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An assessment of factors influencing career choices among fresh graduates: a survey of students majoring in business and economics

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify and analyze factors that affect the career choices of fresh graduates majoring in business and economics. The proposed model of the study consists of four independent variables, which are family factors, personal interests, financial benefits, and peer influences. The results from the exploratory factor analysis and the multiple regression analysis with data collected from 198 fresh graduates show that family factors have no relationship with career choices. Personal interests have the strongest influence on career choices, which are followed by financial benefits. Peer influences show a negative relationship with career choices. Based on these results, recommendations are proposed for fresh graduates, parents, academic institutions and educators, and businesses.

Keywords: Fresh graduates, Career choices, Personal interests, Financial benefits, Peer influence

1. Introduction

Career choice is one of the most critical decisions because a career exerts a significant impact on every facet of our life including personal, social, and professional aspects. It is interdependent with economic security, job satisfaction, and life fulfilment (Jusoh *et al.*, 2011). DeSimone *et al.* (2002) believe that career choice is the most crucial decision to a fresh graduate's life because this selection would lead to a dramatic transformation in his/her life.

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Firstly, after graduating from an academic institution, suitable career decisions made at the intermediate years of employment may have a major impact on fresh graduates' professional and personal growth (Jusoh *et al.*, 2011). With the right careers, they could accomplish their work in a positive and willing manner because these careers are suitable for them. They will go to work happily and feel motivated without feeling being forced or depressed. Secondly, the right careers also help them to increase their life fulfilment and be a source of happiness for them. If the career choices are made incorrectly and inappropriately, the workers might have to experience unnecessary stress and dissatisfaction. If the choices are not made appropriately, the workers might have to experience tension and unhappiness, and even burnout (Mashige and Oduntan, 2011). Moss (2019) defines burnout as fatigue, cynicism, or self-distance and lack of effectiveness and encouragement. Lastly, the organization is benefited from the right career choices made by the workers. Individuals with good career decision-making skills will be able to apply for the right jobs, which lower the country's unemployment rate (Lui *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the ability to make good career choices is at the heart of success for fresh graduates in their first years of employment (Lui *et al.*, 2013).

Therefore, the aim of the study is to obtain an understanding of the factors which impact fresh graduates' career choices. This research has three main purposes, including exploring the influential role of both external and internal factors on fresh graduates' decision-making process for career choices, investigating the significance of the impact of each factor on fresh graduates' career choices, and providing fresh graduates, parents, educators at academic institutions, and other researchers in this field a deeper insight into fresh graduates' career choices.

This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature on determinants of career choices. Firstly, four factors including family factors, personal interests, financial benefits, and peer influences are selected based on its frequencies of appearance among previous studies. Those factors are suggested to have impacts on career choices. However, a few studies have tested the influences of these factors. Secondly, studies on career choices of fresh graduates are relatively limited. The previous studies seem to pay more attention to the career choices of students and adolescents rather than fresh graduates. Lastly, in Vietnam, there is a lack of studies analyzing determinants of career choices among fresh graduates majoring in business and economics.

The remaining of the paper is structured as follows. The next section will present the literature review related to this topic. The theoretical framework will be followed to enable the development of various hypotheses. After that, the research methodology will be demonstrated. In the next part, the empirical findings will be presented, as well as, discussed. Finally, the conclusion and recommendation part will close this study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Concept of career choices

The term career is defined by Gecikli (2002) as the professional, marketable, or business activity that an individual may adopt during his/her study life or till death. A person's job

choice may be defined as a series of decisions that he/she makes while deciding on a career path (Kolawole *et al.*, 2012). Maina (2013) defines career choice as “the decision to follow a course of study that leads to a certain profession based on one’s interests, passions, and skills as influenced by parental influences, peers, and role models.” This definition is supported by Hartung (1995). He supposes that the career choice is a certain profession which one individual will depend on his/her readiness, ability, interests, decidedness, comfort, and self-clarity to decide on. This study uses the definition of career choice from Hartung (1995) and Maina (2013).

