

Factors Influencing Career Choices Among Final Year Students in Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

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Abstract

Given the unemployment issue, it is understandable that final-year students are often concerned about their career prospects. They are likely contemplating what their future holds after university and the factors that will influence their career decisions. This study is conducted to identify the factors that influence career choices among final year students in UTHM. The main objective of this study is to identify the level of family influence, personal interest, peer influence, gender factors and salary factors among final year students in UTHM and to investigate the dominant factors. This study is using a descriptive method in achieving the research objective. In addition, the data collected was processed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The number of respondents participating in the survey was 211 representing 52.75% response rate. Data analysis shows that the dominant factor of this study is personal interest factor, followed by salary factor, peer influence, gender factor, and lastly family influence. The highest mean score is 3.966 while the lowest mean score is 3.340. The results show that final year students in UTHM prioritize their own interests and suitability when making career decisions along with salary factor. The findings of this study have important implications for career counseling and educational interventions, suggesting that a focus on aligning personal interests and financial expectations with career choices can enhance student outcomes.

1. Introduction

A career is essentially synonymous with an occupation. Choosing a career is not a single event but a continuous process that begins with a child's early perceptions of the working world and continues into adolescence and young adulthood. The initial step in this journey is often inspired by aspirations and ambitions that shape one's dream career. This research aims to survey and analyze the factors influencing final-year students in deciding their future careers after graduation, particularly focusing on the concerns they face. Among the significant issues affecting career choices for final-year university students in Malaysia is the unemployment rate. Unemployment is a critical challenge for many developing countries, as a high unemployment rate indicates that a country's labor resources are not being fully utilized. Theoretically, when a country does not make full use of its resources, it fails to achieve maximum economic output. Therefore, achieving full employment should be a key macroeconomic goal for any nation aiming to optimize productivity (Idham *et al.*, 2014). Given the

unemployment issue, it is understandable that final-year students are often concerned about their career prospects. They are likely contemplating what their future holds after university and the factors that will influence their career decisions. Although these factors vary among individuals, some common influences can be identified. This study seeks to determine the degree to which family, personal interest, peer influence, gender, and salary expectations affect career choices among final-year students at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM). Furthermore, the research will identify which of these factors has the most significant impact.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the country's unemployment rate has been rising (Akhbar, 2017), heightening the concerns of final-year students about whether they will secure employment after graduation. The unemployment rate reflects the percentage of individuals capable of and actively seeking work but unable to find employment, serving as a useful measure of the underutilization of labor resources. Globally, the youth unemployment rate is about three times higher than that of adults, and twice as high as the overall unemployment rate (Dian Hikmah & Mohd Zaidi, 2017). This equates to over 70 million young people worldwide struggling to find meaningful employment. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported that after some improvement between 2012 and 2015, youth unemployment began rising again in 2017 (ILO Library, 2017). In Malaysia, the Department of Statistics recorded a 3.5% unemployment rate in July 2017, a slight increase from the previous month (Akhbar, 2017). These figures have prompted heightened concerns among final-year students in higher education institutions (HEIs) about their ability to secure a job after graduation. Additionally, many students in Malaysia lack clear career plans, and most graduates are uncertain about the steps they need to take to start their careers. This study will focus on final-year students at UTHM, as they are at a pivotal stage of their academic journey and are likely thinking about their future career paths. By identifying the factors that play a more significant role in their career decision-making, students can better prepare themselves and build the self-confidence necessary for making informed career choices.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Career

