

Challenges of Career Decision-Making among University Students

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Abstract

The study investigated the link between career decisions, professional knowledge, and self-knowledge, as well as the role that each of these factors plays in predicting career decision-making among Pakistani university students. (i) to explore the common challenges faced by students when making career decisions and contemporary era. (ii) to assess issues influencing students' decision-making processes regarding their academic career challenges. (iii) to identify the issues that provide opportunities for students' career choices, with a focus on effective study. This study was conducted using a survey research methodology and had a correlational goal. Two hundred fifty students enrolled University of Management and Technology students that were enrolled in the institutions made up the population for this study. Sample of the study were selected as many as 250 students through simple random sampling technique. The personality types of the students were investigated using Holland's theory-based career choice exam. Three specifically created questionnaires were used to assess the sample students' vocational knowledge, employment preferences, and self-awareness. The Career Decision linkert Scale (ADSD), a widely used survey tool, was used to determine students' level of confidence in career-related activities. The relationship between professional expertise and job preference. It was discovered that while choosing a job, male and female students exhibited distinct trends. Male and female students showed varied patterns of professional decision-making, even across the same academic areas. To help career counsellors better customize their treatments to the requirements of their clients, strategies for effectively planned assessment activities of career decision-making challenges into career counselling. The study may suggest grouping direct to the students in determining how best to utilize career decision-making process-based valuations to test certain constructs and finding the most valid ones. **Keywords:** Collaboration and teamwork, Communication Creativity, Critical thinking, 21st-century imagination, learning problem-solving skills.

Keywords: Career Choice, Career Knowledge, Challenges, University level.

Introduction

The process of choosing a professional path from the array of occupations on offer in the market is known as career choice. John Holland developed a theory which best describe an individual's profession/vocation interest, personality at work station and career. In the beginning, Holland's theory was developed as a trait theory when it was presented in 1959. So, it's the essential attribute of this theory that it was popularized in career development and

career domains and extensively used by the researchers. This is a result of the theory's simplicity and straight for warden. According to Runacres et al. (2017) students' decisions to carry on their academic journey at HEIs of their preferred interest with number of aspects; scholarships, program content and structure, facilities, resources and job promotions and social influence on the contemporary society. The researches in this dimension on international students

found that the main factors influencing international students' decision to attend private HEIs are tuition costs, cultural diversity, language, communication channels, programs, teaching facilities and quality, housing, transportation, and cost of living (Dhaliwal, 2022; Omar et al., 2019).

In career counseling, the term "career" refers to a considerably broader range of concepts, including learning processes, personal roles, and professional experiences. Apart from that, a career is a constantly evolving process of planning that incorporates life planning, a person's interests and abilities, attitude, financial concerns, and decision-making ability (Hirschi & Koen, 2021). Career development is the lifetime process of managing progression in learning and work (Gati, I., & Kulcsár, 2021). Making professional selections can be relatively straightforward for some people, but difficult for others because there are many internal and external factors that generate problems and conflicts. Different people have varying levels of decidedness, which are roughly regularly distributed in a variety of samples. While some people report a few challenges and are still able to make a decision, others report so many that it is difficult for them to decide (Gati, Izrailevitch, & Tatar, 2024). Additionally, it's critical to distinguish between indecisiveness and indecision in one's career. Based on their success, they grew more optimistic that their kids may excel in that sector. They gained faith in their children's ability to succeed in that sector based on performance.

It is a prevailing theory among business

communities that students must make their first job selection when they reach grade eight at local level. At this point, they must choose between a science and an arts stream. While most of the students have no counseling at all, they choose courses based on recommendations from peers or older siblings without realizing how important those choices motivation be for their future. On the other way side, the choice of things that parent's thought is significant, parents sometimes make their children choose courses that have not aligned with their intellectual abilities and interests. The National Education Policy (NEP, 2009) informed that students at higher secondary school may receive guidance and counselling that addresses their inclination toward their interest. It help them make independent study choices rather than choosing a course of study that does not fit to their personality and interest. The other technique is the choice of things that parents think are significant, parents sometimes make their kids choose courses that do not having match with their intellectual growth and interest.

