

Are Fresh Graduates Too Picky? Preliminary View What Drivers Influencing Career Choice Among Students at HEIs in Malaysia

Noor Azzura Mohamed, Siti Normah Awang Tuah, Khalilah Ibrahim, Siti Nazirah Omar, Ferozah Haini Mohamed Ahmad & Afzan Sahilla Mohd Amir Hamzah

Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka 78000 Alor Gajah, Melaka

Corresponding Authors Email: sitinormah@uitm.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i3/16377>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i3/16377

Published Online: 27 September 2022

Abstract

Career choice is a crucial topic in the developmental lives of youths, since it is related to positive and negative psychological, physical, and socioeconomic differences that continue into adulthood. Thus, today's undergraduates confront a nightmare while deciding on their subjects, courses of study, and future careers. Choosing the appropriate combination of courses leading to the desired profession might indicate whether a future career will be appreciated or detested. This study aimed to identify the elements that influence students' career decisions. This study examined the influence of extrinsic and intrinsic factors as well as interpersonal factors on the career choices of students from High Education Institutions in Malaysia. To conduct this study, the researchers will collect data from primary and secondary data. The expected results from this study will suggest a theory that can explain students' career choices from the standpoint of the social environment by understanding intrinsic factors. The idea will assist students in learning about and exploring professions, ultimately leading to career selection. Moreover, this had a crucial effect in moulding the career decisions of pupils. The High Education Institution suggested providing Career Education and Guidance to allow youngsters to explore the world of employment since they must make a smooth transition from first-year student to senior year.

Keywords: Career Choice, Intrinsic Factors, Extrinsic Factors, and Interpersonal Factors

Introduction

In recent years, numerous industries have been fading out due to advancements in science and technology, societal progress, and changes in the human way of life. Simultaneously, many new industries develop and eventually dominate, such as the paper and economic media industries, the coal business, and the new energy sector. Students will therefore have an advantage in the beginning phase if they make an intelligent career decision. Due to the increasing employment demand, career selection has become a battleground. Competition with other graduates, whether locally or internationally, for employment has intensified,

elevating the importance and significance of the career decision process for graduates (Wong & Quek, 2015). Related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that Malaysia should embrace in 2030 for balanced development to guarantee that "no one is left behind"; compatible with SDG-4 (Quality education) and SDG-8 (No poverty) (Decent Work and Economic Growth). By 2030, Malaysia aims to significantly expand the number of teenagers and adults with appropriate skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship, leading to demands for full employment and decent work possibilities.

Graduates Statistics 2020, issued by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), indicates that there were 5.36 million graduates in 2020 compared to 5.13 million in 2019. The data showed that there is increase about 23 percent of graduates from universities. In line with that, the unemployment rate increased from 165,200 (3.9 percent) in 2019 to 202,400 (4.4 percent) in 2020. Moreover, many recent graduates continue to have difficulty finding full-time jobs. According to the Ministry of Higher Education's graduate tracer research, the marketability of Malaysian graduates in 2020 will be 84.4 percent, down from 86.2 per cent in 2019. This situation was because of the Covid-19 outbreak (Ignatius, 2022). Due to lack of new jobs and widespread layoffs across industries, jobseekers especially fresh graduates, struggle to find work. Thus, graduates must make a clear career decision based on numerous aspects, including education, employability skills, employer expectations, and other job-related considerations to get relevant employment (Ganesan et al., 2018).

Higher education institutions play an essential role in a nation's socioeconomic growth. The institutions are factories that produce skilled human resources by imparting, creating, and disseminating knowledge and providing advanced education in various fields, increasing productivity, business earnings, and economic growth in Malaysia. Therefore, universities are the originators of knowledge, and students are essential to this process. Nonetheless, following graduation, a student's most significant challenge is selecting a good profession, described as the progression of a person's various jobs and work experiences (Siddiky & Akter, 2021). Unfortunately, most public and private institutions in Malaysia lack attention to career advising and counselling services that may connect students to the job market.

Consequently, students typically pick jobs without adequate career information and labour market expertise. However, a successful career largely depends on meticulous career planning, which entails making a sensible career choice or deciding which professional path and position to follow among the available options and implementing the appropriate career preparedness measures. If a student is careless about his profession and moves recklessly, he may fail to achieve his desired job aim and career achievement. So, career planning is integral to helping students have successful careers because it helps them make the right career choices and use the right tools to reach their professional goals. A person's career decision has a lasting effect on him or her. It acts as a predictor and determinant of their future income and type of employment and subsequently leaves an imprint on an individual's personality and attitude (Selvanathan et al., 2016; Siddiky & Akter, 2021). Thus, failure to make appropriate career decisions will hinder their ability to acquire jobs and contribute to the unemployment crisis (Ng et al., 2016; Shahid Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Everyone finds it tough to choose a profession. This individual activity manifests itself on a national scale as economic success. In other words, there is a significant mismatch between the skills required by

employers and those possessed by job seekers (Ignatius, 2022). Mismatches in the workplace are often less productive and efficient, preventing them from achieving their objectives.