2.2 Concept of fresh graduates

A graduate is a person who has earned a first degree from a university or an institution, according to the Cambridge dictionary. A recent graduate is someone who has just graduated from a college or a university and has been out of school for less than three years (Keenan and Newton, 1986; Graham and McKenzie, 1995; Wickramasinghe and Perera, 2010). According to McGaha (2005), an undergraduate is considered a graduate after he/she receives his/her bachelor’s degree. After receiving the bachelor’s degree, a fresh graduate will experience immediate years of employment. He/she will be regarded as a fresh graduate from one to three years (Keenan and Newton, 1986; Graham and McKenzie, 1995; Wickramasinghe and Perera, 2010).

2.3 Factors impacting career choices of fresh graduates

In the literature, this topic has attracted great concern among scholars and practitioners (e.g., Akosah-Twumasi *et al.*, 2018; Shujaat and Manzoor, 2014; Ahmed *et al.*, 2017). Many scholars have investigated the determinants of career choices among different groups of people including secondary and high school students, international students, undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students. Some studies have categorized factors affecting career choices into groups. Akosah-Twumasi *et al.* (2018), Purohit *et al.* (2020), and Marinas *et al.* (2016) point out that there are three groups of factors affecting career choices. These are extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors, and interpersonal factors. Extrinsic factors refer to the factors that wield their influences from the external environments (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.*, 2018). Intrinsic factors refer to the factors that belong to an individual (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.*, 2018). Interpersonal factors refer to the factors that are related to other relationships of individuals (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.*, 2018). The list of factors is based on the previous research of Akosah-Twumasi *et al.* (2018), who have provided a systematic review of factors that have influence on youth career choices. Table 1 illustrates the systematic review of the factors proposed by Akosah-Twumasi *et al.* (2018).

According to Akosah-Twumasi *et al.* (2018), there are four commonly observed determinants of career choices. These are financial remuneration, personal interest, influence of family member, and peer influences. There is, however, no research which tests the effects of all four factors on career choices. This study is conducted to analyze all four factors’ impact

on career choices of fresh graduates in Hanoi. The fresh graduates are selected because there is also a lack of research on this target group in Vietnam.

Table 1. A systematic review of factors that influence youths career choices

Factor Types	Criteria of each factor type
Extrinsic factors	Financial remuneration
	Professional prestige
	Job accessibility
	Job security
Intrinsic factors	Personal interests
	Self-efficacy
	Outcome expectations
	Professional development opportunities
Interpersonal factors	Influence of family members
	Teachers and educators
	Peer influences
	Social responsibilities
	Emergent bicultural influence

Source: Akosah-Twumasi *et al.* (2018)

Family factors

Family factors have gained great attention from researchers (Whiston and Keller, 2004). According to Wright *et al.* (2014), parents are the most important individuals who have a more direct effect on career choice making by their children than other contextual variables, particularly throughout adolescence. Family factors refer to the advice, guidance, wish, expectations, and support from family members (Fouad *et al.*, 2015).

According to Saleem *et al.* (2014), Wright *et al.* (2014), and Fouad *et al.* (2015), the profession of parents, their knowledge and income level in various professional areas, the norms, beliefs, information about modern occupations, the spotlight on the local and international job market, and the skills they acquire can all influence children's career choices (Saleem *et al.*, 2014). Intriguingly, despite being influenced by their parents, children's economic dependence on their parents has restricted their willingness to follow their parents' choices (Jodl *et al.*, 2001). Most importantly, Fizer (2013) points out that family factors influence students' choice of major in comparison with personal rewards, job opportunities, and other factors. Herren *et al.* (2011) find that parents have the most influential role on students when choosing a job in the agricultural field.

Personal interests

Personal interests refer to regular hobbies or habitual activities which could make people's minds comfortable, happy, joyful, and encouraging (Liaw *et al.*, 2017). Individuals select work settings that best suit their personality and interests, according to the idea of career typology (Holland, 1966). Personal interests are formed during upbringing, education, and their contact with friendships, and life experiences. People are more likely to do the activities they like when they are motivated by their interests. A strong and inspiring passion in anything will encourage individuals to reach their full potential.

Pablo-Lerchundi *et al.* (2015) indicate that interest is a major factor affecting students' career choices in engineering. In addition, Gokuladas (2010) argues that students from metropolitan regions are more likely to prioritize their personal interests above social objectives when making career decisions. According to Atitsogbe *et al.* (2018), personal interests have a greater effect on Swiss pupils. In the computer and information technology industry, Alexander *et al.* (2011) highlight that personal interest is the most important factor affecting the career choices of students. Ahmed *et al.* (2017) illustrate that interest in the subject has the strongest linkage with the student's career choice.

