

Career Counseling Program for the Psychological Well-Being of Freshmen University Students

Sheila Marie G. Hocson

Abstract—One of the vital developmental tasks that an individual faces during adolescence is choosing a career. Arriving at a career decision is difficult and anxious for many adolescents in the tertiary level. The main purpose of this study is to determine the factors relating to career indecision among freshmen college students as basis for the formulation of a comprehensive career counseling program for the psychological well-being of freshmen university students. The subjects were purposively selected. The Slovin's formula was used in determining the sample size, using a 0.05 margin of error in getting the total number of samples per college and per major. The researcher made use of descriptive correlational study in determining significant factors relating to career indecision. Multiple Regression Analysis indicated that career thoughts, career decisions and vocational identity as factors related to career indecision.

Keywords—career decisions, career guidance program, career thoughts, vocational identity

I. INTRODUCTION

PEOPLE live in a world of uncertainty. One domain of life in which uncertainty plays a significant role is that of career decisions [1]. Deciding on a career is one of the most important aspects of an individual's development and personal happiness.

According to Creed, Patton and Prideaux [2], making decisions regarding a career is an important task for young people. Not all young people make career decisions easily, and many experience episodes of indecision before settling on a career path. Moreover, arriving at a career decision is a difficult and anxious task for many adolescents who are already in the tertiary level.

Career indecision can also be looked at through many lenses and are associated with various personal and interpersonal variables. Grothkopf [3] implied that when individuals experience career indecision, they may experience a number of associated problems including greater anxiety, lower self-esteem, less career decision-making, less self-efficacy and less effective self-appraised problem-solving skills. Operationally, this refers to the inability to express an educational or occupational choice when asked to do so and a delay in bringing closure to the career choice process.

In the Philippines, there are a growing number of career counselors and experts in the field of counseling that were very active in formulating career programs that help our Filipino students come up with a personal career plan.

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The career program of Villar [4] that focuses in collecting, collating and evaluating various information about the self and the world of work and to help the Filipino students meet his/her life goals and take the necessary steps to implement the plan. Moreover, Dy [5] formulated a model for helping undecided Filipino students make effective career decisions.

The main problem of this study is to determine the factors relating to career indecision among Filipino freshmen college students as basis for the formulation of a comprehensive career counseling program. This program may be used to assist the university students' better self-understanding, coping and adjustment to developmental changes, personality development, formation of vocational identity, familiarity with world of work, enhancement of career problem solving and decision-making skills, demonstrating positive attitudes towards career, and accessing and maximizing information on career and placement. Thus, it is the hope of this study to formulate a comprehensive career counseling program for the psychological well-being of freshmen university students that will assist them to make better decisions.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Career indecision is associated with various variables namely career self-efficacy, career thoughts on career decisions, vocational identity, need for information and career indecision. In terms of career thoughts on career decisions, the studies of Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, and Saunders [6] implied that cognitions have been generally recognized as important factors that affect an individual's career decision-making process and overall vocational development. Elliott [7] noted that negative self-statements can impair a client's ability to utilize occupational information, lead to career indecision, and inappropriate choices. In addition, dysfunctional career thoughts have been found to be positively correlated with the inability to choose a major field of study for undecided college students [8], self-appraised problem-solving ability for substance abusers [9], perfectionism and career indecision [10], state anger as measured by the total score on the Career Thoughts Inventory only [11], ego identity [12], and depression and career indecision [13].

Furthermore, in relation to vocational identity, need for information and career barriers, Talib and Aun [14] studied the predictors of career indecision among Malaysian undergraduate students. Their research revealed that female undergraduates with high academic achievement and low occupational information, and vocational identity were more unlikely to have decided on their career.

Lastly, in formulating career counseling program, Krauz and Hughey [15] examined the impact of an intervention on career indecision and decision-making self-efficacy of students in the United States. Likewise, the effects of school career guidance activities on students' career decision making self-efficacy and career indecision. Providing career guidance activities as part of the school counseling program is a way to help students learn career decision-making skills and to address career decision making self-efficacy and career indecision.

