

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Career aspiration, as in an individual's strong desire to obtain a particular occupation serves as a foundation towards future career choices. This strong desire can be conceptualised into two components i.e., the idealistic component and the realistic component. The idealistic component is the career that the respondent would like to have if able to choose any career without restrictions. The realistic component is the career that the respondent expects to obtain after making compromises.

By analysing the factors that influence career aspirations, one would be able to have a better understanding of the multiple influences in the occupational decision making process emanating from different social and environmental sources. The factors influencing the realistic and idealistic components are examined to give an idea on the factors preventing an adolescent from pursuing his or her idealistic career goals. In this study, the idealistic component is termed as career preference and the realistic component is termed as career expectation.

Many career developmental theories have been formulated to explain the crystallisation of occupational aspiration and choice which is usually explained in different stages of career development. Theories such as Super's Self Concept Theory (Super, 1963), Ginzberg's Developmental Framework of Occupational Choice (Ginzberg, 1966) and Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (Gottfredson, 1981) theorise that the factors influencing an individual's self concept, as in factors that influence the way one perceives oneself, are the factors that will have a strong influence on career aspiration and choice. Many studies on occupational choice using these theories as a basis, have been conducted but were mainly for the Western countries. This study re-examines the strength of these theories, in terms of whether self concept variables are important determinants of occupational aspiration in the Malaysian context.

Work values are the intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics of a job that are deemed important to a person. Examples of intrinsic characteristics are 'opportunity for creativity' and 'use of one's talents' and examples of extrinsic characteristics are 'good salary' and 'attractive working conditions'. The study also examines whether these factors have a significant influence on career aspirations.

Data for this study are obtained from a survey conducted in 1989 on two samples that is the sample consisting of Form 5 students and the sample consisting of Form 6 students. This survey is the first part of the University of Malaya's tracer study on "Transition from School to Work" (see Chew et al., 1995 for details). More details on the data used are described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2).

1.1 Objective Of The Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the factors that significantly influence the career aspirations of students in the process of transition from school to work.

The study fulfils the objectives listed below:

- i) Factors affecting the self concept of adolescents are found to also influence their career aspirations. This study determines the main self concept variables influencing career aspirations. As these variables can be grouped into categories relating to the demographic characteristics of respondents, family characteristics, socio-economic status and academic related influence, the aim is to determine which of these categories have the greatest influence on career aspirations. The categories that have the least importance on career aspirations are also identified.
- ii) As career aspirations can be separated into two components that is career preference and career expectation, this study makes a comparison on the different factors affecting both components.
- iii) This study determines the different factors affecting the career aspirations of Form 5 and Form 6 students to gauge whether the two additional years of education have any effect on the career maturity of adolescents.

- iv) This study determines whether perceived work values have an influence on the career aspirations of adolescents. If work values are found to have some influence on career aspiration, the study attempts to gauge what work values are deemed important and whether importance is placed on intrinsic or extrinsic work values.
- v) The study also examines whether career preference has any influence on career expectation. This will show whether students generally expect to obtain the careers that they desire.

1.2 Importance Of The Study

Many theories on the occupational decision making process of adolescents have been developed but these theories are based on Western viewpoint. The Asian case, with a differing economic and family structure, may differ from the Western one. This study gives an Asian perspective of factors affecting career aspiration of adolescents. It is hoped that this will serve as an aid for career guidance counsellors in Asian countries, especially Malaysia. An understanding of both frameworks too will aid in building a universal theory of vocational guidance.

Results from the study are useful in the following respect:

- i) A screening mechanism for career preparation and educational programmes.
- ii) Career guidance counsellors will be able to know where to focus their attention on if they have an understanding of the self concept variables affecting career aspirations.
- iii) Motivational programmes can be improved if employers have an idea of the work values that are deemed important to people pursuing careers of different prestige levels.
- iv) The career maturity of students can also be gauged by observing whether students are easily influenced by family and other external characteristics instead of just focussing on their own ability and interest.

1.3 Socio-economic Situation

It is pertinent to know the socio-economic situation during the time of the survey as issues such as the availability of educational and occupational opportunities can have an impact on career aspirations of the sample.

1.3.1 Education

Education is an important aspect in determining career aspiration as education increases the employability of an individual.

Educational system in Malaysia

In the Malaysian educational system, students have to undergo six years of primary education, followed by three years of lower secondary education after which the students have to sit for the *Sijil Rendah Pelajaran (SRP)* or Lower Certificate of Education examination (now renamed *Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR)* or Lower Secondary Assessment). Upper secondary education consists of two years of schooling after which some students sit for the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)* or Malaysian Certificate of Education examination and some for the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia Vokasional (SPMV)* or the Malaysian Certificate of Vocational Education. After *SPM* or *SPMV*, students who wish to further their education have the option to sit for the *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia (STPM)* also known as Malaysian Higher School Certificate, at the end of a two-year sixth form education. Some *Bumiputera* students who have achieved creditable results in their examination have the choice of going for a two year matriculation programme. Those who have achieved good results in their *STPM* or matriculation examination will gain entry into local universities. Alternatively, students wishing to pursue their education overseas can enrol for the A-levels and other equivalent programmes conducted by private institutions.

