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Exploring Personal and Contextual Influences on Dance Majors' Career Behavior: A Social Cognitive Career Theory Approach

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate how individual and contextual factors influence the career behavior of university students majoring in dance, based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Specifically, it examined the effects of these factors on three key variables: career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, and career preparation behavior. A total of 389 dance major students in South Korea participated in an online survey. Data analyses included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, Pearson correlation analysis, independent-samples Welch's *t*-tests, one-way ANOVA with Scheffé post hoc tests, and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that year of study and accumulated dance experience positively predicted career decision-making self-efficacy and career preparation behavior, highlighting the importance of experiential learning and academic progression. Significant differences across majors were also observed, with commercial dance majors reporting comparatively lower levels of self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Trait anxiety demonstrated consistent negative correlations with all career variables, but in the regression model remained a significant predictor only of career decision-making self-efficacy. Finally, perceived career barriers emerged as the strongest negative predictor, significantly reducing self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and preparatory behaviors. These findings indicate that dance majors' career behavior is influenced by the combined effects of academic progression, accumulated experience, psychological dispositions, and perceived barriers. The results highlight the need for systematic and discipline-specific career development strategies, including tailored interventions and psychological support, to foster sustainable career pathways for dance students.

Key words: dance major, career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, career preparation behavior, trait anxiety, career barriers, Social Cognitive Career Theory

Introduction

Since the enactment of the Korean Career Education Act in 2015, national policy has placed increasing emphasis on systematic support for students' career development through diverse programs such as career curricula, counselling and psychological testing, and experiential opportunities. In line with this policy shift, dance majors are also expected to acquire the competencies necessary to navigate the uncertainties of life after graduation. Structured interventions are therefore needed to enable dance students to respond

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effectively to the rapidly changing social environment and the challenges of transitioning into the labour market (Kim et al., 2018; Kim, 2019; Shin, 2017).

Recent studies have investigated a broad range of individual-level factors, including career decision level, self-leadership, emotional intelligence, grit, ego-resilience, vocational identity, and career adaptability, all of which have been shown to positively influence career decision-making and preparation behaviors (Kim, 2019; Lee, 2023; Lee & Kwon, 2016; Park, 2015). Additional variables such as major satisfaction, psychological capital, protean career attitude, flow experience, and motivation for major selection have consistently emerged as positive predictors of career preparation (Kim & Kim, 2022; Kim et al., 2024; Lee, 2019; Lee et al., 2022; Lee & Lee, 2018; Oh et al., 2016). In contrast to these predominantly positive personal resources, trait anxiety has been consistently identified as a negative affective factor associated with poorer career-related outcomes. Elevated anxiety is known to undermine decision-making self-efficacy and goal-directed behavior by reducing attentional control and increasing cognitive interference (Eysenck et al., 2007; Ryu & Ko, 2024; Shin et al., 2019). Within dance contexts, higher trait anxiety has been linked to lower career decision-making self-efficacy (Ham & Kim, 2021) and to maladaptive coping patterns among dancers (Barrell & Terry, 2003; Lench et al., 2010). Given this evidence, trait anxiety is an important individual factor warranting focused examination, as it represents a meaningful risk condition that may hinder career development among dance majors.

Although numerous personal factors have been examined in prior research, relatively little attention has been given to contextual influences. A small number of studies have considered factors such as departmental and major commitment in relation to career barriers and self-efficacy, the contribution of social support to career decision-making self-efficacy and preparation behaviors, and the mediating role of resilience in this relationship (Choi, 2016; Do, 2019; Kwon et al., 2023). However, these studies remain limited to specific variables and do not offer a comprehensive view of how individual and contextual factors jointly shape career development. This gap is particularly salient for dance majors, who face distinctive challenges such as early career tracking, intensive practice schedules, and limited opportunities for broader career exploration, thereby underscoring the need for approaches that integrate both individual and environmental factors (Ashton & Ashton, 2016; Pickard, 2012).

