

CAREER CHOICES AND OCCUPATIONAL IMAGES[#]

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The study examined the career choices and occupational images of high school and college students. The sample consisted of 600 boys and 400 girls selected from different schools and colleges of Peshawar. An aptitude test Peshawarana Rujhanat Ki Azmaish was devised by the author to study different issues and considerations as related to career choices of adolescents in our country. The results show that the three occupations 'most preferred' by boys, in order of preference, are armed forces, medicine, and engineering. Girls, on the other hand, have described medicine, law, and teaching as the three most preferred careers. The occupations 'most disliked' by boys are police, teaching, and business; whereas girls have described show business, air-hostess, and politics as the most disliked professions. The main reasons for preferring an occupation are altruistic and social, whereas the reasons for disliking an occupation are ethical and personal. The data further demonstrate that our subjects are quite definite in their ideas about what people in these occupations are but they do not have much information concerning specific work activities of even their most liked occupations.

Choices of a career is the most important decision in the life of an individual. Initial decisions about an occupation are usually made during childhood or adolescence years. These early decisions are often quite unrealistic as they are made without much information and experience about the world of work and awareness of one's own needs, desires, interests, aptitudes, and abilities. According to Cosby (1974) as many as half of all teenagers show a preference for professional occupations, whereas only about 14 per cent actually become professionals.

The development of occupational plans during adolescence can be viewed in many respects as paralleling, or even as a part of the identity development process. As with developing a coherent sense of identity, the development of occupational plans follows a sequence that involves an examination of one's traits, abilities, interests, and an integration of influences from one's past with one's hope for future. According to

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Super (1967) the adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 years, first begin to crystallize a vocational preference and develop occupational self-conceptions that will guide subsequent educational decisions. During this period they begin to seek information about their own tentative choice and make plans for the future (Osipow, 1973). This process is reminiscent of the sort of role experimentation described by Erikson (1968) in his theory of "adolescent identity development". Both of these authors believe that during middle adolescence, alternative identities are considered and evaluated by the individual on the basis of exploration, experimentation, and self-examination. Many researchers believe that individuals select careers that match, in one way or another, certain elements of their personality (Holland, 1973; Stevens & Stephens, 1968).

One problem faced by young people in making career plans is to get accurate information about the labour market needs of the future and the appropriate means of pursuing jobs in various fields. An extensive study of adolescents' occupational plans (Grotevant & Durrett, 1980) shows that the majority of young people do not have educational plans that are consistent with the educational requirements of the jobs they hope to enter. Consequently, when they actually enter the world of work, they may discover that there is a gap between their idealized images of the jobs and the educational skills they have acquired as students in the school and college on the one hand, and the real rewards and demands of the job on the other.

Longitudinal research has shown that gender differences do emerge during high school years in career choices mostly because of the traditional stereotyped roles of boys and girls. Besides, the expectations held by parents and teachers for boys result in the higher educational and occupational aspirations of boys during formal school years (Crites & Fitzgerald, 1978; Miller, 1978). In the absence of any provision for career counseling in the present educational system of Pakistan, a student who aspires to continue education after secondary school level, has to decide about the subjects and courses to be offered in the college without insight and its relevance to the career choices that will be ultimately available to him/her. Such decisions are largely determined by unrealistic aspirations rather than one's abilities and aptitudes.

The present study was undertaken to find out the major considerations of adolescents in selection of particular occupations. Further, gaps in information between the idealized images of the jobs

and skills and training required were also identified. Such an information is of crucial importance for a vocational counselor.

METHOD

Sample

600 boys and 400 girls were selected from those educational institutions of Peshawar Cantonment and University Campus that were evaluated by eight judges (4 psychologists, 4 educationists) as having mostly a similar standard of education at school and college levels. The main criterion of selection of subjects was to include all the students who were present in the particular class on the day of test administration in school/college.

School Going Sample

The subjects included 360 boys and 200 girls selected from student population of class 10th representing various schools of Peshawar. The median age of boys was 16.5 years, with a range from 15 to 18 years. On the other hand, the age range of girls was 14 to 17 years, median age being 15.5 years.

