CHAPTER 3:
OBJECTIVES AND FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES

3.1 Chapter Overview

The present chapter includes two sections. Various objectives of the study are discussed in section one and the second section deals with the development of hypotheses followed by the conceptual model.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

The present study is designed to address the research gaps identified in the previous chapter. Based on the study of past literature, a conceptual model is formulated, which is used as the basic framework for the study. An empirical enquiry is followed to address the research objectives in the later part of study.

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To propose a conceptual model using MST as the theoretical framework to explain the antecedents and consequences of Career Decisiveness.

2. To use the various components of MST (goal setting, Career Self Efficacy, Perceived Social Support, and Optimism) as predictors of three career planning attitudes (Career Adaptability, Career Optimism, and Perceived Knowledge of Job Market).

3. To empirically test the relationship between the main components of MST and each of the three career planning attitudes.
4. To empirically test the relationship between the main components of MST and Career Decisiveness.

5. To explore the relationship between Career Decisiveness and Life Satisfaction.

3.3 Proposed Hypotheses

3.3.1 Relationship between Goal Decidedness and Career Planning Attitudes

Goal Decidedness is explained as presence of goals which directs individual’s efforts at work and is therefore linked to performance which is linked to reward systems (Mu, 1991). Goals represented in the form of goal setting or instability or orientation is found to increase adolescent’s career exploration and planning efforts (Patton et al., 2004; Santos 2003; Rogers et al., 2008). Individuals who are expected to commit to higher career related goals also engage in more career planning and are equipped with positive career planning attitudes to attain that goal (Ford, 1987; Ford and Smith 2007; Hirschi 2009; Lent, 2013; Reardson et al., 2000). In similar lines, using a longitudinal study, the relationship between goal orientation and career aspiration was analyzed by Creed et al. (2011). The authors concluded that individuals who are very clear about their goals tend to reach their desired outcomes by developing appropriate attitudes. These individuals would be more focused in what they would like to do in their careers so they would be concerned and hence would obtain as much as information as possible about jobs of their interest and employment market trends (Rogers et al., 2008). The knowledge of job market trends help them not only set realistic career goals but also help them prepare contingency plans (Flum and Blustein, 2000; Hall, 1986; Taveira and Moreno, 2000). Hence, they are likely to be flexible in changing their career plans because of the changes in the market. At the same time,
they will be very optimistic about their careers. In other words they will hope for the best but prepared for the worst. On the basis of the above, the following hypotheses are proposed.

\textit{H1A: Goal Decidedness is positively related to Career Adaptability.}

\textit{H1B: Goal Decidedness is positively related to Career Optimism.}

\textit{H1C: Goal Decidedness is positively related to Perceived Knowledge of Job Market.}

3.3.2 Relationship between Career Self Efficacy and Career Planning Attitudes

Career researchers have proved that higher Career Self Efficacy promoted the development of career related attitudes like CA, PJK (measured by vocational exploration and career exploration), and career commitment (Betz and Hackett, 1983; Bluestein, 1989; Sullivan and Mahalik 2000; Zhao 2012). Hirschi et al. (2010) showed that conscientiousness (related to self efficacy) was related to occupational interest which was again related to career exploration variables such as self-exploration, career information seeking, and stress regarding career exploration. Studies have also shown career related Self Efficacy to impact career planning attitudes like Career Adaptability (Creed, Patton, and Prideaux, 2007; Hirschi, 2009). Atta et al. (2013) found that career related self-efficacy was significant negative predictor of negative career thought. Bandura (1999, 2000) suggested that career cognition levels are improved by constructs like Career Self Efficacy that can strengthen or weaken one's self-evaluation of their career abilities (Career Self Efficacy) and consequently influence career outcomes. Brown et al. (2003) examined studied the relationship between Career Self Efficacy and their beliefs about career exploration by students, and found the former to significantly predict career exploration.
They concluded that students’ perception of the labor market is related to how effectively they feel confident about their own ability to fulfill their career goals. In a study with high school students, Anderson and Brown (1997) found that Career Self Efficacy predicted career development attitude for both rural and urban students. Individuals who were high on Career Self Efficacy were more optimistic about their careers and were very open to changes in their career plans. At the same time such individuals were continually looking for information about the job market and employment trends. Based on the above observations, following hypotheses can be framed.

