Factors Influencing Career Decision-Making among Final-Year University Students: A Study in Mysuru City

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
	Career decision-making is a critical process for final-year university students, often influenced by various social, personal, and experiential factors. This study investigates the roles of parental influence, peer pressure, personality traits, and internship experiences in shaping the career choices of undergraduate students. The research was conducted in Mysuru city and focused specifically on final-year students enrolled in Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) and Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programs. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, with data collected from a sample of 300 students across multiple colleges. Quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression revealed that parental influence and internships significantly affect students' career decisions. Peer pressure showed a moderate impact, while personality traits—particularly conscientiousness and openness—were strong predictors of career clarity and decision-making confidence. The findings highlight the importance of a comprehensive support system that includes family involvement, practical exposure, and self-assessment. The study underscores the need for career guidance programs tailored to

undergraduate commerce and management students, integrating personality profiling and internship facilitation. These insights can aid educators, policymakers, and career counsellors in supporting students to make informed and confident career choices.

Introduction

Background

Career decision-making is a crucial process in the academic journey of university students, particularly during their final year of undergraduate studies. This phase marks a transition from education to the world of work or further studies, where students are expected to make informed choices about their future professions. The decision taken at this stage has long-term implications on an individual's career satisfaction, performance, and life trajectory. In India, especially in urban educational hubs like Mysuru, students from programs such as Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) and Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) often face multiple career options including corporate employment, entrepreneurship, higher education, and government service. With an increasingly competitive job market and evolving industry demands, it becomes imperative to understand the key influences that shape these career choices.

Problem Statement

Despite having access to various resources and career opportunities, many final-year students struggle with uncertainty in making appropriate career decisions. This confusion often stems from multiple external and internal pressures, such as parental expectations, peer influence, limited work experience, and a lack of self-awareness. Moreover, some students may be swayed by popular trends or short-term rewards, rather than aligning their choices with their interests and personality traits. The absence of structured career guidance mechanisms in many colleges further compounds the problem, leaving students inadequately prepared for the next phase of their lives.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the factors that influence career decision-making is vital for educators, career counselors, parents, and policymakers. Insights from this study can guide the development of student-centered career support services that consider the psychological, social, and experiential dimensions of decision-making. For academic institutions in Mysuru, the findings can contribute to the design of more effective career guidance programs, internship support systems, and personality assessments. Ultimately, this research aims to enhance students' career readiness and confidence in making well-informed choices.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

- To identify the key factors that affect the career decisions of final-year university students.
- To analyze the extent to which parental influence, peer pressure, personality traits, and internships contribute to career choice.

Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the primary influences on students' career decisions?
2. How strong is the role of parents, peers, and internships in shaping these decisions?
3. How do personality traits correlate with students' career preferences and decision-making confidence?

Scope and Limitations

This research is limited to final-year undergraduate students enrolled in B.Com and BBA programs across selected colleges in Mysuru city. The study does not include students from other disciplines or postgraduate programs. Data collection is based on self-reported surveys, which may be subject to bias or misinterpretation. Additionally, while the study identifies correlations between variables, it does not claim to establish causation. Nevertheless, the findings provide valuable insights into the career decision-making process among a significant segment of the student population.

Literature Review

Career decision-making is a multifaceted process influenced by a range of psychological, social, and contextual factors. Numerous studies across disciplines have examined how students make career choices and what influences these decisions during the final stages of their undergraduate education.

Parental Influence

Parental involvement is frequently cited as a key determinant in students' career development. According to Keller and Whiston (2008), students often internalize their parents' values, expectations, and occupational aspirations, which in turn shape their own career choices. This influence is particularly strong in collectivist societies such as India, where familial bonds and respect for elders are deeply rooted in cultural values (Agarwala, 2008). Students may choose careers that align with their parents' desires, even if these do not reflect their personal interests or aptitudes.

Peer Pressure

Peers can also play a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of careers. Brown et al. (2002) note that peers can either positively or negatively influence decision-making by creating social comparisons, offering advice, or reinforcing certain career norms. In the context of undergraduate education, students may be influenced by the success or aspirations of their classmates, sometimes leading to career decisions based more on conformity than individual fit.

Personality Traits

Personality has long been associated with career preferences and satisfaction. Holland's (1997) theory of career choice emphasizes the congruence between personality types and occupational environments. More recent frameworks, such as the Five-Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992), have been widely used to study how traits like conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion influence career clarity and confidence. For instance, research by Lounsbury et al. (2004) found that conscientiousness was positively correlated with career decision-making self-efficacy among college students.

