An Analysis of Factors Influencing Secondary School Students' Career Planning

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Abstract. With the popularization of higher education, more and more students choose to enter high school and prepare for the ideal university. The career planning of middle school students not only affects the curriculum choice of high school but also provides a direction for the professional choice of university and even affects the future employment of students. The current researchers have some research on the career planning of middle school students, but have not found a better way to help students find their own good and suitable development direction. Therefore, this article intends to improve this situation from the source by finding the factors that affect career planning. Finally, the article provides a summary of middle school students' global career planning, outlines the factors that have a greater impact on their careers, explains how to mitigate the negative effects, and offers some advice for middle school students' career planning.

Keywords: High school; Career planning; Career plan; High school student.

1. Introduction

On September 4, 2014, state officials released the implementation opinions on the reform of the examination and enrollment system. The Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Several Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform was approved by the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee. A series of tries were suggested by the decision: to push for a change in the examination and enrollment system, to investigate the relative separation of enrollment and examination, the multiple choice of student exams, the legal independence of schools' enrollment, professional institutions' organization and operation, and the micromanagement of the government. The operation mechanism of social participation in supervision fundamentally solves the problem of "one exam determines the whole life." This reform provides more choices for middle school students. Because of the autonomy of curriculum collocation, the classification of disciplines is not limited to liberal arts and science, and many restrictions have been opened, allowing students to choose more extensive college courses. However, it will give students more choices, and it will also cause students to be more confused about the future direction, which requires professional methods and knowledge to guide, which also emphasizes the importance of future career planning.

A process of ongoing and methodical career and life planning that includes the following three components is known as career planning: career positioning, setting goals, and designing channels. Students' career development can be made more effective with career planning. Through a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and capabilities of the applicant and the needs of the future society, career planning can help the applicant to determine their career goals at different stages of life and then make plans and arrangements based on the actual situation of the applicant. With the popularization of higher education, junior high school students need to face the high school entrance examinations and pass the high school entrance examination. The number of senior high school students is increasing year by year, and the pressure of college entrance examinations is also increasing. The career planning of students not only affects the course selection, but also provides a direction for the major selection of universities. At present, there is research on career planning of

middle school students, but researchers have not found a better way to help students find their own good and suitable development direction. As a result, based on articles and research reports on middle school students' career planning, this article will examine the impact of various factors on middle school students' career planning and offer recommendations based on students' current circumstances and differences.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural and Environmental Factors

Environmental factors sometimes have a negative impact on the career planning of secondary school students. Migration has become an option for many people due to work or living standards, and the education of children is an important area of migration. However, children of immigrants do not learn well due to ethnic differences, learning environments, and language differences. Many of them are forced to drop out of school because of bullying or their own families and cannot continue their studies [1]. All pupils, especially those from immigrants, should graduate from public high schools in the United States prepared to find employment. However, the challenges immigrant students face can make this hope difficult to achieve, as the benchmarks for college and career readiness for immigrant students are low [2]. A strong community culture can have an impact on high school students' career planning, which is tied to the local economy [3]. High school students' career plans can also be significantly impacted by significant life events. There were a number of respondents in the study whose career plans were altered as a result of medical issues, the adoption of grandparents, or the death of a parent [4]. The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 also had many negative effects on high school students. Due to the exposure restrictions caused by COVID-19, secondary school students can only learn via distance learning, but this format is not appropriate as no support is provided for career guidance and decision-making, and the proliferation of COVID-19 greatly affects the career decision-making process of participants. Also, due to COVID-19, their concerns about their own and other family members' health, educational processes and other affected aspects complicate the career planning process [5]. Gender, influenced by cultural factors, makes career planning difficult for female students in some places, and women are less likely to persist with their science and engineering career aspirations in the long term due to the institutional and cultural barriers they face in education and careers [6]. There are also some interesting findings regarding environmental factors. The study found that secondary school students who attended resource-rich schools rarely had career plans because these high-resource schools lacked a career planning process and because most students were unsure of their career path and believed that attending university would help them figure out what career they wanted to pursue. In high-resource schools, academic preparation for the future takes up the majority of time, and parents in high-resource schools are supportive of students choosing a career path after college. However, in contrast to what was anticipated, students attending schools with high resources had a clear career path and a concrete understanding of the steps necessary to enter that career. This could be due to the fact that they are connected to friends and family members who work in fields that necessitate a college degree and are willing to share their perspectives with them [7].

