Career Counseling For Management Students

Muhammad Mouzam Chandio, Salman Bashir Memon, Prof: Dr. Chandan Lal Rohra

Working as Officer Grade-I at Askari Bank Ltd Karachi
Lecturer Department of Business Administration SALU-Khairpur
Chairman Department of Business Administration SALU-Khairpur

Abstract: Career counseling has been given a great deal of importance throughout the world especially in developed countries where students are provided with formal and professional counseling for better career decision making and career development. Unlike developed countries, Pakistani students happen to be less counseled or even not counseled which could be disastrous if wrong decisions are made. This research study addresses the problem focusing specifically on the career counseling of management science students who are indecisive to choose amongst management disciplines as their major. The descriptive research has been conducted at business schools of Karachi to identify the level of indecisiveness, need for career counseling and role of respective business schools in providing career counseling. Highlighting the need for formal and professional career counseling, this research study is to provide the business schools with a basis for chalking out the strategy to ensure that their students make right decisions and develop throughout the career which adds to the goodwill of institution in the market.

Key words: career counseling, career decision-making, career indecisiveness, business schools.

INTRODUCTION

Background:
This has always been a problem for the undergraduate and even graduate students to decide about a particular field of study to pursue their career in. Students usually get themselves enrolled on the basis of just a few criteria like elder’s opinions, parental behavior or experience and on going trend. The recent literary work on the “Role of Parental Influences on Young Adolescents’ Career Development” Keller & Susan C. (2008) hypothesized that, “...career decision making is so vital that formal career courses are offered in developed countries for improving vocational identity and self-efficacy which produce positive results...” However we are eager to replicate the findings and our proposed study hypothesized that, undergraduates enrolled in a career explorations course would report significant gains in career decision-making self-efficacy and vocational identity during their studies. Since subsequent analyses showed that, students also reported a stronger sense of vocational identity following the course (Scott, et. al; 2008). However Pakistan is far behind in this area also as compared to developed countries and much more efforts are required to formally and professionally deal with the issue in terms of theory application and practice.

Problem Statement:
In Pakistani context formal and professional career counseling is almost non-existent in general, but this study is made more focused and limited to finding out whether new entrant management students are given proper counseling by their institutions to start a right career. Business management students have three major disciplines namely Finance, Marketing and Human Resource Management to pursue and they face similar problem in terms of making a right decision. However, by keeping in view the severity of the problem we have pursued following research questions

1. How indecisive are the students in terms of making career choice?
2. What are factors behind choosing a particular discipline of management science?
3. Do business schools provide career counseling to their students?
4. Do students need proper career counseling in business schools?

Corresponding Author: Muhammad Mouzam Chandio, Working as Officer Grade-I at Askari Bank Ltd Karachi, E-mail:chandio_mouzam@hotmail.com
Research Objectives:
Considering prior theories and research this study is intended to explore and answer the questions raised in the problem statement.
1. To identify indecisiveness amongst management students.
2. To know new entrant management students’ career decision-making basis of pursuing specific management discipline.
3. To explore the whether career counseling provided by the business schools or not.
4. To propose initial counseling to management students for entering a particular management discipline with the help of prior theories, research, and practices.

1.4 Importance/Benefits:
This study will prove to the stepping-stone to take the career counseling of students seriously, formally and professionally. It will further be a door opener for future extensive research through broadening the horizon of career counseling for not just management students but also for other students related to different fields in general to ensure better prospects of Pakistani students. Furthermore, this study seems to be helpful for different business schools where little consideration is given to counseling their students in terms of identifying right career for their students and help them make right decision at right time to ensure better decision making to chose the field of choice and further develop the career.

Research Methodology:
The descriptive type of research accomplished at five leading business schools of Karachi including; Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science & Technology (SZABIST), College of Business Management (CBM), Bahria University and Mohammad Ali Jinnah University (MAJU). Having acquired the responses from students the primary data was analyzed by using MS-Excel in consolidated form thorough which complete results were depicted in shape of pie-chart presentation. Primary data collection is carried out through survey conducted by means of close-ended questionnaire distributed to management science students (Batch fall 2008) based on Non-probability convenience sampling. Whereas, total 180 questionnaires were distributed to around 180 students out of which the response rate remained 83% as 30 questionnaires have not qualified to be included. Secondary data collection is acquired mainly through related journals however newspapers magazines and Internet will also be used as a source.

