



**THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY AND SOCIOECONOMIC
STATUS (SES) ON IIUM UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'
VOCATIONAL DECISIONS/CHOICES**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine relationships between students' vocational choice and the influences of family and socio-economic status among IIUM Undergraduate students. It was hypothesized that both family and socio-economic status would positively predict career choice students. Participants in this study were 321 students from different kulliyah in IIUM Gombak Campus. Participants were drawn from the total population of IIUM Gombak campus. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and two research measures which are adapted from Career Decision Scale (Osipow etc, 1996) and Career Attitudes and Strategies Inventory (Holland and Goffredson, 1994). Results of Pearson Correlation suggest that family influences were positively related to students' career decisions as hypothesized earlier. On the other hand, the researcher found that family socio-economic status was negatively related to career choice. In addition, the researcher also developed new research question and hypothesis which is concerning gender as one of the contributors in students' career decision making. However, Pearson correlation results indicated that, gender have insignificant role on students' choice. The researcher also included Islamic perspective on guideline to make a better career decision. Limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice are also outlined.

خلاصة البحث

كان الهدف من هذه الدراسة فحص العلاقة بين الاختيار المهني عند الطلاب وبين تأثيرات الأسرة والحالة الاقتصادية الاجتماعية بين طلاب المرحلة الجامعية في الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا. كان من المفترض أن كلتا الأسرة والحالة الاقتصادية الاجتماعية تتنبآن الاختيار المستقبلي السعيد للطلاب. بلغ عدد المشاركين في هذه الدراسة من مختلف كليات الجامعة 321 طالب وطالبة في الحرم الجامعي بغومباك، علمًا بأن هذا العدد مستنبت من المجموع الكلي لطلاب الجامعة. أجاب هؤلاء المشاركون الاستبيان والباحثين المقياسين المقتبس من ميزان عزم السعادة المستقبلية (Osipow etc, 1996) والمواقف المستقبلية والاستراتيجيات المستكشفة (Holland and Goffredson, 1994). تقترح النتائج الارتباطية أن تأثيرات الأسرة تَمَّتْ بصلَة إيجابية إلى عزم السعادة المستقبلية عند الطلاب حسب المفترض سابقًا. ومن ناحية أخرى، فإن الباحثة توصل إلى أن حالة الأسرة الاقتصادية الاجتماعية تتعلق سلبياً بالاختيار المستقبلي. علاوةً على هذا، فقد طورت الباحثة سؤالاً جديداً وافترضوا الذي يهتم بالجنس كأحد العوامل المساهمة في ضبط عزم السعادة المستقبلية. وبالتالي، فإن النتائج الارتباطية تشير إلى أن الجنس لم يلعب دوراً ملموساً في اختيار الطلاب المهني. وكذلك أضافت الباحثة تصوراً إسلامياً في إرشاد الطلاب ودليلهم إلى الاختيار المهني السعيد، وإن الحدود، والعواقب، والتوصيات للبحث والتطبيق مستقبلاً قد أخذ في الاعتبار.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conformed to acceptable standard of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology).

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Nik Ahmad Hisham Ismail
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conformed to acceptable standard of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology).

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Institute of Education

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the findings of this study are the product of my research effort. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or any other institution.

Fadhilah Zahiyah Binti Abu Talib

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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Signature

.....
Date

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandparents; Salim, Yang, Ab Ghani and Hafifah, To my beloved Abah and Emak . My family members. May Allah bless all of you. Insya Allah. Amin.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A career may be thought of as a long-term project for an individual life. One's career may be "in" business, law, teaching, entertainment, professional philanthropy, or something else (Care, 1984).

Career is a lifelong task. It is listed as one of the life aims that require oneself to identify and pursue his or her preferences, explore the advantages and disadvantages and finally to make the decision. Career also becomes a significant achievement in one's life. It is a way of life for a person (Care, 1984). No doubt, career enables individual to earn money or to satisfy his or her ambitions and dreams. A career imposes a number of responsibilities and duties on an individual. Different careers have distinct requirements for: example human, skills, location and climate, level of education and standard of qualification.

Entering into the job's world always excites fresh undergraduates. The scenarios such as asking seniors regarding professional related to their specialization, surfing the internet to search for present job vacancies, sending curriculum vitae to corporations and organizations to try their luck, and also contacting networks attainable for minimizing the effort of job-seeking activities. These situations happen every year; specifically, when the students are in their final year of study at universities.

