DETERMINANTS OF CAREER
ASPIRATION AMONG STUDENTS IN
THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION

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Abstract

This study is on the determinants of career aspirations of students in the process of transition. The study examines two components of career aspirations i.e., career preference, which is the idealistic component and career expectation, which is the realistic component.

The main purpose of this study is to find the determinants of career aspirations. The main factors that are expected to influence career aspirations are self concept factors, that is, factors that influence the way one perceives oneself. The self concept factors in this study are grouped into categories relating to the demographic characteristics of respondents, family characteristics, socio-economic status and academic related influence. The study determines which categories have the greatest influence on career aspirations and which have the least influence on career aspirations. The study also makes a comparison of the self concept variables influencing career preference and career expectation to highlight factors preventing an adolescent from pursuing his or her idealistic goals. A comparison is also made on the factors influencing the Form 5 and Form 6 sample. Other variables examined for its influence on career aspirations are perceived work values which are the attributes desired in a career. The influence of career preference on career expectation is also determined.

The data for this study was obtained from a survey conducted in 1989 on two samples of Form 5 and Form 6 students for the University of Malaya's tracer study on "Transition from School to Work" (Chew et al., 1995). The career preference and expectation for the Form 5 and Form 6 samples are converted on Trieman's (1977) Standard International Occupational Prestige (SIOP) scale to obtain the prestige level for each occupation.

The main method of for analysing career aspirations in this study is by using the multiple regression analysis. As the dependent variables are career preference and career expectation for the Form 5 and Form 6 samples, four multiple regression models are
constructed. From the multiple regression analysis, the variables having the most and least influence on career aspirations are determined. The factor analysis method is also used in this study to identify representative factors for perceived work values from a larger set of variables. These perceived work value factors are then subsequently used in the multiple regression analysis to detect whether work values have any influence on career aspirations. Other than the multiple regression analysis, exploratory data analysis consisting of graphical displays and confirmatory data analysis consisting of t tests and ANOVA tests are also used.

The most important self concept variables influencing career aspirations for both samples are academic related variables such as prior academic achievement, the decision to further one's studies, the fact that the respondents are from the Science stream and the decision to further one's studies up to tertiary level (which influences only the Form 5 sample). All these variables have a positive influence on career aspirations.

The socio-economic status factor of parents' educational levels is also found to have a significant positive influence on career aspirations of both samples. The socio-economic status factors of parents' occupational status and parents' income have a positive influence on only career expectation.

In terms of demographic variables, females are found to have significantly higher career aspirations than males and this is mainly prominent in rural areas and for those from low socio-economic status. Indians are found to have higher career aspirations than other ethnic groups. There is no significant difference in the career aspiration of Chinese compared to Bumiputera respondents when similar academic achievements are considered.

The factors having the least influence on career aspirations are family characteristics such as birth order, family size and parental interest. Perceived work values also do not have much of an influence on career aspirations. There is not much difference between the factors influencing career preference and career expectation and between the factors influencing the Form 5 and Form 6 samples.
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