Research Limitations:
i. Only five business schools of Karachi are surveyed and all of them are private institutions.
ii. No psychological test was adopted as a tool that might have helped in highlighting the actual level of indecisiveness among students.
iii. Time and resource constraints are also the limitations of the study.

Career Counseling: an Overview:
More than a hundred years of historical background in the field of career counseling provides widespread and protracted work carried out by researchers and theorists. Starting from the very first conceptualization of formal career counseling widely recognized as Trait-Factor theory can be traced as far back as early 1900’s succeeding which a number of theories have been tested and verified. In order to provide a sound theoretical framework to this research only recognized and related theories are considered which are also considered by profound counselors. Osborn et al., (2004) theorized that, counselors preferred Trait-Factor approaches to career counseling including Holland's RIASEC theory, Person-Environment-Correspondence theory and Cognitive Information Processing theory, respectively.

Related Career Theories:
For creating an understanding following is a brief overview of the theories that are more related to the topic under study:

Trait-Factor Theory:
Proposed by Edmund Griffin Williamson, Donald Paterson and John Darley in 1939 based on the theory of renowned vocational scientist Frank Parson. This theory hypothesized that every person possesses a unique pattern of traits made up of their interest, values, abilities and personality characteristics. These traits can be identified and profiled to represent an individual’s potential and every occupation requires certain characteristics
called factors for successful performance at job. These factors can also be identified to represent an occupational profile. Close match between personal traits and the job factors ensures success and job satisfaction. Arthur j. O’shea (1984) reported that Trait-Factor counseling adheres closely to the principles of scientific problem solving and decision making; career councilors are highly active in using the methods like interview techniques, test interpretation procedures and use of occupational information to logically attack the client’s decision making problem.

**Holland’s Career Typology Theory:**

Described by John Holland which is basically an expansion of Trait-Factor theory. It presumes that, personalities fall into six broad categories: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (often referred to as RIASEC) and certain personalities are attracted to certain jobs consequently the work environment is reflected by the personalities creating six model environments: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (RIASEC). People tend to choose the career that is reflective of their personalities and search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities e.g. Realistic types seek realistic environments and so on. This theory also suggests that close match of personality to job the greater the satisfaction. Supporting Holland’s theory Tracey, Terence J. G. concluded that Individual adherence to the RIASEC as a cognitive structure was related to better career decision outcomes’ (2008). Applications of the tools are also validated employed on non-college-degreed black women (Ward et al., 1981).

**Super’s Life-Span/Life-Space Theory:**

Expressed by Donald Super in 1963. According to him humans are dynamic who change continuously through out the span of life. He proposed a comprehensive model that accounts for various important influences on a person while experiencing different life roles and moving into different life stages. He further quoted that “…every individual has potentials, skills and talents that they develop through different life roles making them capable of a variety of tasks and numerous occupations and an individual expresses self-knowledge or self-concept while making a vocational choice…” Moreover, people try to find professional satisfaction in their roles and responsibilities normally they are more mobilized while expressing and implementing their own thoughts into practice. Donald Super also introduced the implication of ‘self-concept’ in his theory based on which vocational psychology has generated a number of concepts and assessment instruments considered to reflect ability of self-concept (i.e., one’s view of one’s own abilities) often categorized as either self efficacy beliefs or self-estimated (i.e., self-rated, self-evaluated) abilities believed to be relevant to career development (Hansen et al., 2008).

**Krumboltz’s Social Learning Theory of Career Choice:**

Formulated by John D. Krumboltz in 1976. He postulated that career decision-making and development are based on social learning and interaction with people. Career decisions are the result of a number of learning experiences gained through encountering with people institutions and events in one’s environment. Four main factors influencing career choice are genetic influences, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences and task approach skills (e.g., self-observation, goal setting and information seeking). In addition, learning experience lead people to develop their norms and beliefs about the potential careers and their role in life. It also influences career choice and on job demeanor. Learning experience also diminishes the influence of substantial role models i-e; parents, teachers, heroes and celebrities and have an impact on career decisions. Shurts et al., (2004) one of the literary contribution on ‘Providing Career Counseling for Collegiate Student-Athletes: A Learning Theory Approach’ imply that, career counselors who infuse the Learning Theory of Career Counseling into their work with collegiate student-athletes can help these clients learn new ways to explore career possibilities.

