

Career Choices, Occupational Status, and Quality of Life of Agricultural Science Graduates

MARIA SHEILA D. SIMON

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7741-9633>

sheilamarsimon@gmail.com

Capiz State University

Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines

ABSTRACT

While it seems easy to choose from among the many academic programs available to the person, he has to be very careful in his choice because it may affect the kind of life he will have in the future. The study aimed to determine the career choices, occupational status and quality of life of Agricultural Science graduates. Using descriptive correlational research design, data were obtained from 337 total population graduates of Capiz State University, Pontevedra Campus, Philippines. Questionnaires – checklist were personally delivered, and sent either regular or electronic mail. Frequency count, percentage, ranking and mean were used in the analysis of descriptive data while Chi-square was employed as inferential analysis. Results showed that graduates' career choices relate to occupational status. Moreover, the standard of living is parallel with their perceived quality of life. The university student services office may develop a scheme in assisting students to decide which career to pursue based on their abilities and inclinations. A study on the employability of graduates can be undertaken to verify further and validate the findings.

Keywords – Management, career choices, descriptive correlational research design, Roxas City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Whatever decision a person will make with regards to his choice of career will affect his future. There are many factors to be considered in choosing a career. Some think in terms of “better employment opportunities” while others choose a career in which they find adequate outlets for abilities, interest and personality traits. Some define an ideal job as a prerequisite to guide them in getting an employment which better matches their skills and desires (Ho, 2013). Some avoid occupations which they feel to be too intellectually demanding, on one hand, or not sufficiently challenging, on the other. Others seek careers which are prestigious. Some avoid those which are overcrowded and seek those with much greater opportunities. Science and math-related courses like medicine, nursing, engineering, and law require four to eight years of continuous studies, while technical/vocational courses such as midwifery, electronic technician, culinary arts, and many others require only a few months to two years of training. In choosing one of these courses, a person has to think of what future can this bring to him.

John Holland (Gibson& Mitchell, 2008) a famous career counseling expert believes that the career choice is an expression of personality. People search for environments and vocations that will permit them to exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, take on agreeable problems and roles, and avoid disagreeable ones. Research data revealed that up to 85% of workers are satisfied with their chosen occupation (King, 2002). They can fulfill the questions asked when they were young. While many did not have the exact kind of job they dreamed of when they were younger, the work they have had at least something in common with what they desired.

Since 1985, the Panay State Polytechnic College in Pontevedra, Capiz, now Capiz State University, has produced a number of Agricultural Science graduates. Many of them seem to have found places for themselves in terms of work and employment. However, to date, there are no hard data to show how these graduates have gone their way with regards to their career choices, occupational status, and their quality of life. What careers have they chosen? What kind of work do they have? How do they perceive about the quality of life they are experiencing now? Are they contented, satisfied, fulfilled, or frustrated? These are some of the questions that the study intends to address.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to determine the career choices, occupational status, standard of living and quality of life as perceived by the Agricultural Science graduates of Capiz State University, Philippines.

FRAMEWORK

The concept of the study was guided by John Holland's (1997) theory of personality types and environment models, and economic theory. According to Holland (Weiten, Dunn & Hammer, 2011), people flourish when their personality type is match with a work environment that is congruent with their abilities, interests, and self-beliefs.

A good match typically results to career satisfaction, achievement, and stability. Economic theories (Gibson & Mitchell, 2008) suggest the importance of economic factors in career choice. Job security has also become an important consideration in career choice in the 1990s and beyond.

The descriptive variables focused on the respondents' personal profile that includes age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, year of graduation, and monthly family income. The results of the relationships of the variables will bring about the collaboration for the development of the university student services office. The independent variables include respondents' career choices, while the dependent variables were their occupational status, the standard of living, and their perceived quality of life.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive – correlational research design. A researcher-made, validated and subjected to reliability test survey questionnaire – checklist was used to gather the data. The researcher sought permission from all the respondents who were surveyed in compliance to research ethics protocol. The questionnaire had four parts: part I provided personal profile, part II focused on respondents' career choices, part III was on occupational status as employed, unemployed and self-employed; part IV included items that asked about the respondents' quality of life adopted from the Quality of Life Research Unit, University of Toronto,(n.d.). The respondents of the study were the 337 total population graduates of the Agricultural Science Curriculum of Capiz State