Financial benefits

Financial benefits refer to the salary and bonus payment that a person gets for adding value to a company (Fizer, 2013). The yearly amount of money that a company pays to an employee, particularly a professional or white-collar worker, is referred to as salary. An employer provides a regular payment to an employee, which is referred to as an annual payment. Bonus payment is a supplement to an employee's basic salary or an hourly rate of compensation (Fizer, 2013).

Financial remuneration, known as financial benefits, has been proved to be the most influential extrinsic factor in career choice decisions (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.*, 2018). Financial remuneration refers to income, which is regarded as the most critical component of a young individual's life whose level of individualism is high (Agarwala, 2008). Al-Abri and Kooli (2018) suggest that Omani graduates take financial benefits as the most important determinant of the career choices. Wust and Simic (2017) indicate that high income is the most decisive factor for German students to choose a job. German students agree that high financial benefits and high social status are their top priority when selecting a career and evaluating their success. In Croatian culture, Wust and Simic (2017) point out that high income is of lower importance to young Croatians than young German because the Croatian society values collectivism.

Peer influences

Peer influences refer to activities such as sharing, advising, counselling, communicating, and learning from peers (Gokuladas, 2010). In addition, peer influences can be referred to the feelings that peers bring to participants such as peer pressure. To illustrate, individuals decide to take on a job because their friends work at this place or advise them to work at this place.

In other scenarios, an individual decides to take on a new job as an outcome of peer pressures is considered as peer influences.

Peer influences should not be disregarded since it is shown to have an impact on job choices. Peer influences are identified as a third powerful element, which is after parents and teachers. Peer influences may have a major impact on career selections of children, particularly among the females. Peers are a branch of significant others. As social actors, they affect their types through social comparisons and approval (Yamashita *et al.*, 1999; Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa, 2006; Gokuladas, 2010). Hashim and Embong (2015) suppose that the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence with reference to career choices.

3. Research framework

3.1 Hypothesis development

As having been mentioned in the literature review part, family factors have exerted a significant impact on career choices in most studies. In general, the young in Asian culture is proved to be more influenced by family factors than in other cultures (Guan *et al.*, 2015). This study is conducted in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, which has an Asian culture. Hence, it could be inferred that those participants might be affected by their family. Howard *et al.* (2009) find that students in urban and industrial backgrounds are less impacted by family factors. These family factors are also suggested by many researchers to have a complex impact on people of different ages. Therefore, the hypothesis is advanced as follows:

H1: There is a significant relationship between family factors and career choices of fresh graduates.

Personal interests are usually shown to have the most influential impact on career choices in many studies. In Sri Lanka, research is performed on personal variables that influence business students' job choices (Anojan and Nimalathasan, 2013). The results from most research reveal that personal factors have the largest influence. The next hypothesis is as follows:

H2: There is a significant relationship between personal interests and career choice.

As having been mentioned in the literature review part, financial benefits have exerted a significant impact on career choices. According to Agarwala (2008), Indian students, whose major is management, agree that financial remuneration has a strong relation with career choice. As the participants of this study are majored in business and economics, the following hypothesis is proposed to test the accuracy of financial benefits on career choices:

H3: There is a significant relationship between financial benefits and career choices of fresh graduates.

Peer influences are also proved to have a relationship with career choices in previous studies. However, the results are complex and different in many studies. Peer influences have a negative and positive impact on career choices in some studies. Gardner and Steinberg

(2005) and Salami (2008) point out that peers have a negative influence on career choices. Meanwhile, other studies show a positive impact of peers on career choices (Alika, 2010b; Migunde *et al.*, 2012; Hashim and Embong, 2015). Kaur (2020) indicates that peers have both negative and positive effects on career choices. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H4: There is a significant relationship between peer influences and career choices of fresh graduates.

3.2 Proposed research model

This research model consists of four independent variables, which are family factors (FF), personal interests (PI), financial benefits (FB), and peer influences (PE), and one dependent variable, which is career choices (CC).