College Sample

The sample of college students included 240 boys and 200 girls. The median age of boys was 10 years, with a range from 7.5 to 19.5 years. The girls ranged in age from 17 to 19 years; their median age was 16.5 years.

Instrument

Peshawarana Rujhanat Ki Azmaish

A vocational aptitude test namely, Peshawarana Rujhanat Ki Azmaish was devised in Urdu by the author to study an individual's career choice and his/her occupational image of the persons in each occupation. It consists of the two parts: Part I comprises nine questions including five questions about the most favorite vocation; daily occupational activities that make it most attractive; skills, qualifications, and personality traits that are a prerequisite for success in that vocation. The last question is devised to provide the subject an

opportunity to assess the validity of his/her opinion about the most undesirable occupation.

Part II consists of an adjective checklist (Ansari, Farooqi, Yasmin, Khan, & Farooqi, 1982) of 50 adjectives to be rated on a 5-point scale to describe the personality profile and the image of the person working in the most favorite occupation of the subject.

Procedure

The test was administered to small groups of students ($n < .30$) who could be comfortably seated in the room. A male examiner administered the test to boys and a female examiner gave it to girls.

RESULTS

Eighteen professions were mentioned by the sample of 1000 students. However, the boys ($n = 600$) described 11 professions, whereas the girls ($n = 400$) mentioned 18 professions. For boys (school and college) the three most favorite professions, in order of preference, are Armed Forces, Doctors, and Engineers. Out of a total of 360 school boys 133 (36.90%) want to become Army Officer, 102 (28.30%) would prefer to become Doctors, and 73 (20.38%) want to become Engineers. Among the 240 college boys, 74 (30.83%) want to become Army Officer, 50 (20.83%) wish to become Doctors, and 38 (15.83%) want to become Engineers. On the whole, 34.50 % boys prefer to become Army Officer, 25.33 % would like to become Doctors, and 18.50 % wish to become Engineers. The remaining 21.67 % boys showed varied choices spread over eight other professions (see, Table 1).

Among the school girls, the three most liked professions in order of preference are Medicine, Law, and Teaching, whereas the college girls expressed their preference for Teaching, Medicine, and Law. Among the school girls ($n = 190$), 60 (31.58%) want to become Doctors, 47 (24.74%) want to become Lawyers, and 34 (17.89%) want to become Teachers. Among the college girls ($n = 210$), 58 (27.62%) showed preference for Teaching, 47(21.90%) want to become Doctors, and 26(12.40%) wish to become Lawyers. On the whole, 26.75 % girls in the present sample aspire to become Doctors, 23.00 % wish to become Teachers, and 18.25 % have a strong desire to become Lawyers. The remaining 32.00 % girls (school and college) showed their preference for fifteen other professions.

Table 1
Occupational choices of school and college students

Occupation	School		College		φ	χ ²	p
	Boys (n= 360)	Girls (n= 190)	Boys (n= 240)	Girls (n= 210)			
Armed Forces	133 (36.90)	10 (5.26)	74 (30.83)	29 (13.33)	.269	72.36	.001
Medicine	102 (28.30)	60 (31.58)	60 (20.83)	47 (21.90)	.014	.196	n.s
Engineering	73 (20.28)	8 (4.21)	38 (15.83)	4 (1.90)	.0899	8.082	.01
Teaching	8 (2.22)	34 (17.89)	28 (11.67)	58 (27.62)	.208	43.26	.001
Law	0 (0.00)	47 (24.74)	10 (4.17)	26 (12.40)	.409	167.28	.001
CSS	8 (2.22)	9 (4.74)	9 (3.75)	10 (4.76)	.126	15.876	.001
Business	7 (1.90)	3 (1.58)	19 (7.92)	20 (9.52)	.0687	4.72	.05
Police	18 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	12 (5.00)	1 (0.48)	.209	43.68	.001
Banking	4 (1.11)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)			
Journalism	2 (0.55)	2 (1.05)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)			
Miscellaneous*	5 (1.50)	16 (8.42)	0 (0.00)	11 (5.24)			

Note: (1) Percentages are given in parentheses, and (2) * Agriculture, Computer Science, C.A., Pilot, Air-hostess, Tourism, Social Worker, Psychologist, Fine Arts, Embroidery.

