

Research Article

THE INFLUENCE OF TRAIT ANXIETY ON CAREER SELF-MANAGEMENT AND THE MODERATOR EFFECT OF STATE ANXIETY ABOUT LAYOFFS DUE TO COVID 19 PANDEMIC AMONG WHITE-COLLAR EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

This study aims to contribute to the literature on sustainable careers by studying the effect of t-anxiety on the career self-management dimensions which are Personal Mastery (PM), Verbal Persuasion (VP), and Vicarious Learning (VL), and the moderator affect of s-anxiety about layoffs due to COVID 19 pandemic on these relationships. The causal comparison screening approach was adopted. Hypotheses were investigated by the SEM method. The research data were collected online from 365 white-collar employees between July 1, and August 30, 2021, using a simple random sampling approach. The purpose of collecting the data between these dates was that the ban on lying off the employees due to the COVID 19 pandemic has been lifted on June 30, 2021. Empirically, a negative and significant relationship was found between t-anxiety and PM. It was also found that positive and significant relationships exist between t-anxiety and VP and VL. A negative relationship between s-anxiety about layoffs due to COVID 19 pandemic and PM was determined. S-anxiety about layoffs due to COVID 19 pandemic has been found to have moderating negative effect on the relationships between t-anxiety and VP and VL. High levels of anxiety (both for t-anxiety and s-anxiety) affect PM negatively whereas low levels of anxiety strengthen it. PM gets weaker in anxious individuals, while VP and VL get stronger. Because of the s-anxiety about layoffs due to COVID 19 pandemic white-collar professionals are likely to face a career shock, resulting in unsustainable trajectories. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 23(1) January, 2022; 1-17.*

Keywords: Trait Anxiety, State Anxiety, Career Self-Management, Personal Mastery, Verbal Persuasion, Vicarious Learning, COVID 19

Introduction

There were 236 million COVID-19 pandemic victims worldwide as of October 2021, with around 5 million deaths (WHO). Individuals, society and the global economy have all suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Total working hours worldwide have fallen by approximately 17%. The global economy has suffered a loss of 495 million full-time jobs [1]. The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing many issues to be redefined, which will affect individuals' professional lives in the future. In the short and

medium-term, employees in some industries, such as health care, will have to work for longer hours in a high-risk work environment. 88% of the top 800 corporations in the world have mostly adapted to work from home approach [2]. COVID 19 has serious effects on people's psychological states too. It has been found that anxiety and stress have hit the highest levels in 25% of the population [1]. This type of anxiety is identified as the state anxiety caused by COVID 19 [3]. There are two forms of anxiety: trait anxiety (t-anxiety) and state anxiety (s-anxiety).

According to the researchers, t-anxiety and s-anxiety are two distinct disorders [4]; Knowles which have different effects on individuals' health, attitudes and behaviours [5].

Anxiety affects individuals' private and professional lives as well as their knowledge abilities, and behavioural competencies [6]. It is also a major reason for avoiding career-decision making tasks [7]. It has been found that individuals with high levels of career anxiety are indecisive about their careers [8-10]; Furthermore, it has been shown that individuals must learn to manage their anxiety to acquire new information and abilities and reach their professional objectives at the end [11,12]. So, it can be argued that anxiety is an obstacle in the path of building sustainable careers.

The social cognitive model of Career Self-Management (CSM) can be useful to understand the relationship between the two types of anxiety and a sustainable career. The model views career management as a process and seeks to describe how individuals attempt to manage their careers *via* decision-making and persistence [13]. It is based on self-efficacy which can be defined as "the judgments regarding one's ability to organize and execute plans of action in situations that contain ambiguous, unpredictable, and stressful elements [14]. According to the CSM model, the sources of self-efficacy and outcome expectations for career exploration and decision-making are Personal Mastery (PM), Verbal Persuasion (VP), and Vicarious Learning (VL) [15]. CSM has a vital function in attaining professional sustainability, wellness, and it has become increasingly relevant in career environments characterized by greater volatility, uncertainty, and ambiguity [16]. A sustainable career can be defined as sequences of work experiences over time, which are shaped by the individual (the central career actor) but also influenced by other stakeholders and contexts (society, family, friends, incidents, etc.) [17], so building a sustainable career is not merely a matter of personal preference, it is also affected by contextual structures [18]. Governmental and organizational practices during the COVID 19 pandemic are the current examples. In Turkey, to ease the negative consequences of the COVID 19

pandemic, the government has offered incentives for businesses, so they would not lay off their employees. Laying off the employees was restricted for a certain period in exchange for these incentives. But the lay-off restriction expired on June 30, 2021. It was envisaged that most companies would implement austerity measures, so they would start laying off their employees once the ban was lifted. It was also expected that the employees would experience the s-anxiety due to the risk of being laid off after this date, which would all have serious influences on their careers.

Literature Review

Social cognitive model of career self-management

A career has been defined as the outcome of one's education and training, as well as the development of one's professional life [12]. As the career management is a process, the individual must decide her/his career goals, develop strategies to attain these goals, and generate action plans accordingly. This rational process is based on personal experiences. A successful CSM would lead to a sustainable career that is characterized by productivity, health, and happiness in the long run [17].