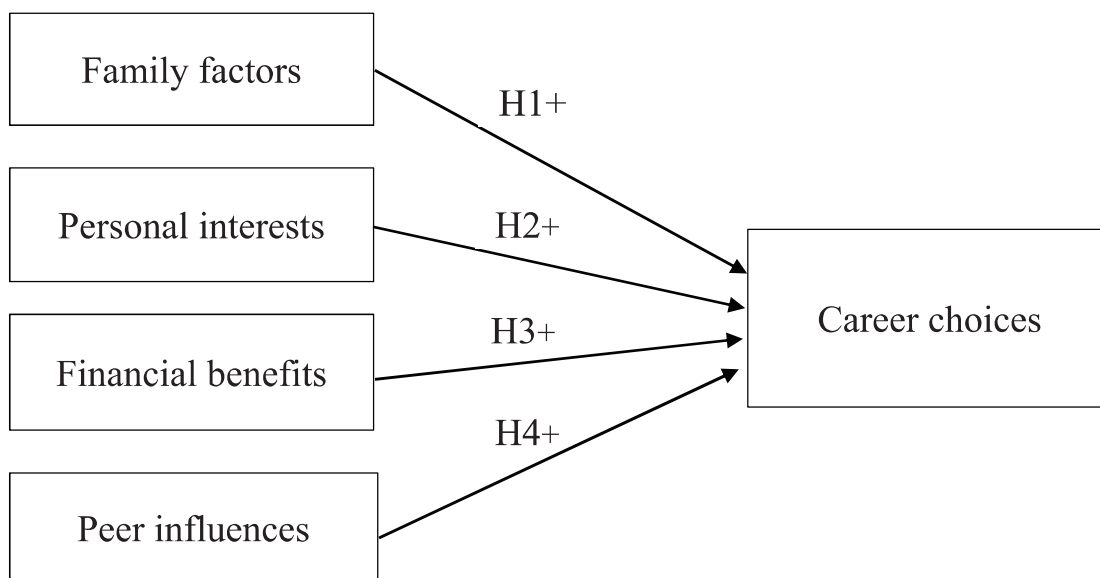


Figure 1. The research model

Source: The authors' suggestion

4. Research methodology

4.1 Research method

This study utilizes a quantitative method following Goddard and Melville (2004). The data are directly collected from the fresh graduates enrolled in business and economics majors from several universities in Hanoi. The most important tool for this research is a survey. This survey is conducted on fresh graduates. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey is mainly distributed through online mediums.

4.2 Sampling methodology

The study aims to investigate freshly graduated students in business and economics majors from universities in Hanoi, which are Foreign Trade University, National Economics

University, and RMIT University. The majority of participants are from the Advanced Program of Foreign Trade University. The respondents are fresh graduates who have graduated from universities from one to three years. The survey started in April 2021 and ended in May 2021. This study applies the simple random sampling method in which participants are selected randomly (Etikan and Bala, 2017). Data were collected from 198 respondents.

4.3 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the demographic information of the participants, which includes age, gender, level of education, academic institutions, working experience, degree classification, and their personal opinion. The second part contains 23 questions based on the model framework. Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement on 23 statements. For each statement, the answer is constructed based on the five-point scale of agreement (Albert and Tullis, 2013).

Table 2. Measuring scales and references for the proposed framework

Constructs	Code	Description	Source
Family factors (FF)	FF 1	My family expects that my choice of occupation will reflect their wishes.	Fouad <i>et al.</i> (2015)
	FF 2	My family discussed career issues with me at an early age.	
	FF 3	My family showed me how to be successful in choosing a career.	
	FF 4	My family provided guidance on which careers would be best for me.	
Personal interests (PI)	PI 1	I would do better in the field that interests me.	Humayon <i>et al.</i> (2018)
	PI 2	I would choose careers that match my interests.	
	PI 3	I would get greater satisfaction and happiness when working in the field of interests.	
	PI 4	In my ideal job, it is important that I would make use of my interests.	
	PI 5	I constantly looking for what make me happy in career choice.	
Financial benefits (FB)	FB1	Salary and bounces have the most significant influence in choosing my career path.	Humayon <i>et al.</i> (2018)
	FB2	It is important for me to get a high salary job after graduation.	
	FB3	I consider financial benefits are the most significant motivator for career choice.	