A career is an occupation or profession in life in order to earn money. A career for an individual is for the persons' future. The author also stated that the process in planning and choosing a career is very important in a person's life. A career is as work or an activity to fulfil the psychological needs, economy and individual social. It can be realized by working in a successful career. In a study about student career ready, it has been stated that students that have a career readiness in deciding their future career choice are the students that are proactive, has durability and having good communication skill to achieve future career of their choice. They are also able to feel satisfaction in their life. They have the knowledge and skill to imagine their future (Gysbers, 2013). There are a lot of careers out there to be chosen. However, people need to choose their future career wisely to avoid any job hopping or unemployment in the future. Deciding a future career has been a concern to most of the people in the world. This has become a concern to mostly fresh graduates and final year students. The concern about the future career is mostly because of unemployment issue. The issue rises up as in a year, there are thousands of graduates from Institutions yet there are not enough employment offers for the graduates. There are a few factors that affect the unemployment issue in Malaysia. One of the factors is that there are a lot of fresh graduates, yet there are only a few jobs offers. Other than that, minimum salaries and wages offered by employers are not satisfying enough. This has made employees feel unsatisfied and wanted to resign from their work. Furthermore, the benefits that certain companies offer do not satisfy their employee. Career choice happens when an individual states or has intentions in deciding his or her future career path. Career choice is a complex decision for students since it determines the kind of profession that they intend to pursue in life. Students need to choose and decide what they want to be in the future. In Kenya, Edwards and Quinter (2011) stated that every year form four secondary school students make career choices before sitting their final exam. However, study indicate that most students enter into careers that are totally different from what they have chosen. This study was done by selecting 332 form four students. In an effort to determine the outcome expectations that influence students' career choices, there are eight aspects of outcome. There are 15 factors that influencing career choices based on a study in Kenya. The factors are including gender, area of residence, school attended, attitude, self-employment, prestige, employment security, financial support, career specialization, career flexibility, personal interests, availability of job, advancement, apply knowledge and learning experience

2.2 Family Influence

Family influence plays a pivotal role in shaping career decisions. Parental advice often has the most significant impact due to the initial exposure children receive from their parents. Additionally, children may be inspired by their parents' careers when choosing their own career paths. Conversely, some children may deliberately choose careers different from their parents'. Parental attitudes towards their children also significantly influence career

choices. Regular discussions between parents and children about future careers can make family influence a dominant factor in career decision-making. A study by Subhan *et al.* (2015) highlights Anne Roe's discussion on the role of family in career choice. Roe's concept focuses on two main aspects: personality and career classification, to determine the relationship between career choice and family background. Further research supports the significant role of family influence in career choices. Vautero *et al.* (2021) found that family values, expectations, and support systems significantly impact students' career choice implementation through perceived environmental supports or barriers and self-efficacy. Similarly, Koçak *et al.* (2021) emphasized that family influence, combined with academic satisfaction, enhances career decision self-efficacy and overall happiness. General supportive parenting behaviors, rather than career-specific guidance, have also been found to boost students' career self-efficacy (Koçak *et al.*, 2021). Family influence encompasses various dimensions, including values, expectations, and emotional support, all of which significantly impact final-year students' career choices. These influences should be considered in career counselling and interventions to help students make informed and confident career decisions.

2.3 Personal Interest

From a young age, students often develop specific career interests. In school, teachers frequently ask students about their ambitions and future aspirations, encouraging them to dream about their future careers. These early interests significantly influence their choices when pursuing higher education. Students are generally aware of their capabilities and genuine interests, which guide their academic and career decisions. Holland's Career Typology is a widely recognized framework that connects personality types with career fields. This theory establishes a classification system that aligns personality characteristics and personal preferences with job characteristics. The Holland Codes consist of six personality or career types that describe a broad range of occupations namely; realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, conventional. However, this study will not utilize Holland's Career Typology. Personal interest plays a crucial role in career choices among final-year students. Brown and Lent (2016) indicate that students' interests significantly influence their career choices, as these interests are closely linked to their self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Furthermore, a study by Hirschi (2010) found that students who pursue careers aligned with their interests are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and career success. Additionally, personal interests are often shaped by various factors, including extracurricular activities, hobbies, and academic subjects. According to a study by Nauta (2010), students who engage in activities related to their interests are more likely to develop a clear sense of career direction and make informed career choices. This highlights the importance of fostering students' interests throughout their educational journey to support their career development. Personal interests significantly influence career choices among final-year students. These interests, shaped by early experiences and activities, play a vital role in guiding students towards fulfilling and successful careers. Understanding and supporting these interests can enhance career counselling and educational interventions.

