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FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE OF COMMERCE STUDENTS IN PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

The issue about career choice and relevant factors or determinants have been dealt theoretically and empirically, that is finding the relation between factors and a particular profession but a comprehensive framework which incorporates all possible factors is missing. The present study, therefore aims to address this gap by including twenty-one possible factors important for career choice. The data for the study was collected from the students of colleges affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh situated in Punjab using a structured questionnaire. The data collected from the students was regarding different factors affecting their career choice. Responses for all the factors were requested on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1(Least important) to 5(Most important). The questionnaires were distributed to respondents through Google forms. Out of the distributed questionnaire all were fully filled which counted for 110 in total.

INTRODUCTION

There are abundant studies available in literature that prove that students all over the world are usually left with a dilemma in making career choice decision in their lives (Bandura *et al.* 2001; Issa and Nwalo 2008). There are certain stages of education during which a student may have to take decisions regarding their careers time to time. But most of the times, the choice of careers, subjects and courses of the study and the subsequent career paths to follow are a nightmare for perspective undergraduate students (Issa and Nwalo 2008). It is mainly after completing graduation, a student has to make decision, what he or she wants to do with their lives. The career related decisions also become important because selection of right profession can make the whole difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future. Therefore, the influence of career choice has a lasting impact on an individual.

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What makes the situation even more challenging that the careers today are mot what they used to be. In India traditionally people opted career according to family heritage, afterwards engineering, medicine & Government jobs become popular, but presently due to continuous changes people are supposed to reinvent themselves every now or then (Dessler & Varkkey, 2011). Thus, it is difficult for almost every student to take decision regarding their career (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Each individual undergoing the process of making a career choice is influenced by such factors as the context in which they live, their personal aptitudes, and educational attainment (Bandura et al. 2001; Watson et al. 2010). It is often found that many times that the youths made wrong career choices due to ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers, or as a result of prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counseling. It arises the need to address this issue.

Although evidence about career choice and relevant factors or determinants have been dealt theoretically (Najar & Yousuf, 2018) and empirically that is finding the relation between factors and a particular profession (Agarwala, 2008; Anand & Sankaran, 2019), but a comprehensive framework which incorporates all possible factors is missing. The present study, therefore aims to address this gap by including twenty-one possible factors important for career choice. The study results would be helpful for the student counselors, parents, and universities, in developing the career counseling and guidance programs for the students to facilitate them in making the right career choice.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Different factors have been studied from different perspectives, to check the influence on career choice. Firstly, talking about the financial aspect of any career, Meddour et. al. (2016) found in their study that economic consideration plays a highly influential role in students' career choices. But the influence of money as a factor is different, while talking from gender's perspective. Ng & Burke (2008) claims in their study that men are more prone to wealth than women, while selecting a particular career. The other factor which holds the importance in selection of career is Personal/Self-interest. Uyar et. al. (2011) claims in their study that if students are interested in a particular field, they are more likely to be successful in their field. Moreover, Buikstra et.al. (2007) propounds that the major factor influencing their career decision making is self-interest. Moreover, the study of Dick & Rallies (1991) depicted that genuine interest in a career was a more important

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factor for women than men. The parents, family members, teachers and career counselors & peers are the persons who affect the decision of career-choice of students. Shumba & Naong (2012) found in their study that family and teachers are significant factors that influence career choice of learners. Moreover, Kazi & Akhlaq (2017) recognized the role of teachers in career making more important while finding the family or parents pressure as not important. The findings of Byrne & Burke (2012) are quite opposite recognizing that parents are most influential and teachers are not influential at all. Saleem et.al. (2014) advocated that parents' profession has influence on career choice. Abbasi, & Sarwat (2014) depict other factors like growth opportunities, service to society also plays important role in selection of career. Najar & Yousuf (2018) conclude that all the highlighted factors should be given equal weightage while selecting the career. AnbuSelvan et. al. (2013) claims that the variations in the level of influence each factor has on students' career choice by gender. The variation is even stronger in some cases as Stohs (1991) mentions in his paper that careers of women are most of the time contingent upon situational factors rather than individual characteristics. Moreover, Crawford (1978) indicates that family background seems to play a primary role in the process of female career development.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the relatively importance of different factors for students while opting for their careers.
2. To find out the difference in the perceptions of male and female students regarding these factors in, and influences on, their academic and career choices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sampling

The data for the study was collected from the students of colleges affiliated to Panjab University, Chandigarh situated in Punjab using a structured questionnaire. The data collected from the students was regarding different factors affecting their career choice. Responses for all the factors were requested on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1(Least important) to 5(Most important). The questionnaires were distributed to respondents through Google forms. Out of the distributed questionnaire all were fully filled which counted for 110 in total. The response rate was not an issue because questionnaires were sample includes only those students who had been in the

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consistent touch with their respective teachers from different colleges. The data collection was done with the help of some teachers teaching in different colleges. The students selected for the study only belong to commerce stream.

