



Influence Of Parental Pressure In Career Choice Among Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT: Career choice is an important milestone of an individual's life. Career selection is one of the very challenging decisions of life which not only decides the future but also defines one's personal and professional growth. Parental pressure has been found to greatly impact on the career selection process of their children. However it negatively effects on the emotional and mental health on their children. Parents are much concern on career choice and its effects on the life of their children. Expectations come from parents to be the best for their children that meet to unwavering, smooth and comfort lives. The study focuses on effects of parental pressure on decision making on career choice of the students. Academic environment gradually become competitive, the active involvement of parents can often direct their child's academic as well as career choices, which in turn can affect students' career aspirations. The primary objective of the study was to examine the nature of parental involvement and its effects on career- decision making processes of the students. It can be summarised that parental expectations can encourage students to succeed academically, on the other way immense expectation leads to stress, low self-esteem and disinterest in some careers. This findings highlighted the need for balanced parental support and the importance of fostering student's autonomy and independency in career decision-making. The study concluded with recommendations of reducing harmful parental pressure, promoting more open communication between students and parents, and encouraging career guidance programs in school.

Key words: Parental Pressure, career choice, Secondary school students, carer decision.

Career choice is the process of selecting a career path which include specific job or field to pursue. Career choice is an important landmark of an individual's life. It is considered to be the most important decision that each individual makes in their life. It determines not only the professional direction but also influences personal fulfilment, financial security, and later life. Deciding a career requires not only reflection, exploration, and planning but also strategies and choices. It involves the identification of one's interests, strengths, values, and aspirations considering the opportunities and challenges available in the world of work.

In the life of the students, the shift from secondary school to the workforce or further higher education is a turning point, which involves important decisions about future career paths. For many secondary school students, their parents play a significant role in this entire process. Although parental advice is said to be helpful, it often transforms into pressure, creating a challenging situation that affects students' ability to make independent career choices.

Parents play an essential role in determining their child's futures, including the career they will pursue. Parental pressure is the expectations or demands that parents impose on their children to achieve certain goals, such as academic success, career choices, or personal conduct. This pressure can be direct (through verbal encouragement or strict rules) or indirect (through comparison, high expectations, or emotional expressions). Some level of guidance and motivation from parents can be beneficial but excessive parental pressure may lead to stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and mental health issues in children. This study examines parental pressure and its effect on the decision taken by their children and leading consequences on their lives.

Objectives

The present study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the nature of parental involvement in the career decision-making process of secondary school students.
2. To assess the impact of parental pressure on the career decision-making process of secondary school students.
3. To investigate the effects of parental pressure on students' career- decision-making processes.

Research method

The present study is based on descriptive study and data is purely based on secondary sources. Secondary data were collected from various published sources like journals, websites, articles, books, etc.

Present Status of Parental Pressure and Career Choice

In the current competitive world parents play a major role in a child's career decisions. In India, this pressure is particularly noticeable due to deep-rooted cultural values emphasizing family expectations and interdependence. Many parents, motivated by societal norms, the need for financial security, and their aspirations, often encourage their children to pursue traditionally secure and respected careers like medicine, engineering, law, or government jobs.

According to National Crime records bureau (NCRB) reported over 13000 student's suicides in 2021, a 4.5% increase from 2020. The supreme court of India has acknowledged the intense competition and parental pressure are primary factors in these tragedies.

Current Trends & Observations:

After reviewing some papers and discussing with the students and parents regarding their choice of career some observations are as follows:

1. Career & Academic Expectations:

- High-paying and secure jobs are often prioritized by parents over children's interests.
- In countries like India, China, and South Korea, fields related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) were heavily encouraged

2. Changing Outlooks:

- An increasing number of parents have now started recognizing the importance of creative fields, sports, and entrepreneurship.
- Career counselling and psychological support are becoming more common in schools to help students in making independent choices.

3. Impact of Technology & Social Media:

- Exposure to different career options through the Internet is expanding students' aspirations beyond conventional jobs.
- Among younger generations, Digital careers such as content creation, gaming, and freelancing are gaining more acceptance.

The Nature of Parental Pressure in Career Decision-Making

Influence of parental pressure on career choice can be seen in several forms:

- **Direct Pressure:** Some parents clearly state their career choices for their children, insisting that their children follow specific professions without taking into consideration their personal interests or skills.
- **Indirect Pressure:** This includes more subtle forms of influences such as expectations, comparisons with other children, and emotional reinforcement that push students toward certain career paths.
- **Cultural and Social Influence:** Career decisions are strongly influenced by cultural values, in many societies' family reputation and societal status play a significant role in shaping parental expectations.