**H2A:** Career Self Efficacy is positively related to Career Adaptability.

**H2B:** Career Self Efficacy is positively related to Career Optimism.

**H2C:** Career Self Efficacy is positively related to Perceived Knowledge of Job Market.

### 3.3.3 Relationship between Perceived Social Support and Career Planning Attitudes

Career theorists acknowledge that vocational outcomes are determined by the peoples interactions with their environments which accentuate the learning experiences (both direct and vicarious), and contour their vocational and career related interests (Osipow, 1990; Rounds and Tracey, 1990; Super, 1957). Research has shown that perceived support from the societal surroundings is critical for successful adolescent vocational development (Felsman and Blustein, 1999; Kracke, 2002). Rodriguez (2012) showed that social support is important for developing correct career planning attitudes among students. Studies conducted on similar lines have shown that Perceived Social Support to be an important predictor for career planning attitudes like PJK, CA, and CO (Hargrove et al., 2005; Henneyesseya et al., 2008; Hurtung et al., 2002; Rogers et
Involvement of social group in the form of family, friends, and teachers has been instrumental in developing career exploration among high school students (Noack et al., 2010). Adolescents who demonstrate higher levels of attachment towards family, friends, and peers show greater propensity to engage in greater market exploration and make better career choices, suggesting that supportive, relations aid the career development tasks (Hirschi et al., 2010).

Several researchers have stressed the importance of broad cultural contexts in understanding career choices (Blustein, 1988; Fouad and Kantamneni, 2008). Schmitt et al. (1998) stated that different cultures provide different ranges of opportunities because of dissimilarity in government policies that influence market conditions and lifestyles. Thus, vocational and career development is very sensitive to one's cultural context. For example, East German adolescents who grew up under a communist regime had fewer career choices available than adolescents in West Germany, where there was a strong economy and much less central government control (Reitzle, Vondracek, and Silbereisen, 1998). The function of social context becomes more imperative in cultures guided by collectivism values (Choi, et al, 2010). In case of collectivist cultures, career decision making process is mostly impacted by family and parents (Agarwal, 2008).

To sum up, it can be argued that an individual who receives adequate emotional and social support from the social environment is likely to explore more about the job market; would be more optimistic about the career choices; and would make appropriate adjustment pertaining to career decisions. The following hypotheses are proposed based on the findings.

**H3A:** Perceived Social Support is positively related to Career Adaptability.

**H3B:** Perceived Social Support is positively related to Career Optimism.

**H3C:** Perceived Social Support will impact Perceived Knowledge of Job Market.
3.3.4 Relationship between Optimism and Career Planning Attitudes

Research on career planning indicates that a more optimistic attitude towards various aspects of life is related to better career planning and greater career exploration among adolescents (Rogers et al., 2008; Hirschi et al., 2010). Studies have shown that Optimism impacts career planning attitudes like CA and CO (Duffy 2011; Levy et al., 2013; Murphy et al., 2010; Shin and Kelly 2012). Patton et al. (2004) found Optimism positively influencing career expectations which further predicted career goals, planning, and exploration. As purpose-driven attitude is also associated with Optimism; it enables an individual to gain better knowledge of job market. It was found that optimistic students find it easier with career identity and academic adjustment (Shin and Kelly, 2012). Hirschi (2009) related Emotions with Career Adaptability. Recent research provided evidence that Optimism is positively related to important career outcomes like job satisfaction, work happiness, organizational commitment, and performance (Kluemper, Little, and DeGroot, 2009; Youssef and Luthans, 2007). Further, research has shown that that optimists maintain a positive outlook by inhabiting less on negative or stressful situations, fighting back amidst stress, so as to develop plans of action to deal with stressful situations (Peterson and Seligman, 1984; Shifren and Hooker, 1995; Strack, Carver, and Blaney, 1987). Thus individuals who are very optimistic about life will develop positive attitude towards work. In the process, they would gain more insights about job market, employment trends, and would be very adjusting to unforeseen situations pertaining to their careers. On the basis of the above observations, the following hypotheses are proposed.

