Facets of Parental Involvement and Exposure in Career-Related Activities to Career Indecision among Adolescents

Magallanes, Angelika T.
Eva Castronuevo

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine whether parental involvement and career-related activities are predictive factors of career indecision among first year college students taking board course programs (N=112). Data for this study were collected through online survey and administered questionnaires. Findings show that facets of parental involvement, such as support and lack of engagement do not have significant relationship to career indecision however, interference (r=-.250) is negatively correlated with career decisiveness therefore this means that high parental interference were more likely to result high career indecision among students. On the other hand, exposures to career-related activities do not have a direct impact on career indecision of students.

Keywords: career indecision, career exposure, parental involvement, career related activities

Choosing a career is one of the most important decision most of us ever make. It is considered to be one of the vital developmental task of adolescents (Hirschi, 2009; Creed, Patton & Prideaux, 2006) has to face. Adolescence is generally recognized as a critical time in the development of career. On the other hand, nowadays, most adolescents tend to be more independent in many aspects of life, especially in choosing the career they want to pursue. However, several studies have shown that some face the challenging task of deciding on their individual careers, which according to Creed, et al (2006), is not surprising given the wide array of career and educational options, and the need to be informed about one’s needs, values, goals and the information needed about the field of career. According to Ma & Yeh (2005), certainty and indecision are two variables that have been designed to assess career decision status. Career certainty refers to one's degree of certainty of having made a career decision while career indecision is defined as an inability to make a decision about the career one wishes to pursue (Guay, Senecal, Gauthier, & Fernet, 2003).

Career indecision is experienced by many college students across all years. Career indecision plays a major role in the way students perceive their future career and it influences their career-related thoughts and decisions. In addition, it also affects the way they perceive themselves and has a role in formulating students’ career goals and how they approach these prospects (Jordaan, Smithard & Burger, 2009). Thus, variables that contribute to career indecision among adolescents should be identified and recognized. Exploration, vocational identity, and decision-making difficulties are central facet in adolescents’ career development. (Dietrich & Kracke, 2007).

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 (Guay, Ratelle, Senecal, Larose & Deschenes, 2006). Career indecision can push students to avoid making decisions in their vocation or to make “wrong” decisions which can affect their professional life, both in the short and long term (Marcionetti, 2013). Therefore, knowledge of student’s career indecision will help in foreseeing their status in terms with choosing their individual career. According to Callanan (2006 ), as cited by Talib & Aun (2009),
knowing the student’s career decision status will help not only the students itself, but also the educators and other personnel to understand the factors that lead to student’s inability to decide a major field of study.

**Parental Involvement**

Students are choosing a career based on influences such as family and peers (Guay et al, 2003) and assumptions (about introductory courses, potential jobs and characteristics of the major) rather than through understanding of their own personal goals and values (Freedman, 2013). Several studies have reported that parental influence is a predictor of career indecision among students (Mojgan, Kadir, Noah & Hassan, 2012), especially to adolescents during educational and career transition, underlining parents’ importance in choosing their child’s career. Slomp, Bernes & Gunn (2012), found that students perceive their parents as helpful in assisting them with their developmental needs. In accordance with the past studies, it is generally recognized that parents play a vital role on the intellectual, emotional, social, academic and career development of their children and studies found that the more individual felt secured (Hirschi, Niles & Akos, 2010), attached to their parents the easier it was for them to make career decisions (Emmanuelle, 2009).

A study made by Wolfe and Betz (2004), as cited by Nota, Ferrari, Solberg & Soresi (2007), found that parent-child relationship was related to both career decision-making self-efficacy and career indecisiveness. The study implies that parental impact has either positive or negative effect to the child: for example if both parents and if either the mother or father and the child have conflict in terms with the career the child wants to pursue, this may lead to career indecisiveness. In this case, the parents does not play an active role in shaping the career identity of the child instead, it refrains from playing a positive role in building the child’s career identity. Parents can affect their children’s choice of career through different ways; support, interference and lack of engagement (Dietrich & Kracke, 2007).

