

Influences on the Decision-Making of Selected Physical Therapy Students in a Public University in Choosing their College Course

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Nil Edward F. Panuelos

Assistant Professor III

College of Physical Therapy, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila
(University of the City of Manila)

Email: nefpanuelos@plm.edu.ph

Prime Rose Teodulice M. Lanete - Fabul

Assistant Professor III

College of Physical Therapy, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila
(University of the City of Manila)

Email: prtmlanetefabul@plm.edu.ph

Jean Perez-Ramirez

Assistant Professor III

College of Physical Therapy, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila
(University of the City of Manila)

Email: jep Ramirez@plm.edu.ph

Abstract

High school students are always excited about their college years. But behind the feeling of excitement is an indecisive and anxious mind. College can help students understand who they are and what they want to do in the future. It can also help them become a better version of themselves. The study intends to determine if family, friends, and in-demand jobs are some of the variables considered by students when choosing a college course. Results show that students who have a common interest in a course create more discussion about the topic, making it easier for them to decide. Peer influences have shown limited influence among respondents in terms of choosing a college and eventually choosing a course. Students also think of the availability of jobs, employment opportunities, and job requirements as significant factors in choosing their courses.



Keywords: Decision-making, choosing a college course, public university

Introduction

High school students who graduate are always excited about their college years. There are things that students expect when entering college life, such as meeting new people, venturing into a different environment, and having stressful and new experiences. For these students, college means a fresh start. These fresh beginnings can help them understand who they are, and what they want to do in the future, or perhaps make a better version of themselves. But behind the feeling of excitement is an indecisive and anxious mind. One of the questions that may bother them before entering college is: What college course should I take? (Edmonds, 2012). The choice of college course is one of the hardest decisions a teenager should make. Before they come down to that one last course that they want to pursue, it will take a long time, be a long process, and involve a lot of variables to consider. This decision will have a big impact on their future (Fizer, 2013). Parents, families, and peers may influence the decision. These variables may confuse some students and, sad to say may lead to regretful choices (Alcantara, 2014). Influencing a student's choice, of course, may also reduce the likelihood that students will choose what is best for them. According to Pascual (2014), considering a family's decision can be a factor in a student's decision-making.

Family expectations are often set for students who are financially supported by their parents. Because of this, parents' decisions greatly affect the students' course preferences. The result of the same study also considers, although it is the least influential factor, peer influence as a factor in choosing a course in college. The study revolves around one aspect of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory: the influence of microsystems in a person's life, specifically in choosing their preferred course in college. A microsystem includes the immediate



relationships and activities of an individual, such as family members, friends, and interests, as well as the school. The framework used by Bronfenbrenner served as the main reference in choosing three variables such as family, friends, and in-demand jobs in society that may influence a student in choosing his course of study in the future. For the researchers, determining the effect of family, friends, and in-demand jobs in choosing their college course will provide insight on the level of influence of such variables in shaping the future of the students and their satisfaction with the course that they chose to pursue.

Methodology

In a study conducted by Pascual (2014) entitled "Factors Affecting the Career Preference of High School Students: A Basis for Career Planning Program," the researchers adopted some parts of her questionnaire to fit with the current scope and objective of the study. Once validated, the final questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part includes demographic questions about the name (optional), gender, and monthly household income. The second part is the actual questionnaire, which was split into three main variables or domains: family, peers or friends, and in-demand jobs. The respondents were asked about the impact of these variables on their choice of course. For instance, the interest/specialization domain subsequently referred to the personal preferences of the student. On the other hand, the in-demand jobs were related to the participants' considerations of professions related to their choice of course. Using a five-point Likert scale, the respondents answered the questionnaire, in which 5 represented "strongly agree," 4 "agree," 3 "neither agree nor disagree," 2 "disagree," and 1 "strongly disagree."

The questionnaires were distributed to one class block under the College of Physical Therapy, comprising 30 students. An electronic format (see Appendix A) of the questionnaire was



generated via Testmoz®. A link was forwarded to the students, and they were given at least 3 days to turn in their answers to the researchers. After gathering all relevant data, it was recorded in Microsoft Excel 2010 (Microsoft Corporation, California, USA). The data gathered was tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using the following ranges:

Range	Description
1.00 – 1.79	Strongly Disagree
1.80 – 2.59	Disagree
2.60 – 3.39	Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)
3.40 – 4.19	Agree
4.20 – 5.00	Strongly Agree

Results and Discussion

The following focuses on the significant information obtained in the study. It summarizes the results of the questionnaire based on the answers of the respondents.

Table 1. **Demographic Profiles of the Respondents according to Gender.**

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	8	27
Female	21	70
LBTQ	1	3
Total	30	100

Table 1 depicts the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of their gender. Most of the participants were female with 70 percent (21 respondents), while male respondents were the second with a percentage of 27 (8 respondents). Lastly, one respondent was identified as LGBTQ+.

Table 2. **Demographic Profiles of the Respondents according to Socioeconomic Status**

Socioeconomic (Parent' monthly income)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Below 20, 000	3	10



20, 000 - 30, 000	4	13
30, 000 - 40, 000	5	17
40, 000 - 50, 000	1	3
50, 000 - 60, 000	5	17
60, 000 - 70, 000	8	27
70, 000 - 80, 000	3	10
80, 000 - 90, 000	0	0
90, 000 - 100, 000	0	0
ABOVE 100, 000	1	3
TOTAL	30	100%

Table 2 depicts the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of their socioeconomic status as reflected by their parent’s monthly salary or income. Most of the monthly income of the respondents are 60,000 – 70,000 pesos with a percentage of 27 while the least monthly income of the respondents is 70,000 – 50,000 and above 100,000 having both 1 percent. The result of this data helped the researcher to consider that the current economic status and income of the family may influence on how the respondents will choose their preferred college course.

