

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### Hypothesis Testing

The figure 2 and table 3 reflects and analysis of results and testing of hypotheses. The figures 2 represent the values of inner and outer model. Whereas, the table 3 depict the beta, standard error and p value of all the paths of hypothesized model. As per the results, all the hypotheses were accepted as their respective p value is lesser than alpha ( $p$  value  $< 0.01$ ). Moreover, all the beta values have

also been found positive. This implies that all the independent variables are statistically significant and positively related to dependent variable. This, in other words, means that the career conversation activities carried out by the teacher play an important role in developing career competencies among tertiary level students graduating in marketing this result is also supported by (Kuijpers, & Meijers, 2012).



**Figure 2.** Analytical Model of Career Conversation Activities and Competencies Development

The first path shows the testing of hypotheses that career conversation activities have a significant and positive impact on career planning /sharing dimension of career competencies among tertiary level students graduating in marketing (Hensel, 2010). As per the results in the table 3, the significant value of the path has been turned out to be

less than alpha ( $p$  value  $< 0.01$ ) Moreover, the beta value of the path is also found out the positive. This implies that career conversation activities play a statistically significant and positive role in the development of career planning/sharing competency of tertiary level student graduating in marketing.

**Table 3.** Testing of Hypotheses

Paths	Beta	SE	P Values
Career Conversation -> Career Planning/Shaping	0.448	0.049	0.000

Career Conversation -> Career Networking	0.381	0.052	0.000
Career Conversation -> Career Reflection	0.442	0.055	0.000
Career Conversation -> Job Related Performance Effectiveness	0.325	0.058	0.000

The second path shows the testing of hypothesis that career conversation activities have a significant and positive impact on career networking dimension of career competencies among tertiary level students graduating in marketing. As per the results in the table 3, the significant value of the path has been turned out to be lesser than alpha ( $p$  value < 0.01) Moreover, the beta value of the path has also been found positive. This implies that career conversation activities play a statistically significant and positive role (Winters et al., 2009) in the development of career networking competency of tertiary level students graduating in marketing.

The third path indicates the testing of hypothesis that career conversation activities have a significant and positive impact on career reflection dimension of career competencies among tertiary level students graduating in marketing. As per the results in the table 3, the significant value of the path has been turned out

to be lesser than alpha ( $p$  value < 0.01) Moreover, the beta value of the path has also been found positive. This implies that career conversation activities play a statistically significant and positive role in the development of career reflection competency (Kuijpers, & Meijers, 2012) of tertiary level students graduating in marketing.

The last path indicates the testing of hypothesis that career conversation activities have a significant and positive impact on job related performance effectiveness as dimension of career competencies among tertiary level students graduating in marketing. As per the results in the table 3, the significant value of the path has been turned out to be lesser than alpha ( $p$  value < 0.01) Moreover, the beta value of the path has also been found positive. This implies that career conversation activities play a statistically significant and positive role in the development of job related performance effectiveness among

tertiary level students graduating in marketing (Mittendorff, 2010).

In a nutshell, it has been determined through the analysis that the more the career conversation activities being carried out the higher will be the development of career related competencies among tertiary level students graduating in marketing.

### Recommendation

Following recommendation were made on the basis of result.

1. A teacher may be provided training on career conversation skills.
2. There is dire need of National Career Counseling wing to promote career conversation knowledge, skills and culture in teachers.
3. Future researches are recommended to investigate the role of career conversation on school or college level, furthermore the role of technology in career conversation with its challenges may be studied.

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