Statement of the Problem

The competitive climate of today presents a number of obstacles for university students, making choosing a job more difficult. Students need to make important decisions about their future jobs at this critical point in their study. However, a number of issues can seriously affect their academic performance and ability to make decisions, including challenges with time management, budget, relationships, effective study techniques, and preserving both physical and mental health. Students who get efficient career decision-

making help was better able to recognize their talents, consider a variety of career opportunities, and make well-informed choices that are consistent with their potential and ambitions.

Objectives

The study proceeds with the following objectives and these objectives aligned with the research methodology and the statistical analysis that execute the findings and conclusions for the study.

1. To find out the perceptions of students about career knowledge at university level.
2. To identify the challenges, students find in the way of their career choice.
3. To find out students career decision-making abilities at university level.

As per the National Education Policy (2023), the principal objective of secondary education is to equip the youth for success in life. In Pakistan, university is a phase where students select their majors that was led to their future career path. It is crucial for students to have a clear idea of their identity and career path at this point. Students who do well in their areas of interest can perform better overall. They will be beneficial to society as well as the individual's private life. At this stage of life, choosing a career based on interests will result in success. A person's decision on their job is impacted by a number of things, such as their hobbies and preferences, market trends, prospects that are practical, and outside influences.

A young person's job decision is critical to their future and the future of their nation. Academic performance is impacted by the difficulties university students experience today with studying, time management,

money, relationships, and mental health. At work, happiness promotes higher results, whereas sadness limits potential. Career decisions are influenced by a variety of factors, including individual characteristics, social contexts, work histories, and external circumstances. Although Pakistan lacks career assistance, the National Education Policy recommends career counseling for higher secondary learners.

Review of Related Literature

The process of choosing a profession among the many occupations or career options that are accessible to an individual is known as career choice. A person's career choice, according to (Chao et al., 2022), is the vocation they choose from a range of available options. In a similar vein, (Ebeh et al., 2023) clarified that choosing a job involves either picking one from a variety of occupational options or making a career decision from scratch. The availability of career possibilities and each person's own preferences for them are the main factors in career decisions. Similar to this, (Okoh, 2020) emphasized that an individual's professional choices are decisions about the activities they choose to engage in for their occupational pursuits. These are decisions on vocations or jobs to pursue in order to establish the role. A person's career is defined as the sequence and combination of jobs they have held throughout their working life (Siddiqui and Akhter, 2021). The process of career development manage the different duties of an individual and his/her employers i.e. behaviours, experiences both inside and between occupations and organizations through the professional time span having

consequences for employees' identities tied to their work/profession.

Consequently, while emphasizing distinct characteristics, the concepts of career and career growth are interconnected. Career development study, in particular, focuses on how individual and environmental variables impact changes in people's careers over time, in a person's career is their educational and professional route, which makes up an important part of their life, adds a role for their entire lifespan, and plays a big part in many aspects of some people's lives. Hutchinson (2023) states that proposed a three-pronged approach to career learning. Career education, which includes Self-improvement, research, and management; work-related learning, which includes work related skills and knowledge; and career information. Learning to explain young people's activities in considering their future, acquiring the necessary skills, and effectively navigating the transportation system.

The process of choosing a profession from the range of vocations offered by the labor market is known as career choice. A study on the influence of technology, learning, and family on college students' job selections was carried out by (Omar et al., 2019). It was discovered that college students were quite aware of their own strengths, the occupations that were open to them, and their future alternatives. For students in higher secondary education, selecting a professional path is crucial since it marks the beginning of the planning process for the future and helps to shape young people's futures. It is crucial that upper secondary pupils understand their potential, be aware of the various vocations

that are accessible, and select the keeping in view the futures.

Barclay and Barker (2020) persons are categorized as successful or unsuccessful based on the knowledge they possess, and those with the finest information tend to succeed. People who made career selections based on hazy professional concepts experienced anxiety when making such judgments (Nkomo and Mpofu, 2022). Information regarding the working world is referred to as career knowledge. Career advisers at colleges and universities are one source of information on careers, in addition to the media, parents, siblings, and classmates. The following six concepts, as demonstrated by (Agbayani et al., 2020), can help students identify their professional interests, broaden their knowledge of careers, consider future opportunities, and, while pursuing these, help them reach their career goals:

- i. Develop a learning atmosphere at your work station through career development examination.
- ii. Develop professional knowledge through discussion with sage experts.
- iii. Collaboration and support of community speakers
- iv. Inspire students to share their interest and hobbies
- v. Searching of the career.
- vi. Opportunities for students to contribute at their career.

