

Process and Pattern of Career Choices among Muslim Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is the period when significant career development takes place. The occupational choices made during this formative stage of career shape the whole work life. Adolescents begin to search their career identity, develop an awareness of vocational interests, and undertake career planning and exploration during this time. Researches on the subject indicate that a variety of person, environmental, contextual, and behavioural variables influence the career choice process. These factors could facilitate or impede an individual's career building and trajectories. The purpose of the present study is to investigate how Muslim adolescents contemplate and develop career interests and goals, and what is the trends and composition of their perceived choices. Gender differences in the preferred career choices were also examined. A self-designed Career Goal Scale with Career Goal Setting Scale (CGS) of Mu (1999) was employed to collect the empirical data. A sample comprising 75 Muslim adolescents (40 boys and 35 girls) with age ranging from 16 to 19 years was prepared for the purpose. Descriptive statistics were used to tabulate and analyse the data. Results revealed occupational choices that were conventional, employment oriented, and independence seeking aspired by the majority of adolescents. Findings have implications for career counselling practices, devising appropriate educational interventions, and future research.

Keywords: *Adolescents, Career Goal, Vocational Interests, Career Counselling.*

Career selection is one of many important choices adolescents make in determining future plans. Career decisions impact them throughout their work life. A major part of individual life is spent in occupational activities. Choices made during this formative period of development, therefore, shape the entire life course. Previous studies revealed that a host of personal, environmental, behavioural and contextual factors influence the career choice process. Adolescence is a pivotal phase of career preparation and maturity. They begin to clarify their career identity, develop an awareness of vocational interests and undertake career related task of planning and exploration. During adolescence, career goals and aspirations become more realistic in terms of adaptations to personal and environmental characteristics. Career preparation tasks comprise actions or behaviours that are integral to career development process. The chosen occupations structure a large part of people's everyday reality and serve as a major source of

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PROCESS AND PATTERN OF CAREER CHOICES AMONG MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS

personal identity and self evaluation. Moreover, experiences in the work life have considerable repercussions on other domains of functioning as well as personal effects. For instance, an aversive work life has detrimental spill over effects on family relations, whereas a productive, fulfilling work life has a positive spill over on the quality of life (Bandura, 1997). Occupational aspirations are “expressed career-related goals or choices” that provide important motivational momentum for career related behaviours and future educational and career success (Rojewski, 2005). Career decision is a developmental process adolescents undertake. An important developmental task of adolescents is the growth and exploration of future aspirations and career goals (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The vocational endeavours are explored for the purpose of satisfying personal, economic and intellectual goals. Thus, career choice is a very complex and dynamic process. It is often overlooked that children are engaging in the dynamic process of career exploration, which involves exploring the world of work, examining the self and understanding how the two are related (Hartung *et al.*, 2005). To cope with these developmental tasks, Super (1990) advocated active engagement comprising planning, exploring, information gathering and learning decision- making skills.

Empirical research suggests that career exploration and planning are positively related to career commitment and decidedness in adolescents (Creed, 2005; Hirschi *et al.*, 2007). In one study (Patton & Creed, 2007), adolescents who aspired and expected high status occupations had higher career decision-making self-efficacy and less career indecision, whereas students whose aspirations and expectations were discrepant were less confident about making a career-related decision, more career indecisive and had lower level of career maturity. Occupational aspirations and expectations have been shown to be related to a wide range of personal and situational variables including gender, race, socio-economic status, educational aspirations and attainments, self-esteem and self-efficacy, family and social environments, social support, parental aspirations and parenting style. To be precise, a review of literature showed that three areas of a students’ life affect the career choices they make: environment, opportunity and personality. All these play varying roles in career outcomes. Throughout a career, an individual seeks to accommodate the environment with one’s goals, while at the same time being incorporated into the environment (Kroll, 1970). Career development process is the balancing of recognizing and meeting needs of the individual and responding to the outer forces and realities of life. Career decision factors, therefore, involve two sets of inputs: the self and the world of work. The individual in a career journey has constantly to balance one’s aspirations and to know how they have fitted into the reality of workplace. The personality factors include the abilities, interest, self-knowledge, esteem and special skills. Lastly, opportunity is an important factor shaping the career path. It may influence how students have perceived their future in terms of the reasonable probability of a future in a particular career field. Hence, these social cognitive variables stimulate career choice actions which are necessary for the young person to make progress towards identified career goals (Rogers & Creed, 2011).

According to Census data, Muslims form one of the important categories of the educationally backward communities of India. About 26% of Muslims completed secondary education and only 6% of the relevant age cohort attained higher education (GoI, 2006). It is also evident that Muslims are at a much larger disadvantage at the higher secondary level and unemployment rate among Muslim graduates is the highest. Presently, India is experiencing a ‘demographic dividend’ where more than one-third of her population consists of adolescents. Muslims

PROCESS AND PATTERN OF CAREER CHOICES AMONG MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS

constitute a considerable proportion of this young population. But little academic attention has been given to this issue.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the present study was to find out how Muslim adolescents were making career choices and what their perceived career goals were. Gender differences in career choices were also explored.