CSM focuses on the process of career development rather than the content, on understanding people's job-related decisions throughout their lifetimes, and on adaptive career behaviours in general [13,15]. CSM model is based on Bandura's social cognitive learning theory which is a model that includes the cognitive process in which goals and actions are active, as well as the proximal antecedents self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, personality, supports, and barriers [13,14]. Personal experience is the primary source of self-efficacy and expected results in CSM. Lent et al., describe PM (successes and failures), VP (approval and recognition), and VL (copying models) as sources of personal experience. Self-efficacy and expectation of outcome are fundamental cognitive motivators that assure the emergence of the goal-action-result process. At the decision-making stage, the individual has the

mind-sets based on learning experiences that result in primary and embedding knowledge and instilling in the individual a notion of long-term sustainability and stability in a subject and process [19]. Learning experiences, particularly those with positive outcomes, establish the necessary motivation and expectancy for behaviours [20] and it can automatically turn into an adopted strategy. The CSM model has potential strategies for the evolution of sustainability career paths. Three strategies PM, VP and VL, which individuals adopt within the scope of CSM, are defined as follows:

Personal mastery: The degree to which people feel in control of their life is referred to as personal mastery [21]. A greater sense of personal mastery protects individuals against the emergence of depressive symptoms and is a sign of psychological resilience, allowing individuals to better organize personal resources when dealing with problems [22]. Individuals with high PM are found to have a high level of learning, innovation, and adaptability [23,24].

Verbal persuasion: Verbal persuasion is the process of convincing others to complete a task [25]. There is evidence supporting the effectiveness of employing verbal persuasion to alter psychological, emotional, and behavioural consequences [26]. Verbal persuasion has a direct positive impact on psychological health and acts as a buffer against depressed symptoms [21]. As affirmation, recognition, and acceptance are VP can be a need for individuals. Even individuals can make substantial contributions to their professions by granting other actors the right to speak to be recognized and accepted within the organization [27].

Vicarious learning: Vicarious learning is the use of someone else's experiences to learn [28]. VL is a coping method that involves analysing and copying patterns, and it protects people from being psychologically damaged by unpleasant social experiences [29]. VL is distinguished by active listening and reflective thinking, with the goal of understanding by being fully involved in the scenario [30]. VL provides a tested and safe way.

Past research shows that career mismanagement is associated with many cognitive and emotional factors, including low self-efficacy, low self-esteem, and lack of self-knowledge, external locus of control, depression, and anxiety [31]. Individual features are vital, but external forces also play a significant part in the career management process. The social cognitive career theory is an appropriate conceptual perspective for investigating the evolution of sustainable career self-management, as it views career choice as a dynamic process affected by both individual variables such as t-anxiety, and environmental variables such as layoffs due to COVID 19 pandemic [18]. So we can have an integrative understanding of the relationship between anxiety and sustainable careers.

Anxiety

Anxiety is described as an unpleasant emotional state or condition. It is also used to describe relatively stable individual differences in anxiety-proneness as a personality trait. There are two types of anxiety: t-anxiety and s-anxiety, which are distinct disorders [4]. T-anxiety has been identified as a risk factor for psychopathology [32]. Individuals with a high t-anxiety struggle to learn and make decisions [33], execute what they have learned [34], adapt to changing stimuli or the degree of stimulation in the workplace [35] and have a low tolerance for ambiguity [36].

S-anxiety is a rapid, intense, and substantial fluctuation induced by a single incident. High s-anxiety was found to be substantially linked with the risk of monetary loss. People who tend to view stressful events as hazardous or threatening to respond to such situations by increasing the severity of their s-anxiety responses. It has been found that s-anxiety has a brief, negative, but powerful effect on a person's mood, behaviours, conduct, and performance [37]. According to the findings, those with a high level of anxiety engage in more habitual, or quick, and automatic conduct and are less goal-directed [38] and have low self-efficacy. Conversely, individuals with high self-efficacy establish high goals in career management and believe that their decision-

making habits will result in more favourable outcomes.

Anxiety has been found to have a substantial impact on career management. According to Deer study lower levels of anxiety lead to significantly higher levels of self-efficacy and significantly higher levels of job search intentions [39]. Similarly, Campagna et al. found that both t-anxiety and s-anxiety are strong predictors of career indecision. In this study, the t-anxiety was taken as a personality trait, whereas s-anxiety was taken as the anxiety caused by the organizational regulations following the removal of the lay-off ban imposed by the government due to the COVID 19 pandemic. From now on, s-anxiety about layoffs due to COVID 19 pandemic will be mentioned as the COVID 19 s-anxiety [40].

Research Model and Hypotheses

The following research questions were investigated in this study: How does an

individual's t-anxiety impact her/his career exploration and decision-making activities within the scope of the CSM? What are the relationships between t-anxiety, s-anxiety and PM, VP, and VL? How do individuals maintain stability in their careers according to their t-anxiety? What is the moderating effect of s-anxiety about layoffs due to the COVID 19 pandemic on these relationships?