Parents’ involvement and behavior influence their children to learn about career and work, thus it helps build a foundation for future success (Hong & Ho, 2005). Career or educational suggestions of parents, as well as sharing of knowledge and experiences, conveying their concern for their child’s future, and modeling work behaviors --- this indicates indirect support and guidance in career development of their child (Kerka, 2000). Without support and guidance of parents, students are often reluctant to pursue or even explore their desired career.

Several researches show that interaction between parents and child is also a powerful influence. Interactions can comprise of constructive behaviors such as showing support, attention and by open-communication, or unconstructive behaviors such as interfering, controlling the child’s career and having no engagement at all. Parents’ reactions (both verbal and non-verbal) and the former then affect what children think, say and perceive about certain careers. Research found that adolescents learn about and explore career through interaction with the context of their family, which leads to stable career choice (Ferry, 2006). According to Li and Kerpelman (2007), adolescent’s outlook of themselves would strengthen or weaken when they obtain response from their parents about their career aspirations. Thus, receiving feedbacks from parents are considered significant to adolescents in making their decision, especially with their career.

Students become more confident and decided when they observe that their parents take an active support, interaction and interest in their chosen career path. Parents create the strongest impression on adolescent’s career choice more than others like counselors, teachers or peers. On the other hand, some studies have found that parental involvement was not significant in predicting career indecision (Mojgan et al, 2012) and that family cohesion contributed significantly to the prediction of career decision-making difficulties. (Koumoundourou, Tsaousis, & Kounenou, 2010). Career development is a lifelong process (Auger, Blackhurst & Wahl,
Understanding parents career-related behaviors and parent-child relationship can help identify barriers to students career progress.

**Career-Related Activities**

Students learn not only through lectures done by the teachers and professors but also through real-life experiences. Application of knowledge by means of involving oneself to different activities, opportunities and exposures would definitely help in providing deeper sense of knowing towards achieving goals and in seeing real-life situations. According to Yip (2009), career-related experiences do not merely mean “work experience”. It is a common practice that schools encourage and allocate students to have “work experience” in different offices to enable students to experience working in their desired field and to acquire certain skills through those experiences. Career-related experiences enable students to gain knowledge about the world of work and careers through diverse learning activities such as internships, seminars, career workshops, and etc. Such activities allow students to see the practical value in learning their career.

Giving young people the tools and knowledge to realistically plan for their future is a primary goal of education (Hughes & Karp, 2004). Career exploration assist students in developing realistic plans for their future and it contributes to higher career commitment and decisiveness in adolescence (Creed, Prideaux, & Patton, 2005). A study made by Callanan & Benzing (2004), concluded that completion of an internship assignment was linked with finding career oriented employment. Individuals who spent time in career exploration, attended more training programs, and used more career resources reported higher career-search clarity (Zikic & Saks, 2009). Indulging students in different activities related to one’s career has a higher probability of having a clearer view towards their career. In a study made by Macera & Cohen (2006), they found out those students who completed a plan of study, a resume, and a career exploration paper either changed their career plans or felt more confident about their plans. Thus career exploration help individuals obtain greater clarity of the type of work, job or career they desire (Zikic & Saks, 2009).

According to Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Career-related activities also provide youth with the opportunity to test academic theories through real-world application. As stated by the National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition, Work-based learning is an integral part of the academic curriculum, reinforcing academic and occupational skills learned in the classroom, providing career exploration and a broad understanding of an occupation or industry, motivating students, introducing generic workplace skills, and teaching entry-level technical skills (American Youth Policy Forum & Center for Workforce Development, 2000). Working closely with employers allows schools to define the knowledge and skills necessary for graduates to successfully perform in college and the workplace (Achieve, 2004). In other words, in depth exploration of career choices would result to individuals’ confidence about making career decisions. (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010)