2.4 Peer Influence

Peer influence plays a significant role in career choice through peer interactions. Studies in Uganda (Okiror & Otabong, 2015) and Kenya (Walaba & Kiboss, 2013) have shown that peer interactions significantly influence students' career choices. As students interact, they share information about various careers, which can impact their decisions. Many students prefer not to be separated from their friends, with whom they have established comfort and familiarity since school or university. Peer-provided information is often considered reliable, as peers are typically of the same age and share similar experiences. Consequently, students may view their friends as trustworthy sources for career advice. Those without strong personal principles may be more inclined to follow their friends' career choices. Further research supports the impact of peer influence on career decisions. A study by Marcionetti and Zammitti (2023) found that peer support and interactions are crucial in shaping adolescents' career choices. Similarly, Avila (2023) highlighted that peer pressure significantly affects the career choices of high school students, emphasizing the role of peer interactions in career decision-making. Additionally, research by Oxford Academic (2023) demonstrated that peers with whom students spend time, rather than close friends or study partners, consistently influence their choice of college majors. Peer influence is a critical factor in career choices among final-year students. Peer interactions provide valuable information and support, shaping students' career decisions. Understanding the role of peer influence can enhance career counselling and educational interventions, helping students make informed and confident career choices.

2.5 Gender

Gender differences in competitiveness have been proposed as a potential explanation for disparities in educational and labor market outcomes (Buser, Niederle, & Oosterbeek, 2014). Gender can influence the range of careers students consider pursuing. Some careers may offer limited opportunities for one gender, while male and female students often have different interests and career paths. In a study by Edwards and Quinter (2011),

the factors influencing career choice were analysed, revealing that gender had the highest mean score, indicating it was the least influential factor. This suggests that while gender does play a role, it may not be the most critical factor in career decision-making. Venable (2015) also noted that both men and women experience career-related stereotypes, which can impact their career choices. Gender is a significant factor in various career development theories, including social learning and multicultural career counselling. How individuals perceive themselves can influence the opportunities and barriers they encounter when making career decisions. As the roles of men and women in the workforce and higher education evolve, ongoing studies continue to explore the impact of gender on career development. Further research supports the influence of gender on career choices. A study by Angwaomaodoko (2023) found that gender perceptions significantly affect students' career aspirations, with male students more inclined towards engineering and technology, while female students preferred arts and management. Additionally, research by Serra *et al.* (2019) highlighted that gender stereotypes and social supports significantly influence students' interest in pursuing degrees in fields like physical activity and sport science. While gender differences in competitiveness and stereotypes do influence career choices, they are not the sole determinants. Understanding the multifaceted impact of gender on career decisions can enhance career counselling and educational interventions, helping students navigate their career paths more effectively.

2.6 Salary

Payment from a job is one of the essential aspects for people to consider. Salary can be a factor when choosing a career path. It can motivate employees when working and their work performance. Wan *et al.* (2014) mentioned that salary expectations have a moderating effect on choosing a career. The relationship between salary and career choices is multifaceted. High salary expectations can drive individuals to pursue specific career paths that promise financial rewards. According to a study by Liu, Ling, and Chen (2023), career adaptability is directly connected to starting salary among graduates, indicating that individuals with higher adaptability tend to secure better-paying jobs. This suggests that salary considerations are integral to career planning and decision-making. Moreover, financial incentives are often linked to job satisfaction and career commitment. Research by Ahmed, Sharif, and Ahmad (2017) found that financial outcomes, although not the most dominant factor, still play a significant role in career choices among business students. This highlights the importance of aligning career aspirations with financial expectations to ensure long-term job satisfaction and career success. Additionally, Sorthaix *et al.* (2013) emphasized that while intrinsic factors like interest and personal alignment with the career are crucial, extrinsic factors such as salary and job security cannot be overlooked. These extrinsic factors often provide the necessary motivation for individuals to pursue and remain committed to their chosen careers. Salary is a critical factor influencing career choices. It not only affects initial career decisions but also impacts long-term job satisfaction and career commitment. Understanding the role of salary in career planning can help final year students to make more informed and strategic career choices.

