

Correlates of Career Decisions Among Children of Overseas Filipino Workers

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Introduction

Decision making is a vital part of an individual's life. It is a complicated process which involves information search and processing to understand available options (Moore, Jensen, & Hauck, 1990, in Rice & Dolgin, 2000). It is during adolescence that an individual needs to make one of the most important decisions, that of choosing a career (O'Hare, 1987, in Rice & Dolgin 2000). During their senior year in high school, students are faced with the dilemma on what they want to do right after graduation: pursue college education, learn a trade by enrolling in technical-vocational program, or work immediately. Whatever career decision the high school seniors eventually make, it is important to determine the career decision making process they undergo. It is also important to know which factors they consider or disregard in their career decisions. At stake in making the right career decision is their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Thus, it is imperative that they choose the occupation that best fits each of them.

Majority of the local researches on career decisions and the factors influencing them focus on adolescents. Similarly, the literature and studies on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) usually delve on the economic and social repercussions of overseas employment (Asis, 2004; Nicodemus, 1997). There is no available study regarding the career decisions of the adolescent children of OFWs in particular. Although a recent research on the impact of migration on Filipino families revealed the career aspirations of young children (Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines,

2003, in Asis, 2004), this study, which employed adolescents, focused on their decision making process, career decisions, and the extent of relationship between the career decisions and selected internal (personal) and external (social/environmental) factors.

Purpose and Theoretical Bases

This study was designed to explore the decision making process and the career decisions of children of OFWs. It sought to find out the extent of relationship between career decisions and selected internal (personal) and external (social/environmental) factors.

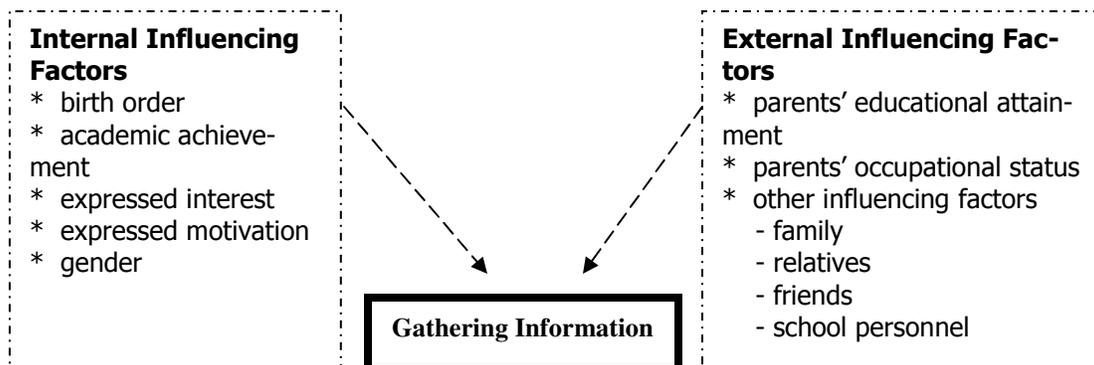
The paper was anchored on two theories, namely, Gelatt’s career decision making theory (1989, 1991) and Super’s approach to vocational behavior (1963, 1980, 1990, 1992, 1996, in Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). According to Gelatt, all decisions have essentially three similar components: a decider, two or more possible choices or courses of action to take, and a decision presumably made on the basis of information. His proposed career decision making process consists of three simple steps: gathering relevant information, arranging and rearranging the gathered information until the decider finally arrives at the last step in the decision making process, and choosing a course of action.

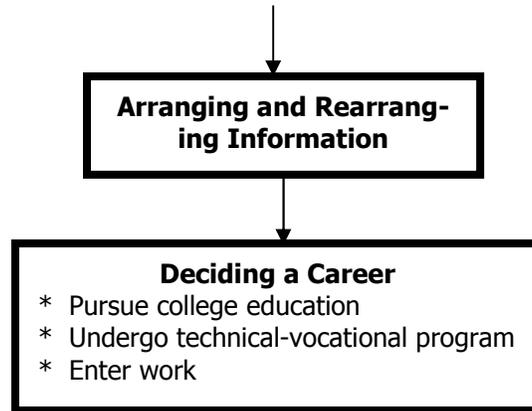
Meanwhile, Super’s approach to vocational behavior stated that adolescence is a period when individuals become aware that career will be a major part of their life.