2.2 Social Factors

The affordability of an occupation or job opportunities/stability is also one of the main factors in determining career choice. Careers that secondary school students perceive to ensure access to jobs upon their studies are, for some, considered to be the main reason for choosing a particular field of study [8]. Students' career plans and even their intention to drop out of school can be significantly influenced by social support, particularly the support of academic partners. Prominent academics can not only serve as successful role models to inspire students, but can also make students aware of where they can get help related to career planning without being confused [9]. Web-based interventions provide students with specialist career knowledge and offer them a search platform,

with specific examples such as online career assessments and a database of university majors providing high school students with direction in their choices. From this, they can learn a systematic approach to career planning, which can greatly facilitate their decision-making process and determination. At the same time, because online learning lacks teachers' intervention, it tests children's independence, which is an integral part of career planning [10].

2.3 School Factors

2.3.1 School intervention

It has been demonstrated that adolescent career planning is positively impacted by school interventions that provide students with career information that is relevant to their interests.Comparative with the benchmark group, members in the mediation had less hardships in vocation dynamic connected with absence of data and conflicting data. This may be explained by the fact that exploring the specific characteristics of the career of interest reduced the barriers of lack of information difficulties [11]. These interventions may have increased participants' confidence in obtaining reliable career information [12]. Research has demonstrated that students with higher self-continuity scores have more concern, planning, and autonomy in making decisions about their future careers and that adopting a future-self perspective can promote future self-continuity [13]. The school intervention of writing letters to one's future self three years from now and writing letters to one's present self vicariously through the lens of three years from now provides some support for increasing students' self-continuity. Role-playing from a position of not being the self seemed to increase students' feelings about the future and encouraged a more positive view of career planning [14]. In some Chinese high schools, relevant slogans are posted all over the campus to encourage students to focus on their future careers [10]. However, most Chinese high school students do not know enough about the basics of career planning and therefore find it difficult to plan themselves and thus determine what career they are suited to and to make decisions about their career plans. They are at a loss when they encounter career development confusion or psychological barriers. This is because schools do not have a strict curriculum for career education and do not take it as seriously as other examination subjects, so career guidance classes are virtually useless for high school students. Although there are career education activities in schools, students are not motivated to participate in these activities. The lack of knowledge and skills of teachers in career guidance also contributes to the lack of guidance for most students, and even when there are guidance activities, they are not effective and do not attract students [15]. School interventions that provide students with career information relevant to their interests have been shown to have a positive effect on adolescent career planning. Participants in the intervention had less trouble making professional decisions due to incomplete and inconsistent information compared to the control group. This may be due to the fact that examining the unique traits of the desired occupation helped to overcome informational hurdles [11]. Participants' confidence in obtaining trustworthy career information may have increased as a result of these interventions [12]. It's also found that effective career interventions tend to include elements of general counseling; structured group interventions appear to be more useful than unstructured group interventions [16]; and, in general, qualitative group career counseling outcomes are more positive than quantitative ones [17].

2.3.2 Instructors

The support and encouragement of teachers is also a crucial aspect for high school students. Some students want to pursue a future career idea because of their interest, but this idea is made possible because of the help and support of their teachers. The impact of teacher affirmation on a high school student's career planning can be seen when a senior student was encouraged by his high school teacher to persevere with his theatre dream and interact with members of the community about it [3]. Students need professionals to provide the necessary information to facilitate the career decision-making process. This will minimize their confusion, uncertainty, and doubts about their future careers [8]. And the lack of support is partly due to the fact that counselors have different experiences in different

contexts, which can create problems. School counselors in urban contexts encounter more challenges than those in rural areas, such as a lack of counselors and resources or institutional weaknesses. These challenges can lead to school counselors spending more time helping students with their career planning and can negatively affect students' ability to plan their careers [18].

2.4 Family Factors

2.4.1 Family background

High school students from average or better financial backgrounds also do better academically and often choose to postpone career decisions until university because they will have more time to decide and choose. While rural children from less privileged families still choose to return home for further study, even when they have high achievements, which is due to the depth of their family roots [3].

2.4.2 Parent-child relationship

These interventions may have increased participants' confidence in obtaining reliable career information [12].

