

Factors Affecting the Career Path Choice of Graduates: A Case of Omani

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Abstracts

Planning career path is a lifelong process and an approach helping to accomplish objectives and aspirations. This research consists of measuring the factors affecting career path choice of graduates in Oman. We aimed to investigate factors that mostly affect graduates' decision regarding their career path and the potential relationship among these factors. We used a quantitative analysis through primary and secondary data. The sample size of this survey envelopes 80 Omani students. The data analysis showed us that financial benefits and interest regarding the job have very significant influence on career decision among Omani students. Contrarily, regarding job security and job opportunity, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis showed that, there is weak association and there is no statistical significance between these two factors and career path.

Keywords: Career Path; Job seekers; Sultanate of Oman; Influence factors.

1 Introduction

Planning career path can be defined as a sequence of processes that build up a career plan. A career plan involves short-term or long-term goals and objectives leading to appropriate career, while a career path includes processes that allow individuals to achieve their goals and objectives (Adeola, 2011). From his side, kechukwu (2016) defined planning career path can as continuous process of thinking and identification of interests, preferences, values, qualities, abilities and capacities, investigating the life, work and learning choices available. These processes include gathering data and information that will enable humans to settle on informed decision for career choices. Planning career path is also extremely helpful for assessing interest, abilities and capacities to identify jobs and career paths that are mostly appropriate (Adekola, 2011). According to Olamide and Onaway (2013), following the different steps of career planning processes will allow humans to have a sense of clear

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direction, the chance to reflect on how the career path is progressing, whether persons are achieving the main goals and objectives that they have determined by themselves, and the chance to recognize where things might be going wrong. To move on in the career and get the predetermined objectives, people must plan forward, and work on improving their skill set. In every country, young people face challenges in deciding their career path and starting their professional lives, regularly while business environment keeps changing (Adeola, 2011). In Oman, few studies were made in order to explain how job seekers plan their career path. The Oman National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) announced that, one in five Omani job seekers admitted that the government or civil service industry is the most attractive for the local talent. The NCSI, also indicated that as of December 2017, there were 238 688 Omanis employed in the private sector, compared to 200 174 Omanis working in the public sector for the same period. Thus, we conclude that 54% of the Omani citizens' work in the private sector and 46% in the public sector. This ratio is literally beyond the regular international standards as the total of Omani working in the private sector is very close from those working for the public sector. It becomes important to understand these facts and explore whether Omani citizens actively and professionally develop themselves in order to achieve the career desired goals and work hard to meet them (Cohen, 2003). At the international level, several researchers highlighted the importance of understanding factors that influence career path. We believe that it is very important to understand and realize the potential factors that can shape the career path decision of graduates in the Sultanate of Oman. This understanding will be useful in helping the Oman government to control the rate of unemployment. Also, that will help the government to keep up to date of current career needs, requirements and demand of the job-seeker. Also, this study will help university students to be aware and get ready to make informed decisions regarding their career path. The central research question of the study consists of identifying and measuring the factors affecting the career path choice of graduates in Oman.

2 Literature Review

For Watts (2006), planning a career path can help individuals to decide their professional goals and come up with a clear strategy for getting these goals. Selecting an appropriate career path includes making an honest self-evaluation of people talents, abilities and interests. Leung (2008) advocates that choosing a career field must involve decision making process. The effectiveness of choosing career field can be greatly influenced by the information available at the point of decision-making. The effectiveness of the decision-making process depends on the correct and up-to-date information. The process of identifying a career field needs also a due time to collecting information about ourselves and the world of work as we go through. Career decision-making is not a once-off activity. It is a throughout life process. Decision-making of career path is ongoing and something that people need to keep practicing throughout their career. With new experiences and at new stages of life, humans might find themselves starting this procedure again. The important thing is to continue to reflect on the right direction, how it fits our aspirations and who we are and to make informed decisions on the direction that is appropriate for us (Dod & Hooley, 2015). Career guidance/planning can have significant advantages for the economy by supporting people to upgrade their abilities which thusly contribute to enhance jobs, skills and development. In this way, all the public and private organizations ought to