3. Methodology

A research design can be viewed as a plan, structure and strategy of a research to find the tools to solve the problem and to minimize the variance. Research design is a method or technique that is used to obtain the data or information to solve problems of the research. It is also a plan in a process to achieve the research objective. Research design facilitates the attainment of the various research operations thereby making research as efficient as possible and yielding maximum information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money. The current study will be using a quantitative research survey. The quantitative method is characterized by the collection of information which can be analyzed numerically and presented in tables for easier analysis and interpretation. This method, specifically a descriptive study will measure the research subject widely based on the questionnaire prepared. Bhattacharjee (2012) explained that the unit of analysis in a study refers to the target of the investigation, which can include objects, organizations, groups, countries, individuals, technologies, or collectives. This concept involves detailing the characteristics of these elements and analyzing the extracted information to form evaluated data on the subject. The unit of analysis for the study will be the individual, which are the Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) final year students. The population was selected among final year students for undergraduates' study from UTHM. Based on the statistic from Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, there are a total of 82,643 output students from Public University and 109,769 output students from Private University in Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2016). In UTHM, the population of current students is 15,364 students. The total number of final year students in UTHM is 3751. The samples will be selected conveniently in the UTHM campuses, Parit Raja and Pagoh. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample determination table, a minimum of 246 respondents will be selected as the sample. The data collection includes all nine faculties in UTHM namely, Fakulti Pengurusan Teknologi dan Perniagaan (FPTP), Fakulti Sains Komputer dan Teknologi Maklumat (FSKTM), Fakulti Kejuruteraan Mekanikal dan Pembuatan (FKMP), Fakulti Kejuruteraan Elektrik dan Elektronik (FKEE), Fakulti Pendidikan Teknikal dan Vokasional (FPTV), Fakulti Sains Gunaan dan Teknologi (FAST), Fakulti Teknologi Kejuruteraan (FTK), Fakulti

Kejuruteraan Awam dan Alam Bina (FKAAB) and lastl but not least Pusat Pengajian Diploma (PPD). The questionnaire was adapted from Mtemeri (2017). There were two parts of the questionnaire. Part A, consists of respondent’s profile (5 items) and Part B consists of factors influencing career choices; family influence (9 items), personal interest (4 items), peer influence (8 items), gender factors (8 items) and lastly salary factors (5 items). The five-point Likert scale was used consisting strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). The data collected will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. SPSS is a comprehensive system for analyzing data. SPSS can take data from almost any type of file and use them to generate tabulated reports, charts, and plots of distributions and trends, descriptive statistics, and complex statistical analysis (Chandler, 2010). The SPSS software is used to help researcher to key in data, analyze data and calculate the data. It will be easier and convenient for researcher. The significant indicators for the factors that influence career choices of the final year students are family influence, personal interest, peer influence, gender factors and salary factors. The data will be analyzed using descriptive analysis. It will determine which factors will get the highest and lowest mean. Upon analyzing the internal consistency of each factor, the results show family influences having a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.906, personal interest ($\alpha=0.792$), peer influence ($\alpha=0.874$), gender factor ($\alpha=0.860$), and salary factor ($\alpha=0.793$). The reliability values surpassing 0.7 are considered acceptable and good.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Statistics

