

Undergraduate Students' Career Decision across Perceived Parenting Styles: Evidence for Gender Differences

Mahdi Khasmohammadi, Sara Ghazizadeh Ehsaei, Sidek Mohd Noah, Tajularipin Sulaiman, Marzuki Wan Jaafar, & Hossein Abolfathiasl

Abstract - Career indecision is the state of being undecided regarding educational and occupational interest or career path. Career indecision can be antecedents of commitment difficulty, decision-making confusion, and lack of determination. In Malaysia the figure of university students with career-related problems has touched 50% or even more. Parenting styles might instantly affect children's decision-making abilities since challenging styles are characterized by parental control that allows slight independent preparation of decision making. The impact of parenting style in career development of children varies from culture to culture. This study attempted to examine the relationship of parenting styles to the career decision-making of undergraduate students in Malaysia. Specifically, 258 Malaysian undergraduate students aged between 18 to 21 years completed Career Decision Scale (CDS) and Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI). Pearson's correlation, t-test, and multivariate regression were used to answer the research questions. Male students significantly reported higher level of career indecision compared to females. The findings of this study revealed only about 38 percent of students were decided about their future career. Although, neglectful parenting style and affectionless control style were related to higher scores on career indecision, optimal parenting style and affectionate constraint parenting style were related to lower scores on career indecision. Furthermore, results revealed significant effect for gender on career decision. Finally, the conclusion and implication of the study are discussed.

Keywords: Career decision-making, Career indecision, Career counselling, Gender differences, Perceived parenting style, Undergraduate students

Mahdi Khasmohammadi*, Sara Ghazizadeh Ehsaei, Sidek Mohd Noah, Tajularipin Sulaiman, Wan Marzuki Wan Jaafar, and Masoumeh Homauni, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia.
(*Email address: mahdikhas@gmail.com)

I. INTRODUCTION

Young students face various personal decisions that can have long-lasting and wide-ranging influences on their lives. Some of these decisions are career-related. While some students make their early career decisions with relative ease, others struggle. There is an extensive tradition of studies on career decision-making. According to Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) career indecision can be defined as an inability to reach a decision about one's future vocation once required doing so which appears to be a common experience to form part of a developmental stage of students (Chen & Wong, 2013; Santos, Ferreira, & Goncalves, 2014). A difference exists between career indecision and career

indecisiveness (Di Fabio, Palazzeschi, Asulin-Peretz, & Gati, 2013). Career indecisiveness refers to a chronic state of career indecision affecting multiple aspects of life (Santos et al., 2014). Scholars have revealed that career indecision is linked with locus of control (Lease, 2004), personality traits (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2016), and career decision-making self-efficacy (Sovet, Tak & Jung, 2015), as well as with contextual dimensions, such as parental perfectionism and parenting style (Khasmohammadi et al., 2010 & 2017; Sovet & Metz, 2014).

Career indecision can be antecedents of commitment difficulty, decision-making confusion, and lack of determination (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, Mylonas, Argyropoulou, & Tampouri, 2012). It has been proven that participation in career guidance and counseling sessions has been demonstrated to decrease difficulties related to career decision-making. Uthayakumar, Schimmack, Hartung, & Rogers (2010) examined the association of career decidedness with undergraduate students' personal health. Outcomes confirmed that well-being is directly related to career decidedness. Those people who had a clear idea about their profession considerably had a better feeling about their future life. Di Fabio et al. (2013) revealed that although substantial research exists on the predictors of career indecision, it has been remained as a poorly understood construct.

The findings of studies on the influences of parents on career decision-making are dissimilar. There are some studies which represent a rare or no relation among difficulties related to career decision-making and family variables (Marcionetti, 2014). Other studies uncovered rather stronger relations between decision-making difficulties with various family variables such as family patterns of expressiveness and cohesiveness, parental perfectionism, and parental support (Bolat, Odaci, & Odaci, 2016; Fernandes & Bance, 2015; Garcia, Restubog, Toledano, Tolentino, & Rafferty, 2012; Isaac, 2014; Khasmohammadi et al., 2010 & 2018). According to Glasgow, Dombusch, Troyer, Steinberg, and Ritter (1997) parenting styles can be defined as a mixture of nonverbal expressions, practices, and parental attitudes that illustrate the nature of parent-child interactions through various circumstances. Besharat, Azizi, and Poursharifi (2011) defined parenting styles as patterns of behaviour that primary caregivers employ to interact with their children.

