

# Stability and Shifts: Self-Efficacy, Person-Environment Fit, and Career Continuity Among Undergraduate Hospitality Students

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**Submitted:** 19 December 2025   **Accepted:** 29 December 2025   **Published:** 05 January 2026

**Citation:** Chang, H. H. (2026). *Stability and Shifts: Self-Efficacy, Person-Environment Fit, and Career Continuity Among Undergraduate Hospitality Students*. *J of Glob Perspect Soc Cult Dev*, 2(1), 01-08.

## Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing undergraduate students' career choices and continuity in the hospitality industry, with a focus on foodservice operations. Drawing on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), it investigates the role of career decision-making self-efficacy in initial career choices, the predictive power of pre-training career plans on post-training continuity, and the moderating effect of person-environment fit (P-E fit). Data were collected via pre- and post-training surveys from 163 students in a foodservice laboratory course at a Mid-Western U.S. university. Results revealed no significant link between self-efficacy and initial career choice. However, students with predefined career plans demonstrated greater continuity post-training; P-E fit did not moderate this relationship. Paired t-tests showed increased self-efficacy after training but decreased perceived P-E fit. These findings suggest that initial career intentions strongly predict persistence in hospitality, while hands-on training boosts confidence despite potential mismatches in perceived fit. Implications include reinforcing industry values in curricula to retain talent amid high turnover. Limitations involve small sample size; future research should expand longitudinally. This contributes to understanding career development in hospitality education, highlighting practical training's role in shaping professional trajectories.

**Keywords:** Career Choice, Career Continuity, Self-Efficacy, Person-Environment Fit, Social Cognitive Career Theory, Hospitality Education.

## Introduction

The concept of "career" has been investigated in the social sciences, described as being in relationship with identity and providing a residual trace of the individual's relationship with work [1]. Previous study indicates that a career is an accumulation of information and knowledge embodied in skills, expertise and relationship networks acquired through an evolving sequence of work experiences over time while the accumulated knowledge may be removed, rearranged and replaced [2]. In terms of a career choice, a person chooses a certain occupation because he or she feels confident in that area, and this confidence leads the individual to be interested in that area [3]. Having different career-related goals and needs, people vary in terms of income, advancement and development to overall career goals [4]. Giving the high turnover rates in the hospitality industry, understanding the potential employees, i.e., hospitality-related-major undergraduate students' career expectation and plans are essential [5].

Students' choice of major and specialty has been investigated by previous research of career choice theory [6-8]. Career choice is an important issue for college students because they are at the stage of determining what vocation to choose and establishing their profession throughout academic training. During university level, college students often make career decision on their academic major or emphasis area of study, and even have some plans for future vocation. Crook, Healy & O'Shea's study (1984) suggested that those people who are determined and comfortable with their career choice are more motivated to perform well and that this is demonstrated as higher performance ratings. Other researchers also found that when individuals perceive that they will experience positive outcomes, the outcome expectations contribute to the development of career interests, which in turn, affect career choices [9, 10]. This research investigates the relationship between self-efficacy and career continuity, as well as explores the effect of person-environment fit (P-E fit) on career

choice and career continuity after course training in foodservice. Research indicated that undergraduate courses affect students' career plans Macera & Cohen's (2006) [11]. Nearly all students either change their career plans or feel more confident about their plans after taking certain courses related to their major. However, what makes students change or keep on their career plans is not clear. A study of college students' career choice indicated that the college students, as career decision makers, perceived their interests, values (i.e., expected outcomes and working conditions), and abilities as important factors with respect to both choice options they expected to pursue and those they had ruled out [12]. The same study found that career exploration activities (e.g., job shadowing, internships, realistic job previews) enable college students to clarify their interests, values, and skills in relation to particular occupational fields and work tasks. Other studies indicate that the courses or training have influence on career choices. For instance, West studied medical residents and found that career choices were unstable, with nearly two thirds of residents changing their career plans at some time during training [13]. Other researchers also found that medical students change their career choices during their residency [14]. Nevertheless, little is known about the timing and stability of college students' decisions on career choices during courses at the university-level.