Higher learning opportunities

There are also many avenues for higher learning in Malaysia. The types of institutions of higher learning in Malaysia in the year 1989 are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Types And Number Of Higher Learning Institutions For 1989

Type of Institution	1989
Teacher's Training Institutions	28
Polytechnics	6
Colleges / Private Institutions	2
Universities	7
Total	43

Source: Social Statistics Bulletin, Department of Statistics, 1989

Financing of education

The following are some of the many different ways of obtaining financing for furthering one's education:

1. Scholarships or Awards by private education institutions, the private sector, government institutions and foreign organisations.
2. Commercial or Bank Study Loans
3. Insurance Companies' Education Schemes
4. Mutual or Trust Fund Education Schemes

Factors that may have some effect on furthering of education and educational preference

The Malaysian government's policy of ethnic sponsorship with the aim of achieving interethnic parity may have raised the educational aspirations of the *Bumiputera* but may also have a depressing effect on the educational aspirations of other ethnic groups. Also, students who are not able to enter state-owned universities or institutions have to bear a much higher cost, which can sometimes be too much of a burden for the lower income group.

Remuneration levels and career prospects in government service, state-owned enterprises and private enterprises still favour university education at the expense of technical competence, adversely affecting the educational preference of students.

Although the demand for technical skills exceeds supply, few students are drawn towards vocational and technical education (Jomo et al., 1997).

1.3.2 Economic, Labour Force And Employment Situation

Malaysia was experiencing high growth during the time of the survey. Following a recession in the mid-1980s, the Malaysian economy picked up and experienced rapid growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 6.7% between 1986 to 1990. Annual growth rate was a high of over 8.0% (Ministry of Finance, 1994).

Labour force in the country also grew at an average rate of 3.0% per annum from 3,597 million in 1970 to 5,110 million in 1980 and 7,047 million in 1990. This is a result of increase in the working age population and a rise in the female participation rate.

The rapid economic expansion was accompanied by a high rate of increase in employment. Unemployment rates fell significantly from 7.5% in 1970 to 5.7% in 1980. Economic slowdown and unemployment culminated in the mid 1980s resulting in an increase in the rate of unemployment to about 6.9% in 1985. However unemployment fell to 6.0% in 1990. Unemployment data was found to have declined even further to about 3.0% in 1993 (Ministry of Finance, 1994).

From Table 1.2, it can be seen that there was rapid growth in employment for all the sectors from 1980 to 1990. The highest increase seemed to be for the production sector. It is expected that in the next few years, the fastest growing occupations will be from the administrative and managerial, sales, professional and technical, and Production sectors. In terms of creating new job opportunities, it is found that the manufacturing and non-government service sectors are expected to generate the most number of jobs. The manufacturing sector, with its labour-intensive industries employed more than 15% of its total labour force by 1980, then rose to 19% in 1990 (Jomo et al., 1997).

Table 1.2: Employment By Occupational Group, 1980 And 1990

	1980		1990		Increase 1981 - 1990	
	('000)	(%)	('000)	(%)	('000)	(%)
Professional and technical	288.1	6.0	580.8	8.8	292.7	16.2
Administrative and Managerial	51.4	1.0	162.4	2.4	111.0	6.2
Clerical	350.9	7.3	645.9	9.8	295.0	16.4
Sales	471.1	9.8	761.3	11.5	290.2	16.0
Services	418.2	8.7	770.3	11.6	352.1	19.5
Agricultural	1,864.4	38.7	1,872.5	28.3	8.1	0.5
Production	1,372.8	28.5	1,827.8	27.6	455.0	25.2
Total	4,816.9	100.0	6,621.0	100.0	1,804.1	100.0

Sources: Malaysia (1986), Fifth Malaysia Plan, 1986-1990; Malaysia (1991b), The Second Outline Perspective Plan, 1991-2000

1.4 Organisation Of The Study

Chapter 1 outlines the introduction of the study and lists the objectives and importance of the study. Chapter 2 consists of the Literature Review, which provides information on the theories governing occupational aspiration and choice, and past studies on the factors affecting occupational aspiration. Chapter 3 describes the data source and the methodology that is employed in the analysis. Chapter 4 provides a description of the sample characteristics in terms of their demographic characteristics, family characteristics, socio-economic status, academic characteristics and career aspirations.

The results of the analysis are detailed in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 represents the results of the bivariate analysis. Graphical displays and mean and ANOVA tests for differences in career aspirations are used to gauge whether variables considered have any influence on career aspirations. Chapter 6 reports the results of the multivariate analysis using a multiple regression together with a factor analysis approach. This is useful for deciding the important determinants of career aspirations. Chapter 7 concludes the study by summarising the results and providing recommendations for future research on career aspirations and choice.