Super (in Osipaw, 1996) introduced the concept of personal determinants (e.g., intelligence, interests, needs) and situational determinants (contextual factors like family, peer group, school, community) as factors which influence career development. He contended that vocational development implies interaction which is both intra-individual and individual-environmental. A person’s career pattern is determined by interests, motives, innate capacity, family, and by the opportunities to which one is exposed. Furthermore, Super and his associates (1996, in Ferry, 2006) stated that initial career decision making,

A developmental task, is accomplished by the adolescents by the end of their senior year in high school. It is during senior year when they eventually decide if they want to pursue college education, undergo a technical-vocational program, or enter the world of work.

Figure 1 below shows the internal and external factors that may influence the career decisions of students. Internal factors include the student’s birth order, academic achievement, expressed interest, expressed motivation, and gender; while external factors include the parents’ educational attainment, parents’ occupational status, and other influencing factors such as family, relatives, friends, school personnel, and media. Career decision making involves (1) gathering of relevant information, (2) arranging and rearranging the gathered information, and (3) deciding on a career. The choices for career decision, the dependent variable, include pursuing college education, undergoing technical-vocational program, and entering the world of work.





Methodology

The study made use of the descriptive survey method through the use of a survey questionnaire and a focus group discussion (FGD) guide. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to elicit information regarding the students' career decision making process, their post secondary career decisions, and the factors influencing them. A focus group discussion was conducted to validate and elaborate on the students' answers to the questionnaires.

The respondents were 341 senior high school students (137 males, 204 females) who are all children of OFWs. There were 59 participants (27 males, 32 females) in the FGDs. They came from three public and three private general secondary schools in Quezon City.

The survey questionnaire had three parts: (1) respondent's personal circumstance, (2) respondent's family background, and (3) respondent's career decisions. It had eight open-ended questions pertaining to career decisions (e.g., decision making process conducted, reasons for choosing a career, difficulties encountered in the decision process, certainty of decisions made, factors considered in deciding, and sources of major influence in career decision). A focus group discussion guide was used to validate and elaborate on the respondents' answers to the questionnaire.

Six general secondary schools which served as the research locale were chosen in this study.

Purposive sampling was employed because only the senior high school students, who have one or both parents working abroad, were included in the study. The schools were chosen based on the location and consent of school administrators. Participants in the FGDs were selected based on their availability. The six FGDs (one per school), which lasted for about 30 minutes per session, were recorded and transcribed. The students' general weighted averages (GWAs) in third year were used to classify the students' academic achievement. Data gathering was undertaken in School Year 2007-2008.

The data gathered were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Answers to the survey questionnaires were tabulated into frequencies. The students' GWAs were grouped and categorized as follows: 85 to 100 high academic achievement, and 74 to 84, low academic achievement. The original ten scales for the likelihood to pursue each career decision and the original ten scales for the sources of influence were both reduced to three. In addition, the 15 occupational groups were categorized using Holland's (in Patton, 1999) classification system and were divided into two groups: (1) Realistic (Agriculture, Bench Work, Building Trades, Machine Operation, and Transportation), Investigative (Mathematics and Science), and Artistic (Fine Arts); and (2) Social (Customer Services, Educational Services, Health Services, Legal Services, and Social Science), Enterprising (Management and Sales), and Conventional (Clerical Services).

Chi-square test was used to show the relationship between career decisions and the factors studied. Fisher's (html) exact

Test was used for the cells in the tables that have an expected count of less than five. The level of significance used was .05. On the other hand, the responses from the FGDs were treated qualitatively.

Discussion of Results

Career Decision Making Process

Table 1 presents the career decision making process of the respondents. It is comprised of three steps: exploring themselves and their environment, gathering and processing information pertinent to their career decision, and deciding on what career to undertake. These results support Gelatt's theory (1989, 1991) that the decider undergoes a certain process in order to arrive at his career decision.