Profile of the Respondents

Table No. 1

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Males	70	63.64	63.64
	Females	40	36.36	100
	Total	110	100	
Age	18-19	39	35.45	35.45
	20-21	40	36.36	71.81
	22-23	31	28.18	100
	Total	110	100	
Locality	Rural	49	44.55	44.55
	Urban	61	55.45	100
	Total	110	100	
Institute	Government	36	32.72	32.72
	Private	74	67.27	100
	Total	110	100	

Measure

In this study different factors affecting students' selection of their respective careers had been taken with the help of literature and with the suggestions of experts. On the basis of which 21 factors were finalized. These factors are; Service to Nation, Service to Society, Growth Potential, Family Business/Parents' Occupation, Flexible working hours/Flexibility job Schedule, Creativity/Innovations Involved in work, Freedom from Supervision, Skills/abilities & Talent one possess, Scope of travelling, Freedom from Undue Stress/Mental Peace, Money/Good Salary/Good Package, Job Near to Home, Experts/Teachers Advice, Ability to pay course fee/Financial Condition, Variety in work involved, Safety from economic point of view, Opportunities to meet new people, Personal Interest, Fame/Social Recognition/Status,

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Peer/Friends Pressure, Parents Pressure. In order to find out the relevance of various factors mean score was used.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The mean value of different factors is given in the Table no. 2, addressing the issue of gender specific differences.

Table No. 2

Factor	Male Mean	Male (Rank)	Female Mean	Female Rank	Overall mean	Total Rank
Service to Nation	4.0909	9	3.7907	12	4.0000	9
Service to Society	4.0152	10	3.6512	14	3.8981	12
Growth Potential	4.1515	7	3.9070	6	4.0833	6
Family Business/Parents' Occupation	3.4697	16	3.3953	19	3.4074	19
Flexible working hours/Flexibility job Schedule	3.8333	14	3.5238	17	3.7130	15
Creativity/Innovations Involved in work	4.1818	6	3.8810	7	4.0556	7
Freedom from Supervision	3.8308	15	3.5238	16	3.7130	16
The skills, abilities & Talent you possess	4.1846	5	4.0714	2	4.1389	3
Amount of Travel involved	3.7538	19	3.5476	15	3.6759	17
Freedom from Undue Stress/Mental Peace	3.9846	11	3.7750	13	3.9057	10
Money/Good Salary/Good Package	4.2923	2	4.1905	1	4.2500	1
Job Near to Home	3.7077	17	3.9286	5	3.8056	14
Experts/Teachers Advice	4.2769	3	3.8333	10	4.1111	4
Ability to pay course fee/Financial Condition	3.7077	18	3.4250	18	3.6132	18
Variety in work involved	3.8923	13	3.8049	11	3.8692	13
Safety from economic point of view	4.0923	8	3.9512	3	4.0467	8
Opportunities to meet new people	4.2615	4	3.8537	9	4.0935	5
Personal Interest	4.3692	1	3.9512	4	4.2056	2
Fame/Social Recognition/Status	3.9375	12	3.8537	8	3.9057	11
Peer/Friends Pressure	3.0615	20	2.9750	20	3.0377	20
Parents Pressure	2.9538	21	2.9024	21	2.9159	21

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Ranking based on mean values shows that for male's personal interest is the most important factor but for females it is money/salary which plays the most important part in selection of career. The results are quite contrary to previous studies which represents the opposite (Agarwal 2008). Moreover, the money/salary package combinedly holds Rank 1, which shows that the ultimate aim of students is money while choosing a specific career. This is the plight of todays' scenario where education is merely seen as money earning venture more than anything else.

The least important 2 factors which are peer/friends' pressure and parents' pressure are same for both males and females. This shows that students in the present era are becoming more self-conscious when it comes to selection of career.

Service to nation and service to society are not very important for students (either boys or girls) because the overall ranking of both is 9 and 12 respectively. The finding is quite different from (Sax 1994; Watson et. al. 2010) who claims women are more concerned with the social good in their career choice. It is also very ironic as well because most of the students under study (70%) has opt for Government sector as their preference of career. Therefore, purpose of joining Govt. Sector is not due to the notion of servicing society.