profoundly observe into the significance of Career guidance/planning to be engaged with macro-economic advantages (Chuang, 2009). The importance of planning career plan can enable us to control the direction of our career, decide job skills and knowledge we need, and how we can get them. It can enable us to deal with our career pathway, work towards our objectives and screen if we are on track. Also, it can help us in identifying our skills, strengths and weaknesses, where training might be required, finding reasonable and suitable career alternatives, staying up to date with current industry patterns, advancements and changes. It will also help us in securing ourselves against unemployment by ensuring our current skills match job demand and to make a move to refresh your skills if required. According to Dod & Hooley (2015), planning career also enable us to maintain a strategic distance from and adapt to any sudden or startling changes in our your working life. Planning career assist us to manage change proactively instead of responsively (Dod & Hooley, 2015). Sears & Gordon (2002) admitted that making a sound career decision requires the collection of adequate information about ourselves and the career environment. They explained that the kind of person we are, will also play a role in determining the types of careers that suits us. Abilities, skills, interests, personality, values and past experiences are also good indicators of career path. Everyone has a different opinion of what leads to a great job (Olawaiye.S, 2013). Everyone experiences some fear or apprehension when deciding about career (Hooley, 2012). Thus, there are many other factors that may affect our choice of career field. For example, family and cultural influences, economic trends, skill preferences, peer pressure, personal values, work values, interests, personality, health considerations, natural talents, and aptitude are several factors that may influence career and decisions. From his side, Gikopoulou (2008) considers that the most important criteria in choosing a career path is the focus on the daily activities that we are going to do every day. For him, if the work to execute is is satisfying, it may not really matter whether we make vast sums of money, or have a boss we regard as a friend. Sharf (2002) admitted that financial consideration (salary, benefits and incentives) is very important for everyone in career decision making. The salary and bonus, potentially determine whether we can buy a new home, purchase a car, go on vacations, or start a family. It's important that we make a good idea of what we need to achieve as a reasonable standard of living. Moreover, Mikacic (2015) determined that before selecting career path, it is important to think about cultural considerations. Regularly, people are applied to spend a large portion of their day at work. It becomes important for them to get along with their co-workers and feel like they fit in. For Mikacic (2015), there will be a minor disagreements along the way. However, people should be comfortable working in the environment, given cultural elements such as dress codes and the way that conflicts are resolved. The college of Reading (2005) argued that choosing a career path can allow us to decide other important life decisions like marriage and building a family. Achieving a desired work-life balance can be a challenge for many professionals, but career planning can help to reduce some of this stress. Finally, Mikacic (2015) explained that once we have carefully considered the information about ourselves, career and the environment, we need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Only then we will be able to make an informed career decision by linking what we know about each career to what you know about ourselves. The next section will help us to identify and measuring the factors affecting the career path choice of graduates in the Sultanate of Oman.



3 Data & Methodology

3.1 Methodology

This study uses a quantitative experimental research method. The tool that was used to gather data from the respondents was questionnaire. A structured questionnaire was distributed among students of university of Al-Buraimi. The purpose of this survey was to figure out the factors which may affect the career path of graduates in Oman. Convenience sampling is the method which was used in this research. Convenience sampling involves in non- probability sampling. Convenience sampling method is set of techniques in which respondents are selected by convenience due to their proximity, availability, accessibility or other way that researcher decides (Abrams, 2010). We selected this method because convenience sampling as it constitutes a fast and accessible tool that takes into consideration time and resources constraints. It is also the best and common used method for this kind of studies.

3.2 Hypotheses

Ha1 Career path tends to be affected due to financial benefits.

Ho1 Career path is not affected by financial benefits.

Ha2 Career path tends to be affected by culture consideration.

Ho2 There is no effect by culture consideration on career path.

Ha3 Career path tends to be influenced due to job security.

Ho3 There is no influence by Job security on career path.

Ha4 Career path tends to be influenced by future job opportunity.

Ho4 Future job opportunity has no influence on Career path.

Ha5 Career path tends to be affected by interest.

Ho5 Interest has no influence on career path.