**Synthesis**

Most of the studies found focused on the relationship of parental involvement to self-efficacy and career decision-making of students and the engagement of students to career development. Parents play a vital role in the intellectual, emotional, social, academic and career development of their child. Parents also serve as an influence to students in choosing their own career path. Many studies claimed that involvement and interaction of parents with their child, relevant to career decision-making, could have either positive or negative impact. On the other hand, involvement of the students in career-related activities helps in obtaining career-search clarity. The result of the studies implies that involving and exposing students to various learning activities helps them to have a clearer view towards their career. Thus, parents and the school environment should know and identify their role in the development and growth of the students.
Existing researches relevant to the study were mainly from western society and some of the results were contradicting. The researcher found that there are minimal studies that concerns possible predictors of career indecision in home environment (parents) and school environment (career-related activities). Therefore, the present study aims to discover the relationship between parental involvement and exposure to career-related activities to career indecision among adolescents. The current study aims to determine the level of career indecision of first year college students and to answer the following questions: What is the level of exposure in career-related activities of first year college students? What is the respondent’s perceived parental involvement in terms of support, interference and lack of engagement? Is there a significant relationship between Parental Involvement (Support, Interference and Lack of Engagement) and Career Indecision? Is there a significant relationship between Career-Related Activities and Career Indecision?

Method

Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative research design, specifically correlational design to determine the extent to which the values for the factors are related. The researcher used correlational design to know whether there is a significant relationship between the Levels of Parental Involvement (Support, Interference and Lack of Engagement) and Career-Related Activities to Career Indecision. Scales and checklist were also used to gather the needed data.

Participants and Sampling

The researcher used purposive sampling in the study. The target participants were two hundred twenty-four (224) first year college students enrolled in board course programs of San Beda College Alabang, specifically, BS Accountancy, BA Psychology, BS Psychology and Education. The researcher is concerned about how decided students’, who are taking board course programs, are with their chosen career path, given the fact that these course programs have retention policy. However, only one hundred twelve (112) questionnaires were returned (41 male, 71 female) with an age range from 14-18 years old (M= 16.34, SD=1.06).

Instruments

Parental Involvement. Perceived Parental Career-Related Behaviors (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009). The scale is composed of 15 items on a 4-point Likert format (1 = does not apply, 4 = fully applies). The scale measures three dimensions: Parental support, Interference and Lack of engagement, with 5-items for each dimension. Sample items includes: “My parents talk to me about my vocational interests and abilities” (support); “My parents have their own ideas about my future vocation and try to influence me accordingly” (interference); “My parents are not really interested in my future vocation” (lack of engagement). The scale has an adequate Internal consistency measured with Cronbach’s alpha (support: .93 for girls and .84 for boys; interference: .72 for girls and .78 for boys; lack of engagement: .68 for girls and .75 for boys). High mean score in each dimension indicates that the dimension fully applies; however, low mean score indicates that the dimension does not apply.

Vocational Identity. My Vocational Situation Scale (Holland, Gottfredson & Power, 1980) is designed to assess for difficulties related to vocational decision-making. It is used to identify the career decisiveness of individual. The MVS assesses three aspect of vocational decision-making: Vocational Identity, Occupational Information and Barriers. The MVS is composed of 18 true/false items (Vocational Identity Scale), and 8 yes/no items (Occupational Information and Barriers scales). However, in this study, only the Vocational Identity subscale was used. The scale has an internal consistency of (KR-20=.89) for male college students and (KR-20=.88) for female college students, and a construct validity (r= -.69, p<.01) with Career Maturity Scale (Leong & Morris, 1989). High scores indicate low career indecision on the other hand, lower
scores indicate high career indecision.

*Career-Related Behavioral Checklist.* The researcher formulated a 14-item career-related behavioral checklist to know whether an individual involved or explored sources which can help in their career decision-making. The researcher created a norm based on the z-scores of the respondents and were categorized according to its level of exposure; low, average and high.

**Procedure**

First, the researcher prepared an online questionnaire, combining the three instruments (Perceived Parental Career-Related Behaviors, My Vocational Situation and Career-Related Behavioral Checklist) through Google Forms, attached to this is a brief background of the study. The researcher then contacted and informed the president of each courses (Psychology, BS Accountancy and Education) that the target participants of the study were the first year students of the stated courses and they were briefed about the background and main purpose of the study. Second, the link of the online questionnaires that was created was disseminated to the president of Psychology and Education Department and it was then posted on their respective Facebook groups. On the other hand, the printed copies of the instruments was handed to the president of Accountancy and was distributed by the first year level representative. Lastly, all the data gathered was tabulated, it was then scored and interpreted.