Table 1. Career Decision Making Process of the Respondents

	f	%
Step 1. Explore		
a. Self		
Values	49	14.37
Interests	79	23.17
Abilities	18	5.28
Needs	37	10.85
Did Not Specify	158	46.33
Total	341	100
b. Environment		
Job Demand	20	5.87
Opportunity to Work Abroad	12	3.52
Others' Work	16	4.69
Others (e.g., daily experiences)	12	3.52
Did Not Specify	281	82.40
Total	341	100
Step 2. Gather & Process Career-Related Information		
Consult with Parents	39	11.44
Evaluate Information	13	3.81
Ask Other People's Opinion	13	3.81
Others (eg., read, study, pray)	11	3.23
Did Not Specify	265	77.71
Total	341	100
Step 3. Decide a Career		
Own Decision	180	52.79
Parents' Decision	77	22.58
Siblings' Decision	5	1.47
Relatives' Decision	13	3.81
Other People's Decision (e.g., friends)	13	3.81
Did Not Specify	53	15.54
Total	341	100

Self-exploration involves knowing the respondents' values, interests, and abilities. The values they regard are having a bright future, helping their parents, acquiring an in-demand job, and having the opportunity to work abroad. On the other hand, exploration of the environment involves surveying the jobs that are marketable, taking note of the jobs that are in demand abroad, observing other people's work/profession, and reflecting on the daily experiences.

These results are congruent with Frank Parson's (in Patton, 1999) proposition that individuals choose careers based on self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work. It confirms Holland's (1966, 1973, 1985a) proposition that people seek work environments that are compatible with their attitudes and values and allow them to use their skills and abilities. It supports Super's (1963) view that vocational development implies interaction that is not only intra-individual but also individual-environmental.

Gathering and processing of career-related information involves consulting with parents, evaluating obtained information, asking other people's opinion, reading, studying, and praying about the information collected. The results revealed that majority of the students consulted their parents. It showed the value that children give to their parents' opinion on their career decisions. Filipinos are generally family-oriented and they highly regard what their elders say on very important matters such as educational and occupational decisions. Moreover, the parents are the very first significant individuals in the students' lives and they are in the best position to influence their children (Medina, 1991).

The findings also showed that as far as the distribution of the influencing factor in their career decision is concerned, 70% of the respondents claimed that it was their own decision, 23% family's decision, 3% relatives' decision, 2% friends' decision, and only 1% others (such as media). These results imply that majority of the students are capable of practicing independence in decision making.

They may have consulted or asked the opinion of others but they made the final decision. These findings support Dadulla's study (1990, in Medina, 1991) wherein the children make decisions by themselves in matters concerning them such as the course to take in college. It also supports various studies which identified family (Whiston & Keller, 2004), relatives (Balum, 2002; Co, 1990), friends (Jacobs, Finken, Griffin, & Wright, 1998), and media (McMahon & Patton, 1997) as sources of influence in career decisions.

The findings of the research and the literature reviewed supported the results of the FGDs. The respondents underwent a career decision making process wherein they gathered relevant information by observing their environment and assessing their values, interests, and abilities. Almost half of the respondents consulted and asked the opinion of the significant people around them, especially their parents, relatives, friends, and teachers. After gathering relevant information, they evaluated the pros and cons of their choices and finally made their career decisions. In evaluating their choices, they considered some factors and disregarded others. It was observed that the most common factors considered were interests, parents' suggestion, salary/job security, and academic achievement. The factors they disregarded were gender, mental ability, and parents' career preference for their children.

During the FGDs, the respondents enumerated the following when asked about the difficulties they encountered in decision making: conflict between their interests and their parents' career preference for them, too many courses to choose from, many skills/talents, limited mental ability, financial concerns, and peer pressure. They also mentioned how they were able to handle those difficulties. Conflicts between parents' preferences and students' interests were addressed by having open communication and so compromises were reached between what the parents suggested and what the students preferred.