As seen in Figure 1 and hypotheses, this study aims to contribute to the literature on sustainable careers by examining t-anxiety and the CSM model and determining how s-anxiety about layoffs due to COVID 19 pandemic relate to career un-sustainability and what role they play in the process. This is the first study to investigate the impact of both t-anxiety and s-anxiety on the scope of CSM at the same time. Moreover, understanding the effect of COVID 19 on the relationship between anxiety and career management would help us to discover the long-term consequences of COVID 19 pandemic.

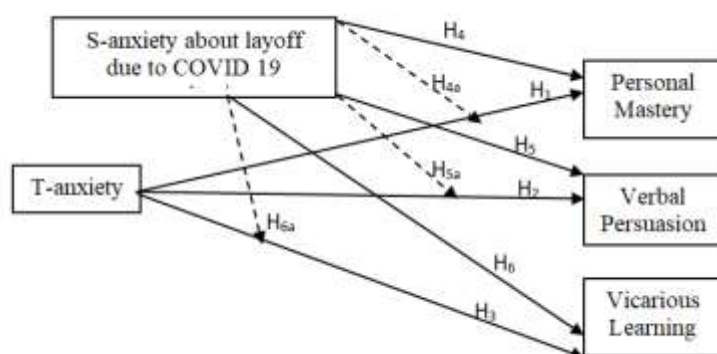


Figure 1. Research model.

Note: H1: T-anxiety has a negative effect on PM; H2: T-anxiety has a positive effect on VP; H3: T-anxiety has a positive effect on VL; H4: COVID 19 s-anxiety has a negative effect on PM; H5: COVID 19 s-anxiety has a positive effect on VP; H6: COVID 19 s-anxiety has a positive effect on VL; H4a: COVID 19 s-anxiety has a moderator effect on the relationship between t-anxiety and PM; H5a: COVID 19 s-anxiety has a moderator effect on the relationship between t-anxiety and VP; H6a: COVID 19 s-anxiety has a moderator effect on the relationship between t-anxiety and VL.

Research Methods and Materials

This study was carried out per The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki) for experiments involving humans. Ethical approval was obtained

from The Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University (reference number 88431307-050.01.04-E.19770). The study was designed using the causal comparison screening approach [41]. When assessing the cause-effect relationship

in the context of individuals' attitudes and behaviours, surveys are preferred [42]. Hypotheses developed based on the relationships identified between the constructs were investigated using the SEM method as an analysis tool in the study. SEM is a technique for examining defined linear relationships between research models constructs [43]. The Smart PLS 3.3 statistical package program was used for the analyses, which employs the Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modelling method. In the studies, a p-value of 0.05 was adopted as the statistical significance level.

Participants

The research data were collected online from 365 white-collar employees between July 1, and August 30, 2021. The purpose of collecting the data between these dates was that the ban on laying off the employees due to the COVID 19 pandemic has been lifted on June 30, 2021 (Presidential Decree of Turkey, 2021). Simple random and snowball sampling techniques were adopted. More specifically, the first contact was made with several people for this study. The link to the online survey was sent to them as an invitation to participate in the study. These people were then asked to help identify and approach other white-collar employees in Turkey to participate in the study. Participants volunteered to participate in the survey, and they were also asked if they accept the use of the data acquired from them in the analysis. The study included 171 female and 194 male subjects. The average age of the participants is 35, and their average job experience is 11 years. There are 192 single and 173 married participants.

Measures

Lent et al. developed the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management Scale, which was used to assess the CSM. Spielberger et al. developed STAI Trait and State Anxiety Scales, which were used to assess trait and state anxiety.

The participants were asked to answer questions on their demographic characteristics in the first part. The second part consists of the construct

items listed in Table 1. Participants were instructed for each scale in the questionnaire.

For the t-anxiety scale, the instruction was "Some statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then blacken in the appropriate circle to the right of the statement to indicate how you generally feel." The statements of t-anxiety were gauged with a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (almost always) to 4 (seldom).

For the s-anxiety scale, the instruction was "Some statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then blacken in the appropriate answer to the right of the statement to indicate how you feel at this moment about the organizational and economic arrangements made by the company you work for due to COVID 19 since July 1, 2021." The statements of s-anxiety were gauged with a 4-point scale ranging from 1 to 4.

For CSM scale was "Some statements which people have used to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement and then answer to the right of the statement to indicate how your prior experiences in making decisions are relevant to your professional future. Such decisions might include things like choosing a career path, declaring a major, and deciding which organization to attend." The statements of the PM, VP, and VL were gauged with a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results

Assessing the outer measurement model

In the preliminary analysis of the research model, as suggested by Hair et al. the convergent validity, internal consistency and discriminant validity analysis were respectively performed for the reflective measurement model.

For the convergent validity, firstly indicator reliability was performed. The indicators with outer loading values less than 0.40 were excluded from the analysis while the indicators with outer loading values above 0.70 were kept.

For the indicators with outer loading values ranging between 0.40 and 0.70, when they were excluded from the analyses of their constructs, their effects on the values of Average of Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability (CR) were examined. As seen in Table 1, some indicators with outer loading values less than 0.70 that meet the norm values were left within the scope of the research model analysis. And the values of AVE should be higher than 0.50 for convergent validity.