Chi-square test was applied to see if boys and girls differ significantly in the preferences for certain occupations (Table 1). According to the findings, boys (school and college) show a significantly high preference for Armed Forces and Engineering as compared to girls (school and college). The girls as a group have a high preference for Teaching and Law. It is interesting to note that both the samples (male and female) have shown almost same preference for medicine as a profession.

As far as other occupations listed in Table 1 are concerned, the frequencies are too small to be used for any inference. However, it is worth mentioning that exactly the same percentage of school and college boys (5%) have shown a preference for Police, whereas only one school girls has endorsed this category.

Table 2

Reasons for preference of the three most preferred occupations of boys

Reasons	Armed Forces		Medicine		Engineering	
	School (n= 133)	College (n= 74)	School (n= 102)	College (n= 50)	School (n= 73)	College (n= 38)
<i>Altruistic:</i>						
Social Service	-	-	39	26	-	10
Defence of the Country	74	38	-	-	-	-
Shortage in the Country	-	-	-	6	-	-
Religious	-	20	-	-	-	-
<i>Personal:</i>						
Interest	6	-	-	-	-	2
Aptitude/Practical Work	1	-	-	-	-	5
Discipline	16	-	8	-	-	-
<i>Social:</i>						
Prestige of the job	20	-	8	18	-	10
Parents' Desire	-	-	-	-	-	2
<i>Economic:</i>						
High Salary	13	-	-	-	-	8
<i>Miscellaneous:</i>						
Adventure	-	-	-	-	-	1
Attractive Uniform	3	-	-	-	-	-

Table 3

Reasons for preference of the three most preferred occupations of girls

Reasons	Medicine		Law		Engineering	
	School (n= 60)	College (n= 46)	School (n= 47)	College (n= 26)	School (n= 34)	College (n= 58)
<i>Altruistic:</i>						
Social Service	25	30	28	6	9	10
To provide justice	-	-	28	20	-	-
Shortage in the Country	-	-	10	16	-	-
Religious	-	-	-	-	4	6
<i>Personal:</i>						
Interest	-	4	-	3	3	2
Self confidence	-	-	2	5	2	7
<i>Social:</i>						
Prestige of the job	27	31	5	-	16	2
Family traditions	2	2	1	2	-	4
<i>Economic:</i>						
High Salary	5	9	-	-	-	-
<i>Miscellaneous:</i>						
Attractive Uniform	1	-	3	-	-	-
Don't know	5	-	11	-	-	-

Tables 2-3 show reasons for preference of the most liked occupations by our male and female samples. Both groups of subjects have emphasized altruistic and social reasons for their aspiration for a specific occupation.

Table 4

Salient occupational images concerning three most preferred careers given in order of priority (male sample)

Army Officer	Doctor	Engineer
Practical	Gentle	Ambitious
Responsible	Hardworking	Adventurous
Brave	Active	Practical
Ambitious	Sensible	Dignified
Loyal	Graceful	Responsible
Self-controlled	Wise	Capable
Honest	Prosperous	Hardworking
Conscientious	Polite	Innovative
Trustworthy	Smart	Intelligent
Confident	Ambitious	Honest

Table 5

Salient occupational images concerning three most preferred careers given in order of priority (female sample)

Doctor	Lawyer	Teacher
Ambitious	Gentle	Hardworking
Sober	Realistic	Responsible
Sensible	Responsible	Wise
Conscientious	Wise	Dignified
Prosperous	Active	Honest
Polite	Smart	Loyal
Kind-hearted	Hardworking	Confident
Trustworthy	Prosperous	Helpful
Careful	Sensible	Active
Smart	Dignified	Religious

Tables 4-5 present the occupational image *viz-a-viz* the personality characteristics of successful persons in a given occupation of choice as described by male and female subjects.