Self-efficacy, self-esteem, role model influence, social cognitive, previous work experience and other variables were found as predictors of career choice (e.g., Quimby & DeSantis, 2006; Quimby [15, 16]. This study therefore can specifically contribute literature on the relationship between career choice and self-efficacy and career continuity. Another specific characteristic of this study is that it adopts social cognitive career theory (SCCT) to analyze the relationship between self-efficacy and career continuity. Theoretical model of career choice and performance emphasized the predictive role of self-efficacy in career development. It provides a social cognitive framework for understanding three aspects of career development: interests, academic and career choice options, and performance and persistence in educational and occupational options. Found that personal factors contribute to individuals achieving career goals and success, especially among the young people [17]. This study aims to apply social cognitive perspective to explore the factors influencing career continuity. The primary goal of this research is to determine whether a link existed between career choice and self-efficacy. A secondary goal of this research is to investigate the moderation effect of a contextual factor of career development, i.e., person-environment fit (P-E Fit). Since studies on career choices and self-efficacy are prevalent in the fields of psychology, education, and behavioral science. Having high staff turnover, hospitality industry today has been facing the challenge of being able to position itself as an ideal career option for hospitality management graduates [18]. The contribution of this study is to reveal how people in the field of food-service management determine their career choice throughout curriculum training.

## Literature Review

### Career Choice

The definition of career varies as the term crosses disciplinary boundaries. Within the disciplines of psychology, sociology, political science, economics, history and geography, defined career

with its broadest sense as "the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time". Career also is described as in relationship with identity and providing a residual trace of the individual's relationship with work. Bird (1994) precisely defined career as accumulations of information and knowledge embodied in skills, expertise, and relationship networks acquired through an evolving sequence of work experiences over time. In addition to being accumulated, knowledge may be removed, rearranged, and replaced. This study proposes that having class training in food operation, a person's knowledge will be accumulated, removed, rearranged or replaced. Thus, one's initial career choice before training might change or reinforce accordingly.

Complementary to career exploration in nature, career planning refers to individuals' outlining future career developments and to their setting and pursuing career goals [19, 20]. Since goals are a good indicator of effort and since contemporary careers are characterized by lifelong planning, it does not surprise that career planning is related to more successful careers [21-23]. Found the college program had a significant effect on students' later involvement in future career activities, because many students had taken jobs which required the skills learned in the programs [24]. Further, researches in different fields had conducted studies linking career plans to performance [25]. In the recent study toward psychology majors, found that nearly all undergraduate psychology students either changed their career plans or felt more confident about their plans after taking the Psychology class which was considered as a Profession course in Psychology Major. On adult achievement found that college grades are useful predictors because they reflect intelligence, motivation, and other abilities applicable to the job [26]. Showed that career concern is positively associated with the need for job related and professional training in the organization [27].

### Social Cognitive Career Theory

Students make career determinations in individual and non-linear ways and vacillate between choice as they participate in self-assessment and self-discovery [28]. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is therefore introduced in the career decision theory as a theoretical model that represents a relatively new effort to understand the processes through which people form interests, make choices, and achieve varying levels of success in educational and occupational pursuits [29].

General social cognitive theory, SCCT highlights the interplay among three cognitive-person variables (e.g., self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals), and on how these variables interact with other aspects of the person and his or her environment (e.g., gender, ethnicity, social supports, and barriers) to help shape the course of career development [30, 31]. In other words, SCCT of career choice behavior illustrates the interplay among personal, environmental and behavioral influences on career development. By focusing on cognitions, behavior, and other factors that theoretically are relatively malleable and responsive to particular situations and performance domains, SCCT explains how people are able to change, develop, and regulate their own behavior over time and in different situations partitioned SCCT into two complementary levels of theoretical analysis [32]. The first level presented cognitive-person variables (self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals) that enable people to exercise agency (i.e., personal con-

trol) within their own career development. The second level of analysis considered the paths through which several additional sets of variables- such as physical attributes (e.g., sex and race), features of the environment, and particular learning experiences- influence career-related interests and choice behavior. When researchers have turned their focus to specific paths posited in SCCT, the most consistent empirical support has been demonstrated for the positive relation of self-efficacy beliefs to outcome expectations, and for positive relations of both self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations to corresponding vocational interests [33-36]. This study corresponds with using career decision self-efficacy, choice commitment and background context, and aims to identify factors that impact foodservice student's career behavior and choices. Recent applications of SCCT in hospitality and tourism education have emphasized its relevance for Generation Z students, where personality traits such as conscientiousness and openness to experience positively influence career self-efficacy, which in turn drives career aspirations; moreover, demographic factors like gender and major moderate these relationships (Harb, Harb, Alakaleek, Alhammad, Alzboun, & Al-Omar, 2024) [36].