Career is a term defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "course or progress through life "(or a distinct portion of life)". Katz & Maanen (1977) defined career as a series of related experiences that makes an individual's life. Meanwhile,

Nosow and Form (1962) provide the following definitions, "Sociologically the career refers to any pattern of job-related change (vertical and/or horizontal) of any occupational group."

Consistent with this concept of career, according to Hall (2002), career is defined as different attitudes and behaviors are linked with individuals and their occupational experiences and actions over the life period. Here, career is a work-related experience over a person's life indicates a long-time action rather than immediate satisfying one.

Career plays a significant role in individual well-being. Holland (1958, 1997) argued people seek work environments that fit their vocational interest, which are defined as personal attitudes, competencies, and values (Hartung & Niles, 2000 as cited in Bjorklund, 2011). In addition, Holland also believes that there are six basic vocational interests: social, investigative, realistic, enterprising, artistic, and conventional or abbreviated as RIASEC. Meanwhile, Shein (1975) as cited in Li & Kerpelman (2007) it may be proposed that career is a medium to secure an inner feeling in terms of motivation or a power of inspiration for an individual. From this description, he discusses stages of career cycle including growth, fantasy and exploration. An individual can reach a realistic career choice by performing a number of jobs and by utilizing his abilities, interests, thoughts, feelings and skills. His opinion seems to agree with Jiang, Klein, and Balloun (2000), research which make reference to the crucial roles of important career in gaining success include organizational stability, identity, geographic security and services. From both views, it is well accepted that career experience is a phase of life, which can help individuals to grow and develop. However, in order to explore the career experience, one must pass the first stage which is the career decision phase.

Career decision is a name of a process that starts during early age. According to Bjorklund (2011), students will experience a time when they start thinking about making some career decision, and the process will continue for the time when the individual is employed (in any organization. This process is intriguing for the student and brings up questions of their own abilities and skills. In Super's Five Stages of Career Development, are as follows: first at approximately the age of 15 – 24, students are more likely to involve themselves in crystallizing their career preference. In the meantime, also, students will specify and implement an occupational choice. During the next period, the period referred to as the period of establishment (25-44), a person can get through the stabilizing of their job's phase or consolidating or even advance their career to the utmost level. At the age of 45-65, the maintenance phase is taking place. At this stage, a person can remain stable in their position or where the person able to hold achieved job.) It is the phase when people perhaps re-evaluate and rejuvenate the task as well. Lastly, during the disengagement stage, this occurs mostly at the age of 65 and above; people decelerate workloads and productivity thus retirement plan came into the mind. From this age onwards, their energy tends to shift to other aspects of life such as family, health as well as religion and society (Super, 1980)

In order to be able to understand the process of vocational choice, career exploration will be the best tool to help the students to identify their preferences. Stumpf, et al (1983) identified four components of career exploration, which are: (1) where one explores (environment versus self), (2) how one explores (intended versus systematic), (3) how much one explores (frequency and amount of information), and (4) what one explores (the focus of the exploration). In another word, in order to attain the dreamed career, ones should tolerate between his or her wants, his or her

wish/desire and what he or she can reach for. These actions may help the students to be satisfied by the decision made.

A person who makes a choice of career is a capable and skilled individual because he has the knowledge, skills, talent and abilities to step further, and he contributes for the society. Career choice may be considered as a problem for qualified individual because, one may be incapable of reaching the desired goal or does not have opportunities for the career of his own choice and may be unable to attain a career that matches his skills, abilities and personality. Care (1984) explained, "Persons that are able to take up the problem of career choice I will call 'competent individuals.' This is the person's position to self realize and to contribute to the lives of others, and this implies many things about them."

It is believed that career choice is a process which occurs in the/at an early age; however, previous research indicates the career choice involves both the choice of a profession which can occur and re-occur in one's life and any choice that may be disturbing one's career (Hall, 1976). Undergraduate students are mostly affected in this process as they are more likely to justify their preferences in career with their academic qualification as well as family aspirations. Through the process, students somehow experience certain dilemma in directing their career decision, which leads them to another situation, which is called as indecisiveness.

Most of the studies reported that, parents influenced students, mostly when they are in the middle of making career decisions. According to Featherman and Hauser (1973), family is the single best predictor for student's future occupation. It is a stronger predictor than the number of years of schooling. Other than that, youth's choices are more likely to resemble occupational choices of the adults in the family (Blau & Duncan, 1962). For example, either both parents and one of them are/is a

teacher, then the children, will follow the same route. This is due to resemblance; as parents could have enough info to explain about the career chosen. Thus, the children manage to follow what the elders do.

Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan (1978) also mentioned that socioeconomic status (SES) directly influences students' in the pursuit of their career aspirations. As fresh university graduates nowadays, to have broad and big networking is compulsory. It is due to the current issue that job seekers failed to attain the desired career because most of them mostly relied on the academic achievement without a network of people that can help them to hold the job being sought. Those who have high socioeconomic status (SES) will have large networks, and this is the answer why most of the students, coming from great SES family, easily get the job aspired to compare to the students who belong to low SES family. This is supported by the findings of Marini & Greenberger (1978) by a positive relation between socioeconomic status and aspirations for higher status occupations.

Classification of high-status occupations include doctors, engineer or lawyer and are related to the high SES family, while the careers of teacher, nurse or clerk fall into the list of lower status occupations. Rojewski and Kim (2003) reported that SES had a substantial effect on individuals' post secondary path. It is found that, the high school sophomores in the lowest SES quartiles were four times more likely to be unemployed.

Career choice is influenced by performance of an individual. Personality also plays an important role in terms that it may come to select the right job for an individual. It's become necessary for all persons to find an appropriate careers need not merely for financial reasons, but also for self-satisfaction or quality of life. By

choosing a career that matches your needs and your personality, you are more likely to perform a job happily (J. A. Young, n.d.).

There is a close relationship between the career choice and the intelligence because if a person is intelligent enough and has abilities, then he will select a career that matches his/her personality. We can relate career choice to career exploration, which includes physical and mental activities. These activities provide information about oneself and the outer environment and help in exploring a career or making a choice (Jordaan, 1963).

Schein (1978) suggests that an individual's self-perception about his abilities, skills, talents, needs, values, and attitude determines what kind of career matches to his personality and what he wants to get from his career.

From these important factors, the current study wants to explore the IIUM undergraduate students' career choice and how do the students not needed to decide based on the influence of the family and family incomes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The undergraduate students face a life transition as they move into the job world. They need help in order to make them firm with their choices. However, things can be worst when their desire conflict with family and their socioeconomic status (SES). These prominent factors will drag the students into situation called incongruence (Super, 1956). As most of the adults experienced regarding choosing a career path is a critical period in time, students may experience it as well. Thus, the more information they get, the longer confuse they are about in their vocational aspirations.

It has been ascertained that undergraduate students always face the dilemma of choosing a career path once they have completed their study (Croll, 2008; Super,

Savickas, & Super, 1996). This is due to the conflict that happens between personal interest (Ozdemir & Hacifazlioglu 2008), parental and familial influences (Ozdemir & Hacifazlioglu 2008; Oyetunde, 2009), and socioeconomic status (Featherman & Hauser, 1975, Hauser & Featherman, 1976; Bielby, Hauser, & Featherman, 1976; Croll, 2008).

There are many studies conducted in the last few years to identify the salient factors contributing to this issue. This is likely due to the students' not having enough information and experience to make their own decisions regarding vocational choice. They need guidance and help from others, especially family and parents. The dilemma of being influenced by parents and family plus pressured imposed by SES, young adults somehow do not show any interest of pursuing their life target. This may result in future dissatisfaction in the career chosen.

Thus, the current study chooses to investigate the significant interaction between students' vocational choice with family influences and household incomes. In addition, the study also highlights the influence of gender differences in the career choice of the students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the present research are to find out the basic factors that most influence individuals while selecting a career. Individuals choose their career based on the basis on what they think of themselves and other different factors in their lives, which mark their personality and kind of impact their career choice has on their performance. So, in this study, our objective is to seek answers to the following major areas.

1. To examine the influence of socioeconomic status (SES) in terms of family incomes in motivating the students to choose their career path.
2. To look at the importance of family influence in career decision making among undergraduate students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to the objectives presented, two central questions were formulated:

1. Does family income (SES) influences the vocational choice of IIUM undergraduate students?
2. Does family influence the vocational choices of IIUM undergraduate students?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is aimed at providing a description regarding the IIUM Undergraduate students' vocational choice. Thus, it is hoped that the finding of the study may reveal some relevant paths and provide baseline information to improve both parents and students' understanding regarding the importance of family and socioeconomic status (SES) in students' vocational choice. More than that, this study also aims to provide an insight of/in the influence of gender differences on students' career choice. Additionally, we hope the data and conclusions from this study will contribute to the existing knowledge in the field of vocational choices among young adults. In addition, this study also intends to contribute toward our understanding of career choice that every individual makes in the long span of his or her life and what are the consequences of the choice they made.