Table 6

Skills and activities required for success in an occupation (male sample)

Army Officer	Doctor	Engineer
Interest	Determination	Hardworking
Physical fitness	Career Planning	Interest
Intelligence	Devotion	Ability
Conformity	Sincerity	Honesty
Patriotism	Sacrifice	Untiring
Self-controlled	Patient	Aptitude
Risk taking	Hardworking	Intelligent

Table 7

Skills and activities required for success in an occupation (female sample)

Doctor	Lawyer	Teacher
Hardworking	Knowledge	Education
Sincerity	Confidence	Interest
Dutiful	Insight	Language command
Devotion	Intelligence	Affection
Confidence	Hardworking	Helpful
Kind-hearted	Competence	Aptitude
		Discipline

Tables 6-7 show the skills and day-to-day activities that are not only a prerequisite for success but also make the occupation attractive.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study clearly demonstrate differences in vocational choices of boys and girls. Despite the fact that sex barriers are rapidly breaking down, some jobs are still regarded as men's work and others as women's work. The sex role stereotypes reflect assumed differences in personality traits of the two sexes. The typical masculine personality pattern, for example, is that of a dominant, aggressive, and active person. By contrast, the typical feminine personality pattern, is characterized by dependency, passivity, and compliance. Due to these differences in personality traits, certain vocations are regarded as appropriate for males and others for females. Therefore, children are encouraged and pressured from their childhood years to choose and prepare for vocations that will fit into this stereotype. Boys for example, are expected to go into leadership roles in business, industry, and the professions. On the other hand, girls are encouraged to go into women's work, i.e., teaching, nursing, domestic service, and areas where their work will contribute to the welfare of the others (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Shields, 1975; Whiting & Edwards, 1973).

One of the most recurring results in the measurement of vocational interests is that regardless of age, country, linguistic or cultural affiliation, the interest patterns of men and women have consistently shown marked differences (Fitzgerald & Crites, 1980). From childhood onwards, vocational interests show a marked coherence and differentiation according to gender.

The results of the present study showed the gender differences. A large number of boys, at secondary and higher secondary school levels, have shown a marked preference for Armed Forces, Medicine, and Engineering (Table 1). Girls, on the other hand, have shown a preference for Medicine, Law, and Teaching. These findings are consistent with earlier researches demonstrating that the process of career maturation varies for the two sexes. As adult roles and responsibilities of men and women are conceived to be different and women who are traditionally believed to be family-oriented, have to add a family outlet to their career choices. In our society, women are primarily seen to be homemaker and procreator. Consequently, differential socialization of the sexes towards aspiring for and accepting

occupational roles regarded as appropriate for men and women, limit the career opinions for them. Teaching and Medicine are two predominant careers for educated women in our society. Diversification of women's employment is strongly controlled by our religious and cultural values emphasizing segregation of sexes and high standards of female modesty.

An earlier study about occupational aspirations of high school students revealed that the most preferred occupations of boys are Doctor, Pilot, and Engineer. In case of girls, Doctor is again the most liked occupation followed by Teacher, Lawyer, and Lecturer (Ansari, 1981). Similar findings were obtained in a survey of high school students of Karachi, except an additional mention of business and law related jobs (Zaidi, 1979). Chowdhri and Shah (1981) in a study of occupational choices of high school students in Islamabad found that the three most preferred occupations of boys, in order of preference, are Doctor, Engineer, and Armed Forces. Shah (1970) in a cross-cultural study of vocational interests of physicians and engineers found that both of Pakistani professionals have a greater liking for military career.

In Pakistan, a military career appears very prestigious to general public. In the light of the present findings, it is also one of the most desirable careers. The reasons for liking this career may be attributed to the long span of Martial Law Regimes, each spread over more than a decade. The role of Army especially during Martial Law, the powers and privileges of Army Officers coupled with job security makes military career a highly aspired for vocation as compared to other professions.

Tables 2-3 show the reasons for liking a vocation. Both of the groups (boys and girls) enumerated a number of reasons that were classified into five categories: altruistic, personal, social, economic, and miscellaneous. Our results indicate that the most important determinants of career, in our sample, are altruistic and social. Personal and economic factors are next in order of importance. These findings may be attributed to the fact that ours is a traditional society. The values most emphasized in eastern cultures, especially among Muslims, give more importance to others-oriented behaviour and welfare of the society at large, rather than self-interest. Thus our findings are congruent with our dominant ethico-religious values.