Effects of Parental Pressure on Students

The effects of parental pressure on career choice can be both positive and negative:

Positive Effects:

- It can offer motivation and financial support for pursuing higher education.
- It can encourage discipline and strong work ethics in pursuing career goals.
- It introduces students to stable and well-established career options.

Negative Effects:

- It can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and fear of failure (atychiphobia).
- It can suppress personal interests and passions, resulting in long-term disappointment towards parents.
- Lack of motivation can result in poor academic performance
- It might contribute to mental health issues such as depression and low self-esteem.

Factors Contributing to Parental Pressure

Several factors contribute to parental pressure in career decision-making:

- 1. Parental Educational Background:** Educated parents often push for prestigious and financially rewarding careers.
- 2. Socio Economic Status:** families with limited financial backgrounds may emphasize the importance of job security over one's own passion.
- 3. Social Expectations:** Cultural and societal pressure also shapes career paths, discouraging unconventional choices like arts, sports, or entrepreneurship.

Summary

Parental Expectations Shape Career Choices

Research shows that parental expectations are a significant factor in influencing the career choices of secondary school students. Parents often push their children to achieve career goals that they either had in mind or that the family desired. For example, it is usual to find parents planning their children to become doctors, lawyers, or engineers despite the child's interest or aptitude (Liu et al., 2019).

This pressure is felt because of the desire of giving children a better future. Parents believe that some professions are more economically stable and respected by society, leading to pressure on their children.

Negative Psychological and Emotional Outcomes

Many students face emotional and psychological challenges because of too much pressure from their parents. Studies have shown that when parental expectations are high, students often struggle with anxiety, stress, and feelings of sadness (Stead et al., 2018). Students often try to please their parents and meet their parent's expectations, leaving them to feel emotionally exhausted.

In extreme situations, the pressure from parents can create feelings of separation or even destroy the bond between parent-child relationships. This emotional weight can hinder a student's ability to make independent and informed choices about their career.

Impact on Independence and Career Happiness

When parents push too hard, it can affect a student's independence, especially regarding their career choices. Evidence shows that students who face high expectations from their parents often find it tough to express their own interests or make their own independent decisions (Gupta et al., 2015). These students instead of chasing their own dreams, they may try to meet their parents' expectations, which can lead to career paths where they do not truly reflect their interests or strengths. This might result as long-term dissatisfaction in their professional lives and they might have the feeling of getting stuck in careers in which they have no interest which may lead to lack of motivation and professional fulfilment (Mau,2016)

Academic Success and Coping Mechanisms

Some students perform better under the pressure of parental expectations, others tend to perform poorly in academics when they cannot meet their parents' high expectations. Research has shown that parents' pressure contributes to declines in academic performance, particularly for students who are not interested in their area of study (McWhirter, 2018). Such constant pressure may make students feel inadequate and low down their

self-esteem. In order to cope with this stress, most student's students seek support from teachers, counsellors, or friends, or they may choose to go against their parents' wishes by exploring different career options (Grotevant & Cooper, 2020). Some even rebel by taking up less traditional careers or in fields that their parents may not appreciate.

Cultural and Societal Influences

Societal and cultural issues have a direct impact on the amount of pressure students receive from their parents. In collectivistic cultures, where reputation and honour of the family are highly correlated with career achievement, the pressure to meet parental expectations is typically stronger. Empirical evidence indicates that students from China, India, and South Korea receive substantial pressure from parents to pursue prestigious professions (Shin, 2019). Such expectations are often supported by societal expectations and the desire to maintain the family's social position.

In contrast, students from individualistic societies will find themselves with a relatively lower level of pressure, although expectations from parents to succeed in highly competitive career paths continue to exist. Parental pressure could be due to wanting the children to become economically secure or possess high status, which may lead to stress and internal conflict in such students who are not certain of their aspirations (Kang & Park, 2015).

Gender Differences in Parental Pressure

Gender is also one of the aspects that determine the nature of parental pressure on professional choices. According to research, parental pressure can differ significantly between boys and girls, where girls might be urged to pursue careers in more traditionally "feminine" professions like teaching, nursing, or social work, while boys might be pushed towards professional careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Ibarra et al., 2019). This gendered pressure might confine to the various careers open to students, upholding conventional gender roles and restricting professional diversity.