It is suggested that the values of Cronbach's Alpha and CR should be higher than 0.70 for

internal consistency; The values of Cronbach's Alpha, CR, and AVE which are the indicators of internal consistency of the constructs met the requirements as seen in Table 1.

To determine if the data had the normal distribution features, excess kurtosis and skewness analyses were done. Skew value $> \pm 2$ and kurtosis value $> \pm 7$ in research with more than 300 participants sign that the data does not have a normal distribution characteristic [44]. As shown in Table 1, the indicators' values are within the normal values, and the data is considered to have a normal distribution.

Table 1. Convergent validity, internal consistency, composite reliability analyses.

| Personal mastery | AVE | Cronbach's Alpha | CR | Mean | SD | EK | Skw | VIF | Outer Load |
|---|------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| | 0.65 | 0.82 | 0.88 | 4.07 | | | | | |
| 1. The way I have approached important career-related decisions has worked well for me in the past | | | | 4.26 | 0.95 | 1.51 | -1.33 | 2.13 | 0.846 |
| 2. I have done a good job of weighing the positives and negatives of different options when I have had to make career-related decisions | | | | 4.05 | 1.05 | 0.51 | -1.01 | 1.77 | 0.812 |
| 3. I have been good at putting my career-related decisions into action | | | | 3.98 | 1.02 | 0.60 | -0.94 | 1.67 | 0.794 |
| 4. I have been resourceful at gathering the information I need to make career-related decisions | | | | 4.00 | 1.07 | 0.00 | -0.86 | 1.74 | 0.774 |
| S-anxiety about layoff due to COVID 19 pandemic | AVE | Cronbach's Alpha | CR | Mean | SD | EK | Skw | VIF | Outer Load |
| | 0.51 | 0.93 | 0.89 | 2.20 | | | | | |
| 1. I feel calm | | | | 2.20 | 0.94 | -1.07 | 0.11 | 1.92 | 0.618 |
| 2. I feel comfortable | | | | 2.55 | 1.01 | -1.06 | -0.13 | 3.52 | 0.739 |
| 3. I feel nervous | | | | 1.80 | 0.95 | 0.02 | 1.02 | 2.70 | 0.767 |
| 4. I am jittery | | | | 1.79 | 0.99 | -0.01 | 1.07 | 2.49 | 0.735 |
| 5. I am relaxed | | | | 2.63 | 1.03 | -1.10 | -0.18 | 3.03 | 0.703 |
| 6. I feel content | | | | 2.38 | 0.95 | -0.95 | 0.04 | 2.37 | 0.682 |
| 7. I am worried | | | | 2.12 | 1.01 | -0.82 | 0.52 | 2.71 | 0.795 |
| 8. I feel secure | | | | 2.50 | 0.97 | -0.98 | -0.18 | 2.54 | 0.686 |
| 9. I feel pleasant | | | | 2.50 | 0.92 | -0.82 | 0.03 | 2.63 | 0.661 |
| 10. I am tense | | | | 1.91 | 0.96 | -0.41 | 0.78 | 2.60 | 0.758 |
| 11. I feel strained | | | | 1.65 | 0.90 | 0.50 | 1.23 | 1.80 | 0.651 |
| 12. I feel at ease | | | | 2.42 | 0.95 | -0.94 | 0.01 | 3.00 | 0.757 |
| 13. I feel upset | | | | 1.94 | 0.95 | -0.19 | 0.84 | 1.91 | 0.692 |
| 14. I am presently worrying over possible misfortunes | | | | 2.33 | 1.08 | -1.22 | 0.26 | 2.79 | 0.691 |
| 15. I feel frightened | | | | 2.33 | 1.03 | -1.04 | 0.29 | 3.25 | 0.779 |
| T-anxiety | AVE | Cronbach's Alpha | CR | Mean | SD | EK | Skw | VIF | Outer Load |
| | 0.50 | 0.91 | 0.82 | 2.22 | | | | | |
| 1. I have disturbing thoughts | | | | 2.38 | 1.00 | -1.00 | 0.23 | 2.06 | 0.752 |
| 2. I lack self-confidence | | | | 1.69 | 0.86 | -0.06 | 0.99 | 1.64 | 0.671 |
| 3. I feel inadequate | | | | 2.06 | 0.86 | -0.43 | 0.47 | 1.89 | 0.742 |
| 4. Some unimportant thoughts run through my mind and bother me | | | | 2.30 | 0.93 | -0.81 | 0.21 | 2.44 | 0.788 |
| 5. I take disappointments so keenly that I cannot put them out of my mind | | | | 2.45 | 1.04 | -1.17 | 0.03 | 1.83 | 0.677 |
| 6. I feel nervous and restless | | | | 2.23 | 0.89 | -0.46 | 0.45 | 1.47 | 0.615 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| 7. I get in a state of tension or turmoil as I think over my recent concerns and interests | | | | 2.51 | 0.97 | -0.98 | 0.04 | 1.92 | 0.723 |
| 8. I feel satisfied with myself | | | | 2.20 | 1.06 | -1.02 | 0.44 | 1.55 | 0.625 |
| 9. I feel like a failure | | | | 2.21 | 0.89 | -0.59 | 0.34 | 1.47 | 0.637 |
| 10. I feel that difficulties are piling up so that I cannot overcome them | | | | 2.06 | 0.92 | -0.70 | 0.47 | 1.91 | 0.731 |
| 11. I worry too much over something that really doesn't matter | | | | 2.32 | 1.05 | -1.14 | 0.25 | 2.61 | 0.808 |
| Vicarious learning | AVE | Cronbach's Alpha | CR | Mean | SD | EK | Skw | VIF | Outer Load |
| | 0.61 | 0.79 | 0.86 | 2,54 | | | | | |
| 1. I have role models who are good at making important career decisions | | | | 2.35 | 1.42 | -0.96 | 0.63 | 1.61 | 0.752 |
| 2. I have observed people I admire who are resourceful at gathering the information they need to make career-related decisions | | | | 2.55 | 1.34 | -1.00 | 0.38 | 1.80 | 0.828 |
| 3. I have role models who are knowledgeable about how their interests and abilities fit different career options | | | | 2.50 | 1.33 | -1.08 | 0.36 | 1.71 | 0.802 |
| 4. I have role models who have explained to me how they chose a professional career path | | | | 2.75 | 1.31 | -1.04 | 0.23 | 1.53 | 0.742 |
| Verbal persuasion | AVE | Cronbach's Alpha | CR | Mean | SD | EK | Skw | VIF | Outer Load |
| | 0.56 | 0.74 | 0.84 | 2,26 | | | | | |
| 1. Important others have let me know that I am resourceful when it comes to gathering information needed to make career-related decisions | | | | 2.23 | 1.31 | -0.78 | 0.66 | 1.66 | 0.819 |
| 2. Important others have let me know I do a good job of considering the positives and negatives of different choice options when making career-related decisions | | | | 2.71 | 1.28 | -1.13 | 0.05 | 1.35 | 0.712 |
| 3. Important others have let me know that I have been good at evaluating the choice options that would best meet my needs in making career-related decisions | | | | 1.80 | 1.16 | 0.51 | 1.28 | 1.33 | 0.723 |
| 4. Important others have let me know that I am good at managing challenges that arise when making career-related decisions | | | | 2.32 | 1.35 | -0.93 | 0.56 | 1.36 | 0.732 |