**Career Counseling for Indecisive Students: Eastern & Western Cultures:**

Comparing eastern and western culture Jinkook Tak and Ki-Hak Lee (2003) have quoted the findings of Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, (1998) and Osipow, Fitzgerald (1996) that, “…career decisions in Western culture, are generally individualistic and considered an opportunity for self-expression and self-actualization, whereas Eastern culture is based on collectivism thus decision making is much more influenced by the expectations of one’s family and society…” Profound researchers Harren (1979); Leong 1991 cited in Jinkook Tak and Ki-Hak Lee (2003) reported that, Asians tend to go through a dependent decision-making process and their career decisions are predisposed either with the opinions of related groups like parents and friends rather
than their own sense of responsibility. However, Lankard (1995) stated that, “…family influence is an important force in preparing youth for their roles as workers. In addition family background underpinning their career-planning and decision-making process to make right choice of career and a field of study to further build up the career in right direction…” Furthermore, an individual must be clear in terms of which career is more suitable to him/her based on which a particular field of study should be chosen but the fact is that many students enter in to universities with unclear mind especially in eastern countries (Lee and Han, 1997) and this discrepancy further creates the need for career counseling of the students especially those belonging to eastern countries. In contrast the western country like America career indecision is considered to be common problem amongst students as indicated by research that 10% of college-bound students are undecided about their college major and career selections (American College Testing Program 1999, cited in Kevin R. Kelly & Chad A. Pulver 2003). Such an inability of students to make a decision is referred to as career indecision but all undecided students do not necessarily experience the same kind of career indecision. Some students need information about themselves and the world of work, whereas for others, such information would not be helpful because they are too anxious about their career choices (Frédéric Guay, et.al., 2006).

**Career Counseling for Management Students:**

Similar findings are made by Tanuja Agarwala (2008) in his the study seeking the relationship of the cultural values of individualism-collectivism as well as people influencing the career choice of MBA students from India. Scenario in Pakistan is not much different; many students here also are either forced to choose particular field of study or heavily influenced to pursue a particular field mostly by parents, other family members and friends irrespective of what actually they want to do. Identifying only one business school amongst few other institutions which provide career counseling Ayesha Khalid (2008) has highlighted the same issue and emphasized the need of better facilities to students in the form of best counselors in every institute of Pakistan so as to provide the best workforce in the respective fields and help this country progress.

**Career Counseling in Business Schools:**

The Princeton Review (2007) ranking top ten business schools with best career prospects have highlighted that how world’s top notch universities are providing active counseling services to their students, few of them quoted below as an example:

i. University of California Berkeley, California
ii. Columbia University New York
iii. University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia
iv. New York University New York
v. Harvard University Cambridge, Massachusetts

**Career Counseling in Business Schools of Karachi (Findings):**

This study is based on surveys of major business schools through a simple questionnaire distributed to 150 management students who have not yet stepped into the majors. Questionnaire specifically focused on whether students have decided about their majors namely Finance, Marketing and Human Resource Management, what are the influencing factors of choosing a particular discipline of management science, which type of information they value more for better career decision-making and whether they need further counseling in this regard or not. Few very interesting findings were made after data analysis which is discussed as under:

### 4.1 Factors Influencing the Choice:

![INFLUENCING FACTORS](image)

- Parents: 18%
- Other family members: 16%
- Friends & seniors: 13%
- Personal interest: 20%
- Personality match: 15%
- Aptitude & skills match: 18%
Review of the literature helped the researcher identify the key factors which influence the choice of students in terms of career and particular field of study; factors like parents, family members and friends & seniors are observed to have strong influence in eastern societies however factors like personal interest, personality match and skills match are observed to have strong influence over career decision in western cultures. Therefore both angles are analyzed in Pakistani perspective.

4.2 Decision about Management Discipline:

When asked whether students have decided about entering in to a specific discipline of management science, majority of the students’ response was positive that is evident in the pie-chart presentation below: Around 81% of the students claimed that they have decided about their majors and 19% said that they have not yet decided about which specific field of study to pursue as major.

4.3 Previous %Marks of Indecisive Students:

Previous education and percentage marks were also asked through questionnaire and analyzing the data an extremely interesting and valuable finding was made that amongst those who had not yet decided about their major, 46% were those who had 80 to 90 percent marks in previous education and 35% were those with 60 to 70 percent marks. Those with 70 to 80 percent marks in previous education were 19%.