3.3 Population of Study

The survey was conducted to analyse and measure the factors which can affect the career path of graduates in Oman. The sample size of this survey englobes 80 Omani students. The questionnaire was distributed to the students who are in the final year of studies and from different colleges. The respondents who answered the questionnaire of this survey were selected randomly.

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

This research is based on primary and secondary data to come up with accurate result. The questionnaire conducted in this study involved two sections. First section attempted to cover

the demographic data of the respondents. The second section used five-point Likert scale from strongly Agree (SA) = 1, Agree (A) = 2, Neutral (N) =3, Disagree (DA) =4, Strongly Disagree (SDA) = 6, to measure the perception of respondents of the factors which influence career path. This survey consisted of 4 questions in section one and 15 questions in section two. Collection of data is important in answering the research questions (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005). The questionnaire was the most appropriate tool to use because it contained both open and closed-ended questions. The open-ended questionnaires allowed the collection of free responses from the respondents without providing or suggesting any structure for replies. Whereas the structured questionnaires allowed for responses from the respondents to be restricted to the stated alternatives. The alternatives were designed in such a way that it was simple and easy for the respondents to understand. For this study, the methods used to analyze the data collected are frequency, correlations and regression. Frequency is a descriptive statistical method that shows the number of times an event occurs. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is given as a measure of linear association between the two variables. Regression analysis is a statistical technique that models the relationship between a criterion or dependent variable (Y) and a set of predictor or independent variables (X_i), (Wikipedia, 2017).

4 Results

4.1 Correlation Coefficient and Regression

Correlation and regression statistical methods were used to analyse the collected data to decide the strength of correlation between the variables whether it is statistically significant or not. The first two questions which have been considered for correlation coefficient and regression analysis were question one (Career is an important matter in my life) and question five (Salary and bonuses have great influence in choosing my career path) which represent career path and financial benefits as two variables. The second two questions were question one and question nine (There are some cultural beliefs I must consider when I choose my career path) which represent career path and culture as two variables. The third two questions have been considered for this analysis were question one and question ten (I don't prefer to join a job that gives me fear of losing my job or being laid off in the next 12 months) which represent career path and job security as two variables. The fourth two questions have been selected for this analysis were question one and question fourteen (I prefer to do a job that provides me opportunity for personal advancement) which represent career path and job opportunity as two variables. Last two questions which went to this analysis were question one and question sixteen (I tend to avoid a job that I am not interested in) which represent career path and interest as two variables.

4.1.1 Career path and Financial Benefits

Our first assumption of this study was about the relationship between financial benefits and career choice. Table 1 shows the results of Pearson's correlation analysis between career path and financial benefits. A Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.477 was obtained which is close to (0) and that means there is a weak positive relationship between these two variables.

TABLE 1. CORRELATION OF CAREER PATH AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS.

	Career path	Financial benefits
Career path	1	0.477749988
Financial benefits	0.477749988	1

H_{a1} Career path tends to be affected due to financial benefits.

H_{o1} Career path is not affected by financial benefits.

Regression Statistics

Multiple R	0.478
R Square	0.228
Adjusted R Square	0.215
Standard Error	0.676
Observations	60

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	7.8364	7.836	17.1534	0.00011
Residual	58	26.497	0.45		
Total	59	34.333			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.226	0.4767	4.67	1.8E-05	1.2717	3.18	1.272	3.18
Financial benefits	0.439	0.1061	4.142	0.0001	0.227	0.65	0.227	0.65

Figure 1: Regression of Career path and financial benefits.

Figure 1 illustrates regression analysis between career path and financial benefits. The result obtained indicated that, R-square is 0.22 which is more than Alpha (0.05) and P-value is 0.00011 which is less than Alpha (0.05). This means there is a statistical significance between the two variables. We therefore accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

4.1.2 Career Path and Culture Influence

TABLE 2. CORRELATION OF CAREER PATH AND CULTURE INFLUENCE.

	Career path	Culture
Career path	1	0.095514

Culture	0.095514	1
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H_{a4} Career path tends to be affected by culture influence.
H_{o4} There is no effect by culture influence on career path.