The ranking of factor Growth potential is quite similar for both males and females because the difference is only of 1 in their rankings. The overall ranking is 6, which depicts that students do place much more importance to growth aspect while opting for a career. The findings are not in line with Buser et. al. (2014) who claims women seeks more stability in their career compare to males.

Family business or parents' occupation has overall ranking quite lesser which is 19 in aggregate. The different positions for males (Rank 16) and for females (Rank 19) are pretty much similar as well. So there is possibility that students have their own goals in mind unaffected by profession/business of parents.

Flexible working hours/Flexibility in job schedule holds little value for students (both boys and girls), because in total the overall ranking of this particular aspect is 15. This finding is astonishing since in this present era flexibility in working hours has become a significant aspect in working class people.

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Creativity/Innovation involved in work seems to be important factor for students because it holds overall ranking 7, which is also quite same for both boys and girls (Rank 6, Rank 7 respectively). This outcome suggests that students seeks spark in their which may result in promising fields like entrepreneurship.

Freedom from supervision have overall rank for both male and female students that is 16. This denotes students are very well ready to work under someone's supervision. This response can acceptable from point of view of novice who generally needs proper guidance and supervision in the beginning of their career, which is the case with the students.

The factor skills, abilities & talent one possesses have combined ranking of 3 and for boys and girls 5 and 3 respectively. This particular factor should have been placed Rank 1 or 2, definitely before the factor money/salary/ packages, because it is ultimately the skill or talents which should shape the career of individual.

The level of travel involved, holds ranks of 19 and 15 for male and female students respectively. There if the job or profession seeks travelling so often, both male and female students do seem to choose that job or profession, if the other factors remains intact.

Freedom from undue stress/Mental peace has combined ranking of 10, which represents the idea that students want to have reasonable stress pertain to a particular profession or business. The result is quite similar for both males and females' students having ranks of 11 and 13 respectively.

The factor job near to home has rank of 17 and 5 for male and female students respectively. This denotes that female students are more likely to opt for career which facilitates jobs near to home, which is not the case with male students. This is not surprising considering the fact the women traditionally are more prone to maintaining work-life balance compare to men.

Experts/Teachers advice for electing a career have overall rank of 4, but the groupwise ranking by males is 3 and by females is 10. The outcome depicts that boys are more likely to seek advice from teachers or experts compared to females when it comes to choosing a career. So, there seems to be some kind of communication gap between girls and teachers especially on the matter of career.

Ability to pay course fee has combined ranking of 18, which denotes that more education loans are becoming available to students and moreover the ranking signifies students have knowledge

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of these kind of financial assistances as well. This finding applies to both males and females equally.

The students' response towards seeking variety in the work holds comparatively lesser important than other factors, because the overall ranking is 13. This goes almost same for both male and female students having ranking of 13 and 11 respectively.

The factor, safety from economic point of view takes comparatively higher rank that is 8, which depicts students especially girls, expect that the job or business they may be indulged in should secure them from economic point of view. The ranking for the same is 8 by all students, indicating some difference in perception about this particular aspect. It is worth mentioning that the difference between money/salary/package and economic safety can be understood from the angle of longevity. Money/Salary package is for short term but economic safety is a long-term aspect.

The factor opportunities to meet new people surprisingly has much more importance for students, as the overall rank is 5, which is way better than some other crucial factors. Talking about groupwise, boys are clearly keener for this aspect having rank of 4 over girls with rank of 9.

Fame/social recognition/Stauts has rank of 11, which stands write in middle of all factors. There is some difference between the ranks of males and females i.e. 12 and 8 respectively. Therefore, there are chances that this factor is more significant for girl students when compare to boy students.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that money remains one of the most important factors as claimed by earlier studies. Moreover, the other factor i.e. Parents' pressure, which used to be the defining aspect of one's career few decades back, is no longer an important factor. It denoted students want to take independent decisions without being forced by others. Also, some factors like service to nation or service to society, which should have been considered much important, proves lesser important for students. This issue needs to be tackled by providing proper knowledge to students regarding these factors. Rest of the factors took certain positions as opted by students. It is worth mentioning that barring few factors, the perceptions of male and female students regarding different aspects of career selection remains different. Nevertheless, the responses received from female students, it is quite evident that female students do not consider taking a back stage, rather they want to come forward and want to compete by overcoming different challenges. The results of the study

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will be very useful; for career counselors, academicians and parents for helping students in the selection suitable career. Like other studies, this study do has certain limitations in context of sample size and areas covered for sample selection. Further studies can be conducted taking large sample size and taking larger geographical region for sample selection.

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