Note: SD: Standard Deviation; EK: Excess Kurtosis; Skw: Skewness; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; CR: Composite

After analyzing internal consistency and convergent validity, Fornell et al. tests were conducted for analyzing discriminant validity [45].

According to the Fornell-Lacker method, for discriminant validity between the constructs, the

diagonal values of each construct should be greater than the values of other elements in the same column. The Fornell-Lacker test results given in Table 2 indicate that each construct confirms discriminant validity and that the constructs have distinctive validity in the scope of the research model.

Table 2. Fornell-lacker and heterotrait-monotrait discriminant validity test.

| | Fornell-lacker | | | | | HTMT | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------|-----|------|-----------|--------------------|-----|----|----|
| | T-anxiety | COVID 19 S-anxiety | PM | VP | VL | T-anxiety | COVID 19 S-anxiety | PM | VP | VL |
| T-anxiety | 0.709 | | | | | | | | | |
| COVID 19 S-anxiety | 0.599 | 0.72 | | | | 0.63 | | | | |
| PM | -0.49 | -0.4 | 0.807 | | | 0.56 | 0.479 | | | |
| VP | 0.585 | 0.47 | -0.477 | 0.7 | | 0.71 | 0.536 | 0.6 | | |
| VL | 0.612 | 0.38 | -0.423 | 0.7 | 0.78 | 0.72 | 0.421 | 0.5 | 1 | |

Note: PM: Personal Mastery; VP: Verbal Persuasion; VL: Vicarious Learning

Researchers such as Henseler et al. [46] argued that the Fornell-Lacker method is not sensitive in terms of discriminant validity, which is why HTMT method should be performed as a second test.

As seen in Table 2 of the analysis results, it is observed that the model has discriminant validity since the values of HTMT between the constructs are less than 0.90.

Before conducting the research model path analysis, the values of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were evaluated for collinearity analysis between the indicators.

If the values of VIF equal to or above 5 indicate that the model is contaminated by common method bias.

As seen in Table 1, the VIF values of the indicators are found to change in a range from 1.33 to 3.52 and the collinearity between indicators used in the research model analysis was considered to be non-problematic.

The Research Model Evaluation

In the research model analysis, according to the sequence suggested by Hair et al. the size and significance of path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R²), and predictive relevance (Q²) were carried out.

For the research model path and inter-factor significance analysis, the bootstrapping method was applied with regenerated 5.000 samples.

For the 0.05 significance level, the value of p should be less than 0.05, and the t-test value should be above 1.96.

Previously, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), which is a measure of the researcher's model's approximate fit, was examined.