The second assumption of this study is to test the association between culture influence and career choice. Table 2 indicates the results of Pearson’s correlation analysis between career path and culture. A Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.095 was obtained which is closer to (0) and that means there is a very weak positive relationship between these two variables.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.095514
R Square	0.009123
Adjusted R Square	-0.00796
Standard Error	0.765868
Observations	60

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	0.31322	0.31322	0.53400	0.467
Residual	58	34.0201	0.58655		
Total	59	34.3333			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	3.912	0.361	10.834	1.46E-15	3.189	4.635	3.189	4.635
Cultural influence	0.064	0.088	0.730	0.467	-0.112	0.242	-0.112	0.24

Figure 2: Regression of Career path and cultural influence.

Figure 2 indicates regression analysis between career path and culture influence. The result obtained show that, R-square is 0.0091 which is less than Alpha (0.05) and P-value is 0.467 which is more than Alpha (0.05). This means there is no statistical significance between these two variables. We therefore accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis.

4.1.3 Career Path and Job Security

TABLE 3. CORRELATION OF CAREER PATH AND JOB SECURITY.

	Career path	Job security
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Career path	1	0.019893
Job security	0.019893	1

H_{a3} Career path tends to be influenced due to job security.
H_{o3} There is no influence by Job security on career path.

The third assumption is the relationship of career choice with job security. Table 3 shows that, there is very weak positive relationship between career path and job security. Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.0198 was obtained between these two variables which is closer to (0).

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.01989
R Square	0.0004
Adjusted R Square	-0.0168
Standard Error	0.76923
Observations	60

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	0.0136	0.0136	0.023	0.8801
Residual	58	34.32	0.59		
Total	59	34.333			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	4.12144	0.3145	13.1	6E-19	3.4918	4.751	3.492	4.751
Job security	0.01165	0.0769	0.152	0.880	-0.142	0.165	-0.14	0.165

Figure 3: Regression of Career path and Job security.

Figure 3 indicates regression analysis between career path and culture influence. The result obtained show that, R-square is 0.0004 which is less than Alpha (0.05) and P-value is 0.8801 which is more than Alpha (0.05). This means there is no statistical significance between these two variables. We therefore accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis.

4.1.4 Career Path and Job Opportunity

TABLE 4. CORRELATION COEFFICIENT OF CAREER PATH AND JOB OPPORTUNITY.

	Career path	Personal advancement
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Career path	1	0.136640586
Personal advancement	0.136640586	1

Ha4 Career path tends to be influenced by future job opportunity.

Ho4 Future job opportunity has no influence on Career path.

The relationship of career choice with job opportunity is the fourth assumption in this study. Table 4 indicates the result of Pearson’s correlation analysis between career path and job opportunity. A Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.1366 was obtained which is closer to (0) and that means there is a very weak positive relationship between these two variables.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.137
R Square	0.019
Adjusted R Square	0.002
Standard Error	0.762
Observations	60

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	0.64	0.641	1.1035	0.298
Residual	58	33.7	0.581		
Total	59	34.3			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	3.269	0.86	3.80	0.000	1.548	4.991	1.548	4.991
Personal advancement	0.192	0.18	1.05	0.2979	-0.174	0.559	-0.174	0.559

Figure 4: Regression of Career path and Job opportunity.

Figure 4.4 indicates regression analysis between career path and culture influence. The result obtained show that, R-square is 0.019 which is less than Alpha (0.05) and P-value is 0.2979 which is more than Alpha (0.05). This means there is no statistical significance between these two variables. We therefore accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis.

4.1.5 Career Path and Interest

TABLE 5. CORRELATION COEFFICIENT OF CAREER PATH AND INTEREST.

	Career path	Interest
Career path	1	0.708032043

Interest	0.708032043	1
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Ha5 Career path tends to be affected by interest.

Ho5 Interest has no influence on career path.

The last assumption of this study is regarding the association between career choice and job-seeker interest. Table 5 indicates the result of Pearson’s correlation analysis between career path and interest. A Pearson’s correlation coefficient of 0.7080 was obtained which is closer to (+1) and that means there is a very strong positive relationship between these two variables.