Some students gave priority to their interests whereas others prioritized their abilities/skills. Others asked the opinion of their parents, teachers, and friends regarding the different course choices they were considering to take. Financial concerns were addressed by these options: parents indicated their desire to make salary loans so that their children could pursue higher education, some students indicated their desire to become working students, and others planned to apply for scholarships and other study grants.

It was observed that generally, the students were happy with their post secondary decisions due to these reasons:

(1) their courses were similar to that of their parents/relatives/friends; (2) they based their decision on their interests; (3) their chosen careers hold a promising future; (4) they were the ones who made the career decision and not their parents; and (5) they were confident that their skills/abilities matched their preferred courses. The unhappiness of very few students not satisfied with their career decisions originated from the fears and doubts they have regarding their preferred courses. Others were unsure whether their skills/abilities matched the demands of their preferred courses, while some were not sure if they would eventually learn to appreciate their parents' preferred courses for them.

Career Decisions

Table 2 presents the distribution of the respondents' career decisions.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents' Career Decisions

Career Decision	f	%
Pursue College Education	321	94
Undergo Technical-Vocational Program	12	4
Enter Work	8	2
Total	341	100

Majority (94%) of the respondents indicated that they decided to pursue college education, only 4% chose to pursue technical-vocational program, and merely 2% decided to work after high school. These results support a local study which concluded that almost all Filipino youth dream of going to college (Youth Study, 2001) and finish their education (Gastardo-Conaco, Jimenez, & Billedo, 2003). They are also congruent with other local studies which found that the respondents preferred courses which would lead to white-collar jobs (Maye-Guanzon, 1980; Amilbahar, 1983).

The FGDs revealed the reasons why the senior students wanted to pursue college: high pay, prestige, parental influence, more opportunities, fulfillment, challenge, thirst for learning, and opportunity to work abroad.

Likewise, the reasons why they did not want to pursue a technical-vocational program or work after high school include low prestige, low pay, and less employment opportunities.

The result showing that it was the parents' wish that their children pursue college instead of tech-voc program or work supports Medina's (1991) observation that Filipino parents want their children to attain a high level of education. The findings are congruent with what Nicodemus (1997) presented at the Filipino Migrant Conference in Athens, Greece. She said that a strong motivation to go overseas is developed among children of migrant workers in the belief that overseas employment is the only solution to improve their lives. Likewise, the results support the study which revealed that the children of OFWs are already entertaining the idea of migrating and working abroad.

(Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrant and Itinerant People of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 2003, in Asis, 2004). The college courses and technology-oriented programs they preferred lead to a promising work abroad.

For the 4% who decided to pursue technical-vocational program, their preferred post secondary occupations are service-oriented and do not require special skills such as dental clinic

attendant, electrician attendant, fast food crew, grocery attendant, and sales attendant. Meanwhile, the 2% who decided to work after high school needed to help in the family finances. These findings are similar to that of Dela Paz (2005) wherein the students chose not to enroll in college to help their parents send their siblings to school. This may be attributed to the fact that for most Filipinos, the family is the center of personal commitment.

Factors Affecting Career Decisions

Table 3 presents the distribution of the factors that affect the respondents' career decisions.

Table 3. Distribution of Factors Affecting Career Decisions

Factors Affecting Career Decision	Category	Career Decision					
		College (n=321)		Tech-Voc (n=12)		Work (n=8)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Birth Order	Eldest	135	42.06	3	25.00	4	50.00
	Middle	80	24.92	3	20.00	1	12.50
	Youngest	101	31.46	6	50.00	3	37.50
		5	1.56				
Academic Achievement	High	95	29.60	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Low	226	70.40	12	100.0	8	100.0
Interest	Social/Enterprising/Conventional	212	66.04	4	33.33	6	75.00
	Did Not Specify	6	1.87	1	8.33		
Motivation	Interest	159	49.53	5	41.67	3	37.50
	Job Demand/Opportunity	86	26.79	4	33.33	2	25.00
	Financial Consideration/Parental Pressure	73	22.74	3	25.00	3	37.50
	Did Not Specify	3	0.93				
Gender	Male	128	39.88	6	50.00	3	37.50
	Female	193	60.12	6	50.00	5	62.50
Father's Educational Attainment	HS Level and Below	23	7.17	2	16.67	0	0.00
	HS Grad./Tech-Voc	123	38.32	6	50.00	4	50.00
	College Grad./Post. Grad.	165	51.40	3	25.00	4	50.00
	Did Not Specify	10	3.12	1			