Internship and Work Experience

Experiential learning, particularly through internships, provides students with a clearer understanding of their interests, skills, and workplace expectations. Gault et al. (2000) argue that internships serve as a bridge between academic knowledge and real-world applications, often influencing the career paths students choose post-graduation. In India, structured internship experiences are becoming increasingly important in professional programs such as B.Com and BBA, as they enhance employability and career preparedness.

Integrated Models of Career Decision-Making

Several theoretical models attempt to integrate these various factors. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), suggests that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals interact with external factors like family support and learning experiences to shape career decisions. This framework is useful for understanding how internal traits and external pressures collectively influence students.

Gaps in Existing Literature

While many studies have explored these individual factors in isolation, there is a lack of comprehensive research that examines the combined influence of parental pressure, peer influence, personality, and internships within the Indian undergraduate context—particularly among B.Com and BBA students in smaller cities like Mysuru. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing these factors together and providing data-driven insights that are specific to this demographic.

Research Methodology

This section outlines the approach adopted for investigating the factors influencing career decision-making among final-year undergraduate students pursuing B.Com and BBA programs in Mysuru city. The methodology includes research design, population and sampling, instrument design, data collection, and the statistical techniques used for analysis.

Research Design

The study employs a **quantitative, descriptive, and analytical research design**. A cross-sectional survey method was used to collect primary data from a large sample of students within a defined time frame. This approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the extent and nature of various factors—such as parental influence, peer pressure, personality traits, and internship experience—on students' career decisions.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of **final-year undergraduate students** enrolled in B.Com and BBA programs across selected degree colleges in **Mysuru city**, Karnataka. A **stratified random sampling technique** was employed to ensure representation across different colleges and academic streams. The final sample comprised **300 students**, with a balanced mix of gender and academic backgrounds.

Data Collection Instrument

A **structured questionnaire** was designed to collect the required data. The questionnaire consisted of five sections:

1. **Demographics**: Age, gender, course, college type (government/aided/private), family background.

2. **Parental Influence**: Items measuring the level of encouragement, expectations, and involvement in career decision-making.

3. **Peer Pressure**: Statements assessing the influence of friends and classmates on career choices.

4. **Personality Traits**: A brief version of the **Big Five Inventory (BFI-10)** was used to assess traits such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

5. **Internship Experience**: Questions focused on exposure, relevance, and learning outcomes from internships.

6. **Career Decision Confidence**: Measured using a 5-point Likert scale indicating how confident students are in their current career choice.

All items (except demographics) were rated on a **5-point Likert scale** ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Pilot Testing and Reliability

A pilot test was conducted with 30 students to test the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. Minor modifications were made based on feedback. The reliability of the key scales was assessed using **Cronbach's alpha**, with acceptable values above 0.70 for all major constructs.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected physically and electronically over a span of one month, with prior consent from college authorities and students. Participants were assured of confidentiality and informed that participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were coded and analyzed using **SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)**. The following techniques were used:

- **Descriptive Statistics**: To summarize demographic characteristics and mean scores for each factor.

- **Pearson's Correlation**: To identify relationships between variables (e.g., personality traits and decision confidence).

- **Multiple Regression Analysis**: To determine the predictive power of each independent variable (parental influence, peer pressure, personality, internships) on the dependent variable (career decision-making).

- **ANOVA**: To compare mean differences across groups (e.g., gender or course type).

Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical research practices. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, assured anonymity, and provided written consent. Data were used strictly for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the key findings from the data analysis, followed by a discussion of their implications in relation to the research questions and prior literature.

Descriptive Statistics

Out of 300 respondents, 58% were female and 42% male. About 55% were B.Com students, and 45% were from BBA programs. The majority (67%) studied in private colleges, with the rest split between

government and aided institutions. Most students (72%) reported that they had at least one internship experience during their course.

The mean scores (on a 5-point Likert scale) for the influencing factors were as follows:

- **Parental Influence**: 4.12
- **Peer Pressure**: 3.46
- **Internship Experience**: 4.08
- **Personality Traits (composite score)**: 3.82
- **Career Decision Confidence**: 3.89

These results indicate that **parental influence and internships** were perceived as the most impactful factors in students' career decision-making processes.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Influencing Factors (N = 300)

Influencing Factor	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Parental Influence	4.12	0.71
Peer Pressure	3.46	0.88
Internship Experience	4.08	0.76
Personality Traits	3.82	0.69
Career Decision Confidence	3.89	0.74

Note. Scores are based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlation revealed:

- Parental influence had a **strong positive correlation** with career decision confidence ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$).