Thus, by looking at the increase in the enrolment of students entering the university every year, it is predicted that fresh graduates will encounter intense competition when seeking employment. The survey conducted by Leo (2019) revealed that 35 percent of jobless graduates are from the social sciences, business, and law fields. Further, it is stated that since the number of graduates continues to rise each year, students face intense competition in an unstable economy, and graduating from college no longer guarantees a profession. This scenario, if left unresolved, would result in several disadvantages, particularly for students who will compete in the labour market in the future. Without good career counselling, students may be unable to make a job decision or make inappropriate professional choices, resulting in unemployment issues that are already a topic of conversation. To lower the unemployment rate among recent graduates, looking at the careers that undergraduate students choose is essential (Omar et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, students' job decisions are not driven just by their interests; various other factors are involved. In other words, a person's career decision is not decided by a single element but rather by the interaction of several variables (Siddiky & Akter, 2021). Family influence, peer influence, passion, capability, self-efficacy, personality traits, job-related factors, social-related factors, and career guidance counsellors are just a few of the numerous empirical studies conducted on the variables that affect career choice (Siddiky & Akter, 2021; Omar et al., 2021; Abe & Chikoko, 2020; Rainey et al., 2019; Ganesan et al., 2018; Selvanathan et al., 2016; Wong & Quek, 2015; Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013).

Consequently, the primary purpose of this study is to explore the critical elements that will influence career choices among fresh Malaysian graduates. Therefore, the objectives of this study are:

- To examine the intrinsic factors influencing career choices among Malaysian fresh graduates.
- To examine the extrinsic factors influencing career choices among Malaysian fresh graduates.
- To examine the interpersonal factors influencing career choices among Malaysian fresh graduates.

This study is crucial since it instructs undergraduates on choosing a job based on their employability skills and company expectations. Additionally, the research assists employers in comprehending the relevance of human capital and its contribution to business performance. Thus, firms may build more appealing positions following global trends, with attractive salaries, perks, and career advancement opportunities for prospective employees (Ganesan et al., 2018).

Literature Review

Career Choice

A career is defined as an individual's progression from the beginning to the conclusion in their career, workplace, and position within a career. It is related to a person's professional development as they participate in a particular field of work and acquire valuable skills and experience for job advancement (Ates, 2016). It is also defined as the broad opportunities

that exist for lifelong vocations (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). According to Omar et al. (2021), students enrolling in professional education must make an important career decision since it significantly impacts their future professional life and success. Career decisions are among the most significant considerations for students, as they serve as a foundation for future reflection.

Career choice is not only a match between an individual and a job. It is a sophisticated decision-making process considering a person's behavioural, cognitive, and educational history. Therefore, career decisions should be based on a sensible approach. This decision is made because a successful career represents an individual's actual accomplishments in his or her industry throughout time. Therefore, it is not a simple task and requires a complicated decision-making procedure (Siddiky & Akter, 2021; Ganesan et al., 2018). Moreover, this issue is not exclusive to Malaysia but is global. Thus, students may encounter one of the following issues while deciding on a professional path: the need for skills that will enable them to work in the current high-tech period and competition for the limited available positions. Those lacking marketable talents will have difficulty obtaining their desired position. For them to make informed decisions, skill development must be prioritised. The incapacity of a father to raise funds to support his children's education or training may also be problematic. A kid who aspires to be a doctor or engineer may end up in the arts or business since college costs are more manageable for their parents.

Youth employment discrimination is an additional challenge when making a decision. They tend to favour one position over others. Most of these individuals select training programmes and courses that prepare them for white-collar professions. Some students are unaware of where they might apply for open employment. This situation makes it challenging for them to get employment. Some may be interested in a particular career but lack the skills necessary to perform it. The list is incomplete without inadequate employment opportunities (Esseh et al., 2021). Currently, the most easily accessible occupations in Malaysia are temporary or seasonal. Also problematic is the absence of career counsellors in schools and career advice centres for individuals who are not enrolled in school and are unemployed.