Such studies on the factors relating to career indecision has prompted the researcher to pursue an extensive descriptive correlational study on the implications of various predictors in formulating a comprehensive career guidance program among career undecided freshmen college students.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

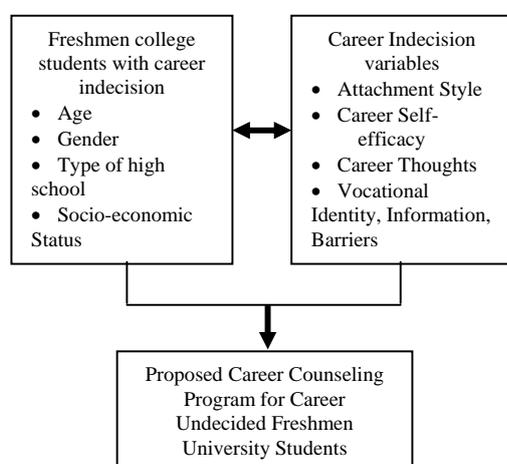


Fig. 1 A Descriptive Study on the Career Counseling Program for the Psychological Well-Being of Freshmen University Students

Fig. 1 outlines the schema of the descriptive study of the various factors relating to career indecision among Freshmen College Students as Implications for a Proposed Career Counseling Program. It shows that there are four factors that are relevant to career indecision, namely (1) the kind of attachment style the adolescent builds on his/her parents, (2) person's beliefs concerning his/her ability to successfully perform a given task or behavior which is career self-efficacy, (3) the amount of career thoughts on career decisions, and (4) vocational identity, career information and barriers. Findings and outcomes of the results of each factors relating to career indecision has served as bases for formulating a career counseling program for freshmen college students to further prevent and alleviate the dilemma of the students undergoing career indecision.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main problem of this study is to determine the factors relating to career indecision among freshmen college students as basis for the formulation of a comprehensive career counseling program.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the level of career indecision among career undecided freshmen college students?
- 2) Is there a significant difference in the level of career indecision among freshmen college students from the different colleges?
- 3) What is the profile of the participants on the career indecision variables?
 - i. Attachment Style to Parents;
 - ii. Career Self-efficacy;
 - iii. Career Thoughts on Career Decisions; and
 - iv. Vocational Identity, Need for Information and Career Barriers
- 4) Are there significant relationships between the socio-demographic profile of the participants and the career indecision variables?
 - i. Attachment Style to Parents;
 - ii. Career Self-efficacy;
 - iii. Career Thoughts on Career Decisions; and
 - iv. Vocational Identity, Need for Information and Career Barriers
- 5) When combined and partialled out, which of the variables are significant factors relating to career indecision?
- 6) Based on the findings of the study, what career counseling program can be developed in order to minimize career indecision for the psychological being of freshmen students?

V.METHOD

A. Research Design

The researcher used the descriptive correlational research design to describe the career indecision, attachment style, self-efficacy, career thoughts, career decision, vocational identity, need for information and career barriers of freshmen college students in relation to career indecision.

B. Participants

This study utilized 386 undecided freshmen college students in identifying the significant predictors of career indecision. The respondents of this study were the freshmen college students from the thirteen colleges of the University of Santo Tomas, Academic Year 2009-2010.

C. Sources of Data

Four instruments were used to gather the necessary research data and these are the following:

- 1) Personal Data Sheet
- 2) Tests

This includes the different psychological tests to measure career decision, attachment style to parents, career self-efficacy, career thoughts on career decision and vocational identity, need for information and career barriers. The tests are as follows:

i. Career Decision Scale (CDS)

The Career Decision Scale measures an individual's

certainty and indecision regarding career choices [16]. The CDS provides an estimate of career indecision in high school and college students and its antecedents, as well as an outcome measure to determine the effects of relevant interventions.

ii. Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ)

According to Griffin and Bartholomew [17], RSQ contains statements drawn from attachment measure [18], Relationship Questionnaire [19], and Adult Attachment Scale [20]. The attachment style would be in reference to the relationship between the adolescent and his/her parents.

iii. The Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form (CDMSE-SF)

The CDMSE-SF is a shorter version of the CDMSE, measures an individual's degree of belief that he/she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions [21].

iv. Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI)

The Career Thoughts Inventory is a theory-based assessment and intervention resource intended to improve the quality of career decisions made by adults, college students, and high school students and the quality of career services delivered to these individuals.

v. My Vocational Situation (MVS)

The MVS was designed to identify potential types of difficulties that people encounter in vocational decision making [22].

3) Collated Interviews from the Assigned Guidance Counselors per College

This includes the collected subjective data through interviews done by the assigned guidance counselors per college regarding varied causes and reasons of their career dilemmas.

4) Career Counseling Program

This includes a well-organized plan of action to achieve relevant career goals and objectives through career counseling activities and strategies based on the significant predictors of career indecision. The exercises were influenced by other career counseling programs.