**Data Analysis**

The level of career indecision was determined through descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation). Pearson Correlation was used to determine the relationship of parental involvement and career-related activities to career indecision. And z-scores were used to norm and interpret the level of exposure in career-related activities of students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Exposure</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2 SD below the mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>1 SD below and above the mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>2 SD above the mean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results/Discussion**

**Research Question 1: What is the level of career indecision of first year college students?**

In vocational identity, high scores of the respondent signifies high level of career decision, which means low level of career indecision. On the other hand, low scores of the respondent signifies low level of career decision, which means high level of career indecision.

**Table 1 Level of Career Indecision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Decisiveness</th>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Level of Career Indecision</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>14.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to the question about the level of career indecision of students (N=112), table
1 shows that 25% of the students who participated in the study have low level of career decisiveness, which indicates high level of career indecision, 11.6% of the students have high level of career decisiveness, which indicates low level of career indecision, and 63.4% of the students have average vocational identity which indicates that most of the students are undecided on certain things however they still tend to be decisive. The Vocational Identity dimension of My Vocational Situation has \( M= 8.08, SD= 3.53 \).

Based on a previous study, initial career decision-making is part of the developmental task that adolescents are expected to have accomplished by the end of their high school years (Ferry, 2006). However, in the present study, it is clearly shown that most of the students are within the average level. This may indicate that students were still in the process of discovering and exploring their career choice.

**Research Question 2: What is the level of exposure in career-related activities of first year college students?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Level of exposure in career-related activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Exposure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the present study, Table 2 shows that 16.96% of the students (N=112) who participated in the study have low exposure to career-related activities, 18.75% have high exposure to career-related activities and 64.29% have average exposure to career-related activities. \( M= 0.000323985, SD= 0.999993888 \). The result clearly shows that most of the students have experienced and completed an average count of activities.

Having experiences that are relevant to career choice can provide opportunities for career exploration (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010), which according to some research, individuals who had career-related experiences were more likely to have made a career decision (Creed et al, 2005). According to Yip (2009), “out-of-classroom” activities are well recognized as effective means to widen and extend students’ understanding about different career. It also helps the students to acquire related skills, positive values and attitudes such as having sense of responsibility, integrity and commitment.

**Research Question 3: What is the respondent’s perceived parental involvement in terms of support, interference and lack of engagement?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 Perceived Parental-Career Related Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facets of Parental Involvement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented in Table 3 shows that students perceive that their parents usually
support \((M = 3.17)\) them with their career choice and career preparation. Given this fact, students with a greater perception of support from their parents present career decisiveness (Moura & Veiga, 2005). Although they somehow recognize that their parents’ seldom interfere \((M = 2.44)\) with their decisions. Parents interference may see or serve as pressure to students (e.g. too much involvement, intervening) resulting to passivity. Moreover, students do not perceive that their parents have no support or engagement at all with their career choice and career preparation \((M = 1.36)\).

**Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between Parental Involvement and Career Indecision?**

Table 4 *Career Indecision and Parental Involvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocational Identity</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Interference</th>
<th>Lack of Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>-.250**</td>
<td>-.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>112</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

The data shown on Table 4 indicates that Vocational Identity has no significant relationship with support and lack of engagement; however interference has a weak negative relationship with Vocational Identity, which means interference has a relationship with career indecision. The higher the level of perceived interference of parents by the students, the higher it is for them to experience career indecision.

According to Dietrich & Kracke (2007), career decision-making difficulty has no association with parental support. Although parents are known to have a vital role in career developmental aspect of an adolescent, the result of the present study shows that whether the child perceives their parents as supportive or not, it doesn’t merely contribute to career indecision among adolescence. However, students become more confident and decided when they observe that their parents take an active support, interaction and interest in their chosen career path. As expected, interference has a relationship with career indecision. On the other hand, lack of engagement does not have significant relationship with career indecision.