Dance students typically make career-related decisions earlier than their peers during secondary education, devoting considerable time to both theoretical study and practical training to develop specialised expertise in dance. At the university level, they dedicate extensive hours to training, rehearsals, and performances, which increases major commitment but can restrict opportunities for broader career exploration. Traditionally, career options have been concentrated in the roles of performer or educator. More recently, however, new opportunities have emerged with the expansion of digital content markets, dance therapy, and interdisciplinary arts, requiring students to negotiate between conventional and emerging career trajectories (Kim, 2019). This pattern resonates with international evidence showing that music and dance graduates often enter portfolio careers that combine multiple creative and non-creative roles, reflecting a substantial gap between students' initial expectations and the realities of sustaining professional work (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015). Nevertheless, structural barriers persist. Employment in dance is often characterised by freelance, part-time, and other precarious forms of labour, marked by limited job security and economic instability (Korea Employment Information Service, 2019; Park, 2015). Social perceptions also contribute to the difficulty of sustaining a career, as dance majors often face a tension between artistic fulfilment and financial stability (Jo, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges by reducing participation in cultural and artistic activities: large-scale national surveys report a 24–25% decline in outdoor activities and a 15–17% decline in indoor attendance at theatres and similar venues (Shin, 2025). Such conditions have intensified the uncertainty of career prospects in dance, underscoring the need for a deeper understanding of how students navigate their career pathways. For dance

majors, reduced performance and training opportunities during the pandemic directly curtailed career preparation, intensifying the instability already characteristic of the dance profession.

The multiple internal and external obstacles that hinder career development are conceptualised as career barriers (Crites, 1969). These barriers can constrain an individual's goals, activity choices, and subsequent behaviors (Lindley, 2005). High levels of perceived barriers are often associated with reduced engagement in career-related behaviors (Hirschi, 2011; Marciniak et al., 2021). Yet, career barriers do not invariably function as deterrents; in some cases, they may act as challenges that stimulate proactive preparation behaviors (Hirschi et al., 2013; Swanson & Tokar, 1991). This dual role highlights the importance of perception: barriers can either inhibit or facilitate career preparation, depending on how they are cognitively appraised. Accordingly, career barriers should be understood not merely as individual impediments but as factors embedded within broader socio-cultural and economic contexts. For dance majors, who often encounter both early career commitments and unstable employment conditions, a comprehensive account of such contextual influences is particularly critical.

Career development can be conceptualised as the outcome of dynamic interactions among individual, behavioral, and environmental factors. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 2005) provides a robust framework for analysing these processes by integrating cognitive, affective, and contextual determinants. Based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, SCCT emphasises self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal-setting as core cognitive variables, while also recognising the influence of external conditions such as socioeconomic factors. The theory comprises three interrelated models: the interest model, which explains how self-efficacy and outcome expectations shape career interests; the performance model, which incorporates goals, abilities, and past performance to predict achievement and persistence; and the choice model, which underscores the role of contextual affordances and barriers in career decision-making (Lent et al., 1994). Among these, the choice model is particularly relevant for understanding the careers of dance majors, as it highlights the interplay between personal characteristics and external conditions.

Guided by SCCT's choice model, the present study examines how individual and contextual factors jointly influence the career behaviors of dance majors. Specifically, we focus on (a) individual factors such as gender, year of study, major, dance experience, and trait anxiety; (b) contextual factors, particularly perceived career barriers; and (c) behavioral outcomes including career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, and career preparation behaviors. By integrating these factors within a single framework, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of career development in the dance context. In doing so, it aims to generate empirical insights that extend SCCT to the unique circumstances of dance majors, and to provide foundational evidence for designing more effective educational and counselling interventions to support their career development.

Methods

Participants

The participants were undergraduate dance majors enrolled in five universities located in the Seoul and Gyeonggi area of South Korea. A convenience sampling strategy was employed, with participants recruited through class announcements in each institution. Data were collected via an online survey administered through Google Forms between 5 March and 17 April 2024. Of the 403 students who responded, 14 surveys were excluded due to incomplete or invalid responses, leaving a final sample of 389 students. The mean age was 21.01 years (SD = 1.42 years). The distribution by gender, year of study, major, and dance experience is presented in Table 1.