D. Data Analysis

The data gathered were organized and processed according to the problems presented in the study. The analysis was done with the assistance of the statistician. The statistical tools that were utilized in the analysis of data are frequency distribution and percentages were computed to answer statement of the problem number one. Whereas, frequency, mean and standard deviation were computed to answer statement two and four in determining the Career Decision Scale, Adolescent Relationship Questionnaire, Career Decision Making Self-

efficacy short form, Career Thoughts Inventory and My Vocational Situation. Moreover, Analysis of Variance or F test was used to determine the significant difference in the level of career indecision among freshmen college students. Furthermore, different types of correlation such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Point-Biserial were utilized in determining the significant relationships between the socio-demographic profile of the participants and the variables influencing career indecision among the target population. Lastly, Multiple Regression Analysis to answer statement of the problem number 6 in determining the significant factors relating to career indecision among freshmen college students.

VI. RESULTS

The findings of the present study were organized according to the seven research problems.

A. Career Indecision

Out of the 386 respondents, 210 (54.40%) scored middle level score of career indecision in the test, 173 (44.82%) respondents got high level score of career indecision and the rest 3 (0.78%) got low level score of career indecision. These findings clearly shows that most of the career undecided freshmen college students from the 13 various colleges and faculties experienced middle and high levels of career indecision.

Further, no significant difference in the level of career indecision among freshmen college students from the different colleges was noted. This is further explained based on the results of the test, subjective data gathered on item number 19 of the Career Decision Scale and results of the interviews conducted by the guidance counselors assigned at the different colleges that career indecision of the freshmen college students are mainly caused by dysfunctional career thoughts, deficient in career decision making skills and lack of vocational identity.

B. Attachment Style to Parents

The respondent's attachment style to parents was measured by means of the Relationship Scale Questionnaire. According to Griffin and Bartholomew [17], there are four types of attachment styles namely secure attachment, dismissing style, preoccupied style and fearful style

Out of the 386 respondents, 217 (56.22 %) have a secure type of attachment style to their parents, 80 (20.73%) have a preoccupied attachment style, 77 (19.95%) have a dismissing style and 12 (3.10%) have a fearful type of attachment. Furthermore, the highest rates of career undecided freshmen college students with 42 (19.35%) secure, 18 (23.38%) dismissing and preoccupied 14 (17.5%) types of attachment styles came from the Faculty of Engineering while lowest rates of students with 4 (1.84%) secure and preoccupied 1 (1.25%) types of attachment styles came from the Conservatory of Music.

Result implies that most of the career undecided freshmen students have secure attachment style to parents amidst their

being career undecided brought about by their close family ties among Filipino families. Most of their families are intact and family members are supportive to each other.

The findings are consistent with the study of Midel [23] who surveyed college students from Metro Manila. She found out that most students' attachment style is the secure attachments style, followed by the dismissing style, showing that most students have a preference for positive self-models.

C. Career Self-Efficacy

Out of the 386 respondents, 171 (44.30 %) have a much confidence score on their career self-efficacy, 142 (36.79%) have a moderate confidence with their abilities, 51 (13.21%) for complete confidence, followed by 20 (5.18%) with very little confidence and 2 (0.52%) for career undecided students with no confidence. Furthermore, majority of the career undecided freshmen college students with 32 (18.71%) much confidence, 29 (20.42) moderate confidence, 7 (13.73%) complete confidence, 5 (25.0%) very little confidence and 1 (50.0%) no confidence came from the Faculty of Engineering while least of students with 1 (5.0%) very little confidence, 2 (1.17%) much confidence, 2 (1.41%) moderate confidence, and 2 (3.92%) complete confidence came from the Conservatory of Music.

D. Career Thoughts on Career Decisions

The Career Thoughts Inventory is a theory-based assessment and intervention resource intended to improve the quality of career decisions made by adults, college students, and high school students and the quality of career services delivered to these individuals [24]. As to the amount of career thoughts, 163 (42.23%) respondents got a high level of negative career thoughts, followed by 159 (41.19%) received an average score and 64 (16.58%) respondents received a low score. Likewise, majority of the career undecided freshmen college students with 39 (23.92%) high and 29 (18.24%) average scores of career thoughts and career decisions came from the Faculty of Engineering while lowest number of students with 3 (1.84%) high score on career thoughts and career decisions came from the College of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Result implies that most of the students have dysfunctional thoughts. The negative thoughts are brought about by their childhood, negative experiences from the past and the environment. These instances made them develop negative outlook in life.

E. Vocational Identity

Results reveal the respondent's profile of vocational identity as measured by My Vocational Situation (MVS). The MVS was designed to identify potential types of difficulties that people encounter in vocational decision making [22].

Out of the 386 respondents, 279 (72.28%) scored low on vocational identity while 107 (27.72%) scored high on vocational identity. Furthermore, majority of the career undecided freshmen college students with 64 (22.92%) scored low on vocational identity came from the Faculty of

Engineering while lowest number of students with 4 (1.43%) low score on vocational identity came from the College of Rehabilitation Science.