Parenting styles might instantly affect children's decision-making abilities since challenging styles are characterized by parental control that allows slight

independent preparation of decision making (Sovet & Metz, 2014). Hughes (2011) reported that parenting style influences the career development process. The impact of parenting style varies from culture to culture, and culture is also known to mediate the role of parenting style in career development. Authoritative parenting style is seen to have a positive impact on several variables in Caucasian students. However, collectivist cultures stress the importance of parental authority and interdependence (Rao, 2017). In the non-Western cultures authoritarian parenting style is reported to be the most widely used parenting style (Wu, 2009). Recently, Rao (2017) found that permissive parenting style was not expressively associated with vocational decision-making. This is contradictory to findings that state the permissive parenting style negatively affected the career decision-making process (Koumoundourou et al., 2011). However, similar findings were reported by Chen and Liew (2015) where they failed to find a substantial relations between permissive parenting style and career decision-making difficulties. Koumoundourou et al. (2011) found that children whose parents exercised strict control over their behaviour had more career decision-making difficulties.

According to the past research, gender is playing a significant role in career development, especially in the time of making educational or vocational decisions. Although, gender differences were studied in relation to career decision-making but the findings are dissimilar. Fadaei Nasab (2012), Khasmohamadi et al. (2010, 2017), Middleton (2017) and Lam and Santos (2017) have reported higher career indecision among male students, in contrast several other studies found higher level of career indecision among female students compare to the males (Abu Talib & Tan, 2009; Migunde, Othuon, & Mbagaya, 2015; Nota, Ferrari, Solberg, & Soresi, 2007; Patton & Creed, 2001).

II. THE CURRENT STUDY

Present study was designed to advance the literature in the field of career counseling and vocational psychology by enhancing the understanding of the interactions between careers related difficulties and instantaneously parental variables related to the career decision. Therefore, we considered specific variable related to the career choice difficulties. Moreover, we considered a sample of Malaysian young undergraduate students. As has been noted by scholars, many of the studies on career development involve western samples, whereas other societies, such as Malaysia, are rarely considered (Nota et al., 2007). This made current research different from and complementary to the studies already done.

Current study was directed by three hypotheses.

1. Based on the past studies, we expected that female students should reported higher level of career indecision compare to males (Migunde, Othuon, & Mbagaya, 2015).

2. We hypothesized that paternal optimal and affectionate constraint parenting significantly negatively and paternal neglectful and affectionless control parenting style positively were related to career indecision (Khasmohammadi et al., 2017).
3. We also expected that maternal optimal and affectionate constraint parenting significantly negatively and maternal neglectful and affectionless control parenting style positively were related to career indecision (Khasmohammadi et al., 2017).

III. METHODS

Participants and Procedures

A total of 258 undergraduate students from two public universities in Malaysia participated in this study. The faculties of both universities were categorized into three fields (science, social science, and technical). Then the respondents were recruited from these three fields of studies. Their participation in the survey was voluntary and fulfilled the requirement approved by the institutional ethical review board. The sample comprised of 136 women and 122 men aged 18 to 21 ($M = 19.53$, $SD = 1.28$). Signed assent was obtained from all study participants prior to collecting research data. Students individually completed anonymous printed self-report questionnaires instruments in the English language including demographic questions, Parental Bonding Instrument and Career Decision Scale.

Measurements

Career Decision Scale (CDS). Career Indecision was measured using CDS (Osipow, 1987). CDS consists of 19 items with 16 items regarding indecision (items 3–18), two items regarding certainty (items 1 and 2), and an open-ended question to indicate concerns about career decision and uses a 4-point Likert-type scale that ranges from not at all like me (1) to exactly like me (4) (Osipow, 1987). More recently, Feldt (2013) found Cronbach's internal reliability of .82 to .90 for the CDS. Evenson (2016) stated that depend on how authors report scores on the CDS, data based on the full scale or using the 2-factor model would be used as dependent variables representing the state of career indecision. In the present study, Cronbach's internal reliability of CDS was 0.87.

The Parental Bonding Index (PBI). Parenting styles were assessed using PBI (Parker, Tupling and Brown, 1979). PBI is a self-report inventory to measure children's reversible experiences about childhood parenting behaviors. PBI consists of 25 items for assessing the individual perspective of parenting styles in two aspects. 12 items examine the affection and warmth parenting style. Another 13 items evaluate overprotecting style of parenting in opinion of children. The questionnaire adapted to a Likert scale from very unlike (0) to (3) very like. Basically, based on PBI scores, parenting styles are divided into four levels; Neglectful (low protection and care), Affectionless Control (high protection and low care), Optimal (low protection and high care), and Affectionate Constraint (high protection and care). Wilhelm, Niven, Parker, & Hadzi-Pavlovic (2005) reported satisfactory validity and reliability for PBI. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of PBI was satisfactory with value of 0.83.