Measures

Individual factors. Individual characteristics were assessed through demographic variables (gender, year

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Variables		Frequency (N)	Ratio (%)
Gender	Male	27	6.9
	Female	362	93.1
Year of study	1st year	127	32.6
	2nd year	91	23.4
	3rd year	108	27.8
	4th year	63	16.2
Major	Korean Dance	131	33.7
	Ballet	30	7.7
	Modern Dance	23	5.9
	Commercial Dance	205	52.7
Year of dance experience	1-3 years	120	30.8
	4-6 years	93	23.9
	7-9 years	58	14.9
	10 years more	118	30.3
Total		389	100.0

of study, major, and dance experience) and trait anxiety. Trait anxiety was measured using the Trait Anxiety subscale of the State–Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) originally developed by Spielberger et al. (1970) and adapted into Korean by Kim (1978). The scale comprises 20 items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = almost never, 5 = almost always), with seven reverse-scored items; higher scores indicate greater trait anxiety. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated that three items (Items 6, 7, and 19) showed low factor loadings and/or substantial misfit and were therefore removed. Modification indices further suggested correlated residuals for two item pairs (Items 1 and 10; Items 9 and 11), which were permitted due to shared wording/semantic overlap (Brown, 2015; Kline, 2016). The refined 17-item model demonstrated adequate construct validity and strong internal consistency (see Table 2).

Contextual factor. Perceived career barriers were measured using the Korean College Students' Career Barrier Inventory (KCBI; Kim, 2001). The KCBI consists of 45 items across nine subscales (lack of self-clarity, interpersonal difficulties, economic difficulties, conflict with significant others, lack of occupational information, age-related issues, physical inferiority, lack of interest, and future anxiety), rated on a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree); higher scores indicate greater perceived barriers. CFA generally supported the nine-factor structure; however, three items (Items 26, 41, and 45) were removed due to insufficient factor loadings (< .40) and/or substantial cross-loadings. The final model retained the original nine-subscale framework with 42 items and showed acceptable construct validity and internal consistency (see Table 2).

Career-related outcomes. Career decision-making self-efficacy was assessed using the Korean adaptation (Lee & Lee, 2000) of the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale–Short Form (CDMSE-SF; Betz et al., 1996). The instrument assesses five theoretically derived domains: career information gathering, goal setting, career planning, problem solving, and self-appraisal, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all confident, 5 = very confident), with higher scores indicating greater career decision-making self-efficacy. CFA suggested that two problem-solving items (Items 13 and 17) exhibited low factor loadings and/or notable cross-loadings and were therefore removed, resulting in a 23-item, five-factor structure. The refined model showed good fit and acceptable internal consistency

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analyses for measurement instruments

Scale	No. of factors (items)	χ^2(df)	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	Cronbach's α
Trait Anxiety	1 (17)	554.634 (117)	.979	.976	.099	.077	.974	.910
Career Barriers	9 (42)	2771.282 (783)	.986	.985	.081	.074	.981	.740 – .860
Career Decision-making Self-Efficacy	5 (23)	992.275 (220)	.982	.979	.095	.071	.977	.670 – .800
Career Outcome Expectations	2 (7)	49.483 (13)	.995	.992	.085	.040	.995	.799 – .800
Career Preparation Behavior	3 (12)	155.140 (38)	.945	.904	.089	.059	.939	.634 – .877

Note. Model fit was evaluated using commonly recommended criteria for confirmatory factor analysis: CFI and TLI ≥ .90, RMSEA ≤ .08–.10, SRMR ≤ .08, and GFI ≥ .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016). Across the five measurement instruments, CFI and TLI values were consistently high (.945–.995), SRMR remained within acceptable bounds (.040 –.077), and GFI values indicated adequate fit (.939–.995). Although RMSEA values for several models fell slightly above the most conservative cutoff (e.g., .081–.099), such levels are frequently considered acceptable for applied, multidimensional instruments and models with large degrees of freedom. This interpretation aligns with recent methodological discussions highlighting the contextual nature of RMSEA evaluation (Heblich et al., 2023; Goretzko et al., 2024).

across subscales (α = .67–.80; see Table 2).

Career outcome expectations were assessed using a self-report scale measuring students' beliefs about the likely consequences of pursuing a dance major. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Although the original instrument comprised 14 items, the present study focused on the academic and career outcome subscales, resulting in nine items reflecting the conceptual distinction between academic and career-related consequences. CFA initially supported a two-factor structure; however, two items (Items 7 and 8) were removed due to substantial cross-loadings and/or large correlated residuals with limited unique contribution. The final measurement model therefore consisted of seven items (four academic outcome expectation items and three career outcome expectation items), retained the two-factor structure, and demonstrated good overall fit and internal consistency (see Table 2).