Table 2. Measuring scales and references for the proposed framework (*continued*)

Constructs	Code	Description	Source
Peer influence (PE)	PE 1	Peer influence regarding career choices is powerful.	Naz <i>et al.</i> (2014)
	PE 2	My friends have influenced me to choose a career.	
	PE 3	Peer advice on career guidance was helpful.	
	PE 4	I chose a career that is similar to my friends.	
	PE 5	I shared with my friends about my career.	
Career choices (CC)	CC 1	I have total freedom to choose my career.	Hartung (1995)
	CC 2	I carefully consider career choices before taking a job.	
	CC 3	In my opinion, career choice is one of the most important decisions.	
	CC 4	In my opinion, career choice influence enormously my personal growth.	
	CC 5	In my opinion, career choice influence enormously my personal growth.	
	CC6	It is a must for me to fully understand the job before choosing it.	
	CC 5	In my opinion, career choice influence enormously my personal growth.	
CC6	It is a must for me to fully understand the job before choosing it.		

Sources: The authors' compilation

5. Empirical findings and discussion

5.1 Empirical findings

5.1.1 Demographic analysis of respondents

The questionnaire was designed and uploaded on Google Form. Facebook, Instagram, and Facebook Messenger were used to distribute the questionnaire. Table 3 presents the demographic statistics of the respondents. Nearly a half of respondents belongs to the age group 22, followed by the participants whose age is 23, the portion of fresh graduates whose age are 23 and 24 accounts for more than a quarter. Regarding to gender, female participants make up 53.54 %. Concerning academic institutions, 175 respondents (88.38%) studied in university while only 23 respondents graduated from college. The fresh graduates majoring in business, economics and accounting-auditing make up 43.43%, 41.92%, and 14.65%, respectively. The majority of respondents achieve a distinction degree (75.25%). In terms of working experiences, 76 respondents (38.38%) have from 3 months to 1-year

working experience, while 49 participants have 1 to 2 years working experience, and only 37 participants have above 2 years working experience.

Table 3. Demographic statistics

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	22	90	45.45
	23	62	31.31
	24	42	21.21
	25	9	4.55
Gender	Male	90	45.45
	Female	106	53.54
	Others	2	1.01
Academic institutions	University	175	88.38
	College	23	11.62
Major	Economics	83	41.92
	Business	86	43.43
	Accounting-auditing	29	14.65
Educational level	Graduated	198	100.00
Degree Classification	High distinction	24	12.12
	Distinction	149	75.25
	Credit	25	12.63
	Pass	0	0
	Others	0	0
Working experience	No working experience	36	18.18
	From 3 months to 1 year	76	38.38
	From 1 to 2 years	49	24.75
	From 2 to 3 years	32	16.16
	More than 3 years	5	2.53

Source: The authors' research sample

5.1.2 Reliability analysis

According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), if the values of Cronbach's Alpha are from 0.8 to close to 1, it is reliable. If these values are about 0.95 or more, there is an overlapped phenomenon, in which observed variables seem to be redundant in this measuring scale. If the values range from 0.7 to close to 0.8, it illustrates a reliable scale (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.789 to 0.921, illustrating that the measuring scale of all variables is appropriate and reliable. All the items are retained because the corrected item - total correlation coefficients of all variables are above 0.3. More importantly, the measuring scales of family factors, personal interests, and career choices are reliable owing to their Cronbach's Alpha values, which are higher than 0.8. The result indicates that the factors impacting the career choices are suitable and reliable. Therefore, all observed variables are used in the next step with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Table 4. Results of variables' reliability

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Family Factors (FF)	0.824
Personal Interests (PI)	0.861
Financial Benefits (FB)	0.799
Peer Influences (PE)	0.789
Career Choices (CC)	0.921

Source: The authors' calculation

5.1.3 Exploratory factor analysis

The results of EFA are illustrated in Table 5 and Table 6. The component matrix is only rotated once. Regarding to independent variables, in the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.713, which is higher than 0.5. It is a middling and good value because Kaiser (1974) states that the KMO values should be more than 0.5 to be reliable. In addition, the Sig. value of KMO and Bartlett's test is 0.000, which is lower than 0.005. Therefore, the dataset is appropriate to conduct the EFA. According to Kaiser (1974), Sig. value should not be above 0.005 because a value higher than 0.005 indicates an inaccurate sample size to perform the EFA. The EFA analysis is for four factors impacting on career choices, which are family factors (FF) with four items, personal interests (PI) with five items, financial benefits (FB) with three items, and peer influences (PE) with five items. The results are depicted in Table 5. The cumulative percentage of sums of square loadings is 67.748%, which is higher than 50%. This statistic indicates that all observed variables can explain up to 67.748 % of all sub-variables in the four factors extracted in the rotated component matrix.