As seen in the study of Wolfe and Betz (2004), as cited by Nota, Ferrari, Solberg & Soresi (2007) parent-child relationship was related to both career indecision and career decision-making self-efficacy. It is evident that the more the child feels and perceived their parents as opposed to their career interest, there is a tendency of experiencing career indecision. Therefore, students may change their choices to fit better with their parent’s view (Li & Kerpelmen, 2007). A context of interference and lack of engagement in the career choice process appeared to influence adolescents to inhibit career indecision (Ferry, 2006). Contrary to several studies, the result of the present study shows that lack of engagement of parents do not have a direct impact on career indecision of adolescents.
Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between Career-Related Activities to Career Indecision?

Table 6 Career Indecision and Career-Related Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocational Identity</th>
<th>Career-Related Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data presented on table 6 shows that career-related activities has no significant relationship with career indecision, this means that no matter how many activities the student has been exposed to, experienced and participated in, it does not merely indicates high career decisiveness nor career indecision. Career-related activities provide students with the opportunity of career exploration and so as with testing the academic theories through actual application.

It is surprising to know that the result of the present study shows that, career-related activities have no significant relationship with career indecision. Though, most of the studies stated that students who spent time in career-related activities and career exploration have reported higher career-search clarity (Zikic & Saks, 2009). Several researches reported that higher levels of involvement in career-related activities and so as with career exploration, the higher career decision making self-efficacy, career satisfaction and decisiveness. Adolescents who were decided were more likely to be engaged in work experience (Creed, et al, 2005). Little research has focused on career indecision and career-related activities, and based on the present study wherein this issue has been examined, no relationship has been found.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Looking at the findings of the current study, most of the first year college students who are taking board course programs are within the average and high level of career indecision and few students are within low level of career indecision. This indicates that most of the students are not yet fully decided on the career they want to pursue and are still in the process of career exploration.

In relation to the level of exposure in career-related activities, most of the students are also within the average level. The result indicates that most of the students have experienced and completed an average count of activities. It is likely that most adolescents have somehow explored and participated in some different career-related activities.

With regards to the relationship of parental involvement and career indecision, parental support and lack of engagement has no significant relationship with career indecision of first year college students. On the other hand, interference is associated with vocational identity. The result points out that the higher the parents interfere with the students’ career choice and exploration; there is a high tendency of career indecision among the students. With regards to mean differences, results showed that most students felt supported by their parents with their respective career choice and preparation, on the other hand only few reported parental interference or parental lack of engagement.

In the result of the present study it cannot be inferred that involvement of parents promotes career decisiveness or career indecision among adolescents. If the students perceive that their parents are pushing them to pursue their parents’ own ideas for their future career rather than working with them in preparing for their desired career this may be construed as
disinterest in the child’s plans, goals and can be therefore foreseen as lack of real and genuine engagement. Adolescents might not have accurately distinguished lack of engagement and interference, especially when they feel the support from their parents.

On the other hand, the present study found out that there is no significant relationship between exposure in career-related activities and career indecision. This implies that whether an individual is exposed to a lot or several activities related to one’s career, it does not predict career indecision nor career decisiveness. Although as stated in most studies that career exposures and experiences are helpful means in career decision-making.

The present study focused on the influences of parental involvement and exposure in career-related activities to career indecision of students. The study relied on students’ perceptions of their parents’ involvement however the relationship of the student with their parents were not distinguished. Active and genuine involvement of parents would help in reducing the possibility of indecision in accordance with the career path of the student. On the other hand, schools should help in promoting diverse career-related activities inside and outside of classroom could help in decreasing the risk of career indecision among students. It is likely that students especially adolescents would be aware with the wide array of careers.

The present study has its own limitations. First, the study focused on adolescents. Second, the relationship of parent and child were not distinguished. Third, frequency of involvement to a specific career-related activity was not identified in the study. It is recommended to investigate the parent-child relationship, how parents involve themselves in career exploration of their child and how they show their support to the career choice made by their child, knowing that there are several parenting styles. The researcher also recommends distinguishing and recognizing other career-related activities that are not cited in the study. The researcher also recommends further studies on other possible predictors of career indecision, such as individuals’ personality, occupational information, socio-economic status and others. Other methods of acquiring data are also recommended. In-depth Interview with the students could be a help in determining other possible factors that could contribute in career indecision of students.

References:


