STATUS OF CAREER DECIDEDNESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION
Choosing a lifelong career is one of the fundamental decisions which students, especially adolescents and young adults, have to make. In the contemporary Indian scenario, it is almost impossible to enter the job market without careful planning, unlike earlier times when jobs were acquired to earn a living or taken simply by chance. As India has made rapid technological advancements and is globalized now, Indian youth is faced with the challenges of choosing careers more wisely, particularly because decisions involve early planning for specialization and training. But making career decision is a difficult and anxious task for most of the students.

It has been estimated that 25% of all students entering colleges and universities do so without having decided on a career (Rogers & Westbrook, 1983). Career indecision has to do with uncertainty about a future career (Sepich, 1987). Although some level of uncertainty is normal, uncertainty becomes a problem when it interferes with an individual’s ability to make sound career decisions (Chartrand & Robbins, 1997). The first year university students are being plagued by the process of career exploration, lack of confidence and uncertainty about an occupation, self assessment and not knowing major strengths and weaknesses, and lack of knowledge of work and what workers do at the workplace (Nile & Bowlsbey, 2009). According to Chartrand and Robbins (1997), "Career indecision is the uncertainty that inhibits individuals from selecting a career or implementing career plans." Tokar, Withrow, Hall and Moradi (2003) define it as the inability to select and devote oneself to a career choice. Career indecision is defined as an inability to make decision about the vocation one wishes to pursue (Guay, Senécal, Gauthier & Fernet, 2003). Similarly, Feldman (2003) defines early career indecision as the inability to formulate initial career goals and experience commitment to initial vocational choices. Greenhaus, Callanan and Kaplan (1995) define individuals as career undecided if they have not established a career goal or if they have established a career goal with which they experience considerable uncertainty and discomfort. Career indecision may impact career issues such as choosing a major, making career choices or even unemployment. It may also create social problems in future such as untrained labourers, alienated youth and
maladjusted adults. Thus, the need to understand career indecision is imperative.

The construct of career indecision is one of the cornerstones of career development theory. Some researchers (Lewallen, 1995; Long, Sowa & Niles, 1995) treat career indecision as a dichotomous construct, with subjects being either decided or undecided. Other researchers conceive of indecision as one end of a continuum of career decidedness; at the other end is career certainty (Jones & Chenery, 1980; Newman, Fuqua, & Minger, 1990). This conception of career decidedness as a continuum has led to the development of numerous psychometric instruments to measure subjects’ level of decidedness. Such instruments are not simply measures of indecision; they may be applied to both decided and undecided subjects. The inclusion of career-decided students in the continuum acknowledges that even students who are truly decided may still benefit from career counselling assistance and that ostensibly decided students may at a later point in time become undecided (Gordon, 1998).

Crites (1981) reported that the percentages of undecided students varied from 5% to 61% over a span of 50 years. Astin (as cited in Gordon, 1982) cited data that suggests that the number of undecided students entering colleges and universities continue to vary from year to year. He claimed a 10-year nationwide comparison of college freshmen and indicated that the number of students who were undecided about a field of study increased from 5.5% in 1969 to 20.8% in 1979. Gordon (1982) summarized many of the earlier studies and charted the incidence of indecision among high school seniors and college freshmen. The number who changes majors is estimated to be between 50% and 60%. According to Salters (1985), the number of undecided students in colleges and universities ranges from 22% to 50%.

Studies by Crites (1981), Foote (1980) and Salomone (1982) are in agreement that undecided students tend to drop out of college at a greater rate than do decided students. Boyd (1988) recognized that there are many negative attitudes attached to being undecided and changing majors. Students may feel as though they are without direction, disappointing friends and family, unaffiliated with an academic department, etc. Parents often feel that their child is without direction, and regard indecision as a financial burden. Thus, a large number of undecided students tend to change their majors in colleges and universities and dropout rate is increasing day-by-day. Many negative attitudes are attached to their psychology which hinders their progress in academic as well as vocational field. Hence it is necessary to explore status of career indecision in Indian culture so that necessary interventions can be applied.

Various factors have demonstrated empirical relationship with career indecision. Demographic status is one of them. As a demographic variable, gender has received the most attention in career choice literature (Huffman & Torres, 2001). However, there is inconsistency in terms of the findings related to gender differences and career indecision (Osipow, 1987). Several investigators have found evidence of significant gender differences, suggesting either less indecision for males (Gordon & Osipow, 1976; Westbrook, Cutts, Madison, & Arcia, 1980).
or for females (Taylor, 1979). Other reports show no difference (Cellini, 1978; Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976). In more recent years, most of the evidence suggests that women experience less early career indecision than men (Feldman, 2003). According to Feldman and Witcomb (2005), research has shown that women tend to make career decisions somewhat earlier than men. Among the reasons cited for these differences are the idea that women mature more rapidly than men, which enables them to identify appropriate career goals for themselves at an earlier age (Post-Kammer & Smith, 1985) and that woman are more likely to be channelled into a smaller set of sex-stereotypical occupations when they are young (Hochschild, as cited in Feldman & Witcomb, 2005).

The other demographic variable which affects career indecision is the stream of study students have chosen. However, there is inconsistency in terms of the findings related to streams of study and career indecision. Sharma (2012) found no significant difference on the variable of career indecision between science, arts, and commerce students. On the other hand, significant differences were found among levels of career decision status based on the stream of Economics and Arts (Khasawneh, Khasawneh, Hailat, Jawameh, 2007).

Thus, present study aims to find out the effect of gender and stream of study on career indecision of first year college students.