A model is said to be well-fitting when the SRMR is smaller than 0.08. The SRMR value of the research model was 0.076.

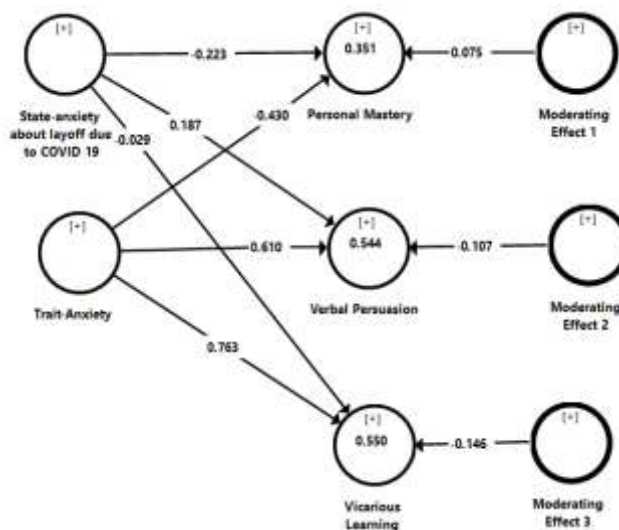


Figure 2. Research model path analysis.

One of the most important coefficients used in the evaluation of the research model is R², the coefficient determination.

The value of R² shows the total effect of exogenous latent constructs on endogenous latent constructs. R² values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19

were defined as respectively high, medium, and low-level thresholds.

As seen in Figure 2 and Table 3, the explanation level of exogenous constructs with R² values, 0.351 of PM, 0.544 of VP, and 0.550 of VL are medium.

Table 3. The research model evaluation results and hypotheses.

| | B | R ² | f ² | Q ² | q ² | T statistics | P values | |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| PM | | | | 0.169 | | | | |
| VP | | | | 0.202 | | | | |
| VL | | | | 0.231 | | | | |
| T-anxiety->PM | -0.430 | 0.351 | 0.171 | | 0.159 | 5.283 | 0.000 | H ₁ supported |
| COVID 19 S-anxiety->PM | -0.223 | | 0.053 | | 0.041 | 2.784 | 0.005 | H ₄ supported |
| T-anxiety->VP | 0.610 | 0.544 | 0.507 | | 0.445 | 8.379 | 0.000 | H ₂ supported |
| COVID 19 S-anxiety->VP | 0.187 | | 0.056 | | 0.038 | 2.364 | 0.018 | H ₅ supported |
| T-anxiety->VL | 0.763 | 0.550 | 0.792 | | 0.685 | 11.784 | 0.000 | H ₃ supported |
| COVID 19 S-anxiety->VL | -0.029 | | 0.008 | | 0.002 | 0.393 | 0.694 | H ₆ not supported |
| Moderating Effect 1->PM | 0.075 | | 0.015 | | | 1.436 | 0.151 | H _{4a} not supported |
| Moderating Effect 2->VP | -0.107 | | 0.039 | | | 1.966 | 0.049 | H _{5a} supported |
| Moderating Effect 3->VL | -0.146 | | 0.065 | | | 3.539 | 0.000 | H _{6a} supported |

Note: PM: Personal Mastery; VP: Verbal Persuasion; VL: Vicarious Learning

In addition to R2 analysis, Hair have proposed f2 test to determine the effect of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs by testing the effect of endogenous construct on R2, when the exogenous construct contributing to the R2 value is excluded from the research model. The formula used in the analysis is $f^2 = \frac{R^2_{Included} - R^2_{Excluded}}{1 - R^2_{Included}}$. In the evaluation of the test results, 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 threshold values were defined as small, medium, and large effects [47,48]. As seen in Table 3, it can be said that the effect of t-anxiety is high; on the contrary, the effect of COVID-19 s-anxiety is small.

The Stone-Geysers' Q2 values were calculated by running the Blindfolding test to evaluate the prediction power of the research model. The value of Q2 represents the out-of-sample predictive power of the research model. In the blindfolding method, the value of Q2 is calculated by giving a specific value of omission distance. As a technique for reusing the sample in the analysis, by eliminating each seventh data in the endogenous construct (in this study, omission distance is 7), the predictive power for endogenous construct is analyzed with the remaining data [49]. As seen in Table 3, Q2 value greater than 0 indicates that the research model has predictive relevance for a certain

endogenous construct; a Q2 value equal to or less than 0 indicates a lack of predictive relevance for endogenous construct [50]. The formula used in the effect size analysis is $q^2 = \frac{Q^2_{Included} - Q^2_{Excluded}}{1 - Q^2_{Included}}$. In the analysis of q2 values, 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 threshold values were defined as small, medium, and large predictive relevance. As seen in Table 3, it can be said that t-anxiety (the q2 values) has medium effect size on PM, and large effect size on VP, and VL. COVID 19 s-anxiety has small effect size on PM, and VP, no effect size on VL.

Results of Hypotheses

As seen in Table 3, PM is negatively influenced by t-anxiety ($\beta = -0.43$, $t = 5.283$, $p = 0.000$). T-anxiety influences positively the VP ($\beta = 0.610$, $t = 8.379$, $p = 0.000$) and VL ($\beta = 0.763$, $t = 11.784$, $p = 0.000$). The H1, H2 and H3 hypotheses were supported.

PM is negatively influenced by s-anxiety ($\beta = -0.223$, $t = 2.784$, $p = 0.005$). VP is positively influenced by s-anxiety ($\beta = 0.187$, $t = 2.364$, $p = 0.018$), and hypotheses H4 and H5 were supported. Between s-anxiety and VL, a significant relationship was not found, and the H6 hypothesis was not supported.

As seen in Table 3, no moderator effect of COVID-19 s-anxiety was found on the relationships between t-anxiety and PM, and H4a was not supported. However, two significant moderator effect of COVID-19 s-anxiety on the relationships between t-anxiety and VP ($\beta=-0.107$, $t=1,966$, $p=0.049$), and VL ($\beta=-0.119$, $t=3,606$, $p=0.000$) were determined and the H5a, and H6a hypothesis were supported.

PLS Predict

Following that, PLS predict analysis was performed using the default parameters (10 folds and 10 repetitions) to assess the model's out-of-

sample predictive power [51,52]. The Q2 predict values of the PLS analysis, the Mean Absolute Error (MAE) values, and the RMSE values based on the PLS and the Linear Model (LM) analyses were utilized to assess the outcomes. As shown in Table 4, all of the Q2 values in PLS analysis were greater than zero, suggesting that the PLS-SEM results had lower prediction errors than merely utilizing mean values. The model has a high predictive power because, except VL1, and VP3, practically all indicators under PLS produced lower Root Mean Squared Errors (RMSE) when compared to the linear regression model.

Table 4. PLS predict assessment.

| Indicator | PLS | | | | LM | | | | PLS-LM | | | |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|--------|--------|--------|----------------|
| | RMSE | MAE | MAPE | Q ² | RMSE | MAE | MAPE | Q ² | RMSE | MAE | MAPE | Q ² |
| PM1 | 0.874 | 0.675 | 22.570 | 0.161 | 0.900 | 0.667 | 22.652 | 0.111 | -0.026 | 0.008 | -0.082 | 0.050 |
| PM2 | 0.949 | 0.749 | 26.837 | 0.182 | 0.978 | 0.762 | 26.466 | 0.130 | -0.029 | -0.013 | 0.371 | 0.052 |
| PM4 | 0.988 | 0.788 | 27.765 | 0.150 | 1.017 | 0.781 | 27.743 | 0.099 | -0.029 | 0.007 | 0.022 | 0.051 |
| PM3 | 0.935 | 0.728 | 26.482 | 0.171 | 0.974 | 0.735 | 26.930 | 0.100 | -0.039 | -0.007 | -0.448 | 0.071 |
| VP3 | 1.038 | 0.794 | 50.494 | 0.205 | 1.002 | 0.723 | 45.954 | 0.260 | 0.036 | 0.071 | 4.540 | -0.055 |
| VP1 | 1.167 | 0.916 | 54.389 | 0.215 | 1.221 | 0.942 | 55.330 | 0.140 | -0.054 | -0.026 | -0.941 | 0.075 |
| VP4 | 1.217 | 0.972 | 57.676 | 0.194 | 1.279 | 1.007 | 58.224 | 0.110 | -0.062 | -0.035 | -0.548 | 0.084 |
| VP2 | 1.174 | 0.970 | 53.192 | 0.166 | 1.185 | 0.967 | 52.180 | 0.150 | -0.011 | 0.003 | 1.012 | 0.016 |
| VL3 | 1.155 | 0.923 | 52.069 | 0.247 | 1.225 | 0.966 | 53.156 | 0.154 | -0.070 | -0.043 | -1.087 | 0.093 |
| VL2 | 1.153 | 0.931 | 50.968 | 0.264 | 1.220 | 0.955 | 51.395 | 0.175 | -0.067 | -0.024 | -0.427 | 0.089 |
| VL4 | 1.174 | 0.966 | 49.961 | 0.205 | 1.232 | 0.972 | 50.067 | 0.126 | -0.058 | -0.006 | -0.106 | 0.079 |
| VL1 | 1.289 | 1.036 | 59.528 | 0.175 | 1.274 | 1.014 | 58.033 | 0.193 | 0.015 | 0.022 | 1.495 | -0.018 |

Note: PM: Personal Mastery; VP: Verbal Persuasion; VL: Vicarious Learning; RMSE: Root Mean Squared Errors; LM: Linear Regression Model

Discussion and Implications

This study was conducted to examine the effect of the trait and the state anxieties on the career self-management process of white-collar employees. Empirically, hypothesis H1 was supported. A negative and significant relationship was found between t-anxiety and PM. So, the t-anxiety negatively affects PM skills. Considering the relationship between the COVID 19 s-anxiety and PM, the H4 hypothesis was also supported, and a negative relationship was found between them. Based on these results, it can be said that both types of anxiety negatively affect the PM skills of the employees.

No moderator effect of s-anxiety was found on the relationship between the t-anxiety and PM, and so, the H4a hypothesis was not supported.

A positive and significant relationship between the t-anxiety and VP was determined and the H2 hypothesis was supported. As the t-anxiety rises, the VP becomes stronger. Similarly, a positive relationship between s-anxiety and VP was determined and the H5 hypothesis was supported. As an individual's degree of t-anxiety rises, so does the effect of VP. The opinions of important people have a greater impact on the psychological, emotional, and behavioral implications of individuals with high t-anxiety

level [53]. Indeed, anxious employees see the opinions and evaluations of their managers about them as a significant reference for the stability and sustainability of their careers, as well as their recognition, acceptance, and approval. Due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID 19 s-anxiety, a negative moderator effect was found in the relationship between t-anxiety and VP, and the H5a hypothesis was supported.

A positive and significant relationship between the t-anxiety and VL was detected and the H3 hypothesis was supported. As the t-anxiety rises, the VL becomes stronger. It can be said that individuals with a high level of anxiety tend to manage their careers through social learning methods. As the individual's anxiety rises, the strategy of using the experiences of other individuals, modelling especially those who are successful, becomes more apparent.

No significant relationship between the COVID 19 s-anxiety and VL was detected and the H6 hypothesis was not supported. This result can be explained by that the COVID 19 pandemic has caused crises in all aspects of life around the world. In terms of the CSM, VL strategy, the conditions were not suitable to determine who, how, and why an individual was successful in the COVID 19 pandemic conditions and to learn from examples through the social learning methods. However, COVID 19 s-anxiety has been found to have a moderating negative effect on the relationship between t-anxiety and VL. H6a hypothesis is supported. S-anxiety also negatively affects VL [54-57]. This is because individuals have difficulty distinguishing which model succeeds and which fails in the conditions of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Implications

The results of the study provide insights for employees, human resource management, and education and development departments, and other department managers. Anxiety weakens employees' self-efficacy and persistence and ability to control their careers. PM will be high in individuals with low t-anxiety. Although these skills are negatively affected when individuals encounter a condition that causes s-anxiety, the

moderator effect on the relationship between t-anxiety and PM has not been detected. This means that when the situation that causes s-anxiety disappears and if the t-anxiety has not changed permanently, the PM will return to its former level. To reduce the possible s-anxiety of their employees, companies can give importance to communicating openly and closely with the employees to make them feel safe in the times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it would be critical for the human resource management and education and training departments to train employees with high trait anxiety to be more focused on their career management, so the negative effects of trait anxiety are reduced.

A positive relationship between both the t-anxiety and s-anxiety and VP has been observed. Individuals with both types of anxiety are more susceptible to VP. They tend to judge their careers by the comments of others who are important to them. In other words, they need approval. And as the level of anxiety increases, so do the search for approval and social support. Whether it is t-anxiety or s-anxiety, it can be said that employees with high anxiety are more sensitive to VP. So, it can be critical for the managers of these employees to act as a mentor, give them detailed feedback and advise and help them to take the necessary steps in their career management.

A positive relationship between the t-anxiety and VL has been detected. Individuals with high t-anxiety adopt other people's career management strategies and paths through social learning. No significant relationship between the s-anxiety and VL has been detected. The COVID 19 pandemic has negatively affected business life and caused anomie. In a chaotic business environment, they cannot find successful examples for social learning methods.

Individuals with high anxiety, not only in terms of career management but also in skill-based training, can benefit significantly from successful examples in terms of learning and applying what they have learned. Giving feedback, making suggestions, and providing social support to individuals with high anxiety in

the process of learning and applying what they have learned will have significant contributions in terms of psychological, emotional, and behavioural consequences.

Conclusion

The effects of the COVID 19 pandemic have left lasting effects, especially in the education and business world. At the individual level, anxiety, which has been on a regular rise over the years, has been accelerated by the COVID 19 pandemic. CSM is an essential component in attaining career sustainability and professional wellness, and it is becoming increasingly relevant in career environments characterized by greater volatility, uncertainty, and ambiguity. Although the CSM creates sustainable careers, even with t-anxiety, but s-anxiety threatens the strategies adopted under the CSM.

Whether it is t-anxiety or s-anxiety, PM strengthens in individuals with low anxiety and weakens as anxiety level rises. PM is weakened in anxious individuals, while VP and VL become stronger. While VP provides social support and acceptance to anxious people, they replace psychological, emotional, and behavioural consequences for self-efficacy. Individuals with high t-anxiety tend to imitate successful people in career self-management by using the VL strategy. But the COVID 19 pandemic has negatively impacted the VL strategy. The COVID 19 pandemic has raised the volatility, uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity of white-collar work settings throughout the skill spectrum. Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, white-collar professionals are likely to face career shock, resulting in unsustainable trajectories. Since this study's data were collected right after the expiration of the lay-off restriction in Turkey (Presidential Decree of Turkey, 2021), we could only observe the short-term results of the COVID-19 s-anxiety. However, it must be noted that if the COVID-19 continues to affect the organization-employee relations in the long term, COVID-19 s-anxiety will possibly turn into some sort of t-anxiety for the employees who suffer from it.

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