Result implies that most of the career undecided students need reassurance that they have made the right choice, confusion on deciding a career, uncertain about which occupation they could enjoy and what kind of career they should follow, unsure of their capabilities, strengths and weaknesses.

F. Need for Information

Results show that out of the 386 career undecided freshmen college respondents, 364 (94.30%) scored low on need for information while 22 (5.70%) scored high on need for information. In addition, biggest rates of career undecided freshmen college students 70 (19.23%) low on need for information came from the Faculty of Engineering while smallest rates with 7 (1.92%) low on score on need for information came from the Conservatory of Music.

Result implies that most of the respondents are not aware on how to find a job in their chosen field, they did not have enough regarding employment opportunities and they are short of data on how to get the necessary training in their chosen major.

G. Career Barriers

Results show that 207 (53.63%) scored high career barriers while 179 (46.37%) scored low on career barriers. More so, largest number of career undecided freshmen college students 39 (18.84%) high on career barriers came from the Faculty of Engineering while least number with 1 (0.48 %) high on career barriers came from the Conservatory of Music.

Result implies that some of the undecided students imparted that money, influence of the significant person in their lives and lack of special talents to follow their first choice as their career barriers.

In the Philippines, Villar [4] found out that financial aspect, practicality of the course and the decision of the parents are career barriers among Filipino students. Findings suggested that as the economy becomes increasingly uncertain, parents and students become focused on courses that would guarantee immediate employment and income that greatly affects the career decision among Filipino adolescents.

H. Relationship of Socio-Demographic Profile to the Following Variables

Gender is the only significant socio-demographic factor that relates to career self-efficacy (-2.36), vocational identity (-1.967) and need for information (-2.16). Hence, there is a significant relationship between gender and career self-efficacy, vocational identity and need for information. Gender as significantly related to career self-efficacy means that most of the female career undecided freshmen students has high self-efficacy than male career undecided freshmen students. Moreover, female students has a higher need of vocational identity and need for information compared to male students that greatly affects their being career undecided.

I. Relationship of Career Indecision to the Following Variables

The researcher also determined which among the dependents variables attachment style to parents, career self-efficacy, career thoughts, career decisions, vocational identity, need for information and career barriers could predict career indecision among career undecided freshmen college students of the University of Santo Tomas by using the Multiple Regression Analysis.

All factors were combined and partialled out and the factor/s that is/are left after the computation are identified as the significant predictors of career indecision.

The results of the study revealed that career thoughts on career decisions with t Stat value of 2.901766644 and P-value of 0.003928487 and vocational identity with t Stat value of 3.022253056 and P-value of 0.002680395 as significant factors relating to career indecision.

In terms of the career thoughts on career decisions, result suggests that student have negative thoughts and dysfunctional thinking. Specifically, majority of the career undecided freshmen college students have experienced inability to initiate or sustain the decision making process as a result of disabling emotions and/or a lack of understanding about the decision making process itself. Likewise, they have the inability to make a commitment to a specific career choice, accompanied by generalized anxiety about the outcome of the decision making process. This anxiety perpetuates indecision. In addition, they have the inability to balance the importance of one's own self-perceptions with the importance of input from significant others thereby resulting in a reluctance to assume responsibility for decision making.

These findings are also consistent with the product of the interviews conducted by the assigned guidance counselors of the University of Santo Tomas, Guidance and Counseling Department that most of the students have dysfunctional thoughts. The negative thoughts are brought about by their childhood, negative experiences from the past and the environment. These instances made them develop negative outlook in life such as having a belief that almost all occupational information is slanted toward making the occupation look good, the influence of other views of important people in their life that interfere in their career decisions, disapproval of significant people in their lives, difficulty and complexities in developing a plan and making decisions, frustrations and anxieties in the process of choosing a career, complications and confusions in choosing a career and being upset when people asked them what they want to do in their lives.

As to the result of vocational identity, scores imply that most of the career undecided freshmen college students have a low vocational identity. The results suggest that majority of the career undecided students are unaware of their own personalities, abilities and talents. This is aligned with the collated results of the interviews from the assigned guidance counselors of the different colleges. According to the guidance counselors, most of the career undecided students

need reassurance that they have made the right choice, confusion on deciding a career, uncertain about which occupation they could enjoy and what kind of career they should follow, unsure of their capabilities, strengths and weaknesses.