University, Pontevedra Campus. It was administered, delivered and retrieved personally, through regular and electronic mail. Analysis of descriptive data was done through frequency count, percentage, mean and ranking; and chi-square was used to test the inferential data at five percent level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Career Choices of the Agricultural Science Graduates

Table 1 revealed that the respondents preferred leadership careers, while the least pursued careers were skilled and office work. King (2002) describes those who pursue leadership career as the helpers. They are people who are the natural caregiver, and like to help other people. They excel in service as they follow their emotions. They aim to make a difference in others. This category includes college/university faculty, dietician, doctor, guidance counselor, human services worker, medical technician, nurse, physical therapist, police officer, clergy man, school teacher, social worker, and telecommunication worker. Moreover, these respondents are described as social type. They have special skills and talents, but often lack mechanical and scientific ability. They are described as responsible, helpful, kind, patient, generous, patient and warm (Holland, 1997).

Table 1. Summary table showing mean score obtained for the respondents' career choices categorized according to groups.

GROUP OF CAREERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	RANK
A. Leadership Careers	98	29.1	1 st
B. Commerce Careers	73	21.7	2 nd
C. Mechanical/Technical Careers	61	18.1	3 rd
D. Health Careers	35	10.4	4 th
E. Service Worker	20	5.9	5 th
F. Natural Careers	16	4.7	6 th
G. Combination Careers	13	3.9	7 th
H. Marine Transportation Careers	9	2.7	8 th
I. Other Careers	8	2.4	9 th
J. Skilled Worker	2	0.6	10,5 th
K. Office Worker	2	0.6	10,5 th
TOTAL	337	100	

Occupational Status of Agricultural Science Graduates

Out of 337 respondents, majority (253 or 75.1%) were employed, 76 or 22.6% were self-employed and eight or 2.4% were not employed. The result supports the findings of Fizer (2013) wherein the students believe that their projected careers will make a positive impact to the world.

Higher education graduates can hardly find adequate employment upon graduation, and many graduates are placed in jobs not comparable to their qualification, and many are lacking security of their working life (Yang, Chen, & Fan, 2010 as cited by Ho, 2013). Thus, adjustment is an important issue for all employees regardless of the industries they are in. As theorized by Dawis and Lofquist's Theory of Work Adjustment (1984), an individual or environment adapts to the ongoing transactions between them. People select occupations that best express their identities and get satisfaction. Hence, they need to adjust themselves to a different types of tasks, organizational culture and work environment.

Standard of Living

The respondents' standard of living was determined by their socio-economic status. Socio-economic status was measured in terms of the following: type of home ownership, type of housing materials, ownership of car/motor vehicles, ownership of household appliances and furniture, respondents' monthly expenditures.

Almost half (146 or 43.3%) of the respondents had an average standard of living; 48 or 14.2% had a high standard of living, while 10 or 3% had a low standard of living. The result implies that the respondents are to a certain degree, financially secured with permanent dwellings, and can afford to provide for the basic needs of their family.

However, result does not conform with the study of Beck and Mishra (2010) wherein the socio-economic and overall quality of life of natives (Oraon, Sambalpur town of Orissa which is one of the most primitive tribals of Eastern India), is far from satisfactory as the natives are very poor and they have poor educational status, poor sanitary and housing facilities, less possession of assets and vehicle, deficient food intake, poor fuel and energy availability and low per capita income.

Summary of Mean Scores obtained by the respondents' quality of life as perceived by them

The respondents obtained the highest mean score of 3.75 in the belonging domain which means “satisfying”; followed by the being domain (3.37) which is “moderately satisfying”; and then in the becoming domain with the least mean score of 2.64 which means “moderately satisfying.” A grand mean score of 3.25 indicated that the respondents perceived their quality of life as “moderately satisfying”. This means that they have a 60% feeling of goodness, happiness, satisfaction and contentment about their quality of life.

This finding confirms the study of Sandoval, Jennings, Rataj and Klein (2013) who suggested that quality of life was affected by perceived quality of health, money, transportation, enjoyment of life, perception of safety, leisure, work, and sex. Furthermore, leisure, the time people spend outside their productive activities, has a major impact on their sense of well-being, happiness and life satisfaction (Abdallah& Stoll, 2012). Meaningful work, rewarding family interactions and revitalizing pursuits are three components of a rewarding and healthy life (Weiten, Dunn & Hammer, 2011).