IV. FINDINGS

Table 1 presents demographic information of participants according to their gender, age, education levels, and level of their career indecision. As it can be seen from the table 1, almost 55% of students were female while the number of male participants was about 44%. Approximately 29% of respondents were fourth year students, 26% of them were in first year of their study, 21% of them were second year students and lastly 24% of them were in third year of their study. The ages of participants were from 18 to 21 years old. 61.63% of all students reported high levels of career indecision and only 38.37% of students reported low career indecision.

TABLE 1: BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

	Gender		Age				Educational Level				Career Indecision	
	Male	Female	18	19	20	21	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year	High	Low
n	116	142	70	61	58	69	67	55	62	74	159	99
%	44.96	55.04	27.14	23.64	22.48	26.74	25.97	21.32	24.03	28.68	61.63	38.37

Note. N= 258

In second step of data analysis, t-test, Pearson's correlation and multivariate regression were utilized. As can be seen in table 2, the difference between male and female students in level of career indecision is considered to be extremely statistically significant. Male students significantly reported higher level of career indecision (M= 42.91, SD= 7.21) compare to female students (M= 36.04, SD= 6.84). The t-test was used to test the significant differences of respondents' career indecision between male and female. Table 2 shows the comparison in career indecision between male and female respondents. Findings show that there is a significant difference in career indecision between male and female (t= 6.3198, p< 0.0001). Therefore, first hypothesis of this study was rejected.

TABLE 2: RESULTS OF T-TEST FOR CAREER INDECISION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS

Variable		Mean	SD	t	p
Career Indecision	Female	36.04	6.84	7.83	0.00*
	Male	42.91	7.21		

Note: SD: Standard Deviation, p< 0.0001, Sig. (2-tailed)

These findings are in consistent with past studies (e.g. Abu Talib & Tan, 2009; Khasmohamadi et al., 2017; Migunde, Othuon, & Mbagaya, 2015; Nota, Ferrari, Solberg, & Soresi, 2007; Patton & Creed, 2001) that have reported higher career indecision among male students. In contrast with the finding of this study, several studies of Khasmohamadi et al. (2010), Fadaei Nasab (2012), Middleton (2017) and Lam and Santos (2017) have found higher career indecision among female students.

TABLE 3: PEARSON'S CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STUDY VARIABLES BY GENDER OF PARENTS

CI	Maternal Parenting Style				Paternal Parenting Style			
	AC	OP	ALC	NP	AC	OP	ALC	NP
	-	-	.583*	.604*	-	-	.682*	.593*
	.739*	.715*			.721*	.519*		

Note. NP: Neglectful Parenting, ALC: Affectionless Control, OP: Optimal Parenting, AC: Affectionate Constraint.

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

According to the table 3, career indecision was negatively associated with paternal optimal parenting style (r=.519, p< 0.01) and paternal affectionate constraint parenting style (r=.721, p< 0.01). Moreover, career indecision was positively related to paternal neglectful parenting style (r=.593, p< 0.01) and paternal affectionless control parenting style (r=.682, p< 0.01). Besides, career indecision was negatively associated with maternal optimal parenting style (r=-.715, p< 0.01) and affectionate constraint parenting style (r=-.739, p< 0.01). Furthermore, career indecision was positively related to maternal neglectful parenting style (r=.604, p< 0.01) and maternal affectionless control parenting style (r=.583, p< 0.01). Consequently, according to these findings second and third hypothesis of the study were accepted. These findings are in consistent with past studies (e.g. Khasmohamadi et al., 2017).

TABLE 4: RESULTS OF MULTIVARIATE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR STUDENT'S CAREER INDECISION

	B	Beta	F	Adjusted R square		B	Beta	F	Adjusted R square
Paternal					Maternal				
AC	-.492 ^a	.373 ^a			AC	.471 ^a	-.367 ^a		
OP	-.352 ^a	.311 ^a	51.632 ^a	.459 ^a	OP	.469 ^a	-.361 ^a	54.325 ^a	.464 ^a
ALC	.468 ^a	.324 ^a			ALC	.458 ^a	.358 ^a		
NP	.436 ^a	.319 ^a			NP	.459 ^a	.332 ^a		

Note. a: Dependent Variable, NP: Neglectful Parenting, ALC: Affectionless Control, OP: Optimal Parenting, AC: Affectionate Constraint.

As can be seen in Table 4, the strongest predictors of career indecision among undergraduate student was paternal affectionless control parenting style (-.492) followed by maternal affectionless control style (-.471).