Therefore, career selection is a complex procedure, and the notion of a career is evolving. It is projected that most graduates will have significant career changes throughout their working lives. Recognizing that not only values, talents, and interests but also work types may change in the future, the individual's present objective is to determine acceptable career possibilities for the following years. According to this study, the individual's employment is determined by the three stated factors: intrinsic, extrinsic factors, and interpersonal. Each element affects the others.

Intrinsic Factors

Intrinsic factors include interest in the profession and a work-oriented personality. In a larger sense, they are fundamental and vital characteristics that make up a person regardless of their affiliation. Choosing a career requires determining one's interests, as these will impact the choice. Students in their last year generally desire engaging employment. Consequently, interest may be substantial and crucial to job selection (Esseh et al., 2021). A passion might also suggest occupations that offer comparable satisfaction, such as football players. Occupations can be grouped if they share an aspect of common interest.

Considering aptitude, desire, monetary incentive, and status, Adjin (2014) found that students at Sogakope Senior Secondary and Dabala Secondary Technical Schools were more motivated by their interest while deciding on a job. Work is intended to enhance a person's quality of life and provide him or her dignity and respect; therefore, one must pay attention to his ability and attitude toward work. In addition, some families are known for a particular occupation because they cherish it and believe it will get them the respect they require in society.

The research conducted by Amedzor (2003) revealed that when prestige, personal interest, and parental influence were considered, prestige was the most influential factor in students' career decisions in Ho Township. In addition, students in their final year must evaluate their values and ambitions while deciding the significance or utility of their profession and their desire or ambition to succeed motivates them to excel in their work. Fundamentally, the scale of values is determined by an individual's attitudes and views towards what is essential in life. Therefore, it will encourage them to make professional decisions that will allow them to live. Innate abilities must be developed. When these abilities are developed, they will impact a person's professional choice; thus, to be wholly developed and achieve self-actualization, one must pay attention to inborn talents. In addition, their intelligence is crucial to their schooling and career decisions. This ability is a significant consideration since they may enter careers that demand extensive educational preparation instead of careers that may not require as much educational preparation.

Extrinsic Factors

Extrinsic considerations include the availability of employment and the remuneration or benefit of a profession. In addition, it includes these critical characteristics as a result of the individual's relationships or outcomes. Students in their last year typically select occupations that are simple to acquire. In a town where the majority of residents are farmers or fishermen, for instance, some individuals may opt to become farmers or fishermen, since those occupations are readily available and accessible. In addition, because they lack access to alternative employment that they value, they accept any offered position. Finally, according to Siddiky & Akter (2021), the availability of progression possibilities and learning experiences are the most critical elements influencing students' career decisions.

Selvanathan et al (2016); Rainey et al (2019) showed that the most significant elements for males were learning experiences and career flexibility. In contrast, the most influencing factors for females were progression opportunities and opportunities to apply skills. In addition, many individuals stated that financial incentives push them to make decisions, i.e., they pursue positions with appealing incomes. Indeed, recent fresh graduates will seek jobs with excellent salaries and benefits. Others examine the work environment before making a decision, while others are motivated by the achievements of friends or family members. In addition, some individuals choose professions they believe will provide them with further opportunities for education or training, which influences their decision to accept these positions. Education or training helps the worker gain the skills, information, attitudes, and talents he needs to do his current job well and prepares him for advancement.

Interpersonal Factors

Interpersonal aspects include parental and significant other influence. Parents - father, mother, and guardians—have a substantial impact on the decisions of seniors. They cater to the last students' fundamental necessities and assist them in achieving their goals through education or training. As a result, they have the best potential to rehabilitate seniors' minds throughout their formative years. Siddiky & Akter (2021) research demonstrated that the cultural and social environment of the family and community had a significant role in how young people learn about occupations and influenced their decision-making.

Adjin (2004) demonstrated that most students at Sogakope and Dabala second-cycle schools had assistance from their parents or guardians in selecting a professional path. However, some students did not provide a rationale for their decisions. In addition, students in their last year may also be influenced by fellow students or close friends while making decisions. In addition to fellow students or friends, their peers also influence a programme selection. Appropriately, even if they are not interested, students in their last year will heed their friends' recommendations. In addition, teachers impact students' job decisions. Essentially, instructors function as mentors and coaches, offer students with vocational information, help them clear their doubts, and equip them with various skills that will assist them in choosing the correct career path. Finally, the counsellor may also affect the client's professional decision. Many may see a career counsellor assist them in making professional decisions (Omar et al., 2021).