400 questionnaires have been distributed throughout the UTHM campuses in Parit Raja and Pagoh using printed survey form and online form. The questionnaires have been given to the final year students in every faculty and all around UTHM campuses. The number of returned questionnaires that are usable is 211 thus contributing to the 52.75% rate of responses. The Table 1 provides demographic data for a sample of 211 individuals, highlighting their gender, age, faculty affiliation, CGPA, and working experience. The sample consists of 56.9% males and 43.1% females. The majority of participants are aged between 19-24 years (75.8%), followed by 25-30 years (23.7%), and a small fraction aged 31-36 years (0.5%). Faculty distribution shows the highest representation from FPTV (27.0%), followed by FKMP and FKEE (both 17.5%), with other faculties having lower percentages. In terms of academic performance, 51.7% of participants have a CGPA between 3.01-3.70, 32.7% between 2.01-3.00, and 15.6% between 3.70-4.00. Additionally, 80.1% of the participants have work experience, while 19.9% do not.

Table 1 Demographic profiles of respondents

Demography	Item	Frequency (n=211)	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	91	43.1
	Male	120	56.9
Age	19-24	160	75.8
	25-30	50	23.7
	31-36	1	0.5
Faculty	FPTP	11	5.2
	FSKTM	8	3.8
	FKMP	37	17.5
	FKEE	37	17.5
	FPTV	57	27.0
	FAST	11	5.2
	FTK	14	6.6
	FKAAS	34	16.1
	PPD	2	0.9
CGPA	Less than 2.00	0	0
	2.01 – 3.00	69	32.7
	3.01 – 3.70	109	51.7
	3.70 – 4.00	33	15.6
Working experience	Yes	169	80.1
	No	42	19.9

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis using mean scores is used to summarize and understand the central tendency of a dataset, which provides a quick snapshot of the overall trend within the data (Bhandari, 2020). This is particularly useful in identifying patterns, comparing different groups, and making informed decisions based on the data.

Additionally, mean scores are essential in comparing different demographic groups, such as age, gender, or faculty, to understand variations and similarities within the population. Overall, descriptive analysis of mean scores is a fundamental statistical tool that aids in simplifying complex data and drawing meaningful conclusions. The interpretation of mean scores on a 5-point Likert scale as low (1.00-2.33), moderate (2.34-3.67), and high (3.68-5.00) is a common practice in social science research. While specific authors may not always be cited for these exact ranges, this interpretation framework is widely used and accepted (Warmbrod, 2014; Sullivan & Artino, 2013; Boone & Boone, 2012).

4.2.1 Family Influence

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for various items related to family influence on career choices among final-year students, with all items falling within the “Moderate” level of influence. The highest mean score (3.668) indicates that information from family members is the most influential factor, while the lowest mean score (3.019) pertains to the influence of the family business. Overall, the total average score of 3.340 suggests that family influence is moderately significant in shaping career choices. This indicates that while family members, including parents, siblings, and extended family, do play a role in career decision-making, their influence is not overwhelmingly strong. The data highlights the importance of family discussions and shared information in guiding students’ career choices, but also suggests that other factors may be equally or more influential.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for family influence

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Deviation (σ)	Level
FI1 My father influenced me into the career I want to pursue.	3.507	1.021	Moderate
FI2 My mother was influential to the career I want to pursue.	3.465	1.043	Moderate
FI3 The family business is a factor in my choosing career.	3.019	1.117	Moderate
FI4 My father’s career had an impact on my choice of career.	3.232	1.18	Moderate
FI5 My mother’s career had an effect on my choice of career.	3.066	1.189	Moderate
FI6 The dominant profession in my family is also my preferred career.	3.275	1.138	Moderate
FI7 Information I got from my family helped me to choose a career.	3.668	0.896	Moderate
FI8 Older siblings had an influence on my career choice.	3.408	1.106	Moderate
FI9 An extended family member was influential in the career that I choose.	3.422	1.081	Moderate
Total Average Score	3.340	0.824	Moderate

