

Career Confusion of ISPSC Freshmen College Students: A Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract: *The problem of career choices is constantly alarming on the part of freshmen students with regards to their doubts and uncertainties. In this fashion, this study has answered this main problem of the study: What causes ISPSC freshmen students of Santa Maria Campus is experiencing career confusion to decide on their course? In answering this, the specific problems of the study were generated which are: (a) Who influences freshmen students in choosing their course?; (b) What major impact do these influential people provide to the freshmen students to choose a course that does not align with them?; and (c) What other external factors push freshmen students to be undecided to choose their courses? This research employed a phenomenological research design in the form of semi-structured interview. The participants consist of thirty freshmen students coming from the different departments of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College-Santa Maria Campus. The results of the study have shown that there is a great influence of their parents as an internal factor in choosing their course over their dream course. Contrariwise, the doubts and uncertainties of the freshmen students' potentialities, influence of the pandemic, and proximity of the school were described to be the reasons for these freshmen students to choose their course externally.*

Keywords: career confusion, ISPSC, freshmen students, phenomenology, course, career choice

1. Introduction

Career confusion continuously affects the student's learning process. Such confusion leaves them nowhere to go and end up pursuing the course they do not want for themselves. In the Philippines, it was mentioned that uncertainty about their jobs was reportedly causing stress in Filipino businessmen (Manila Standard Today, 2006). In that case, career uncertainty is deemed to be influential to people in a negative way. But what stimulates this career uncertainty? Is the distress over one's career choices brought about by intrinsic factors or is it something that can also be influenced by the wider environment? However, Borchert (2002) has argued that "career choice is an ever-evolving process." This encourages the students to choose a course that matches their line of interest.

On an equal footing, even if the K-12 curriculum has been introduced by the government, still these uncertainty levels of students in their career choices are evenly manifested. Specifically, as of this present-day condition, different strands were employed by the Department of Education for a variety of career choices for students. However, in the long run, it defeats the purpose of preparing the learners to actuate their potentialities concerning their career choices. To prove this, Abellanosa (2018) has provided about the dilemmas and issues of the Philippine K-12 educational system. Firstly, the strong implementation of bridging program to students who desired to take a particular area of specialization which is unrelated to his senior high school track or strand. Some schools rely on the result of the entrance examination. Precisely, when applicants have passed the given examination, then they will be admitted to that university or college irrespective of the alignment of the strand. Secondly, the modification of the General Education courses for freshmen college students. For instance, the Philosophy of the Human Person has been replaced with Ethics as only the philosophy subject for the college

curriculum. This is disturbing to the learners since the philosophical foundations of learning are gradually decreasing and as a consequence take these General Education courses for the sake of passing the subject. Lastly, one must take into account the college instructor's readiness in teaching these General Education courses. A particular example stipulated in the article is the case of Ethics subject. There is a possibility that an Ethics instructor will start their lecture on the definition of philosophy and branches of philosophy but Ethics by itself is a specific subject. Since there is a philosophy subject in senior high school, it is requisite that the instructor will explain a glimpse of the history and branches of philosophy. However, it should never consume the whole syllabus about this topic. An additional example of this section would be the assigned teachers in teaching Ethics. Most of the teachers hired for teaching Ethics are unaccustomed to the subject given that they have no background in the subject. As a result, the necessary lesson that is going to be imparted to the students' ends up being a form of distorted knowledge.

Additionally, the student's concern on choosing their course lies heavily on the money that they will earn rather than the satisfaction that they can gain from that course. This can be evenly manifested by Manapsal (2018) in raising this question, "What college education can we afford that can make you finish quickly, get a job, and start helping with family finances?" On the one hand, Koech and his colleagues, as stated by Gestjada, et. al. (2017) have concluded that social interactions with teachers, parents, and peers affect the student's career choice. Meaning to say, significant people in the lives of students play a major role in crafting a decision for their courses when they enter their college years. That is why there is a great tendency that they will sacrifice the course that interests them the most over the decisions of others for their course.

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2. Statement of the Problem

In the Philippines, it is found to be alarming that the unemployment rate is continuously increasing. Braza and Guillo (2015) as cited by Manapsal (2018), has identified a report of the Labor Force Survey in 2012 where 7.1 million are underemployed which was a product of unaided career decision-making. This is the reason why there is a strong need for guidance in career choices between and among students as early as possible. This appropriate career guidance and counseling will strengthen the response of the students to choose their desired course over the demands of others.

In this case, this study aims to answer this main statement of the problem: What causes ISPSC freshmen students of Santa Maria Campus is experiencing career confusion to decide on their course? In answering the general statement of the problem, the specific statements of the study are as follows:

Research Question 1: Who influences freshmen students in choosing their course?

Research Question 2: What major impact do these influential people provide to the freshmen students to choose a course that does not align with them?

Research Question 3: What other external factors have driven freshmen students to be undecided to choose their courses?

3. Method

The Target Group

The participants in the study were thirty (30) freshmen students from the different departments of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College Santa Maria Campus. The sample is comprised of 21 females and 9 males who are enrolled from the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021.

A maximum variation sampling was used by the researcher in choosing the participants of the study. Patton (1990) has stated that "a maximum variation sample is constructed by identifying key dimensions of variations and then finding cases that vary from each other as much as possible." Concerning the study, this sampling yields to uncovering many different key themes of career confusion as possible.