Table 3. Over – all Mean Score of the Respondents who Answered the Basis of Preference in Choosing College Courses in terms of Relatives/Family

Questions	Over-All Mean ($\bar{X}=30$)	Description
1. I consider the financial status of my family in choosing my course.	3.74	Agree
2. My parents are the ones who are choosing my course.	2.03	Disagree
3. Our family business is a factor in my choice of course in college.	1.80	Disagree
4. The dominant profession in my family is also my preferred course.	1.83	Disagree

Table 3 represents the overall mean score of the respondents in choosing a college course based on the influence of their families and relatives. The results for Question 1 indicate that the majority of the participants agreed that they consider the financial status of their family when choosing their course. The possible reasons for this are that students' choices of career courses are greatly affected by their family's socioeconomic status (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2010). Individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds select courses that emphasize occupation-based jobs and their application to future employment. In fact, as early as the 1997 study by Davies and Guppy, a few studies have shown that the decision-making of students coming from a low socioeconomic background is different from that of those students coming from a high socioeconomic background. Students limit their selection of courses based on the cost of attending the university, including the costs of accommodation and transportation. The result for Question 2, on the other hand, indicates that most of the respondents strongly disagreed that they did not experience having their parents choose their course. According to Pascual (2014), students' decision-making is not greatly affected by their family.

Among peers and family, however, parents are the ones who decide their child's future career path. It is also stated that students tend to choose professions that dominate within their family. However, this study shows that for the vast majority of people, peers and family have no influence on their decision-making. The result for Question 3, on the other hand, indicates that most of the respondents disagree that their family business is a factor in choosing a course. Because of the relational ties that come with owning a family business, taking on a leadership position in the business is one of their options besides regular employment. This option can be seen as an opportunity or a burden for the individual, depending on their capabilities and skills. Employment

outside the family provides independence in personal decisions and little obligation in the family business (Schröder et al., 2011). Lastly, the result for Question 4 indicates that most of the respondents disagreed that the dominant profession in their family is also their preferred course. The least of them strongly agreed, though. The result further contradicts the conclusion of Pascual (2014), which states that students tend to choose professions that dominate within their family.

Table 4. **Over – all Mean Score of the Respondents who Answered the Basis of Preference in Choosing College Courses in terms of Peers/Friends**

Questions	Over-All Mean ($\bar{X}=30$)	Description
5. My friend's preference of course affects my decision in choosing a course.	2.10	Disagree
6. My friend's choice of school affects my decision in choosing a course.	1.94	Disagree

Table 4 presents the overall mean of the respondents who answered their basis of preference in choosing their college course according to peers or friends. The results of Question 4 show that the majority of respondents disagreed that their friend's choice, of course, influences their own choice of course. Peer influences the decision-making process of an individual. However, they may only suggest recommendations; they do not impose obligations (Pimpa & Suwannapirom, 2008). In the study of Pascual (2014), peer influence was the factor least considered by students in the process of choosing their college courses. Peers' affectation is not remarkable to students because they are independent when it comes to complex life choices. Additionally, the results for Question 5 indicate that the majority of the students also disagreed that their friends' choice of school affected their decision to choose a course.



Results show that peer influences have had limited influence among respondents in terms of choosing a college and eventually choosing a course. It contradicts the common belief that students who have a common interest in a course will create more discussion about the topic, making it easier for them to decide.

Table 5. Over – all Mean Score of the Respondents who Answered the Basis of Preference in Choosing College Courses in terms of the In-Demand Jobs

Questions	Over-All Mean ($\bar{X}=30$)	Description
7. I consider my course choice to be an in-demand course.	3.90	Agree
8. I consider the place of my future work in choosing my course.	4.20	Strongly Agree
9. I consider the work I will get after finishing my degree in choosing a course.	4.37	Strongly Agree
10. The availability of job in the future affects my choice of course.	4.17	Agree

Table 5 presents the frequency of the respondents who answered their basis of preference in choosing their college course according to in-demand jobs. The results for Question 7 indicate that the majority of the respondents agreed that they considered their course an in-demand one. The result coincides with the study by Sabir et al. (2013) that, aside from university reputation and interest in the subject, course reputation and employment opportunities are significant factors in deciding what course to take. Furthermore, students consider courses with future jobs that offer high earning potential, benefits, and advancement opportunities. Subsequently, the result of Question 8 indicates that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they consider the place of their future work in choosing a course. Borchert (2002) mentioned that students seek career options that will provide

them with jobs in the future that can meet the demands of their different economic statuses and social trends. Some of those jobs require them to leave their homes and work in various environments.

Moreover, the results for Question 9 indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they consider the work they will get after finishing their degree when choosing a course. It affirms the study conducted by Edwards & Quinter (2011), where the respondents agreed that what a certain career holds for the student in the future, specifically job availabilities and employment security, affects their decisions in choosing courses. Lastly, the results for Question 10 indicate that most of the respondents agreed that the availability of the job in the future affects their choice of course. Thus, students think of the availability of jobs, employment opportunities, and job requirements as significant factors in choosing their courses.

Limitations and Recommendations

The study involved aspects of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The researcher proposes expanding the study to identify additional variables influencing how a student chooses their course, such as their interests, specializations, religious affiliations, and type of school, among others.

The researchers limited the scope of the study to identify factors such as the influence of families, peers, and in-demand job opportunities. It is highly suggested also to determine the relationship of these variables to the respondent's sociodemographic profile, such as their current economic status, the type of job of their parents, their senior high school area of specialization (the academic strand), and their gender.

Lastly, the study was only limited to one block or section. To further strengthen the study, the researcher also recommends including a greater number of participants and clustering them



according to their courses or areas of interest.

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