Table 5. Exploratory factor analysis of independent variables

KMO and Bartlett's Test				
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.				0.713
	Approx. Chi-Square			1.786.480
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df			136
	Sig.			0.000
Rotated Component Matrix				
	PI	PE	FF	FB
PI1	0.879			
PI3	0.869			
PI4	0.797			
PI2	0.697			
PI5	0.638			
PE2		0.839		
PE4		0.768		
PE1		0.722		
PE5		0.668		
PE3		0.649		
FF2			0.811	
FF4			0.808	
FF3			0.785	
FF1			0.754	
FB2				0.872
FB3				0.799
FB1				0.759
Total Variance Explained				
Extraction of sums of squared loadings			Cumulative %: 67.748	

Source: The authors' calculation

In terms of the dependent variables in Table 6, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.856. The Sig. value of the Bartlett's test of sphericity is 0.000. The extraction of sums of squared loadings has a cumulative of 71.975 %.

Table 6. Exploratory factor analysis of dependent variable

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.856
Approx. Chi-Square	971.419
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df
	15
	Sig.
	0.000
Component Matrix	
CC1	0.806
CC2	0.801
CC3	0.889
CC4	0.926
CC5	0.777
CC6	0.881
Total Variance Explained	
Extraction of sums of squared loadings	Cumulative %: 67.748

Source: The authors' calculation

5.1.4 Pearson correlation analysis

The Sig. values of FF, PI, FB, and PE are all less than 0.05, which is according to the Pearson correlation analysis. This demonstrates that these factors have a substantial relationship with the dependent variable, which is career choices (CC).

Table 7. Correlations

		CC	FF	PI	FB	PE
CC	Pearson Correlation	1	0.284**	0.820**	0.386**	-0.131
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.065
	N	198	198	198	198	198

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: The authors' calculation

5.1.5 Regression analysis

The multiple linear regression analysis is to anticipate the value of the dependent variable outcome, which is career choices (CC), based on the value of four independent variables. It is used to measure the cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Results from the multiple linear regression analysis are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Multiple regression analysis

Model	Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant		1.836	0.068		
Family Factors	0.011	0.255	0.799	0.848	1.179
Personal interests	0.776	17.864	0.000	0.842	1.188
Financial benefits	0.111	2.554	0.011	0.848	1.180
Peer influences	-0.084	-2.047	0.042	0.941	1.063

Adjusted R square: 0.687

Notes: The independent variables include family factors (FF), personal interests (PI), financial benefits (FB), and peer influences (PE). The dependent variable is career choices (CC).

Source: The authors' calculation

The adjusted R square is 0.687, showing that 68.7 % of the variability in career choices is explained by the independent variables. The Durbin Watson is 2.230, indicating that autocorrelation is not evident.

The collinearity statistics is to test the probability of multicollinearity. If the VIF values are between 1 and 5, there is no evidence of significant multicollinearity (Ferentz and Rosenzweig, 1955). Regarding tolerance statistics, if this statistic is lower than 0.4, it might come to the issue of multicollinearity. Besides, high tolerance statistics illustrate low multicollinearity (Mansfield and Helms, 1982). In Table 9, the VIF statistics are above 1 and below 2. In addition, the coefficient values reveal that the tolerance statistics are all over 0.8, which is relatively high. As a result, it is fair to conclude that multicollinearity does not exist.