Conclusion

A career choice is unquestionably the most important decision a student will ever make. These selections are hampered by the presence of new and developing professions and current prestige inclinations. In addition, it necessitates a balance between allowing the student to make an autonomous decision and offering guidance from the parents and instructors to share their perspectives and experience. Students' motivation and performance may suffer if they are subjected to pressure and a dictatorial mentality. Therefore, the sorts of occupations relevant to their interests, abilities, and goals should be debated democratically. Students should select a profession that corresponds with their skills and interests. In this ruling, the university should aid the student by establishing student counselling centres. Thus, students can choose which job path is ideal for them. When picking a professional choice, students' enthusiasm should never be discounted.

The findings pave the way for researching the drivers influencing career choices among students at Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia. In order to proceed to empirical research, a broader range of works of literature must be researched to get an incisive understanding. Even though this is a conceptual paper, it is hoped that it will contribute to the scholarly literature and substantially influence the owners and policymakers of HEIs after the study has been completed.

Correspondence Author

The correspondence author of this study is Dr. Siti Normah Awang Tuah from UiTM Melaka, MALAYSIA.

Email: sitinormah@uitm.edu.my.

References

- Abe, E. N., & Chikoko, V. (2020). Exploring the factors that influence the career decision of STEM students at a university in South Africa. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 7(1), 1 - 14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-020-00256-x>
- Adjin, L. S. (2014). *Career choices in Senior Secondary School: A case study of Sogakope Secondary and Dabala Secondary Technical School in the Volta Region of Ghana*. [Unpublished B.Ed. Long Essay]. Winneba: University of Education.
- Amedzor, B. (2003). *Career guidance needs of JSS 2 Pupils in Ho Township basic Schools*. [Unpublished B.Ed. Long Essay]. Winneba: The University of Education.
- Ates, S. S. (2016). The Affecting Factors of Career Start in Institutions of Higher Education: Application with Turkish Aviation Students. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(4), 27 - 34.
- Esseh, S. S., Ry-Kottoh, L. A., & Owusu, S. K. (2021). Career Choices of Students in Senior High Schools in Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 12(10), 78 - 90.
- Ganesan, J., Koh, S. K., & Goh, C. (2018). FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES. *Sci. Int. (Lahore)*, 30(6), 905 - 908. 1013-5316
- Ignatius, C. (2022). *Unemployment Among Recent Graduates*. BusinessToday. Retrieved October 6, 2022, from <https://www.businesstoday.com.my/2022/06/19/unemployment-among-recent-graduates/>
- Leo, M. (2019). *What You Didn't Know About Fresh Graduate Unemployment in Malaysia [Infographic]*. EduAdvisor. Retrieved October 6, 2022, from <https://eduadvisor.my/articles/what-didnt-know-fresh-graduate-unemployment-malaysia-infographic/>
- Ng, E. S., Gossett, W., Chinyoka, C. W., Samuel, S., & Obasi, I. (2016). Public vs private sector employment: an exploratory study of career choice among graduate management students in Botswana. *Personnel Review*, 45(6), 1367-1385. 10.1108/PR-10-2014-0241
- Olamide, S. O., & Olawaiye, S. O. (2013). The Factors Determining the Choice of Career Among Secondary School Students. *The International Journal Of Engineering And Science*, 2(6), 33 - 44.
- Omar, M. K., Kamarul Zaman, M. D., & Aziz, M. H. (2021). Factors Influencing Career Choice Among Final Semester Undergraduate Students of a Business Management Faculty in A Malaysian Public University. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(2), 361-373. 10.6007/IJARPED/v10-i2/9830
- Rainey, K., Dancy, M., Mickelson, R., Stearns, E., & Moller, S. (2019). A descriptive study of race and gender differences in how instructional style and perceived professor care influence decisions to major in STEM. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 6(1), 1 - 13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-019-0159-2>
- Selvanathan, M., Ali, R., Mariadas, P. A., Perumal, G., & Pei, J. T. (2016). FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AMONGST UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA. *European Journal of Business Research*, 16(1), 1-20. 10.18374/EJBR-16-1.1
- Kazi, S. A., & Akhlaq, A. (2017). Factors Affecting Students' Career Choice. *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, 11(2), 187-196. 1996-1359
- Siddiky, M. R., & Akter, S. (2021). The student's career choice and job preparedness strategies: A social environmental perspective. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, Vol. 10(No. 2), 421~431. 10.11591/ijere.v10i2.21086

Wong, S. C., & Quek, L. S. (2015). Factors Affecting Individual Career Management among Undergraduates in Higher Education Institutions. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 5(10), 56 - 68. 10.6007/IJARBSS/v5-i10/184