In the field of career development, it is crucial to possess knowledge about various career paths and job market trends. According to a study by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2019), 80% of employers value skills such

as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving above other qualifications. Additionally, a report by the World Economic Forum (2018) highlights the importance of developing skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence. This knowledge is essential for individuals seeking to advance their careers, as it enables them to find out the disciplines/areas of weakness and strength as well as to develop strategies to stay competitive in job market.

The career choices determine the attributes of an individual's potential should be developed that considered the alternative types to live and the lifestyle that will follow. These numbers highlight how crucial it is for first-year students to make important career selections. Even yet, the process is difficult as individuals must work to clear up any doubts regarding its adaptability, interest stability, possibility of a different path in the present and the future, accessibility of a profession, and identity that they wish to cultivate. Doubt is evident in the challenges people have choosing a job. These challenges have the potential to cause people to delegate decision-making authority to others or to put off and put off making a decision altogether, which can prevent them from making the best choice possible.

Facilities of Career Guidance (Niazi et al., 2024) highlighted the lack of resources available in Pakistani educational institutions for career counselling and pointed out that students there need professional career counsellors to help them choose careers that suit their interests and personalities. It was recommended that career counsellors be employed by universities and that career

guidance services be offered at government institutions after the study found that Pakistan's government universities lacked qualified career counsellors and career advisory services. University career days need to be monitored with the assistance of guest speakers who are more knowledgeable and experienced about career options. Zeb (2016) mentioned wise career decisions and assisting students in reaching their objectives are crucial to a university's career development. University-level career coaching assists students in making appropriate career decisions. Each person has a distinct personality; hence it makes sense for them to organize their professional decisions based on that personality. Tests for personality evaluation are used to determine each person's personality, skill set, and potential career path.

Research Methodology

Research methodology suggests the procedure and operation for the execution of the study. The title of the study, "Challenges of Career Decision-Making among University Students" assist toward the quantitative research method, so, the researchers adopted the quantitative method for this research. All the undergraduates' students who are studying in private universities in district Sialkot formulated the population of the study. The researchers distributed the 300 hundred questionnaires to the sample of the study. Questionnaires were randomly distributed to the population of the study and fortunately the respondents (90%) filled the questionnaires. The researchers adapted a questionnaire used in the study of Sarwar (2024). The questionnaire used in the study have 20 items. The researchers

personally visited the population of the study and collected the sample. When the researchers collected all the questionnaires from the respondents, they were filling the raw data in the excel worksheet, they found that there were 250 questionnaires that were filled minutely. So, the researchers made the statistical analysis techniques of mean score and standard deviation to the finalized data.

Data Analysis

Table No. 1

Students' responses

| S# | Statement | MS | SD |
|----|---|------|-------|
| 1 | Career choice factors affect on students career decisions. | 2.89 | 1.193 |
| 2 | Exploring different career options and their alignment with your goals. | 2.86 | 1.259 |
| 3 | Choose a career that will fit your preferred lifestyle. | 3.05 | 1.190 |
| 4 | Change your major if you do not like your first choice. | 2.67 | 1.302 |
| 5 | Decide what you value most in a career. | 2.74 | 1.197 |
| 6 | Know what you're willing to sacrifice to achieve your career goals. | 2.93 | 1.230 |
| 7 | Identify relevant employers, firms, and institutions for your career opportunities. | 3.21 | 1.257 |
| 8 | Choose one career from your list of potential occupations. | 3.22 | 1.287 |
| 9 | I am aware of my strengths for the career I'm interested. | 3.01 | 1.288 |
| 10 | I read advertisements in newspapers that are relevant to my chosen career. | 2.78 | 1.263 |
| 11 | My parents introduce me to relatives who are working in the fields of my interest. | 3.02 | 1.242 |
| 12 | My parents' motivation for choosing a career gives me the confidence to work hard to achieve my career goals. | 3.06 | 1.171 |
| 13 | Providing career guidance facilities for career planning at the university. | 3.20 | 1.216 |