Career preparation behavior was measured using the Career Preparation Behavior Scale (Kim & Kim, 1997). Following CFA, the final structure comprised 12 items across three subscales: information seeking, acquisition of preparatory tools, and practical efforts; higher scores indicate greater engagement in career preparation behaviors. Internal consistency ranged from α = .634 to .877 across subscales. Although reliability for the information-seeking subscale was slightly below the optimal criterion, the overall scale demonstrated adequate measurement quality. CFA showed strong incremental fit (CFI/TLI) and acceptable residual fit (SRMR), while RMSEA was slightly above conventional cutoffs (see Table 2).

Data Analysis

CFAs were conducted using AMOS 29.0, whereas all other statistical analyses were performed in R (version 4.3.0). First, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) were calculated to examine the distributional characteristics of each variable, and reliability and construct validity were assessed using Cronbach's α and CFA. Second, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine interrelationships among the main variables and to

evaluate potential multicollinearity. Third, group differences in career-related outcomes by gender, year of study, major, dance experience, trait anxiety, and perceived career barriers were tested. Welch's independent-samples t-tests were used for two-group comparisons, and one-way ANOVA with Scheffé post hoc tests was performed for comparisons involving three or more groups. Finally, multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify the relative contributions of individual factors (year of study, major, dance experience, and trait anxiety) and contextual factors (perceived career barriers) to career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, and career preparation behavior. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$ for all analyses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the principal study variables are presented in Table 3. Specifically, the mean (*M*), standard deviation (*SD*), skewness, and kurtosis were examined for each construct. All skewness and kurtosis values fell within the conventional threshold of ±1, thereby supporting the assumption of univariate normality (Kline, 2016).

In terms of variable levels, trait anxiety ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.72$) was found to be at a relatively moderate-to-low level among dance majors. Career barriers ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 0.59$) were reported at a comparatively low level, whereas career decision-making self-efficacy ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.59$) and career outcome expectations ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.65$) demonstrated relatively high mean scores. Career preparation behavior ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.80$) was also above the scale midpoint, suggesting that, overall, participants actively engaged in career-related behaviors.

With regard to bivariate correlations, trait anxiety showed a significant positive association with career barriers ($r = .67$, $p < .01$). Conversely, trait anxiety was negatively correlated with career decision-making self-efficacy ($r = –.49$, $p < .01$), career outcome expectations ($r = –.31$, $p < .01$), and career preparation behavior ($r = –.31$, $p < .01$). These results indicate that heightened anxiety is linked to greater perceived barriers, reduced psychological resources for decision-making, and diminished engagement in preparatory behaviors. Similarly, career barriers exhibited significant negative correlations with career decision-making self-efficacy ($r = –.61$, $p < .01$), career outcome expectations ($r = –.41$, $p < .01$), and career preparation behavior ($r = –.31$, $p < .01$). This suggests that perceiving greater environmental or structural obstacles is related to lower confidence in making career decisions, reduced optimism regarding career outcomes, and decreased preparatory behavior.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of the five scales

Scale	M	SD	Scale point	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4	5
1. Trait Anxiety	2.75	0.72	5	–0.04	–0.54	1				
2. Career Barriers	2.05	0.59	4	0.29	–0.45	0.67**	1			
3. Career Decision-making Self-Efficacy	3.73	0.59	5	0.18	–0.61	–0.49**	–0.61**	1		
4. Career Outcome Expectations	4.04	0.65	5	–0.09	–0.85	–0.31**	–0.41**	0.61**	1	
5. Career Preparation Behavior	3.10	0.80	5	0.20	–0.19	–0.31**	–0.31**	0.45**	0.18**	1

Note. N = 389. Correlations are Pearson's *r*. **p<.01 (two-tailed). All $|r|$<.85 (Kline, 2016), indicating no multicollinearity among the scales.

By contrast, career decision-making self-efficacy was positively correlated with career outcome expectations (r = .61, p < .01) and career preparation behavior (r = .45, p < .01), underscoring the pivotal role of self-efficacy in shaping both expectations of career success and the enactment of preparatory activities. Career outcome expectations also demonstrated a significant positive correlation with career preparation behavior (r = .18, p < .01), indicating that stronger positive expectations are accompanied by more active behavioral engagement.