In conclusion, this study is intended to contribute significant knowledge and additional information related to the different influences in making career decision and choice. Nonetheless, the findings from the study still cannot explain the whole phenomenon or over- generalized to other populations since it is conducted among IIUM Undergraduate students only.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is aimed to provide the theoretical framework that shows the relationship between students' vocational choices with family influences and socioeconomic statuses. Another dimension in the framework of this study is the effect of gender differences towards career choice of the students. However, gender is only assumed as a lower catalyst compared to the influence of family and socio-economic status. Pilot study also found that gender differences played significant role but not as the major predictor. It is supported by the following model.

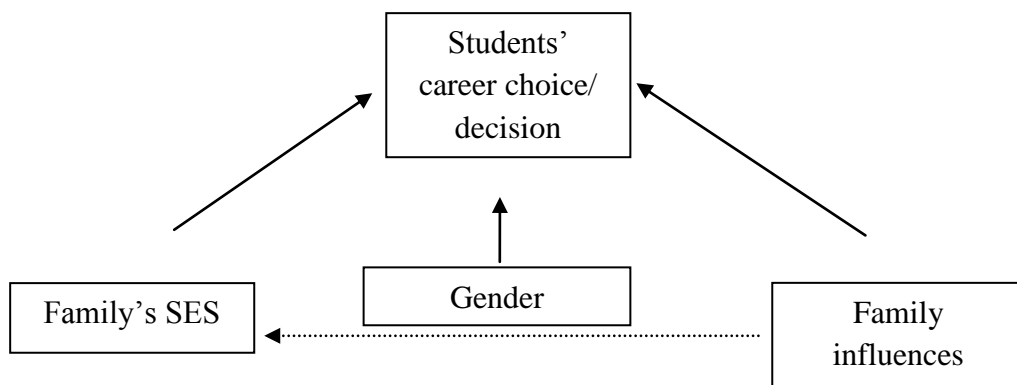


Figure 1.1: Factors that influences students' career decision.

The model shows prominent factors that affect students while making decision of his or her career. In this proposed theoretical framework, the researcher only highlights family and parental influences but not other factors. It is a fact that other factors such as salary that may be derived from the chosen career may be an important

factor to consider as it will influence the lifestyle. Media also counted as one of the catalysts for boosting students' aspiration, including printed and electronic media, such as television and radio can be counted as other mediums to promote one's ideal career aspiration. Idealism is another source of inspiration, and students are usually inspired by someone closely related or by peers. The Researcher has taken siblings, friends, teachers, relatives, principal and grandparents as sources of inspiration. Visit/trip to any institution or vocational place can make someone pick a related profession for life. Another form of strong influence is the Internet. The Internet has converted the whole world into a global village.

Gender differences also influence students' vocational choice as male prefers to choose the masculine type of occupation such as engineer, architect or any other heavy-duty jobs while female are prone to choose feminine job, for example, teacher, nurse or any jobs related to society. However, according to RIASEC (Holland, 1996), some other professions such as doctor, poets or psychologist is well accepted by both genders.

However, this study focuses only on the small scope of the student's decision-making process; parents and family as well as gender differences.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is restricted to the population of IIUM undergraduate students thus the result only can be defined the vocational choice of the selected population and cannot be generalized over other populations.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Vocational: Sociologically, the career refers to any pattern of occupational change (vertical and/or horizontal) of any job-related group (Nosow and Form, 1962).

Career Decision: It is operationally defined as a situation where students, involve in deciding their career path, base their decision on certain factors. In the present study, the researcher focused on family and social background influences.

Influence: A power affecting a person, thing, or course of events, especially one that operates without any direct or apparent effort

Family influence: The independent variable of the study: in this research, family influence refers to family power in manipulating students' vocational choices. Family can include parents, and siblings (brothers and sisters)

Socio-economic status (SES): The other independent variable of the study is the combination of economic and sociological measure. These measures combine together to determine person's work experience and families' economic and social position, based on income, education, and occupation. In this current study, SES is focused on parent's occupation and household incomes.

Household income: Is one of the items in assessing socioeconomic status (.) Categorized into two groups; high SES (household income is RM5001 and above) and Middle to Low SES (RM5000 and below).

IIUM Undergraduate students: In this research, the focus population is fourth-year student in Gombak Campus enrolled for semester 2 in academic calendar of 2010/2011. The sample is derived from four kulliyahs; KIRKHS, KICT, AIKOL and ENGINE.