The standardized beta depicts variations in the dependent variable's standard deviation as a function of a unit change in an independent variable. The standardized beta may be used to find the predictor that has the strongest relationship with the dependent variable (Ratner, 2009). The regression equation is generated as follows using the standardized beta coefficient.

$$CC = 0.776*PI+ 0.111*FB - 0.084*PE.$$

This regression equation shows that personal interests have the largest influence on career choices of the respondents. The second influential factor is financial benefits. The peer influences have a negative relationship with career choices. Surprisingly, the family factors turn out to have no impact on career choices because the significance value between family factors and career choices is 0.779 in the regression analysis.

5.1.6 Summary of testing the hypotheses

From the analysis, it can be summarized that personal interests are the most influential factor in the career choices of the fresh graduates. The second influential factor is financial benefits. Peer influences have a negative relationship with career choices.

Table 9. Results of hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Standardized Coefficients	Composite reliability	Total variance explained
Beta	Sig	Results	0.613
H1: There is a relationship between family factors and career choices of fresh graduates	0.011	0.799	Rejected
H2: There is a relationship between personal interests and career choices of fresh graduates	0.776	0.000	Accepted
H3: There is a relationship between financial benefits and career choice of fresh graduates	0.111	0.011	Accepted
H4: There is a relationship between peer influences and career choices of fresh graduates	-0.084	0.042	Accepted

Source: The authors' calculation

5.2 Discussion of findings

Relationship between family factors and career choices

Hypothesis H1 is rejected. The result could be explained by several reasons. Firstly, the Vietnamese spirit is independent, opportunistic, and resilient (World Bank Group, 2016). It is suggested that Vietnamese younger generation seems to be more independent than before. They have more tendency to seize new opportunities. They are stronger because they are impacted by the individualism ideology from Western culture (World Bank Group, 2016). Therefore, it could be a reason why the fresh graduates have developed their independence and are less reliant upon their parents.

Secondly, fresh graduates might be living on their own because most of the universities in Vietnam are in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Hence, students must migrate from their hometowns to the cities to study. This is the reason why their parents' influence reduces and is weaker than other factors. In universities, they gain knowledge from lectures, educators, their senior colleagues, and social media, which could equip them with a multidimensional perspective and fully develop their cognitions (Dang, 2017). The findings of this study show that family factors have no impact on the career choices of fresh graduates. Most respondents state that parental advice and guidance exert no impact on them. During the time they learn and work, they might realize their ability, strengths, and weaknesses, which might not match with their family expectations. Hence, they seem to be less dependent on their parents and believe more in their personal opinions when choosing a career.

Lastly, they could find new opportunities owing to the development of social media and new jobs, which are not familiar to their parents (Tran and Duong, 2020). For example, there are growing job opportunities such as influencer marketers, content creators, and YouTubers, which are uncommon in the previous generation's perspective (Nguyen, 2020). The young generation might feel that it is difficult for them to share their career goals with their parents. Their parents also do not keep up with their children to understand their career paths (Nguyen, 2020). In this study, the fresh graduates, whose ages range from 21 to 24, have common characteristics of Generation Z. Gen Z is grown in the era of social media, globalization, and technological advancement. According to Luttrell and McGrath (2021), Gen Z is tech-savvy, realistic, individualistic, global-minded, creative, and socially aware. It is understandable that they are more well-aware than their parents about new trends and job opportunities, which might become unfamiliar with the perspective of their parents. With individualism, the fresh graduates might feel more confident about their choices and choose to follow their wishes instead of being guided by their family members. Therefore, it could be reasonable explanations why the fresh graduates majored in business and economics are not influenced by their parents.

Relationship between personal interests and career choices

Personal interests have the significant and positive relationship with the career choices of the fresh graduates. This result is consistent with the previous studies (Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa, 2006; Gokuladas, 2010; Lent *et al.*, 2010; Atitsogbe *et al.*, 2018; Pablo-Lerchundi *et al.*, 2015; Alexander *et al.*, 2011; Ahmed *et al.*, 2017). People should consider their personal interests while choosing a job for four reasons. Firstly, people would do better in their fields of interests (Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa, 2006). Secondly, those who pursue the jobs that align with their own interests are more likely to succeed (Ahmed *et al.*, 2017). Thirdly, working in one's field of interests may provide more pleasure and contentment (Hieu *et al.*, 2021; Atitsogbe *et al.*, 2018). Fourthly, people will choose the jobs that bring them joy and fit their interests to avoid exhaustion and depression, as well as maintain the motivation to strive better every day (Lent *et al.*, 2010).