**H4A: Optimism is positively related to Career Adaptability.**
3.3.5 Relationship between Career Planning Attitudes and Career Decisiveness

Career planning attitudes influence the degree of engagement in career planning activities (e.g., talking about career plans with adults; getting part time or summer jobs; entering the workforce after graduation) and overall self-ratings of attitudes toward making career plans (NOICC 1992). Thus they are important in making right career choices (Greenhaus, 1978). Career Decisiveness; necessitate an enormous amount of preparation and a higher level of career maturity that is characterized by assessment of one’s ability, and knowledge of available careers and employment opportunities (Gottfredson, 1981). With right career planning attitude, the ability to synthesize career information develops, which results in increased clarity and specificity about career choices (Dzibun et al., 1994). In the process of developing career planning attitudes, individuals are constantly high on self and environmental assessment. Individuals use career opportunities, and adjust their individual traits with the career opportunities available (Tahiroğlu, 2002). Such attitudes are therefore supposed to help individuals improve themselves to satisfy their current needs in accordance with the changing market conditions (Deal 2007; Wong et al. 2008). Studies have shown that students who enrolled in various career related programs developed positive career planning attitudes like vocational identity, and career maturity and were more decisive about their careers (Bollman, 2009; Johnson et al., 2002; Peng 2001; Salter 2009). In similar lines, Gunkel et al. (2010) showed that
career planning attitudes like CA, CO, PJK had a positive impact on Career Decisiveness. Based on the above observations, the following hypotheses are developed,

**H5A:** *Career Adaptability is positively related to Career Decisiveness.*

**H5B:** *Career is positively related to Career Decisiveness.*

**H5C:** *Perceived Knowledge of Job Market is positively related to Career Decisiveness.*

### 3.3.6. Relationship between Career Decisiveness and Life Satisfaction

Career planning and deciding on a particular career represents a major task in late adolescence and early adulthood (Super, 1990; Havighurst, 1972). Career planning includes a sense of decisiveness, precision of occupational goals, and confidence (Bardick et al., 2004; Light, 1994). Career indecision is the reverse of Career Decisiveness. It represents a state of mind when one is not certain about one’s career (Crites, 1976) and is characterized by obscurity in attaining work-related information, in recognizing and assessing alternative career options, and in selecting and committing to a single alternative (Chartrand et al., 1994; Levinson et al., 1998). Career theorists had shown successful career development has constructive effects on well-being (Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg, 1986). Adolescence faces possible difficulties in making decisions (Costello et al., 2006; Crites, 1976; Luthar and Goldstein, 2008). This career indecision in adolescence in turn leads to indicators of aggression (Creed, Prideaux, and Patton 2005), despair (Saunders, Peterson, Sampson, and Reardon, 2000), and lower self-esteem (Chartrand et al., 1994). Adolescents who are very clear about their future career choices show higher Life Satisfaction (Salmela-Aro and Nurmi, 1997). Adolescents, on the other hand, who
are undecided about their career, prone to be more nervous, and worried, with high external locus of control, and puzzled concerning their self-concept (Hartman and Fuqua, 1983).

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of studies that integrated adolescent career development and positive youth development, the emerging interdisciplinary field of antecedents and consequences of well-being and thriving (Hirschi, 2009; Skorikov et al., 2007; Vondracek et al., 1995). Specifically, studies among high-school students in the US context had shown positive career orientation and better career preparation prevented problem behaviour, and promoted well-being, and decreased distress (Creed et al. 2005; Hirschi, 2009). The literature has shown the positive outcomes associated for those who are experiencing low levels of career indecision (Arnold 1989; Hirschi, 2010; Poeler et al., 2010; Yowell et al., 2011). Creed et al. (2004) showed that adolescents, who reported being clear about their careers, would fare better than those who were undecided about their career choices, and would be experiencing higher Life Satisfaction and psychological well being. Based on the above observations, the following hypothesis is developed,

\textit{H6: Career Decisiveness is positively related to Life Satisfaction.}

Integrating hypotheses 1-6 (including sub cases), the proposed conceptual model is given in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1: The Proposed Conceptual Model