4.4 Further Counseling Required:

An exactly opposite picture was revealed when asked an indirect question in order to identify the level of indecisiveness amongst students, depicting that majority of the students need further counseling. Around 82% said they required further counseling and 18% said no further counseling was required as such.
4.5 Information Required for Better Decision:
Better knowledge of self and the world of work is helpful in terms of making a better career choice based on which a particular field of study should be chosen, students were asked a close ended question given with five options related to self knowledge and job related knowledge.

![Information Required Chart]

4.6 Institution Should Provide Counseling:
Students also emphasized that their respective institutions should provide counseling in terms of helping their students in choosing right field of study as this is a foundation on which career can further be built. Around 96% of the students responded positively that students should be provided counseling by their institutions that clearly show that business schools of Karachi are not much active in guiding their students.

![Institution Should Provide Counseling Chart]

Conclusions & Recommendations:
This research study is primarily intended to identify the need of career counseling by highlighting the indecisiveness amongst management science students although no psychological tool was adopted to measure the level of indecision. Survey findings revealed that students need counseling as to which specific management discipline to choose and further build up their career. In addition, results showed that around 81% of the students claimed that they have decided about their majors and 19% said that they have not yet decided about which specific field of study to pursue as major. When students were asked if they required further counseling in this regard, an actual position of students’ indecisiveness surfaced revealing 82% students who required further counseling as against 18% who did not require further counseling. Analyzing the data another interesting finding was made that out of those 19% students, who said that they have not decided about their major of management science, around 65% students have acquired 70 to 90 percent marks in their previous education that shows that a talented pool of students are facing problem. Another problem area was identified that students rank collectivist career decision-making influencing factors (like parents, other family members and friends & seniors) almost equally valuable as individualistic career-decision-making factors (like personal interest, personality match and aptitude and skills match). Although this research study supports the claim of Malgwi, Charles A.; Howe, Martha A.; and Burnaby, Pricilla A. (2005) that interest in the subject was the most important factor for students but at the same time it is observed that students give importance to other influencing factors too that may cause confusions in the minds of students and also make them compromise in terms of making a career choice. To overcome the problem students need information and they almost equally rate the importance of information related to self-knowledge as well as knowledge about the world of work and an overwhelming majority of students think that their respective institutions should counsel students for better decision-making. Prior research work and application of recognized theories must be utilized to address the problems related to career decision making specifically at initial level of the students’ academic career as this usually is an intense problem at that stage of life. A research study tested on 747 students related to this issue should be highlighted here which focused on examining persistent aspect of career decision-making difficulties using Emotional and Personality-related Career decision-making Difficulties scale (EPCD). However, results indicated that, “…individuals with high "EPCD" scores at the beginning of the academic school year
had less confidence in their choice and were less close to making a decision about the major into which they wanted to be admitted at the end of the year (Saka et al., 2007).” Some extremely helpful tools, which are validated and also applied throughout the world, should be used to help students in decision-making. Following is the list of such renowned tools/ instruments that can help students increase their self-knowledge and facilitate decision-making:

**Career Factors Inventory (CFI):**
- The CFI reflects some of the reasons of indecision and indicates the steps needed to become more decisive.

**Self-Directed Search (SDS):**
- This instrument provides with feedback regarding career interests.

**Strong Interest Inventory (SII):**
- The SII compares one’s interest profile with those of workers in more than one hundred occupations. It tells how similar your interests are to those of workers employed in these diverse occupations.

**Skills Confidence Inventory:**
- The Skills Confidence inventory describes how you perceive your own capabilities.

**Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI):**
- This popular personality test can be helpful in identifying work environments that are compatible with your personality.

**Forced Choice Values Inventory (FCV):**
- This exercise is designed to help sort the values that relate to selecting a career field.

**Decision Making Self Efficacy (DMSE):**
- This inventory helps describe confidence in ability to make a good career decision.

**Decision Making Style (DMS):**
- This questionnaire helps to better understand one’s approach to making decisions.

**Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ):**
- The CDDQ measures some of the specific barriers that are impeding your progress in making a career decision.

**Five Factor Inventory (FFI):**
- This is another personality test that provides information about some important personality characteristics that are not measured by the MBTI.

Business schools will have to take an active part in guiding and counseling as other good universities around the world do by establishing counseling centers and appointing specialized counselors to deal with such problems. Imperial College London for example has Career Advisory Service division helping students to know about their interests, skills, personality, motivating factors or any other factors and also in terms of job types and occupational profiles. After all this is not only the matter of students career but at the same time goodwill of an institution is also involved from which students graduate and start working in case few students do not perform well due to wrong decision.

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