Table 4 presents the occupational images of persons in the three vocations most liked by boys. Career as an Army Officer has been ranked at the top. The personality profile of an Army Officer emerging from the ratings of the adjective checklist show them as practical,

responsible, brave, ambitious, loyal, self-controlled, honest, conscientious, trustworthy, and confident. Doctors who are ranked second in order of priority for an occupational choice are portrayed as gentle, hardworking, active, sensible, graceful, wise, prosperous, polite, smart, and ambitious. Engineers, the third group in order of preference for a vocational choice, have been described by our male sample as ambitious, adventurous, practical, dignified, responsible, capable, hardworking, innovative, intelligent, and honest.

Table 5 presents the occupational images of careers most liked by the female sample. Medical vocation is ranked on the top of most liked occupations by girls. Doctors are described as ambitious, sober, sensible, conscientious, prosperous, polite, kind-hearted, trustworthy, careful, and smart. Lawyers, next on the priority basis, are described as gentle, realistic, responsible, wise, active, smart, hardworking, prosperous, sensible, and dignified. Teachers are viewed as hardworking, responsible, wise, dignified, honest, loyal, confident, helpful, active, and religious.

Tables 6-7 show a list of skills and activities that are considered by the subjects, irrespective of their sex, as a prerequisite for success in a specific occupation. Table 4 shows that neither the boys nor the girls have described the skills and day-to-day activities required for success in the career of their choice. Similarly, they have not enumerated the activities that make a profession most attractive for boys or girls. These findings confirm the prevalent belief that our youth have idealized images of occupations but they lack adequate information concerning skills, activities, and work-methods that are required for goal achievement.

The data of the present study show that the occupations least attractive or most disliked by our male sample are Police, Business, and Teaching; whereas the girls dislike Show-business, Air-hostess, and Politics as careers. The boys dislike Police, as they believe that majority of police officers and policemen are inconsiderate, harsh, and corrupt. The general impression of boys in the present study about Businessmen is that they are illiterate and their behaviour and attitudes are not congruent with the demands of the present era. About Teaching, majority has the opinion that they have least privileges and respect in our society. Girls have expressed their dislike for Show-business and Air-hostess as careers for the main reason that they are against our moral and religious values, and people do not like girls who are working in these fields. Similarly, majority of girls dislike to become Politicians as it goes against the norms of modesty in our society.

The main sources of information concerning different occupations as described by boys and girls are newspapers, television, magazines, teachers, relatives, friends, and parents. None of the subject has described personal interaction with persons pursuing a particular career nor they have derived information from any directory of occupations. This finding suggests a strong need to provide adequate and relevant information about jobs and careers to those who have to decide about the choice of an occupation.

The findings of the present investigations suggest that it is of crucial importance to provide vocational counseling to students so as to ensure that instead of haphazard selection of subjects and courses the choices are systematic, orderly, and patterned according to their abilities, aptitudes, interests, and work-values. The importance of vocational orientation and guidance is increasing, and they have to become one of the important functions of our schools and colleges.

CONCLUSION

If vocational guidance is to fulfil the fundamental task of developing the individual's ability to choose a job, it must undergo a sophisticated development. Although the final decision about the choice of a career remains that of the individual alone, counselors require a more precise knowledge of the personality, interest, goals, and ambitions of the person seeking their advice. With this consideration in mind it seems that in our educational institutions the vocational guidance becomes a major task of the teacher. The execution of this task should start early in school. The teacher must consider the development of work ideas which grow out of fantasies, interests, and games about careers to more crystallized ideas and plans about work. After an initial stage, the career interests from the twelfth year onwards are an important indicator that bring aptitude and performance into relation with each other. During this stage it is important that initial impressions about different careers must be clarified in meetings with the students. If we want teachers to do justice to the task of vocational guidance they must be confronted with the issues during teacher training. Teachers should also have opportunities to examine these problems in some depth while teaching, whether by means of further education or through in-service training. Every school and college could have a teacher with further qualifications in this area who would be responsible for vocational guidance. When vocational guidance begins early enough and examines actual possibilities on the basis of

inclination and aptitude, it may limit the dangers of a purely conventional choice and the appeal of currently fashionable careers.

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