METHOD

Participants:

A total of 75 students (40 male & 35 female), aged between 16-19 years attending Senior-Secondary Schools was purposively chosen for the study. Our sample comprised adolescents from different educational streams in equal proportion and all belonged to Muslim families from middle income group located in Aligarh.

Instruments:

(a). *Career Goal Scale:* Career related goals were assessed by asking a simple question, “Do you have any career goal? If yes, please rank the listed career goals in order of your preference from 1-10 (most preferred to least). Certainty about goal achievement and most influential person in career decision were also assessed.

(b). *Career Goal Setting Scale (Mu, 1999):* This is a six items scale used to measure the level of career related goal setting (CGS). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each item on a 5-point scale with end points of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. This gave a possible range of 6-30, with higher score representing more career related goal setting. The internal reliability of the scale with the present sample was found to be 0.72.

Procedure:

The principal, teachers and parents of students were contacted prior to the data collection. After obtaining necessary consent from all concerned, the respondents were briefed about the purpose and importance of the study. They were also ensured of the confidentiality of the information required. They were provided structured questionnaires with biographical information blank (BIB) and asked to respond as per instructions given in the scale.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics through SPSS 17.0.

Table -1: Showing demographic characteristics, percentage and career goal setting of Muslim Senior Secondary School students.

Demographic and other Variables		Total Students Frequency (%)
Socio-economic Status	Low SES	31 (41.33)
	Middle SES	28 (37.33)
	High SES	16 (21.33)

PROCESS AND PATTERN OF CAREER CHOICES AMONG MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS

Demographic and other Variables		Total Students Frequency (%)
Parental Education	Illiterate	8 (10.67)
	Up to SSS	41 (54.67)
	Up to Graduation	26 (34.67)
Family Type	Nuclear	46 (61.33)
	Joint	29 (38.67)
Residential Area	Urban	59 (78.67)
	Rural	16 (21.33)
	Total	75 (100)
Percentage (Mean)	Boys	68.73 (8.13)
	Girls	70.83 (8.11)
Career Goal Setting (CGS)	M: SD (Boys) 22.88: 4.00	M: SD (Girls) 22.54: 3.88

Table -2: Showing perceived career goals/ occupations of adolescent Muslims. N=75 (Boys 40; Girls 35)

Career Goal/ Occupation	Boys Frequency (%)	Girls Frequency (%)	Total Frequency (%)
Doctor	15 (37.50)	15 (42.86)	30 (40)
Engineer	8 (20.00)	7 (20.00)	15 (20)
Business	6 (15.00)	1 (2.86)	7 (9.33)
Accountant (Banking)	5 (12.50)	2 (5.71)	7 (9.33)
School Teacher	0	2 (5.71)	2 (2.67)
University Teacher	1 (2.50)	1 (2.86)	2 (2.67)
Civil/State Services	1 (2.50)	1 (2.86)	2 (2.67)
Lawyer	1(2.50)	0	1 (1.33)
Journalist	1 (2.50)	0	1 (1.33)
Other	2 (5.00)	1 (2.86)	3 (4.00)
Undecided	0	5 (14.28)	5 (6.67)
Total	40 (100)	35 (100)	75 (100)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the study presented in table-2 clearly indicate that a majority of students i.e. 42.86% of girls and 37.50% of boys were aspiring to become a doctor. Engineering occupation emerged as the second important career option as shown by 20% of boys and girls. Among the boys, 15% of them preferred to pursue their career in Business, while 5.71% of girls wished to become School Teacher. In the next order of preference, almost equal proportion i.e. (1%) of students planned to enter into Civil/State Services. Teaching, journalism and law were least preferred occupations among boys and girls. It was further manifested that about 14.28% of girls were not clear about their goals. As portrayed in the table, by and large students revealed career choices carrying social prestige. The traditional professions of medical and engineering still figured on the top amongst the participants. It is worth noting that a considerable proportion of girls were opting engineering and accountancy as their career. These were conventionally considered as

PROCESS AND PATTERN OF CAREER CHOICES AMONG MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS

male dominated vocations. It may be purported that no difference could be noticed between boys and girls with respect to their career aspirations. In fact girls had high level of career aspirations given the cultural hurdles faced by them. Further, mean value of career goal setting (CGS) showed that boys (M=22.58; SD=4.00) as compared to girls (M=22.54; SD=3.88) manifested greater CGS and consequently were more certain to achieve their goals. This might be possible due to the fact that the career and education of boys were prioritized by the society. Another important point is that about 65% of students expressed parents' influence on their career decision.

CONCLUSION

It may now be concluded that majority of participants preferred traditional and prestige-related future occupations of medical and engineering. However, trends show that an increasing number of girls were keen to venture into professions like commerce, accountancy and state services earlier considered male dominated. Boys in comparison to girls indicated higher level of career goal setting. Parental expectations appeared to have played central role in influencing career targeting process. The findings also reflect lack of awareness of new courses and opportunities available at the crucial Senior-Secondary stage. In contemporary India, new occupations are constantly emerging. Mindsets that place occupations on a prestige hierarchy often prevent young career aspirants from actualizing their talents. Hence, guidance and counselling that would facilitate effective career decision-making irrespective of educational background assume a special urgency in the current Indian situation.

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PROCESS AND PATTERN OF CAREER CHOICES AMONG MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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