Finally, multicollinearity was assessed to confirm the discriminant validity of the constructs. All correlation coefficients were below the recommended threshold of .85 (Kline, 2016), thereby confirming the absence of multicollinearity among the five scales.

Group Differences in Career-related outcomes by Individual Characteristics

Group differences in career-related outcomes were examined according to gender, year of study, major, dance experience, and trait anxiety (see Tables 4). Independent-samples Welch's t-tests indicated no

Table 4. Differences in career-related outcomes by individual characteristics

Group	N	Career decision self-efficacy M (SD)	Career outcome expectations M (SD)	Career preparation behavior M (SD)
Gender				
- Male	27	3.69 (0.66)	4.14 (0.71)	2.90 (0.75)
- Female	362	3.74 (0.62)	4.04 (0.80)	3.12 (0.80)
t (*df*)		–1.03 (29.74)	0.75 (29.74)	–1.41 (30.60)
p		.310	.457	.167
Year of study				
- 1st year	127	3.58 (0.58)	3.98 (0.58)	2.79 (0.64)
- 2nd year	91	3.71 (0.62)	3.94 (0.61)	2.87 (0.71)
- 3rd year	108	3.96 (0.66)	4.18 (0.64)	3.50 (0.79)
- 4th year	63	3.93 (0.50)	4.06 (0.64)	3.10 (0.80)
F (3, 385)		8.74***	3.02*	23.99***
p		< .001	.030	< .001
Major				
- Korean dance	131	3.90 (0.65)	4.16 (0.64)	3.50 (0.83)
- Ballet	30	4.08 (0.62)	4.29 (0.50)	3.06 (0.96)
- Modern dance	23	3.56 (0.37)	3.85 (0.62)	2.95 (0.39)
- Commercial dance	205	3.67 (0.60)	3.95 (0.60)	2.87 (0.69)
F (3, 378)		24.54***	16.54***	47.23***
p		< .001	< .001	< .001
Dance experience				
- 1–3 years	120	3.63 (0.56)	3.97 (0.59)	2.86 (0.66)
- 4–6 years	93	3.69 (0.63)	3.97 (0.66)	2.80 (0.69)
- 7–9 years	58	3.73 (0.63)	4.04 (0.56)	3.42 (0.90)
- 10+ years	118	4.02 (0.59)	4.17 (0.65)	3.43 (0.80)
F (3, 385)		9.91***	2.76*	20.43***
p		< .001	.042	< .001
Trait anxiety				
- Low	294	3.97 (0.55)	4.19 (0.57)	3.36 (0.90)
- High	96	3.51 (0.50)	3.91 (0.56)	2.87 (0.64)
t (*df*)		8.15 (350.86)***	4.18 (368.46)***	6.32 (348.01)***
p		< .001	< .001	< .001

Note. Values are means (M) and standard deviations (SD). *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

significant differences between male and female students in career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, or career preparation behavior.

One-way ANOVA revealed significant differences across year groups in career decision-making self-efficacy ($p < .001$), career outcome expectations ($p = .030$), and career preparation behavior ($p < .001$). Post hoc comparisons showed that third-year students scored higher than first-year students ($p < .001$) and second-year students ($p = .038$) on career decision-making self-efficacy, and that fourth-year students scored higher than first-year students ($p = .004$). For career preparation behavior, both third- and fourth-year students scored significantly higher than first- and second-year students (all ps $< .001$). Career outcome expectations were also higher among third-year students compared with first-year students ($p = .030$).

Significant differences were also found across majors in all three outcomes (all ps $< .001$). Post hoc comparisons showed that commercial dance majors consistently reported lower career decision-making self-efficacy than Korean dance ($p = .008$), modern dance ($p = .027$), and ballet majors ($p = .010$). They also reported lower career outcome expectations than Korean dance ($p = .018$) and ballet majors ($p = .042$), and lower career preparation behavior than Korean dance ($p < .001$), ballet ($p = .038$), and modern dance majors ($p = .015$).

Dance experience was also associated with significant differences in all three outcomes. Students with more than 10 years of experience scored higher in career decision-making self-efficacy than those with 1–3 years ($p < .001$), 4–6 years ($p = .001$), and 7–9 years of experience ($p = .025$). They also scored higher in career preparation behavior than all other groups (all ps $< .001$). Additionally, students with 7–9 years of experience reported higher preparation behavior than those with 1–3 years and 4–6 years (ps $< .001$).