Factors Affecting Career Decision	Category	College (n=321)		Tech-Voc (n=12)		Work (n=8)	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Mother's Educational	HS Level and Below	25	7.79	1	8.33	0	0.00
	HS Grad./Tech-Voc	130	40.50	8	66.67	5	62.50
	College Grad./Post. Grad.	158	49.22	3	25.00	3	37.50
	Did Not Specify	8	2.49				
Father's Occupational Status	Professional	63	19.63	2	16.67	1	12.50
	Non-Professional	144	44.86	6	50.00	4	50.00
	Did Not Specify	114	35.51	4	33.33	3	37.50
Mother's Occupational Status	Professional	22	6.85	0	0.00	1	12.50
	Non-Professional	73	22.74	2	16.67	2	25.00
	Did Not Specify	226	70.40	10	83.33	5	62.50

The table reveals that among the 321 students (94%) who preferred to pursue college education, 42% are the eldest children in the family and that 30% have high academic achievement. They indicated their interest in Social/ Enterprising/ Conventional occupational groups (66%); they based their motivation in pursuing college degree on interest (50%), job demand/security (27%), and financial consideration/parental pressure (23%). Majority of the females (60%) decided to pursue college. Among the 321 students, 51% have fathers and 49% have mothers who are college graduates/post graduates, while only 20% have fathers and 7% have mothers who are professionals.

Majority of the 12 students who chose to pursue technical-vocational courses are youngest children (45%) and have low academic achievement (70%).

They indicated their interest in Realistic/ Investigative/Artistic occupational groups (50%); they based their motivation in pursuing tech-voc on interest (42%), 33% job demand/security, and 25% financial consideration/parental pressure. Among the 12 students, half were males and another half were females. Likewise, 50% of them have fathers and 67% have mothers who are high school graduates/ tech-voc graduates/ college level.

Out of 341 student respondents, only eight students opted to enter work. Of this number, 38% indicated interest as their primary motivation, another 38% financial consideration/parental pressure, and 25% job demand/ opportunity. Five out of eight were females.

Table 4 likewise shows the distribution of the respondents' ratings on the sources of influence on their career decisions.

Table 4. Distribution of Ratings on the Sources of Influence on Career Decisions

Sources of Influence	Little Influence		Moderate Influence		Much Influence		Did Not Specify		Total	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Family	20	5.87	38	11.14	279	81.82	4	1.17	341	100
Relatives	68	19.94	64	18.77	188	55.13	21	6.16	341	100
Friends	85	24.93	109	31.96	131	38.42	16	4.69	341	100
School Personnel	106	31.09	85	24.93	113	33.14	37	10.85	341	100
Media	136	39.88	100	29.33	71	20.82	34	9.97	341	100
Others	31	9.09	20	5.87	70	20.53	220	64.52	341	100

On the degree of influence on career decisions, the family was rated as having much influence (82%), friends were perceived as having moderate influence (38%), while only 23% rated the media as having much influence. These results support Siron-Galvez' (2005) and Mani's (2003) researches which concluded that parents are the primary influencing factors in the career decision making of adolescents. Other respondents in the FGDs also revealed the major influences on their career decisions such as interests, self, high pay, school personnel (e.g., teachers, guidance counselors), relatives, media, friends, and God. These results are congruent with Fery's (2006) findings that family, school,

and community have an impact on the adolescents' career decisions. The findings also support Super's (1980, 1990, 1992) concept of "situational determinants" (i.e. contextual factors like family, peer group, school, community, society) which influence career development.