Moreover, gendered expectations can also produce feelings of inadequacy in students who do not feel that they meet the expected career path, especially when the pressure contradicts their personal interests or strengths.

Supportive Involvement vs. Overbearing Pressure

All parental involvement in career choice is not negative. Some research indicates that supportive parental intervention—characterized by advice, guidance, and encouragement—can positively influence students' career choices. When students feel that their parents truly care about them and are concerned about their career goals, they are more inclined in thoughtful career exploration and decision-making (Patton & McMahon, 2014). The key difference lies in the intensity of the pressure. When parental involvement becomes controlling or overbearing, students may feel coerced into career paths that do not align with their own preferences, leading to negative outcomes.

The overbearing pressure from parents such as controlling or dominating, forcing into professional choices that are not interesting, can result in stress, anxiety, and resentment, destroying creativity and self-discovery.

Educational and Counselling Interventions

In order to delimit the negative effects of parental pressure, many schools have incorporated counselling programs that aim to provide students with the autonomy to make career choices. Career counselling can help students to develop self-awareness regarding their interests, values, and abilities, allowing them to make well-informed choices free from undue influence from their parents (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Moreover, workshops aiming at improving communication between students and parents have proven effective in conflict reduction and empowering parents to recognize and understand the importance of supporting their children's autonomy in career decision-making.

Conclusion

Students frequently felt pressured to pursue careers in highly popular professions, like medicine, law, or business, regardless of personal interest. Those who got excessive parental pressure expressed feelings of stress, anxiety, and frustration, particularly when their career interests clashed with parental expectations. Parental pressure was found to vary in accordance with gender, where male students were pushed toward careers in engineering, business, and technology, whereas female students were encouraged to pursue careers in healthcare, education, or social services. Societal values played an important role in shaping parental expectations. In some cultural settings, parents tended to channel their children toward stable, high-status professions, viewing them as a guarantee of financial security and social respectability. Students with lesser parental pressure mentioned higher levels of autonomy in making decisions, leading to increased job satisfaction and life satisfaction. As opposed to those students exposed to high parental pressure, such individuals often struggled with decision-making, having to choose definite careers. Those who were permitted to investigate various career paths, either through internships, job-shadowing, or career guidance, were more satisfied and had a clearer direction for careers. However, students under high parental pressure often lack these opportunities, restricting their ability to make informed decisions. Too much pressure from parents, e.g., punishment for low grades or overambitious expectations, may result in decreased motivation and academic performance.

Parental pressure is a strong force in shaping the career choices of secondary school students, but it is not always positive. Proper guidance from parents can provide necessary support and motivation, but too much pressure can suppress a student's personal development, leading to negative academic, psychological, and career outcomes. Parents must stop demanding and expecting too much from their children. It is understandable that parents want their children to be successful in their life but it should not be forgotten that it is their duty not to impose their expectations but to nurture and guide their child. Both parents and educators should realize the importance of creating an environment that lets students to explore and make decisions of their own concerning what they want to do in life. Encouraging open dialogue between students and parents, providing career counselling, and by promoting a more stable attitude to career decision-making will help in reducing the negative impact of parental pressure on career choice. This is especially for secondary school students, who are still struggling in the process of self-discovery or lacking the maturity or confidence to express their own aspirations. Thus there is a need to appreciate the concept of parental pressure as an antecedent of career choice

in order to facilitate understanding between parents and students allowing students to feel empowered to make decisions with their parents' guidance.

Recommendation

In order to implement a balanced model of career choice, the following strategies can be adopted:

1. Parents and students should engage in discussions that consider both parental expectations and the child's interests.
2. Parents might not always be aware of how much their pressure is affecting their children's mental well-being and career choice-making process. By informing parents about the importance of supporting their child's interests and promoting autonomy in career decisions can minimize negative outcomes.
3. Schools and community groups can provide workshops or information sessions for parents that tackle the psychological effects of excessive pressure on students. These sessions would be able to give advice on how to guide students in decision-making without imposing unrealistic demands on them
4. Schools should provide career guidance professionally so that students explore career possibilities based on their strengths and interest.
5. Parents must informed about new career opportunities outside of traditional professions.
6. Schools and communities should collaborate to create awareness about the importance of career diversity and personal satisfaction.

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