2.4.3 Parental expectations

According to the findings of the study, the expectations of parents are the primary factor that shifts middle school students' career planning from the direction in which they are most interested to other directions. Job security and income levels were the main determinants of parental expectations. What began as a child's interest became a mere interest rather than a means of earning a living in the future. Participants' desires for careers that would enable them to remain in their local area (and thereby be nearer to their families) as well as their willingness to respect their parents' preferences for career choices and their preference for attending local colleges and universities were examples of how these were expressed [3]. At the same time, parents' career expectations and career planning are directly and indirectly related to adolescents' self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Parents play a key role in adolescents' self-efficacy. Consistent with parents in career planning can make adolescents more confident and independent. It has been proved that there is a positive correlation between parents' behavior and adolescents' self-efficacy [21]. Adolescents will not even consider their career aspirations and are more inclined to be consistent with their parents [12].

2.4.4 Parental support and attention

Families are the main support unit for secondary school students in their career planning. Families can inform them, guide them and support them in many ways. For many secondary school students, their family members, especially their parents, act as role models when they plan their careers. In turn, discussions and proposals from parents and other family members can directly or indirectly influence secondary school students' choices of their careers. Parents can also provide other support, such as by paying for extra classes, to enable their children to explore careers [8]. Children tend to choose to discuss with their parents the subjects they will study in high school, as the choice of these subjects often affects future schooling and career planning. Therefore, it is crucial for students to feel supported by their parents in their career planning [22]. Parental support often gives children more courage to choose things they are usually afraid to do, such as postponing career decisions until university, which gives students more time to discover what they really want to study and what they want to do in the future [3].

2.5 Individual Factors

2.5.1 Objective factors

Gender The study found that the different values of men and women will lead to the imbalance of the number of occupational genders [23]. Women pay more attention to the intrinsic motivation of male teachers. However, this study found that there is no difference between men and women in the relationship between career motivation and ability after investigation. The effect of gender may be more random. However, this experiment is subject to change. It also has its drawbacks, and there are

differences in the emotions people show between the same and different genders. There is also some research into the factors associated with career readiness that maintains a different perspective [5]. Self-esteem has a positive impact on career maturity for men, whereas it has a negative impact on women.The relationship between optimism and career goals was influenced by control and outcomes belief for men, but not women. Goal setting has a different effect on their behavior [24]. The results show that only in China is gender related to career planning. It is clear from this that there is no conclusive evidence that career planning impacts the genders.

Age People think differently depending on their age. As a result, their behavior is altered. As people grow up, they encounter people and factors that change them in differently. As one learns more pieces of knowledge and knows more effects, one may achieve different decisions. Age is also important in predicting careers and exploration. Older students are more eager to explore than younger students [25]. As they get closer to society, they are more likely to want to learn about different careers and try to explore them.

Socioeconomic status Computer-assisted career guidance systems (CACGS) were used in the study with a sample of ninth-grade students, and the results did not differ based on the economic hardship index [23]. The economic conditions of a person's family will affect his or her concept of money and financial management, as well as his or her behavior and judgment. High school students from average or better financial backgrounds also do better academically and often choose to postpone career decisions until university because they will have more time to decide and choose. While rural children from less privileged families still choose to return home for further study, even when they have high achievements, due to the depth of their family roots [3]. This shows that the family's financial situation will construct a difference in the level of conservatism in what students do. Those better off will be more daring because they have a backup plan. Those who are less well-off will tend to choose the more prudent option.

Part-time jobs, internships, and extracurricular activities In their time outside school, students also do events other than study. Some of these will choose to do part-time work. Many places recruit students to do part-time work, and there is usually an age requirement, such as sixteen or eighteen. Having a part-time job is linked to career planning in China and Japan, and seniors with part-time jobs have more career plans [2]. It does not necessarily take much time, but get to learn about other fields and get paid for it. On the other hand, an internship is slightly more specialized and may require some specialist-related knowledge to do certain jobs. It is not necessarily paid, but it is more social than school and obtaining to experience a job. Many schools create recommendations for students, and companies and businesses will visit schools to give presentations, and these are ways that students can realize about them, or schools may also offer this opportunity to students. Extracurricular activities may not be the same as the first two, as students will choose their favorite activities to participate in, such as clubs or sports. In the process, they can experience matters that they enjoy.