4.2.2 Personal Interest

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for personal interest factors influencing career choices among final-year students, with all items showing high levels of influence. The highest mean score (4.076) indicates that students place significant importance on preparing for interview sessions to ensure they go smoothly. Both finding employment information independently and choosing a career based on personal suitability and interest have a mean score of 3.976, reflecting a strong personal initiative in career planning. Preparing a good quality resume also scores highly at 3.834. The total average score of 3.966 suggests that personal interest is a highly influential factor in career decision-making for final-year students. This indicates that students are proactive in gathering information, aligning their career choices with their interests and strengths, and preparing thoroughly for job applications and interviews, highlighting the critical role of personal interest in shaping their career paths.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for personal interest

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Deviation (σ)	Level
PLI1 I find out all information about employment at the resource centre, internet and newspapers all by myself.	3.976	0.759	High
PLI2 I choose a career based on my own suitability and interest.	3.976	0.771	High
PLI3 I prepared a good and quality resume.	3.834	0.728	High
PLI4 The preparation for an interview session is very important to ensure that the interview goes smoothly.	4.076	0.726	High
Total Average Score	3.966	0.586	High

4.2.3 Peer Influence

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for peer influence on career choices among final-year students, with a total average score of 3.571, indicating a moderate level of influence. Items such as the power of peer influence (3.711), helpfulness of peer advice (3.806), and comprehensive career advice from friends (3.725) are rated highly, reflecting the significant role peers play in career decision-making. However, other aspects like friends influencing career choice (3.393) and choosing similar careers to friends (3.279) show moderate influence. This suggests that while peers provide valuable and reliable career guidance, the overall impact of peer influence is moderate. Students value and consider peer advice, but it is not the sole determinant in their career choices, indicating a balanced approach where multiple factors are considered.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics for peer influence

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Deviation (σ)	Level
PRI1 Peer influence regarding career choices is powerful.	3.711	0.826	High
PRI2 My friends have influenced me to choose a career.	3.393	1.038	Moderate
PRI3 Peer advice on career guidance was helpful to me.	3.806	0.759	High
PRI4 My friends validated the career that I choose.	3.521	0.912	Moderate
PRI5 Information given by my friends is always reliable.	3.549	0.811	Moderate
PRI6 I choose a career that is similar to my friends.	3.279	1.109	Moderate
PRI7 I embrace the advice I get from peers I value the most.	3.583	0.779	Moderate
PRI8 My friends give comprehensive and proper advice on careers.	3.725	0.845	High
Total Average Score	3.571	0.649	Moderate

4.2.4 Gender

Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for gender-related factors influencing career choices among final-year students, with a total average score of 3.504, indicating a moderate level of influence. The highest mean score (3.772) suggests that students perceive certain careers as more suitable for one gender over the other. Other items, such as the influence of male and female role models (3.512 and 3.607, respectively) and the socialization of career choices based on gender (3.512), also show moderate influence. The perception that male students have higher career ambitions (3.488) and the valuation of career advice from same-gender friends (3.507) further highlight the moderate impact of gender on career decisions. Overall, while gender does play a role in shaping career choices, it is not the most dominant factor, suggesting that students consider multiple influences when making career decisions.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics for gender

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Deviation (σ)	Level
G1 There are careers suitable for men and others suitable for women	3.772	0.831	High
G2 Male students have higher career ambitions than female	3.488	1.034	Moderate
G3 Male and female were socialised to choose careers that are gender sensitive.	3.512	0.958	Moderate
G4 I value career advice I get from the same gender friends.	3.507	0.836	Moderate
G5 Women’s role is homemaker and men’s role are breadwinner.	3.228	1.115	Moderate
G6 Male can use computers more effectively to solve problems than female.	3.403	1.084	Moderate
G7 Male role models have influence me to take the career I want to pursue.	3.512	1.044	Moderate
G8 Female role models have influenced me to choose. the career I want to do	3.607	1.043	Moderate
Total Average Score	3.504	0.709	Moderate