Relationship between financial benefits and career choices

The hypothesis about the relationship between financial benefits and career choices is accepted. This finding is in line with the previous studies (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.*, 2018, Agarwala, 2008; Al-Abri and Kooli, 2018). Financial benefits are proved to have the most influential impact on career choices. Surprisingly, this study shows that financial benefits seem to have an insignificant impact on the fresh graduates' career choices. This result could be explained by the following reasons.

Firstly, Wust and Simic (2017) point out that high income is of lower importance to young Croatians than young German because the Croatian society values collectivism. The fresh graduates of this study also live in Hanoi, whose society is collectivist. Vietnam is a high collectivism culture (Nguyen, 2018). Therefore, financial benefits have a weak relationship

with career choices. Lastly, the combination of the working environment and compensation policy might influence the career selection of an employee more. The financial benefits are not a strong factor to encourage the fresh graduates to choose a job.

Relationship between peer influences and career choices

This hypothesis about the relationship between peer influences and career choices is accepted. This factor has a negative impact on career choices. This result suggests that the fresh graduates enrolled in business and economics seem to be less dependent on peers' advice and guidance when choosing a job. According to a study in America by Alike (2010a), for secondary school adolescents, there is no substantial link between peer group impact and career choices in the field of humanities. The research in the United States focused solely on humanities students. Mtemeri (2020) carries out another study looking at all students in Zimbabwean high schools and finds that peers have a lower likelihood of influencing high school students' job choices. In addition, Salami (2008) points out that peers could lead to "herding concepts", in which one will blindly follow a career path without a profound understanding of this career. Furthermore, Kaur (2020) shows that in a negative way, peer influences might lead to indecision among adolescents. The counselling from peers could make fresh graduates feel more perplexed about their career choices (Kaur, 2020; Salami, 2008).

6. Conclusion and recommendation

This study has analyzed four factors influencing career choices among fresh graduates enrolled in business and economics in Hanoi, which include family factors, personal interests, financial benefits, and peer influences. Personal interests are found to be the most significant determinant of the career choices among the fresh graduates. Career choices are based on consideration of the salary and bonuses that companies offer them. The idea that both personal interests and financial benefits are correlated with career choices is consistent and supported by the previous research. In contrast to the earlier studies, there is no impact of the family factors on the career choices of the fresh graduates. University students strengthen their independence and individualism as they must live far away from their family and have other relationships. Furthermore, they interact with information on the Internet, new social trends and new job opportunities, which could help them to develop their own perspective and be less dependent on their parents. Another noticeable point is that peer influence has a negative effect on career choices among fresh graduates, which is in contrast to previous research. To some extent, this study fills the research gap and lay some foundations for further research on this topic.

For fresh graduates, this study is a great guidance to explore themselves more when it comes to the need of career choices. Firstly, fresh graduates should understand that career choices and personal interests have a strong and positive relationship. It is suggested that fresh graduates should listen and discover their interests before considering any career choices. Secondly, fresh graduates should actively and fully utilize the university time to absorb valuable lectures and comprehend important knowledge in different courses. After graduation, fresh graduates

should be on the cutting edge of contemporary times. Therefore, they should be able to seize new opportunities, as well as avoid many pitfalls hidden in society today.

For parents, the research points out that family factors have no impact on fresh graduates' career choices. This might be due to the knowledge gap between the two generations. Therefore, it is suggested that parents should listen to their children's wishes and goals instead of forcing their children to grow up according to their wishes and guidance.

For academic institutions and educators, universities and colleges should implement courses and programs which strengthen undergraduate's employability skills and soft skills. Academic institutions should not only provide students with necessary skills but also offer them opportunities to analyze their strengths and connect with other people. In addition, universities should provide career guidance and counseling programs for the students.

For businesses, the study indicates that financial benefits have a small impact on career choices among the fresh graduates. Apart from profits, businesses should also be concerned about other valuable factors. Other factors which could help attract talents from universities could be organizational culture, businesses' reputation, and human resource policies of the company. Therefore, it is recommended that businesses should focus on building sustainable brand images with numerous positive contributions to employees and the community instead of focusing solely on financial benefits to hire fresh graduates.

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