Data Collection

The study was carried out using semi-structured interviews as the best tool in gathering the responses of the participants. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), semi-structured were preferred because they make it possible to discover themes that could stem out during the discussion. In other words, employing this interview scheme will most likely bring an in-depth discussion and openness to the participants' feelings, thoughts, and beliefs regarding career confusion which is different from a structured interview that is based solely on the given interview questions.

The first phase of the interview involves questions of self-introduction among participants such as their family structure, family income, and their interests/hobbies. The second phase of the interview mainly discusses the specific research questions of the study about those people and the

impact they have given to freshmen students to choose a course that does not align with them as well as the external factors which driven the freshmen students for not choosing their course.

4. Analysis

This section briefly discussed the participants' responses to the three specific questions of the study. The participants' responses were sorted and manually checked to identify themes and codes. This in-depth examination warrants that all relevant data was properly identified, categorized, and interpreted for the intended meaning. While reviewing the responses in this study, the researcher reflected the concrete statements of the participants in the semi-structured interview.

Research Question 1: Who influences freshmen in choosing a course that does not align with them?

As reflected on the responses of the participants, a majority have stated that their parents influenced them in choosing a course that does not align with them. To show this point, one participant has mentioned that "My parents wanted me to enroll in a course that compromises practicality and my line of interest, somehow." (participant 1) This denotes that their parents play an important function in their decisions. Aside from parents, some of the participants have mentioned peers as influential people for them to choose their course. "Since my friend has chosen this course, I have also chosen this course." (participant 6) This response suggested the idea of companionship in deciding on a course to take in college. This only entails that without the company of the participant's friend, she will never decide to choose her course. The least response in the study is former teachers. "My former teachers wanted me to be like them." (participant 29) This statement has shown the participant has chosen the course to compromise with her former teachers.

Research Question 2: What major impact do these influential people provide to the freshmen students to choose a course that does not align with them?

This specific question is connected to the first research question of the study. By mentioning their parents, peers, and former teachers, this follows the impact these influential people have provided to the freshmen students in deciding on a course. One impact here is the affordability of the course since most of the respondents came from a less than 5,000 family income. Relating it to the response given by participant 13, "My parents let me realize that my dream course is not that affordable enough so they let me choose this course." Another impact pointed out in the interview is the idea of being successful in the course given by the freshmen's parents. This is greatly connected to the response of participant 19, "My parents have instilled in my mind that choosing this course can make me successful." It shows that the parents have this optimistic stance that they can be successful in a course that does not align with their line of interest. This is similar to the response of participant 27 which states that "My former teachers have seen that I can become a good teacher in the future." The least impact mentioned here is the notion of an in-demand course. As participant 16 has stated, "The course that I want is Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management but it's too

expensive; that is why my mother says that it is better to take Information Technology since it is a more in-demand course.” This in-demand course shows how parents can see their children be employed easily in the future.

Research Question 3: What other external factors have driven freshmen students to be undecided to choose their courses?

One external factor described is the presence of doubts in one's chosen course. This is evident in the response of participant 5, “I always think that I'm not good enough or don't have any potential to pursue my dream course. I'm pessimistic when it comes to it.” The doubts experienced by this freshmen student make him unable to choose his dream course. Another factor expressed in this study is pandemic. If it can be associated with the response of participant 6, “I have chosen this course because of the pandemic.” The pandemic is a great factor that she has restrained a course that matches her passion and interest. The last factor is given by one of the participants in the proximity of the school. As shown by participant 15, “there are other reasons that I didn't able to choose my desired course. To sort it out it is because of my ministries in our church. The school that I want for myself was far from our church.” This necessarily emphasizes the closeness of one's school in choosing one's course among freshmen students.

5. Discussion

Given the results of the study, this part has explained and sorted out the specific questions of the study.

As manifested from the first research question, parents, teachers, and former teachers hold a strong influence in choosing for the freshmen's courses. This has made freshmen students sacrifice their dream course just to meet halfway to these influential people in their decision-making. Concerning the second research question in terms of the impact of these influential people in choosing a course that does not align to their interest, the most common view of their responses emphasizes the affordability of the courses since most of the participants' family income fall under less than Php 5,000. Other impacts mentioned in the data analysis are the idea of being successful of their parents in the course that they wish to take and in-demand course which involves a greater possibility of employability. The third research question which specifically driven the freshmen students externally is the doubts of the freshmen students in choosing their course, pandemic, and proximity of the school to their home. As shown in the findings, the doubts among freshmen students to choose a course leave them no choice but to choose a course that they do not want for themselves. Additionally, some freshmen students have chosen the pandemic since this restricts them to go out of their hometowns. Other stated factors include proximity because of the nearness of the school to their homes.

6. Summary

This study explored and investigated the career confusion as experienced by freshmen students in Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College Santa Maria Campus. The findings have revealed that parents, peers, and teachers have been very

influential in making the freshmen students choose a course that does not align with their interests. These influential people impacted the freshmen students in a way that makes them choose an affordable course, be successful in those courses, and be easily employed in the future. Regarding external factors, most of the freshmen students have stated doubts in choosing a course, pandemic, and proximity of the school for these factors play an important role in making them more confused in their chosen course.

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