| | | | |
|----|--|------|-------|
| 14 | Career workshops to promote awareness of career guidance and counseling among university students. | 3.89 | 1.151 |
| 15 | A combination of career guidance subjects in the university's curriculum. | 2.97 | 1.153 |
| 16 | Developing career guidance as an integral part of teacher education and training programs. | 2.98 | 1.126 |
| 17 | I use of library and Internet for career guidance at the university. | 3.06 | 1.153 |
| 18 | Academic decisions are made to demonstrate lessons in the classroom. | 3.00 | 1.214 |
| 19 | Academic decisions are used to design strategies to achieve objectives. | 2.96 | 1.236 |
| 20 | Academic decisions are made to establish good relations with parents and the community. | 2.90 | 1.230 |

The data reveals key insights into students' perceptions, challenges, and decision-making abilities regarding their career choices. The mean scores (MS) range from 2.67 to 3.89 on a Likert scale, indicating varying levels of agreement or awareness among students. Higher scores (e.g., 3.89 for career workshops) suggest strong recognition of the importance of career guidance, while lower scores (e.g., 2.67 for changing majors) highlight areas of uncertainty or hesitation.

Students acknowledge the influence of career choice factors (MS = 2.89) and the need to align career options with their goals (MS = 2.86). However, they face challenges in committing to a specific career path, as seen in the lower scores for deciding what they value most (MS = 2.74) and changing majors (MS = 2.67). This reflects a struggle with self-awareness and adaptability in career planning.

Parents play a significant role, with students valuing their motivation (MS = 3.06) and introductions to relevant professionals (MS = 3.02). Yet, students also rely on institutional support, such as career guidance facilities (MS = 3.20) and workshops (MS = 3.89), which are perceived as highly beneficial. This underscores the need for universities to integrate career guidance into curricula (MS = 2.97) and teacher training programs (MS = 2.98).

Interestingly, students demonstrate proactive behaviours, such as using libraries and the internet for career guidance (MS = 3.06) and identifying potential employers (MS = 3.21). However, the relatively lower scores for academic decisions related to classroom lessons (MS = 3.00) and community relations (MS = 2.90) suggest a gap in translating academic experiences into career readiness.

In summary, while students recognize the importance of career planning, they face challenges in decision-making due to limited self-awareness and reliance on external support. Universities must enhance career guidance programs to bridge these gaps and empower students to make informed career choices.

Findings and Conclusions

The study delves into the intricate journey of university students as they navigate the complexities of career decision-making. Through a narrative woven from data, the findings reveal a tapestry of perceptions, challenges, and aspirations. Students, with mean scores (MS) ranging from 2.67 to 3.89 on a Likert scale, exhibit a spectrum of awareness and agreement regarding their career paths.

At the heart of their journey lies a recognition of the importance of career guidance, mainly through workshops (MS = 3.89) and institutional support (MS = 3.20). These resources are seen as beacons, illuminating the path forward. Yet, the road is not without its obstacles. Students grapple with uncertainty, as evidenced by lower scores for changing majors (MS = 2.67) and deciding what they value most (MS = 2.74). This hesitation reflects a struggle with self-awareness and adaptability, key pillars of effective career planning.

Parents emerge as influential guides, with students valuing their motivation (MS = 3.06) and connections to professionals (MS = 3.02). However, the data also highlights the critical role of universities in bridging gaps. Students advocate for integrating career guidance into curricula (MS = 2.97) and teacher training programs (MS = 2.98), suggesting a need for systemic change.

Proactive behaviors shine through, with students leveraging libraries and the internet (MS = 3.06) and identifying potential employers (MS = 3.21). Yet, a disconnect persists between academic experiences and career readiness, as seen in lower scores for classroom lessons (MS = 3.00) and community relations (MS = 2.90).

In conclusion, while students acknowledge the importance of career planning, their journey is marked by challenges in decision-making and a reliance on external support. Universities must step forward, enhancing career guidance programs to empower students, transforming uncertainty into clarity and aspirations into achievements.

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