V. DISCUSSION

The present study has looked into the parenting styles as predictors of career indecision for increasing understanding about career indecision among undergraduate students. Results showed around 62% of Malaysian undergraduate students reported career indecision, and about 38% of participants were decided about their future careers. These findings can prove the fact that career related decisions might be influenced by other significant factors such as job availability in the country which could prevent job seekers from choosing their preferred careers. Regarding career indecision, in consistent with past research (e.g., Fadaei Nasab, 2012; Khasmohamadi et al., 2010, 2017; Lam & Santos, 2017; Middleton, 2017) overall gender difference was observed in this study as well. However, in current study, men scored higher career indecision than women. It could mean that nowadays due to social movements and rapid global changes in terms of gender roles women are encouraged to make a career related decision as quickly as men.

Indeed, in Asian countries, traditionally the person in charge of the family is man and, therefore, this responsibility results in a social pressure that leads men to decide on their career path earlier compared to women who are more decided. This strong social pressure can be stressful, while anxiety is one of the significant variables result career indecision. Findings of this study are inconsistent with other research conducted in Western countries (e.g., Nota, Ferrari, Solberg, & Soresi, 2007; Migunde, Othuon, & Mbagaya, 2015; Sovet & Metz, 2014; Patton & Creed, 2001; Vignoli, 2009). In these research men reported the lower career indecision. This can be explained by the fact that parents due to gender role socialization encourage men to engage in earlier career exploration and to be more confidence in making career related decisions and consequently to express higher levels of self-esteem. More studies about the determinants of the observed difference in career indecision among male and female undergraduate students in Malaysia are definitely needed.

Overall, finding of current study in consistent with the past research (e.g., Khasmohammadi et al., 2017) strongly support that parental optimal and affectionate constraint parenting styles significantly negatively and parental neglectful and affectionless control parenting style positively were related to career indecision. Findings of current study filled the existing gap in the literature and have contributed to past research on understanding the parental factors as important variables in career development of undergraduate students. Past findings indicated the gap in literature on the associations between parental characteristics with career indecision. Findings also fill the gap in career development research and improve the existing literature on understanding the parenting styles as enhancing and influencing elements for undergraduate students' career development. Consequently, this study might be useful in clarifying the roles of parenting styles as influencing factors against career

indecision among undergraduate students. Therefore, the present study adding valuable evidence to theory of parenting styles and supports the portability of this theory to Malaysian undergraduate students' sample.

VI. PRATTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Present research suggests that undergraduate students' career decision-making can be improved through the improvement of parenting styles. Career counsellors and vocational psychologist should engage in interventions to support parents of undergraduate students in enhancing their children decision making capacities in order to develop their career decision-making and subsequently their employability in the future. Counselors, educators and clinicians who working at schools, colleges, universities, and mental health centers can emphasis on education and training of parents and students to prepare for dealing with career indecision. Additionally, results of this study suggested that through couching parents should be aware of the consequence and significance of inefficient parenting styles on career development of children. The result of present study also provided some valuable information to professionals in career counselling and vocational psychology. Findings may help school and university counsellors in classifying the significant correlations between the predictor variables of this study and career indecision. Therefore, career counsellors should consider the effects that parenting styles has on decreasing career indecision among undergraduate students.

Students who score low in career indecision are hunted after by employers due to their better responds to transitions than those who score high on career indecision. According to Del Corso (2013), career counselling interventions should concentrate on career development of individuals by supporting them in formulating their career preferences and career decision making skills in order to improve their career self-efficacy and confidence in representing their capabilities to manage their career related decisions and employability. Savickas (2013) and Tolentino et al. (2014) reported that career interventions such as time perspective workshops may enhance career decision making by promoting decision making training, self-esteem enhancement, future orientation and planfulness, and information seeking activities.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Certain limitations related to this research should be considered. First, this study relied only on opinions of students about their parents' reactions. To ensure whether students reflect parents' real career-related behaviors, data on parents' reports is needed. Second, the interpretations of the results of current research are limited by the cross-sectional nature of the data and by the correlational design that did not allow for conclusions relating to the causality of the relations of the variables. Longitudinal studies on the process of career decision-making must be adopted in future studies. Fourth,

more studies are needed to examine the combined effects of different relational, cultural and structural contexts. Therefore, obtained results need to be replicated with diverse samples especially in terms of age, race and culture. Lastly, the sample of this study consisted of undergraduate students that may not be challenged with a serious necessity to make career related decision as they had chosen their majors. Therefore, much research is needed to be conducted across different younger populations that preparing for a career choice or confronted to the school to college or university transitions such as high school students.

VIII. REFERENCES

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