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy beliefs refer to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attaining designated types of performances. Self-efficacy serves as a foundation for the subsequent development of vocational interests, career goals, and adaptive career-related behavior [37]. In the social cognitive view, self-efficacy is not a unitary or global trait, like self-esteem (i.e., general feelings of self-worth), with which self-efficacy is often confused. Rather, self-efficacy is conceived as a dynamic set of self-beliefs that are linked to particular performance domains and activities. In SCCT, (1) the development of academic and career interests, (2) the formation of educational and vocational choices, and (3) the nature and results of performance in academic and career spheres are conceived as occurring within three conceptually distinct yet interlocking process models. In each model, the basic theoretical elements as self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals are seen as operating in concert with other important aspects of persons (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity), their contexts, and learning experiences to help shape the contours of academic and career development.

According to SCCT's interest model, self-efficacy and outcome expectations about particular activities help to mold career interests (i.e., each person's particular pattern of likes, dislikes, and indifferences in relation to career-relevant tasks). The resulting SCCT model outlines the manner in which person inputs, background contextual variables, self-efficacy beliefs, and outcome expectations affect vocational interests, choice goals, choice actions, and performance attainments. It is believed that an initial career plan determines one's interests in certain career choice. Goals, in turn, increase the likelihood of activity practice, and subsequent practice efforts give rise to a particular pattern of performance attainments, which, for better or worse, helps to revise self-efficacy and outcome expectations within an ongoing feedback loop. This basic process is seen as repeating itself continuously before career entry. Consistent with the assumptions of trait-factor theories, career-related interests do tend to stabilize over time.

Choosing a career path is not a single or static act. As SCCT's interest model illustrates, career choice is preceded by a host of sub-processes such as the development of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, and skills in different performance domains [38]. Thus, over time, it will leave open and make certain choice paths attractive for a given individual and render other options much less appealing or likely to be considered further. Once initial career choices are made, they are, however, subject to future revision because individuals and their environments are dynamic entities. Events and circumstances may well transpire that could not have been foreseen during initial choice-making or career entry. In SCCT, self-efficacy beliefs are posited to have a direct effect on vocational interests, choice goal, choice actions and performance attainment. Described career decision making self-efficacy as an extent to which the students show self-efficacy with respect to their abilities. Hospitality undergraduate students' career decision self-efficacy was found to be the most effective predictors of their commitment to career choices [39]. This study hypothesizes that an initial career choice in foodservice operation is formed by individuals who perceive themselves to be effective in foodservice. Building on this, recent work underscores how self-efficacy mediates the impact of perceived educational quality and experiential elements on career intentions in hospitality contexts (Kahraman & Alrawadieh, 2021) [40].

### **H1: Self-Efficacy will be Positively Related to an Individual's Initial Career Choice**

Social Cognitive Career Theory has been suggested as a useful framework for understanding certain career processes in employees. SCCT posits that educational and occupational choices are often, but not always, linked to people's interests. Circumstances and cultural conditions sometimes require a compromise in personal interests. In such instances, choices are determined by what options are available to the individual, the nature of his/her self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, and the sorts of messages the individual receives from his/her support system.

### **Career Continuity**

In SCCT, choice goals are conceptualized as intentions to pursue a course of action [41]. Jepsen indicated that exploratory career decisions (i.e., deciding to seek more information) are expected to emerge and predominate before terminal career decisions (i.e., deciding to stabilize). Previous studies found that an individual's academic choice as an exploratory career decision is expected to emerge and predominate before deciding the terminal careers [42-44]. The choice actions are the actual activities engaged in to execute the choice. Thus, a person is more likely to formulate goals based on his or her particular set of interests. If the goals one sets are clear and attainable, then an individual will likely engage in activities that bring the goals to fruition (Dickison, Abrams, & Tokar, 2016). Del Corso (2013) also found that people's career concern can be developed by actively engaging in training and preparing for future career possibility. Miller, Osborn, Sampson, Peterson & Reardon (2018) indicated that college course related to career has impact on undergraduates' career decision state and career goals [45-47]. Recent post-pandemic research highlights that while internship experiences may not directly alter career attitudes, perceived job insecurity negatively influences intentions to pursue hospitality careers, underscoring the enduring strength of pre-existing positive attitudes

in predicting continuity (Suwannakul, 2024). Aiming to explore the relationship between undergraduate students' initial career choice and later career engagement in foodservice operation, this study assumes that an individual formulates career goals based on his or her majors. If the goals are clear and attainable after course training, then an individual will likely engage in activities that bring the initial plan to fulfillment [48].

**H2:** Having an Initial Career Choice will be Positively Related to the Career Continuity

### Person-Environment Fit

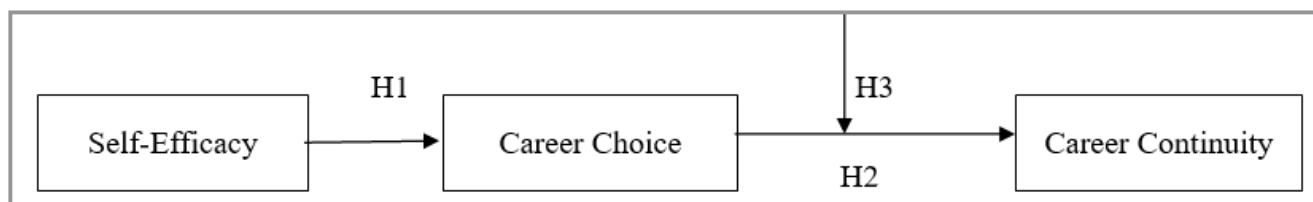
Although recent research suggests that congruence between students and their academic environment is critical for successful student outcomes, little research has been done on student college major choice [49]. The person-environment fit is thus introduced to the research framework because the researchers believe if the students who have registered in the foodservice laboratory have an initial career choice to work in food operations, a fit between person's career choice and class training is indicated. Found that self-clarity (i.e. having a clear sense of identity, interests, abilities, personality and how this fit with different occupations) can predict performance [50].

Environmental factors (supports and barriers) may also facilitate or hinder the choice implementation process, regardless of whether people are pursuing options that are consistent with their primary interests or that they freely chose. The notion of person-environment fit can be traced back to Plato's The Re-

public, where he discussed assigning people to jobs based on their personal attributes [51]. Person-environment fit (P-E fit) has been defined fundamentally as the "compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched [52]. There is a large body of career and vocational literature that historically focuses on the degree to which an occupation fits individuals' interests, desired rewards, personal values, and level of ability and skill, either alone or in combination [53-57]. The fundamental premise of the P-E fit perspective is that explaining human behavior and consequent instrumental outcomes. Fit implies that certain combinations of personal characteristics and situational characteristics yield substantively different, and by implication better or more favorable outcomes than other combinations. Binning, refer P-E fit to the extent to which an individual engages in, or otherwise has the potential to engage in, situationally functional comportment when interacting with specific environmental demands in order to survive and flourish, either literally or relative to particular social standards [58].

**H3:** Person-Environment Fit will moderate the relationship between initial career choices and career continuity.

The present study specifically tests the correlation between self-efficacy, career choices, and career continuity, with the assumption that P-E fit moderates the relations between career choices and career continuity. The research framework and hypotheses are showed as Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Research Framework

### Methodology

In order to understudy college students' decisions on career choices, data was collected from a Foodservice Laboratory class at a Mid-Western University in the United States. Survey questionnaires were applied. In this laboratory class which data is collected from, students learn and develop food production and service skills in the learning-oriented lab of foodservice operations, i.e., cafeteria, kitchen and fine dining restaurant. Students who take this class are sophomore, junior or senior. The student classification data indicates the facts that students not only have already decided their majors or emphasis area of study as part of their career plan, but also had basic course training in the food-service related area to assure the ability and knowledge to fulfill foodservice requirements.

### Participants and Procedures

To ensure both reliability and validity, in a pretest, the questionnaire was administered to one teaching assistant, and two students who previously completed this laboratory class. Comments regarding content and clarity of language were obtained and incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. The sample of this study is composed of all students enrolled in this

foodservice laboratory at during two semesters in a row. All the recruiting procedures follow the Human Subject regulations approved by the Consult Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University. All the students enrolled in this laboratory class were contacted to participate in two questionnaire surveys. The first survey was conducted during the week before students complete their training from different positions in foodservice operation. In this class design, those positions include (1) café kitchen, (2) café operation, (3) restaurant kitchen, (4) bakery, (5) restaurant services, and (6) catering. The second survey was conducted at the last week of the lab training, when students are fully rotated from the aforementioned positions. There were 180 students enrolled and all were contacted for participating the survey. A total of 163 usable respondents were obtained, yielding a response rate of 91%.

### Measures

Participants completed two self-report surveys both consisting of two scales: self-efficacy and person environment fit. In the present study, the short form of the Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE-SF; is used. The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) is a developed scale which in-

cludes 25 highly reliable items. CDMSE measures an individual's degree of belief that he/she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions. believes that the most important part of developing a measure of self-efficacy is specifying the behavioral domain of interest which is the basis for the construction of the five career choice competencies. The five competing subscales include behaviors pertinent to: (1) accurate self-appraisal; (2) gathering occupational information; (3) goal selection; (4) making plans for the future; (5) problem solving. This gives a possible range for the 25-item full scale of 25-125 and for each of the subscales of 5 to 25, with higher scores indicating higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy [58-60]. The P- E Fit is a five-point Likert-scale which includes 3 items developed for this study. Participants were asked to evaluate the perceived fit (subjective fit) in the foodservice environment.

The survey also includes seven items to collect data on participant's demographic and academic characteristics. These items include gender, academic status, major, emphasis area of study, career choice, and career preference in foodservice. The reliability and validity for CDMSE have been confirmed by previous researchers. In this study with 74 samples, the Cronbach's alpha of CDMSE scale ranged from .675 to .790 for the five subscales and .923 for the total score (Table 1). A confirmatory factor analysis also was conducted for validity of the combined instruments. Cronbach's reliability test was performed to measure the internal consistency of each scale used. Cronbach's alpha of P-E Fit Scale and career continuity is .734 and .742 respectively (see Table 2). Cronbach's alpha of each construct greater than .70 confirms the results of the reliability analysis [61].

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale

Variables	Number of cases	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Alpha
Occupation Information (5-25)	74	12-25	19.01	3.13	.675
Self-Appraisal (5-25)	74	23-25	19.68	2.99	.776
Goal Selection (5-25)	74	11-25	18.50	3.19	.718
Future Planning (5-25)	74	12-25	19.47	3.21	.790
Problem Solving (5-25)	74	11-25	18.70	3.22	.750
Total CDMSE (25-125)	74	63-124	95.36	13.31	.923

**Table 2:** Cronbach's Alpha of each construct

Construct	N	N of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-Efficacy		25	.923
P-E Fit	74	3	.734
Career Continuity		2	.742

## Results

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. Logistic regression is run to test H1. A Chi-Square test is applied to test H2. Multiple regression analysis is run to test H3, testing whether the moderator variable, i.e., P-E fit, has moderator effect on the relationship between career choices and career continuity in foodservice operation. The results indicate that 13.5% of the respondents had not decided the career field after graduation. Among respondents who have career choices before foodservice operation training, 14.9% decided to work in the career field of foodservice management, 29.7% decided lodging management, 4.1% in tourism management, 37.8% chose other field such as dietetics, event planning, education, etc. However, the results present that there is no correlation between self-efficacy beliefs and having a career choice ( $p=.394$ ). Hypothesis 1 is not supported ( $\beta = .023$ ,  $p = .389$ ). Chi-square tests were applied to test H2. The results indicate that having an initial career choice will be positively related to the career continuity ( $p=0.034$ ). Hypothesis 2 is therefore supported. The crosstabs further present that among respondents who had not decided their career choice, 60% decided a career

choice after course training in foodservice operation. As for respondents who already had career choices, regardless the career field, 73.4% decided to continue with their initial career choice.