Finally, trait anxiety demonstrated robust group differences. Students in the high-anxiety group reported significantly lower career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, and career preparation behavior than those in the low-anxiety group (all ps $< .001$).

Group Differences in Career-related Outcomes by Contextual Variables

Differences in career-related outcomes were also examined according to the level of perceived career barriers (Table 5). Significant differences were found for career decision-making self-efficacy ($p < .001$) and career preparation behavior ($p < .001$). Students who perceived low levels of career barriers reported higher career decision-making self-efficacy ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.53$) than those with high perceived barriers ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.47$). Similarly, students in the low-barriers group reported higher career preparation behavior ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.87$) compared with their peers in the high-barriers group ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.63$). By contrast, career outcome expectations also differed significantly between the two groups ($p < .001$), with students perceiving low levels of barriers reporting higher expectations ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.62$) than those perceiving high levels ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.59$). These findings suggest that higher perceived career barriers

Table 5. Differences in career-related outcomes by level of perceived career barriers (low vs. high)

Group	N	Career decision self-efficacy M (SD)	Career outcome expectations M (SD)	Career preparation behavior M (SD)
Career barriers				
- Low barriers	190	4.05 (0.53)	4.29 (0.62)	3.34 (0.87)
- High barriers	199	3.43 (0.47)	3.81 (0.59)	2.85 (0.63)
t (df)		12.35 (378.11)***	7.81 (383.60)***	6.57 (342.47)***
p		< .001	< .001	< .001

Note. Values are means (M) and standard deviations (SD). ***$p < .001$.

are associated with diminished self-efficacy, less positive expectations about future career outcomes, and lower engagement in career preparation behaviors.

Predictors of Career-related Outcomes by Individual and Contextual Factors

To further examine the predictors of career-related outcomes among dance majors, multiple regression analyses were conducted with year of study, major, dance experience, trait anxiety, and perceived career barriers as independent variables, and career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, and career preparation behavior as dependent variables. Gender was excluded from the models, as no significant group differences were found in the prior analyses. Results are summarised in Table 6.

For career decision-making self-efficacy, the overall model was statistically significant, explaining 42.5% of the variance (adjusted R^2 = .425, F(10, 378) = 29.68, p < .001). Compared with first-year students, second-year students reported higher decision-making self-efficacy, and students with more years of dance experience also showed higher levels of self-efficacy. In contrast, higher trait anxiety (β = –.119, p = .025) and higher perceived career barriers (β = –.519, p < .001) were associated with significantly lower decision-making self-efficacy. These findings indicate that students with greater experience and higher academic standing tend to report stronger decision-making self-efficacy, whereas higher anxiety and greater perceived barriers significantly reduce self-efficacy.

For career outcome expectations, the model was significant, accounting for 19.1% of the variance (adjusted R^2 = .191, F(10, 378) = 10.15, p < .001). There were significant differences across majors, indicating that students in certain fields, such as commercial dance, held less optimistic expectations

Table 6. Results of multiple regression analyses on career-related outcomes by individual and contextual factors

Dependent variable	Independent variable	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
Career decision-making self-efficacy	Year of study	.139	.064	.100	2.171*	.031	1.72
	Major	–.004	.071	–.004	–.061	.951	1.73
	Dance experience	.093	.028	.191	3.271***	.001	2.04
	Trait anxiety	–.070	.031	–.119	–2.257*	.025	1.82
	Career barriers	–.305	.031	–.519	–9.854***	< .001	1.80
	F (10, 378) = 29.68, p < .001, *Adj.* R^2 = .425						
Career outcome expectations	Year of study	–.047	.033	–.083	–1.432	.154	1.72
	Major	–.061	.026	–.137	–2.356*	.019	1.73
	Dance experience	.036	.032	.071	1.125	.261	2.04
	Trait anxiety	–.083	.051	–.096	–1.619	.106	1.82
	Career barriers	–.236	.041	–.361	–5.774***	< .001	1.80
	F (10, 378) = 10.15, p < .001, *Adj.* R^2 = .191						
Career preparation behavior	Year of study	.149	.098	.156	1.519	.130	1.72
	Major	–.627	.143	–.210	–4.392***	< .001	1.73
	Dance experience	.066	.042	.100	1.584	.114	2.04
	Trait anxiety	–.077	.048	–.096	–1.611	.108	1.82
	Career barriers	–.149	.047	–.187	–3.146**	.002	1.80
	F (10, 378) = 15.38, p < .001, *Adj.* R^2 = .270						