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.708032
R Square	0.501309
Adjusted R Square	0.492711
Standard Error	0.543325
Observations	60

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	17.21162	17.21029	58.30457247	2.50307E-10
Residual	58	17.12171	0.2951846726		
Total	59	34.33333			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	1.899	0.305	6.223	5.81196E-08	1.288	2.509	1.28	2.509
Interest	0.546	0.071	7.63	2.50307E-10	0.403	0.68	0.403	0.68

Figure 5: Regression of Career path and Interest.

Figure 5 indicates regression analysis between career path and interest. The result shows that R-square is 0.5013 which is more than Alpha (0.05) and P-value is 2.50307E-10 which is less than Alpha (0.05). This information explains that, there is statistical significance between these two variables. We therefore accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

5 Conclusion

The study tries to investigate the basic variables that affect the choice of career of Young Omanis. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the relation of career choice with financial benefits, culture influence, job security, job opportunity and interest regarding the job. Firstly, with respect to the financial benefits affecting career choice, financial benefits - as the result showed - have very significant influence on career choices that students make. The finding significantly revealed that financial benefits are some of the most important factors that affect career choice. Accordingly, we believe that there is a strong significant relation between financial benefit and career choice that Omanis make and it is so important to consider financial benefits as the most significant motivator for Omanis career choice. It is important to remind that in Oman's traditional social context money offers stability and security and may bring social prestige. These findings are in accordance with those of Benchiba-Savenius and all. (2016) regarding Oman employment insights. This group of research conducted a survey of Omani nationals on their opinions pertaining to employment in the Sultanate. Insights underpinning the current and future aspirations and motivations to employment of for the Omanis under 30s revealed that money ranked as the most significant motivator for Omanis. Based on these findings, financial benefits were found as a predictor of motivation for career choice and this finding supports a lot of other research on this matter. However, managers should not focus on financial benefits as the only factor that affect career choice decision. Therefore, Managers and decision makers should consider other factor which has significant degree of influence. Secondly, with respect to the culture influences affecting career choice. The research revealed that cultural influences are not significant in affecting the career choices that students make. The finding insignificantly revealed that cultural influences are not some of the most important factors that support these findings. Accordingly, we believe that there is no strong significant relationship between culture influence and career choice of Omanis students. In fact, Manager and decision makers might pay less attention to this point as one of the factor affecting Omani career choice decisions; however, they should not ignore culture consideration at all. Due to sensitive aspects related to Islamic Religion which are connected with culture consideration such as type of gender. Females may be influenced by their family, community or nation on their career choice decision. Nature of work, place of work, conditions of work all these may affect Career choice decision of females and males with lesser degrees. Thirdly, regarding job security and job opportunity, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis showed that, there is weak association and there is no statistical significance between these two factors and career path. Finally, regarding interest, the study sort to find out how interest affects the career path choice. The findings indicated that interest has very strong positive relationship with career path choice and it is too significantly influencing factor. It was the highlighted by respondents as one of the most significant factor that influence career choice. Interest regarding the job can include elements like developing and challenging role, travel, or other things. These findings contrast with those of Oxford's 'Oman Employment' report done by Benchiba-Savenius and all., in 2016, which they found that 'respondents were most likely to be motivated by money (76%). Challenge (28%) and travel (28%) were also popular motivators. But this research revealed also, that offering more challenging roles with clear development opportunities could help attract more Omani job-seekers. Moreover, improving international travel opportunities may attract more female candidates, based on the survey results". So, we can admit that part of these results, match our findings. At the

same time, our results are in complete concordance with those observed by the Oxford Strategic Consulting report (2015), in which they discovered that young Omanis were more likely to be attracted to employers that were considered to be helping the country/society as well as challenging and developing employees. Thus we conclude that the Omani Government must pay attention to the aspirations and motivators of Young Omanis in terms of employment. Government must encourage the creation of employment opportunities that supports Omani talents through providing valuable work experience, opportunities of knowledge development and transfer and incorporating motivating factors other than financial benefits. The building of Omani human capital by focusing on developing leadership culture and Omani leaders is more than essential.

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