OBJECTIVES
The purpose of this study was to determine the status of career decision making among the students enrolled in first year of graduation in degree colleges of Doaba region of Punjab, with following specific objectives:

1. To find the status of career decision making among the students of Doaba region of Punjab.
2. To study if any difference exists in career decision making status based on gender and stream of study (Arts/Commerce/Science).
3. To study the association between career decision making status and gender.
4. To study the association between career decision making status and stream of study (Arts/Commerce/Science).

HYPOTHESES

$H_0_1$: A large number of students will exhibit indecision with reference to their career choices.

$H_0_2$: No difference exists in career decision making status based on gender and stream of study (Arts/Commerce/Science).
H₀: No significant association exists in career decision making, status and gender.
H₁: No significant association exists in career decision making status and stream of study (Arts/Commerce/Science).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The population for the study comprised the first year undergraduates from the degree colleges in Doaba region of Punjab. A total of 1334 respondents from 8 colleges from 4 districts – Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Nawanshehar and Kapurthala of Doaba Region of Punjab were studied. The sample was collected personally with the help of a well structured and non-disguised questionnaire. The sample consisted of 701 (52.5 %) Arts students, 394 (29.5 %) Commerce students, and 239 (18%) Science students.

Instruments Used

Career Decision-Making Inventory (CDMI; Singh, 1999) was used in the present study. It contains 18 items and consists of two subscales: CDMI Certainty scale which indicates the degree of certainty that students feel in having made a career decision and the 15-item (statement 6-18) CDMI career Indecision scale.

Scores of both the subscales are calculated separately and students are categorized in Decided, Undecided and Tentative groups.

RESULTS

To study the first objective, the collected data was analyzed. Table 1 shows the level of career decidedness among Undergraduate Students of Doaba Region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N1</th>
<th>H1</th>
<th>J1</th>
<th>H2</th>
<th>J2</th>
<th>N2</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>K2</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decided</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tentative</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion based on Table-1

It is clear from Table-1 that out of 1334 respondents i.e. undergraduate students, 872 (65%) were decided, 210 (16%) were undecided and 252 (19%) were tentative about their career decision. It means that about one third of the respondents are not certain about their career decision. Hence hypothesis \( H_0 \) stands accepted.

Table 2
Subject Wise and Gender Wise Status of Career Decidedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>STREAM</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decided</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>57.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>73.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>86.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>67.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>54.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>73.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>80.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion based on Table-2

The total sample was categorized gender wise and stream wise into decided, undecided and tentative on the basis of score in CDMI as shown in Table 2. Of the 1334 students, 404 (30.2%) were males and 930 (69.8%) were females. Gender wise distribution of sample on status of career decidedness indicates that among males (\( N=404 \)), 67\% (\( N=271 \)) of students are decided, 14\% (\( N=55 \)) are undecided and 19\% (\( N=78 \)) are tentative about career decision. Among females (\( N=930 \)), 65\% (\( N=601 \)) of students are decided, 16\% (\( N=155 \)) are undecided and 19\% (\( N=174 \)) are tentative about career decision. Thus based on percentages, career decidedness is more in males (67\%) compared to their female counterparts (65\%).

Stream wise distribution of sample on status of career decidedness indicates that among Arts students, 57.87\% (\( N=114 \)) male students and 54.56\% (\( N=275 \)) female students are decided. Among Commerce students, 73.37\% (\( N=124 \)) male students and 73.33\% (\( N=165 \)) female
students are decided. Among science students, 86.84% (N=33) male students and 80.10% (N=161) female students are decided.

The $H_{02}$ that no difference exists in career decision making status based on both gender and stream of study (Arts/Commerce/Science) was not accepted in this investigation.

On the basis of results of the present investigation, it is evident that majority of the students, boys as well as girls, who have chosen Arts stream are not certain about their future career. This may be because of lack of information about self and different careers, personal conflict or external barriers. Such students need guidance and counselling by the practitioners, counsellors and educators.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Contingency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.980</td>
<td>0.372</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stream</td>
<td>70.689</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
<td>0.224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at 5% Level

**Discussion based on Table-3**

To study the second and the third objectives, Chi-square test for association between level of career decidedness and gender/stream of study was applied. Table-3 illustrates chi square test for significance of association of gender and stream with career decidedness.

No significant association was found between gender and level of career decidedness, at 5% level of significance (p=0.372). Whereas, there is significant association between career decidedness and stream of study, at 5% level (p=0.000). Further, contingency coefficient (a measure of strength of association) value of 0.224 shows a relatively low degree of association between career decidedness and stream of study. Thus, hypothesis $H_{03}$ stands accepted whereas the hypothesis $H_{04}$ was not accepted.

Hence, it can be concluded that there is no need for substantially different interventions for counselling of male and female students. Significant association of stream of study suggests that there is more need of guidance and counselling for Arts students in comparison to other streams.

**IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Considering all the social and personal developmental issues faced by college students
during their first year, it is necessary to help them focus on academic and vocational decision-making. Increased efforts should be put forth providing students with opportunities to: 1) increase career self-awareness, 2) develop decision-making skills, 3) acquire knowledge of current and emerging occupational options, and 4) develop job search skills (Griff, 1987).

There are many decision-making models available for career advisors to use for guiding students in decision making. Given the moderate to high levels of career indecision among students of Doaba region there exists a need to integrate various career development activities across courses offered in the Colleges. This idea is especially important considering that students indicated career problems such as the inability to see how their personal characteristics can be utilized in career decision-making as well as their inability to choose a career from a number of attractive alternatives.

REFERENCES
Cellini, J.V. (1978). Locus of control as an organizing construct for vocational indecision and vocational differentiation. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.