Note. B = Unstandardised coefficient; β = Standardised coefficient; SE = Standard error; VIF = Variance inflation factor. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

about their future careers than those in other majors. Perceived career barriers remained a strong negative predictor of outcome expectations (β = –.361, p < .001), suggesting that students who perceive more barriers tend to anticipate less favourable career outcomes, even after controlling for individual characteristics.

For career preparation behavior, the regression model was also significant, explaining 27.0% of the variance (adjusted R^2 = .270, F(10, 378) = 15.38, p < .001). Students in higher years of study, particularly in the third and fourth year, reported greater engagement in preparatory activities than those in the lower years. Major again emerged as a significant predictor, with some majors, most notably commercial dance, showing lower levels of preparation behavior than others. Dance experience also contributed positively to preparation, whereas perceived career barriers were negatively associated with preparatory behavior (β = –.187, p = .002). Trait anxiety was negatively related to preparation behavior at the zero-order level, but did not remain a significant predictor once other variables, especially perceived barriers, were included in the model. Overall, these findings suggest that while individual experiences and training history promote preparatory engagement, contextual constraints play a prominent inhibitory role.

Discussion

Guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), this study examined how individual and contextual factors jointly contribute to dance majors' career decision-making self-efficacy, career outcome expectations, and career preparation behavior. Across all three outcomes, perceived career barriers emerged as the most consistent and powerful negative predictor, while year of study, major, dance experience, and trait anxiety exerted domain-specific and differentiated effects. These findings reinforce the SCCT proposition that career development of dance majors results from the dynamic interaction of personal attributes, learning experiences, and environmental conditions rather than any single determinant.

Students in higher years of study reported greater self-efficacy, more positive outcome expectations, and stronger engagement in preparation than those in lower years. This pattern suggests that confidence and preparatory behaviors increase with academic progression, consistent with previous findings among general undergraduates (Lee & Jung, 2012; Park & Hong, 2016). However, unlike the broader university context in which career education is typically introduced from the early years, dance majors often lack discipline-specific early career interventions that reflect the unique demands and uncertainties of dance careers (Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015; Kim et al., 2018). This indicates that the lower levels of self-efficacy and preparation observed among first- and second-year dance majors may be due less to the absence of generic university-wide provision and more to the scarcity of tailored programmes designed for the dance domain. The pronounced differences observed between lower- and upper-year students in this study underscore the urgency of implementing major-specific career guidance from the first year.

Differences across majors were also notable. Students majoring in commercial dance consistently exhibited lower self-efficacy and career preparation behavior than Korean dance, ballet, or modern dance students. This pattern may reflect the less institutionalised and more volatile professional environment of commercial dance, where formal pathways and informational resources are limited (Choi, 2020). The regression findings also confirmed that major remained a significant negative predictor for both career outcome expectations and preparation behavior, highlighting the structural disadvantages experienced by students in this field. These disparities suggest the need for targeted, major-specific interventions that address the unique challenges of commercial dance careers.

Dance experience demonstrated stable associations with career outcomes, consistent with prior research showing that long-term engagement in dance contributes to the development of mastery experiences and stronger career identity (Jo & Jung, 2020; Kim, 2009; Kim & Hyun, 2008; Schwender et al., 2018). In the regression model, dance experience significantly predicted career decision-making self-efficacy, indicating that accumulated performance and training

experiences continue to serve as salient sources of efficacy information for dance majors (Bandura, 1997; Ko et al., 2009; Ko et al., 2020; Lent et al., 1994).

