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***Career Exploration and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy
Amongst Adolescents: Individual and Contextual Factors***

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Abstract

The nature of the relationship between career exploration and self-efficacy for career decision-making amongst New Zealand adolescents has been examined.

Participants in the study were 483 sixth form students from seven state secondary schools in the Auckland metropolitan area. A self-report questionnaire was administered at schools. The main constructs measured were career exploration, the behaviours, reactions, and beliefs related to this process, and career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE). Individual factors and contextual elements (gender, ethnicity, imminence of career decision-point, careers information, work experience, family support, and career decision status) were explored to investigate their influence on the career development variables. A further aim was to examine the underlying structure of career exploration processes.

Adolescents were found to be engaging in career exploration to a moderate degree, believed in its instrumentality, and were not experiencing high levels of stress over exploration. They expressed confidence in their ability to make career decisions. Exploratory behaviours were strongly related to other aspects of career exploration and to CDMSE and specific career exploration dimensions were found to be important predictors of CDMSE. Adolescents felt that their parents were supportive of their career development, but there was not a strong relationship between this and exploration or CDMSE. Students with work experience had engaged in more career exploration and had higher levels of CDMSE. The same applied to students who had decided on a future career, who were also more likely to have work experience. Students using school as their main source of careers information explored to a greater extent. Gender and ethnic differences were found on some CES dimensions but not for CDMSE.

By examining specific aspects of adolescent career development in relation to the broader context in which this takes place, this research has drawn attention to the complexities of this process and its implications. The utility of the career development measures used in this study has been extended by finding them reliable for use with adolescents, and areas where more extensive investigation would be fruitful have been identified.

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