2.5.2 Subjective factors

One's subjective evaluation of oneself will also have an impact. A student will have a general idea and evaluation based on what he or she already has so far, such as his or her grades and general qualities. In addition, this evaluation is made entirely by the student himself, whether positive or negative, and it will exist as a stage idea. In China, higher life satisfaction was associated with more positive future attitudes and planned to attend college. In Japan, South Korea, and the United States, older students with higher life satisfaction had more career plans.Students were more likely to be optimistic about the possibility of attending college after high school if they were satisfied with their life circumstances [4]. Everyone can also have the opportunity to have a career aspiration. However, this may change over time, and the student's personal evaluation of him/herself may continually be subject to change. People who believe that the rewards they receive are the result of their efforts and have a sense of worth are more likely to make plans and choices. Optimism and having a positive life are thought to play a role in encouraging students to engage in activities [25]. Personality is directly related to career choice. People who are open are more likely to consider career planning.

Self-efficacy Bandura suggests self-efficacy is the belief that a person can successfully perform the behavior needed to produce results [26]. It can serve to help students and enable them to self-regulate. Secondary school is a critical time for students to choose and plan their career development and decision-making, and self-efficacy is described as a more influential determinant of career behavior and interest in research [27]. They will identify the parts that interest them and choose their areas of interest. Not coincidentally, self-efficacy has also been reported as one of the most important predictors of STEM career aspirations. Moreover, it is recommended that counselors should work with stakeholders to help alleviate academic barriers by promoting students' academic achievement [6]. Thus, it can be seen to be the same as the previous study's findings, emphasizing the role of career self-efficacy in the career decision-making process.

Interests It is generally acknowledged that adolescence is a crucial time for career exploration.Career development will be influenced by interests and choices [23]. The study used Computer-assisted career guidance systems (CACGS) to examine the effectiveness of the interest exploration module for grade nine students in specific contexts. The findings demonstrated that interest profiles and classroom exercises gave students a clear understanding of their interests, potential career goals that matched those interests, and concrete suggestions for how to pursue those goals. The sample size was too small, and the findings about the beneficial effects of CIS with ninth-grade pupils should not be extrapolated to students at later developmental stages, therefore the study still has some limitations.

Academic Competence An individual's assessment of their academic achievements might affect how they see themselves. Factors related to career preparation were studied [4]. The results indicate that academic ability is relevant to career planning merely in China. Students with better grades have a higher degree of career planning since feeling that better grades mean more, and they will have more choices than others.

Relationship Network The people know around may also be a factor in changing a student's career choice. Weak ties can provide valuable social capital and benefit future careers. NFGS have more beneficial networks at all stages because they have more social capital [24]. They can identify their goals through the careers of people they know around them, or they can have ideas from seeing the people who work in their careers. They will meet different people in person, and as they expand their social circle, they will be able to learn more about careers and will probably choose one as a career aspiration.

3. Implications

Environmental factors sometimes have a negative impact on middle school students. On the contrary, social factors, academic support, and network intervention will have a significant positive impact on senior high school students' career planning. Although it may not always enhance students' perceptions of engaging in career tasks fit for growth, school intervention may be particularly helpful to defining potential career goals and approaches (i.e., specific educational requirements). In families, family support can help students understand their career interests and choices, thus helping to form expectations of results. Parents play an important role and indirectly predict career goals through their close relationship with the expected results. Among one in supporting children's career exploration and planning, and their participation can directly personal factors, the self-efficacy of middle school students can predict academic and career-related goals. The relationship between career motivation and ability did not differ between men and women, according to the analysis.Gender may have a more random effect.

4. Conclusion

In general, five factors, including environmental and cultural, social, campus, family, and personal, affect middle school students' career planning. This study provides mixed results regarding significant

relationships between career development variables and many factors. Future articles need to continue to analyze more research to clarify the role of various factors in the career development of young people who are unique. We should focus on a sampling survey of middle school students of different ages, high-risk adolescents, and members from more meta communities. Finally, future articles may need to use other analysis and research methods (such as case studies, mixed design) to clarify further the relationship between the research object and the mixed influencing factors.

This article has many limitations, so interpreting these results needs to be cautious. First, the article analysis is limited by the number of references, only referring to the literature within the past 20 years. Secondly, many studies' design does not allow causal statements. Lastly, the analysis objects are still limited, and the samples are few.

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