Trait anxiety showed consistent negative correlations with all three career-related outcomes; however, this pattern shifted after other predictors were controlled in the regression analyses. Specifically, trait anxiety remained a significant negative predictor of career decision-making self-efficacy, but its effects on outcome expectations and career preparation behavior were no longer significant once contextual factors—particularly perceived career barriers—were included in the model. This suggests that anxiety primarily impairs cognitive appraisals of capability (Eysenck et al., 2007), whereas its influence on expectancy formation and behavioral engagement may be overshadowed by more proximal contextual constraints. Prior studies support this interpretation: while anxiety reliably undermines career decision-making self- efficacy among dance students (Ham & Kim, 2021), its behavioral consequences tend to vary depending on the presence of coping resources, emotional regulation strategies, and available support systems (Barrell & Terry, 2003; Lench et al., 2010).

Perceived career barriers emerged as the most impactful contextual factor in this study. Higher perceived barriers predicted lower self-efficacy, lower outcome expectations, and reduced preparation behavior, closely mirroring SCCT's emphasis on the inhibiting effects of contextual obstacles (Lent et al., 1994, 2005; Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Fouad & Bingham, 1995). Unlike trait anxiety, these effects remained strong and consistent across all models, highlighting the structural difficulty of navigating dance careers in Korea. This observation aligns with earlier findings that Korean dance majors experience significant external obstacles, including unstable job markets, limited institutional support, and unclear professional pathways, which obstruct their career engagement (Kim, 2019; Lee, 2008). The present results also resonate with applied reports such as the Barriers to Dance review (Candoco Dance Company, 2025), which documents widespread challenges faced by dancers globally, including irregular income, lack of secure employment, and inaccessible training systems. Taken together, these findings emphasise that perceived barriers reflect not only individual perceptions but structural realities embedded in the dance ecosystem.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results extend SCCT to the context of dance majors by demonstrating that SCCT's general framework requires discipline-specific adaptation when applied to arts fields, as reviewers recommended. For example, the relatively weak predictive role of trait anxiety for preparatory behavior and the strong dominance of contextual barriers suggest that in dance education, contextual constraints may overshadow personal attributes to a greater extent than in other disciplines. This highlights the need for a modified SCCT-informed model for dance careers that places greater emphasis on structural and cultural characteristics of the dance profession—such as unstable employment structures, competitive audition cultures, and variability in institutional support.

This study has two primary limitations. First, the sample showed uneven distributions across gender and major. The gender imbalance reflects a well-documented structural characteristic of dance education rather than a sampling error (Pickard, 2012; Risner & Stinson, 2010). However, the disproportion across majors represents a sampling limitation, and future studies should aim for more balanced recruitment across dance genres. Second, the study used a cross-sectional, self-report design, which limits causal inference and may introduce response bias. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs and multi-method assessments, including behavioral or observational measures.

Despite these limitations, the present study offers meaningful empirical insight into the career development of dance majors. The findings reveal that career-related outcomes are shaped by a differentiated interplay of experiential, psychological, and contextual factors, with perceived career barriers emerging as the most powerful inhibitory influence. This underscores the need for career development approaches that speak directly to the realities of dance education. In particular, the results highlight the importance of providing discipline-specific career education from the early years of study, offering sustained guidance for students in

fields where occupational information and formal pathways are limited, such as commercial dance, and integrating emotional regulation and coping-skills training to support students who struggle with anxiety. Furthermore, the findings draw attention to broader structural issues within dance training and employment environments, suggesting that systemic efforts to reduce institutional and occupational barriers will be essential for enabling more equitable and sustainable career trajectories for aspiring dancers.

Conclusion

This study examined how individual and contextual factors influence the career development of dance majors, guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The results showed that perceived career barriers were the most powerful negative influence, consistently reducing career decision-making self-efficacy and engagement in preparatory behavior. In contrast, year of study and accumulated dance experience contributed positively to students' confidence and behavioral involvement, highlighting the importance of experiential learning and progression. Major differences and trait anxiety displayed more selective effects, suggesting that certain personal dispositions and programme characteristics affect specific career-related outcomes rather than exerting uniform influence.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the career development of dance majors is shaped by a combination of individual dispositions, experiential resources, and structural constraints, rather than by isolated factors. Practically, the study underscores the need for tailored career support within higher dance education, including early discipline-specific guidance, mentoring systems, and psychological support to address anxiety and perceived barriers. By clarifying how multiple factors jointly contribute to the formation of career-related beliefs and behaviors, this study provides a foundation for designing more effective educational and counselling strategies that promote sustainable and realistic career pathways for dance students.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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