Relationship of Selected Variables to Career Decisions

Table 5 presents the relationship of selected variables such as birth order, academic achievement, expressed interest, expressed motivation, gender, parents' educational attainment, and parents' occupational status to the career decisions of the students.

Table 5. Statistical Tests of Respondents' Career Decisions and Selected Factors

Factor	Statistical Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. 2sided	Exact Sig. 2sided
Birth Order	Pearson Chi Square	1.455	2	0.483	
Academic Achievement	Fisher's Exact Test				0.002
Expressed Interest	Pearson Chi Square	2.484	1	0.115	
Expressed Motivation	Pearson Chi Square	0.523	2	0.77	
Gender	Pearson Chi Square	0.206	1	0.65	
Father Educ. Attainment	Pearson Chi Square	0.891	2	0.641	
Mother Educ. Attainment	Pearson Chi Square	3.762	2	0.152	
Father Occupation Status	Pearson Chi Square	0.107	1	0.744	
Mother Occupation Status	Fisher's Exact Test				0.535

The results revealed that at .05 probability level, only academic achievement, which is an internal/personal factor, has a significant relationship with the career decisions of children of OFWs. The findings are supported by some of the results of the FGDs wherein the students indicated that before finally deciding on a career to choose, they assessed their academic ability. These findings support Super's (1980, 1990, 1992) proposition that intelligence is one of the determinants of career development.

The results also showed that other selected internal/personal variables (such as birth order, expressed interests, expressed motivation, and gender) and external/social-environmental factors (such as parents' educational attainment and parents' occupational status) have no significant relationship with the career decisions of the children of OFWs. These results do not support the studies which concluded that (1) birth order has an influence on an individual's career decision (Leong, 2001); (2) parents' educational attainment has an influence on their children's career decisions (Ong, 2002); and (3) parents' occupational status is associated with career development study (Kerka, 2000). However, these findings are congruent to the studies of Balingit (1982) which showed that parents' occupational status is not a determinant of career choice; Houston's (1999), which showed that gender has no influence on career decisions; and Pereyra's (1981), which claimed that parents' educational attainment is not a determinant of career choice.

Conclusion

Majority of the children of OFWs who participated in this study exhibited independence when it comes to making post secondary career decisions. They chose a career path (i.e., pursue college) that leads to white-collar rather than blue-collar jobs. Many preferred college and for those who decided to pursue technical-vocational program, they preferred post secondary occupations which are service-oriented and do not require special skills.

Furthermore, the career decisions of the children of OFWs are neither dependent on selected internal factors such as birth order, expressed interests, expressed motivation, and gender; nor on external factors like parents' educational attainment, parents' occupational status, family, relatives, friends, school personnel, and media. Factors other than academic achievement like migration plans, socioeconomic status, parental attachment, and parental expectations might have accounted for the influence on their career decisions.

Recommendations

The conclusion above was based on a limited sample. It is therefore recommended that further verification of the results be made through the employment of a larger sample. Further research about career decision making can be explored using different respondents like college and tech-voc students; variables such as measured educational and occupational interests, self-efficacy in making career decisions, socioeconomic status, parental expectations, and parental attachment; and methods like case study and longitudinal study. A study on the career decisions and migration plans of the children of OFWs can likewise be investigated.

Policy makers may create items for guidance counselors to enhance the career guidance programs of public secondary schools. This is in response to the Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004 (R.A. 9258) which aims to professionalize the practice of guidance and counseling in the Philippines. Guidance counselors should help students see various educational and vocational options and develop realistic goals. Since most students want to pursue college education, and given the importance of academic proficiency for higher education, guidance counselors should identify students who have college aspirations but are lacking in academic proficiency and help them develop strategies to achieve their goals. Likewise, guidance counselors should give the parents proper career guidance and orientation to help facilitate their children's career decision making. Group sessions for parents can be conducted to increase the parents' awareness of their own attitudes about career development.

OFW organizations should also implement projects which meet the needs or concerns of the families such as livelihood, education, health, food, child care, and youth development. They should offer programs which provide the children of OFWs the opportunity to acquire not only college education but also technical-vocational or specialized skills.

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