J. Proposed Career Counseling Program

The proposed career counseling program for career undecided freshmen college students of University of Santo Tomas is anchored on the mission and vision of the UST, Department of Guidance and Counseling which is "to assist students in the process of understanding themselves and the environment to promote and enhance the learning process as they strengthen work skills, and attitudes in preparation for their various life roles by means of providing comprehensive and developmental programs, carefully designed and systematically implemented by professional, competent, compassionate, committed, community-oriented and Christ-centered counselors". Likewise, the proposed career guidance program considers the objectives of Philippine education as provided by its Constitution which thus states, "1) to promote vocational efficiency and broaden scientific and technological knowledge toward social and economic progress, and 2) review and improve a school curriculum to bring about changes specifically along the areas of career education and development toward becoming more nationalistic and progress oriented" [25].

Moreover, it will help the career undecided freshmen college students in the development, planning and implementation of a personal life-career, with focus on his/her personal aspirations and qualities vis-à-vis the nature and requirements of the worker role in the selected area and how the latter interacts with other life roles. Moreover, helps the career undecided freshmen college students to identify, challenge, and alter negative career thoughts that interfere with effective career decision making. Likewise, assist the students in career problem solving and decision making.

VII. DISCUSSION

Career thoughts on career decisions and vocational identity as significant factors relating to career indecision among freshmen college students means that having dysfunctional thinking and lack of awareness to one's personality, ability and talents contributes the individual to become confused about his/her career decisions. Specifically, majority of the career undecided freshmen college students have experienced inability to initiate or sustain the decision making process as a result of disabling emotions and/or a lack of understanding about the decision making process itself. Likewise, they have the inability to make a commitment to a specific career choice, accompanied by generalized anxiety about the outcome of the decision making process. This anxiety perpetuates indecision.

Practitioners and researchers have also noted that some individuals tend to verbalize negative or dysfunctional statements regarding the career decision-making process.

These negative verbalizations make the career problem-solving and decision-making process more difficult and often cause the individual to avoid it all together [6].

The findings of this study are supported in [12] that dysfunctional career thoughts have been found to be positively correlated with the inability to choose a major field of study for undecided college students. Moreover, the study of Elliott [7] noted that negative self-statements can impair a client's ability to utilize occupational information, lead to career indecision, and inappropriate choices. Furthermore, by the studies of Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, and Saunders, 1996 that cognitions have been generally recognized as important factors that affect an individual's career decision-making process and overall vocational development. Specifically, research has suggested that an individual's career behaviors tend to be influenced by the interaction of vocational cognitions, behaviors, and environments and that changes in an individual's career behaviors tend to be cognitively mediated (Keller, Biggs and Gysbers in [6]).

In terms of vocational identity, Talib and Aun [18] studied the predictors of career indecision among Malaysian undergraduate students. Results revealed that female undergraduates with high academic achievement and low occupational information, and vocational identity were more unlikely to have decided on their career. Moreover, findings of Lucas, Gysbers, Buescher and Heppner cited in [26] found that undecided first year students have significantly increased their scores on vocational identity scale as measured by My Vocational Situation after engaging in a career intervention.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the intention to develop a career counseling program for the psychological well-being of freshmen university students, an initial step of assessing the respondents' demographic profile particularly age, gender, type of high school graduated from and socio-economic status and variables such as Attachment Style to Parents, Career Self-efficacy, Career Thoughts, Career Decisions, Vocational Identity, Need for Information and Career Barriers was attained and a comprehensive career counseling program was formulated.

It was revealed that most career undecided freshmen college students have negative career thoughts on their career decisions and lacking in vocational identity. These findings do not negate the need to develop a career guidance program. It only affirms the need that such program is tailored according to the needs of such students thereby improve the said variables in improving their personal, social, academic and vocational lives to better reach their goals.

Recommendations were derived in the light of giving solutions to the problems encountered in the study such as the development of career guidance program should have the element on how to enhance better understanding of the self, determine other career related competencies, cope with and

adjust to environmental changes as a result of realistic assessment of oneself, identify, challenge and alter negative career thoughts, understand the dynamics of a winning personality, develop high vocational identity, discover more about themselves and the world of work, develop appreciation for and positive attitudes towards work, know how to locate, evaluate and interpret information about career opportunities, learn to use available placement services and develop skills in selecting exploratory, introductory, and instructional programs, develop career problem solving and decision-making skills, application of career decision making skills, become prudent in making decisions and accountable for their actions; and identifying the career goal and carrying out the plan. Future researches on other factors of career indecision like stress experienced by students and resiliency can also be an important factors relating to career indecision. Lastly, strengthen career guidance programs in the various schools and universities in the Philippines by means of efficient and consistent implementation of the program by competent guidance counselors for students in other local schools to have better career decisions.

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