4.2.5 Salary

Table 6 presents descriptive statistics for salary-related factors influencing career choices among final-year students, with a total average score of 3.829, indicating a high level of influence. The highest mean score (4.000) suggests that students strongly believe high income levels can stabilize the economy and help realize personal dreams. Other items, such as the importance of high monthly income in making effective career choices (3.938) and choosing organizations based on income earned by education level (3.829), also show high influence. Paying attention to salary aspects when applying for jobs (3.815) further underscores the significance of financial

considerations. However, the willingness to reject job offers with low salaries (3.564) shows a moderate influence. Overall, these results indicate that salary is a crucial factor in career decision-making for final-year students, significantly impacting their job preferences and career planning.

Table 6 Descriptive statistics for salary

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Deviation (σ)	Level
S1 I pay more attention on salary aspect when applying for work in an organization.	3.815	0.780	High
S2 I choose an organization based on the income earned by the education level.	3.829	0.792	High
S3 High monthly income encourages me to make career choices more effectively.	3.938	0.787	High
S4 High income levels can stabilize the economy and realize one's dream.	4.000	0.736	High
S5 I will reject the job offer if the salary is low.	3.564	1.103	Moderate
Total Average Score	3.829	0.606	High

4.2.6 All factors

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics for various factors influencing career choices among final-year students, including family influence, personal interest, peer influence, gender, and salary. The mean scores indicate the level of influence each factor has on career decision-making. Family influence has a moderate impact with a mean score of 3.340 (SD = 0.824), suggesting that while family members play a role in shaping career choices, their influence is not overwhelmingly strong. This aligns with research by Vautero *et al.* (2021), which found that family values and support systems significantly impact career choice implementation through perceived environmental supports or barriers and self-efficacy.

Table 7 Descriptive statistics for all factors

Item	Mean (μ)	Std. Deviation (σ)	Level
Family influence	3.340	0.824	Moderate
Personal interest	3.966	0.586	High
Peer influence	3.571	0.649	Moderate
Gender	3.504	0.709	Moderate
Salary	3.829	0.606	High

Personal interest emerges as a highly influential factor, with a mean score of 3.966 (SD = 0.586). This indicates that students prioritize their own interests and suitability when making career decisions. Lent *et al.* (2016) support this finding, emphasizing that students' interests significantly influence their career choices, as these interests are closely linked to their self-efficacy and outcome expectations. The high influence of personal interest underscores the importance of aligning career choices with individual strengths and passions to ensure job satisfaction and career success. Peer influence, gender, and salary also play significant roles in career decision-making, with mean scores of 3.571 (SD = 0.649), 3.504 (SD = 0.709), and 3.829 (SD = 0.606), respectively. Peer influence is moderate, indicating that while peers provide valuable career guidance, their impact is balanced with other factors. Gender also shows a moderate influence, reflecting the ongoing impact of gender perceptions and stereotypes on career choices (Serra *et al.*, 2019). Salary, with a high mean score, highlights the critical role of financial considerations in career planning. Wan *et al.* (2014) noted that salary expectations significantly affect career choices, motivating students to pursue financially rewarding careers. Overall, these findings suggest that career choices among UTHM final-year students are influenced by a combination of personal interests, financial considerations, peer support, gender perceptions and family influence.

5. Conclusion

The study has successfully identified the levels of influence of various factors on career choices among final-year students. Personal interest and salary are the most influential factors, while family influence, peer influence, and gender factors have moderate impacts. Future studies should explore the interplay between these factors and other potential influences, such as cultural and societal expectations, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of career decision-making. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine how these influences

evolve over time and impact long-term career satisfaction and success. The findings of this study have important implications for career counseling and educational interventions, suggesting that a focus on aligning personal interests and financial expectations with career choices can enhance student outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** Zakahar, Ahmad; **data collection:** Zakahar; **analysis and interpretation of results:** Ahmad; **draft manuscript preparation:** Ismail, Ahmad. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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