Career Choices in Relation to their Occupational Status

The career choices of the respondents were in descending order: leadership career (85); commerce career (53); mechanical /technical career (47), and in natural and health careers (35).A total of 20 respondents finished commerce career, 16 graduated from natural career/health career, and the 13 earned the degree related to leadership career. They preferred to be self-employed and others do not have job because they are pursuing another course.

Results revealed a highly significant relationship between the respondents' career choices and their occupational status. This implies that the occupational status of the respondents is related to their career choices. The analysis of the relationship between the respondents' career choices and their occupational status had chi-square value of 19.562, $df = 2$, $p\text{-value} = 0.003$ which was lesser than the 0.05 alpha, therefore, null hypothesis is rejected. The result implies that the occupational status of the respondents is related to their career choices.

The study is similar with the study conducted by Smith, Lambert, Pitcher, Goldacre (2013) on the career choices among cardiologists. Results showed that one year after graduation, the percentage of doctors specifying cardiology as their first choice of long-term career rose from the mid-1990s from 2.4% (1993) to 4.2% (2005) but then fell back to 2.7% (2009).

From the perspective of Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2013), career calling is a process by which individuals impose personal meanings on their career. A high level of calling motivates individuals to develop the relevant career competence. Moreover, the results of the study conform to the economic theories (Gibson & Mitchell, 2008) which suggest the importance of economic factors in career choice. Prominent among these are the availability of types of jobs versus the availability of qualified workers for these jobs.

Standard of Living in Relation to their Quality of Life as Perceived by Them

Of the 48 with a high standard of living, 27 perceived their quality of life as slightly and moderately satisfying with 21 others who perceived this quality of life as satisfying. The 146 found to be with a middle standard of living, 104 had a slightly and moderately quality of life and 42 with satisfying quality of life. Furthermore, among those with low standard of living, 109 had a slightly and moderately satisfying quality of life.

Moreover, a significant relationship exists between respondents' perception of quality of life and their standard of living ($\chi^2 = 10.656$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.005$ which was lesser than 0.05 alpha). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and conclude that respondents who have a middle standard of living, tend to perceive their quality of life as moderately satisfying and vice versa. This implies that the respondents' perception of their quality of life has something to do with their standard of living. This result was correlated to the Theory of Holland wherein people flourish in their work environment when there is a good fit between their personality type and the characteristics of the environment. Lack of congruence between personality and environment leads to dissatisfaction, unstable career paths, and lowered performance.

Nevertheless, findings do not conform with Corrigan, Skantze, Malm, Dencker and May (1992) that when living standards are met by a well-functioning social service system, patients' perceptions of their quality of life and their standard of living appeared to be independent.

The study examined the career choices, occupational status, standard of living, and quality of life of Agricultural Science graduates of Capiz State University, Pontevedra Campus. Among the limitations in the conduct of the study were access to the target respondents and assigning of scores to certain items used as parameters in determining the standard of living of the respondents. As experienced, the respondents were far and wide so the survey questionnaire had to be sent either by regular or electronic mail. Whenever possible, a personal follow-

up of the graduates was made to check on their responses to the questionnaire used to collect the needed information. Otherwise, the researcher had to content herself with whatever data are made available to her.

Another limitation was on the manner by which indicators for standard of living had been rated. The researcher, with the help of her adviser, an economics consultant, and a statistician had to develop a scheme of assigning a score to a particular item based on its average cost. For this purpose, a canvass of the cost of identified items was made and the computed average was used as basis of scoring.

CONCLUSIONS

Leadership careers are the dominant courses pursued by most of Agricultural Science graduates; most of them are employed and enjoy an average standard of living. They have a moderately satisfying quality of life. They feel that somehow they have become what they intended to be, and that they are accepted by their respective communities. Respondents' career choices have something to do with their occupational status. Standard of living is parallel with their perceived quality of life. Those who have average standard of living perceived their quality of life as moderately satisfying.

The university student services office may develop a scheme in assisting students in deciding which career to pursue based on their abilities and inclinations. A follow – up study on the employability of graduates can be undertaken to verify further and validate the findings obtained from this study. Other parameters to determine the standard of living and quality of life should be explored.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of the study may be translated to various media of communication for information dissemination, if not, further awareness campaign thru PTCA meetings, alumni homecomings, and community extension activities. Indigenous materials such as flyers, publication in school paper and local newspapers, among others may be designed for stakeholders from the remote areas, and social media, mass media (TV, newspaper, and radio) may be used in the information dissemination.

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