To test H3, multiple regression analysis was used to examine the links between having initial career plans and career continuity in the relationship for an individual's perception of P-E Fit in the foodservice environment. Stepwise procedure was used to run the multiple regression. Results of relationships between having initial career choice, perceived P-E Fit, and career continuity (direct effect) are shown as table 3. The results showed that 4.678% of the variance in career continuity can be predicted from the variables, having career choices and P-E fit. In model 1-1, the F value is 4.678 ( $P < .05$ ); in model 1-2, the F value is 2.522 ( $P > .05$ ). Only model 1-1 presents a significant level. The standardized coefficient ( $\beta$ ) in Model 1-2 indicates that only career choice yields significant results ( $p=.033$ ), while P-E Fit yields no significant results ( $p=.526$ ). The results mean that P-E Fit does not explain the dependent variable, career continuity. Thus, H3 is not supported.

**Table 3:** Multiple regression results of career choice, PE Fit and career continuity

Dependent variable→		Career Continuity	
Independent variable↓	Model 1-1		Model 1-2
	β(p)	β(p)	β(p)
Constant	-	-	-
Career Choice	.334*	.337*	.033
P-E Fit		.038	.526
R2	.061	.066	.005**
ΔR <sup>2</sup>			
F	4.678*	2.522	.087

\*p< .05 \*\* p< .01 \*\*\* p< .001

In this study, two surveys were conducted before and after the course training in foodservice operation. Changes in participants' self-efficacy beliefs and perceived P-E fit after course training are explored. Paired sample T-test was applied to examine the difference after training. The results show a significant increase in self-efficacy. Also, there is a positive relationship and high correlation between individual's self-efficacy before and after the class training (p=.000). On the contrary, the results show a decrease in the perceived P-E fit in foodservice environment before and after class training. However, the correlation between individual's perceived P-E fit in foodservice before and after class training was not significant (p=.057).

## Discussion

This study provides insight on factors that influence undergraduate students' career planning process. It is found that undergraduate students who have an initial career choice before course training tend to have higher career continuity in the decided career field. However, in terms of career-related factors (career self-efficacy), one of the most striking findings of this study is the non-significant correlation between self-efficacy and career choice. It means that for students enrolled in the foodservice laboratory, their self-efficacy beliefs do not help them to determine their career choice. The results are not consistent with prior research. Moreover, these findings also do not fit our fundamental social cognitive career theory. An explanation for these results is the small sample size. Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson states that the sample size used in multiple regression is perhaps the single most influential element under the control of the research in designing the analysis [57]. The effects of sample size are considered as most directly in the statistical power of the significance testing and the generalizability of the result. This study aimed to explore the factors influencing undergraduate students career choice and career continuity in foodservice operation, so that the samples were limited to students enrolled in this laboratory. Only 13.5% of students did not have a preferred career field before taking the foodservice operation course. The small sample therefore failed to generalize the results.

Although the relationship between self-efficacy and career choice is not significant, career choice and career continuity are found to be correlated. It means having an initial career plan in foodservice operation could be the most effective predictor of an

individual's commitment to the foodservice industry. The previous SCCT studies predict that P-E fit has a direct effect on an individual's career goals and career actions. theory of work adjustment (TWA), which is the prototype of PE Fit theory, specifies that the degrees of correspondence (congruence) between an individual's abilities and the ability requirements of the work setting helps to determine important work outcomes such as job tenure [58]. However, this study found that there is no significant relationship between students perceived fit in foodservice operation (P-E fit) and their initial career choice. The perceived P-E fit does not correlate to students' career continuity either. Another main finding is that while there is a positive relationship between career choice and career continuity, the contextual factor (i.e. P-Efit) does not have a significant moderator effect on the relationship between career choice and career continuity. It might be because students who have an initial career plan before taking this foodservice laboratory mostly tend to continue with their original choice, so that how they perceived a fit in the foodservice operations course do not affect their determination on career choices. The effects of small sample size might directly influence the statistical power of the significance testing and fail to generalize the results.

The results indicate that among students whose major is not in Hospitality and Tourism Management, such as food and nutrition, education, etc., only one of them (5%) chose to work in the foodservice industry before taking this foodservice course. After the course training, the same person decided not to work in foodservice after graduation. None of the students majoring in family and consumer science education chose to work in the foodservice industry before or after having training in foodservice. These results correspond to another finding of this research. That is, an individual's initial career choice is correlated to his or her career continuity. Thus, people who do not consider working in the foodservice industry as the career goal, they will eventually discontinue working in foodservice operation. This might explain why the foodservice industry has a high turnover rate due to the fact that only people whose initial career plan is in foodservice management will remain in the foodservice industry.

## Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

The SCCT gives a theoretical background of this study. However, the scales used for testing each construct of SCCT were

not developed by previous studies. A developed scale of P-E fit and career continuity might be helpful for the future studies. Also, the small sample limits this research and the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, expansion of the sample size is recommended for future studies. This foodservice laboratory in Hospitality and Tourism

Department of a well-known Mid-Western University is an appropriate setting to collect data. Data can be used to analysis the difference before and after training in foodservice operation. Thus, the period of collecting data could be expanded to one more semester and should aim to collect at least 200 samples. Longitudinal research is also recommended to examine the career behavior of participants as they progress to different levels of academic status and throughout their careers. Such career development information may prove valuable to foodservice educators and industry professionals.

### Conclusions and Implications

This study finds that an individual's initial career choice is correlated to career continuity. This aligns with recent research findings that undergraduate students who switched into hospitality and tourism management (HTM) majors from previous fields demonstrated significant development in career-related self-efficacy and improved soft skills compared to those who entered directly or did not switch. This suggests that transitioning to a hospitality major may provide unique opportunities for building confidence through curriculum exposure and experiential learning, even if initial self-efficacy does not strongly predict entry into the field—as observed in the current study. Such findings reinforce the value of hospitality programs in fostering self-efficacy gains, particularly for non-traditional entrants, and highlight the potential of targeted educational interventions to enhance career readiness amid industry challenges. As indicated in Zhu, Kim, Milne, and Park's (2024) study, SCCT supports the finding that hospitality employees' occupational self-efficacy positively influences their career commitment. The vocational education inputs, such as skill self-efficacy, could strongly predict lifelong career intentions in hospitality-related fields (Choy & Yeung, 2024) [65].

The implications of the research finding suggest that foodservice programs may want to reinvestigate the work values of the foodservice industry that confirm students' career goals and reinforce their career continuity in the field. Moreover, this study explores that throughout training in foodservice, an individual's self-efficacy beliefs increase. Only interest in a hand-on activity exposing students to the technical mechanics of transmitting energy could be predictive of their efficacy. Therefore, in the training and education perspective, the course training in food operation could be imposed to facilitate the good. Thus, more foodservice training in the industry should be offered in order to increase people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances in foodservice operations. The perceived person-environment fit was not found to have a moderation effect on the relationship between the initial career choice and choice of a career. The non-significant role of P-E fit in moderating career continuity observed here contrasts with organizational contexts where fit fosters deeper outcomes. In a recent study of 373 employees, both person-organization fit and person-job fit

positively predicted career calling—the sense of meaningful, purposeful work—with psychological contracts (employees' perceptions of mutual obligations) partially mediating this relationship [59-62]. Organizational career management practices strengthened this mediated path, amplifying the influence of fit on calling when support for career development was high. In hospitality education and early career stages, the post-training decline in perceived P-E fit may thus hinder the emergence of a stronger career calling unless curricula and industry placements actively nurture psychological contracts through clear expectations, support, and developmental opportunities. The future study should aim to find other contextual factors influencing the career choice.

The results of this study are in line with recent empirical evidence indicating that vocational education inputs, including skill self-efficacy, strongly predict long-term career intentions in hospitality-related fields (Choy & Yeung, 2024) [67]. In conclusion, many students would benefit from career exploration and planning that emphasize a comprehensive self-evaluation of skills and values and an orientation to fundamental career decision-making principles. A career development course is primarily designed to help undecided students with career decision making [63, 64]. Students who completed the career course showed increased career decision-making self-efficacy overall, specifically in the areas of obtaining occupational information, setting career goals, and career planning. It is expected to help students who enrolled in foodservice laboratory courses to increase the career decision-making self-efficacy. The findings of this study could be used to improve the training in foodservice operation. For example, future course training in foodservice should help students to determine their career choice after graduation. The foodservice career course in hospitality and tourism programs should appear to lower perceived career decision difficulties. After all, the major goals of foodservice programs are to graduate academic-prepared individuals and successful managers who are not afraid of challenges; leaders able to keep up with an ever-changing industry. More important, hospitality programs are expected to educate and retain people who have career commitment in the foodservice industry.

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