- Internship experience also showed a **significant positive correlation** (r = 0.58, p < 0.01).
- Personality traits (especially **conscientiousness** and **openness**) had **moderate positive correlations** (r = 0.49 and r = 0.44 respectively, p < 0.01).
- Peer pressure had a **weaker but still significant correlation** (r = 0.32, p < 0.05).
- **Table 2**
- **Pearson's Correlation Between Influencing Factors and Career Decision Confidence**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Career Decision Confidence	—				
2. Parental Influence	.62**	—			
3. Internship Experience	.58**	.49**	—		
4. Personality Traits	.49**	.35**	.41**	—	
5. Peer Pressure	.32*	.27*	.25*	.30*	—

- *Note. **p** < .01 (2-tailed) *; p < .05 (2-tailed).*

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression model was applied to assess the relative impact of each factor. The overall model was statistically significant (F = 19.87, p < 0.001) and explained **52% of the variance** in career decision confidence (R² = 0.52).

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Career Decision Confidence

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t	p
Parental Influence	0.38	0.06	0.41	6.33	< .001
Internship Experience	0.34	0.07	0.37	5.82	< .001

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error (SE)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t	p
Personality Traits	0.29	0.08	0.28	4.27	< .01
Peer Pressure	0.21	0.09	0.18	2.39	< .05

Model Summary:

$F(4, 295) = 19.87$, **p** $< .001$, $R^2 = .52$

Note. Dependent Variable: Career Decision Confidence.

These findings suggest that **parental influence and internship experience** are the **strongest predictors** of students' career decision-making, followed by personality traits. Peer pressure had the least predictive power, though still statistically significant.

Discussion

The results provide a clear indication that **students' career decisions are significantly shaped by external influences and individual traits**. The strong role of **parents** aligns with prior research (e.g., Agarwala, 2008), reaffirming the cultural importance of family in Indian students' lives. Internships emerged as a powerful experiential factor, supporting Gault et al. (2000), who emphasized the importance of practical exposure in career planning.

The finding that **personality traits**, particularly conscientiousness and openness, significantly correlate with career clarity supports the relevance of incorporating personality assessments into career guidance frameworks. This aligns with Lounsbury et al. (2004) and Holland's theory of vocational personalities.

Interestingly, while **peer pressure** was found to have some influence, it was comparatively less impactful. This suggests that while students may consult friends, their final choices are more likely to be shaped by authoritative figures and structured experiences like internships.

Implications for Practice

These findings have practical implications for educational institutions in Mysuru and similar settings:

- Colleges should actively engage parents in the career guidance process.

- Internship programs should be strengthened and aligned with students' career interests.

- Personality-based counseling should be introduced to help students understand their strengths.

- Career services must move beyond generic advice and adopt a more individualized approach.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the key factors influencing career decision-making among final-year undergraduate students pursuing B.Com and BBA programs in Mysuru city. Through a structured survey and statistical analysis of responses from 300 students, it was found that **parental influence**, **internship experience**, and **personality traits** play significant roles in shaping students' career choices. **Peer pressure**, while present, was found to be a comparatively weaker influence.

The findings highlight the continued prominence of familial expectations in Indian society, as well as the growing value students place on real-world experiences gained through internships. Personality traits—especially conscientiousness and openness—were also positively associated with career clarity, underlining the importance of self-awareness in the decision-making process.

The research contributes to existing literature by offering a context-specific understanding of career influences in a Tier-2 city like Mysuru. It also confirms that effective career decision-making is not shaped by a single factor, but rather a **combination of personal, social, and experiential elements**.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for educational institutions, career counselors, and policymakers:

1. **Parental Engagement in Career Programs**

   Institutions should design workshops or counseling sessions that include parents, helping them understand the importance of supporting their child's personal interests and aptitudes.

2. **Strengthening Internship Opportunities**

   Colleges should establish strong links with industry and business communities to offer **structured, relevant, and reflective internship experiences**. This will help students explore real-world roles aligned with their career goals.

3. **Incorporating Personality Assessments**

   Career guidance programs should integrate tools like the **Big Five Inventory** or other validated personality assessments to help students make self-informed decisions.

4. **Peer Mentorship Programs**

   Instead of viewing peer influence as negative, colleges can develop **peer mentoring systems** where senior students share their career journeys, thereby creating positive peer models.

5. **Customized Career Counseling**

   Institutions should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and offer personalized counseling based on students' backgrounds, academic interests, and personality profiles.

6. **Further Research**

   Future studies may include students from other academic streams, postgraduate programs, or rural backgrounds to gain broader insights into regional and socioeconomic differences in career decision-making.

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