

Future Time Perspective, Perceived Personal Competence and Career Decision Making Among Pre University Students.

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Abstract

Career decision-making is a complex process influenced by various psychological and contextual factors. This qualitative study explores the relationship between Future Time Perspective (FTP) and Career Decision-Making among pre-university students in India, while also examining the moderating role of Personal Competence. Using thematic analysis, six major themes emerged: Career Awareness and Planning, Self-Perception and Competence, Influences on Career Choices, Career Decision-Making Strategies, Future Career Expectations, and Strategies for Success. The findings indicate that students with a strong future orientation engage more actively in career planning, but external influences and self-doubt often create uncertainty. Personal competence plays a crucial role in decision-making, as students with higher self-confidence and adaptability translate future goals into actionable steps more effectively. However, those with lower competence struggle to bridge the gap between aspirations and actions. The study highlights the importance of career guidance, mentorship, and structured skill-building initiatives to support students in making informed career choices. These insights contribute to the growing discourse on career decision-making by emphasizing the need for holistic interventions that address both future-oriented thinking and self-efficacy.

Keywords: future time perspective, personal competence, career decision-making, pre-University students, thematic analysis, career guidance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Career decision-making has become a pivotal developmental task for pre-university students, who are at a crossroads as they transition from secondary education to higher learning and eventually the workforce. In today's fast-paced and ever-changing economic and educational landscapes, young individuals are increasingly aware of the importance of making informed career choices that not only reflect their personal interests and competencies but also consider external market demands (Judge et al., 2010; Ng & Feldman, 2010). As several studies have mentioned, pre-university students must synthesize internal factors such as personal preferences, cognitive abilities, and self-perceived competencies with external factors like job market trends and career prospects. This synthesis is crucial because it sets the foundation for future educational pursuits and long-term vocational success.

A core construct in understanding career decision-making is future time perspective (FTP). FTP is defined

as a cognitive-motivational construct that captures how individuals perceive and value their future. As mentioned by Carstensen (2006) and further detailed by Zacher and Frese (2009) and Park and Jung (2015), FTP involves a person's sense of purpose regarding future goals, the extent to which they anticipate future opportunities, and how they link current behaviors to future outcomes.

Perceived personal competence is another critical variable in this context. It refers to an individual's self-assessment of their ability to successfully perform tasks and overcome challenges. As discussed by Ryan and Deci (2000) and Deci and Ryan (2000), this construct is closely tied to self-efficacy, which is defined as the belief in one's own capability to execute the necessary actions to achieve specific outcomes.

Career decision-making itself is a complex process that entails evaluating one's interests, values, and competencies alongside available occupational opportunities. As highlighted by Hirschi and Lage (2007), successful career decision-making is characterized by a high degree of career decision-making self-efficacy confidence in one's ability to make choices that lead to fulfilling career outcomes.

The interplay between future time perspective and perceived personal competence is particularly salient for pre-university students. At this stage, students are in the midst of a critical transition where they must reconcile self-knowledge, academic performance, and evolving career aspirations.

The transition from secondary education to higher education represents a period of significant change and uncertainty for pre-university students. As noted by Saunders and Fogarty (2001) and Hirschi and Lage (2007), this phase is characterized by the need for self-discovery, academic adaptation, and strategic planning to navigate the complex landscape of future career opportunities. By integrating the constructs of future time perspective and perceived personal competence into the career decision-making process, educators and policymakers can gain deeper insights into how students prepare for and commit to their future careers.

2. Method

This study investigates the role of Future Time Perspective and Perceived Personal Competence in the career decision-making process of pre-university students. Using a qualitative research design and thematic analysis, the study aims to explore the interactive effects of Future Time Perspective and Perceived Personal Competence on career choices. The sample consists of 10 to 15 pre-university students between the ages of 15 and 18, selected through purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria require students to be in the 11th or 12th grade, have a consistent academic record, and have attended career counseling sessions or workshops. Students who are not proficient in English, have diagnosed cognitive or developmental disorders, or have already made firm career decisions are excluded from participation. Data collection involves in-depth, semi-structured interviews, each lasting 20 to 30 minutes, which will be audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically. The research follows ethical guidelines by ensuring informed consent from participants and their guardians, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and allowing voluntary participation with the right to withdraw. The expected outcome is to identify the interactive effects of Future Time Perspective and Perceived Personal Competence on career decision-making, contributing to the limited research on these constructs within the Goan cultural context. The findings will help develop tailored career guidance and counseling interventions that support students in making informed career choices.

3. Results

Themes	Sub Themes	Examples
1. Career Awareness and Planning	Frequency of Career Thoughts – Some students think daily about their future, while others reflect occasionally.	<p>“My future career, I think almost every day, every day, daily.”</p> <p>"Ever since I came into 12th standard, all I think about is my future career. I think about it at least two to three times a day."</p>
	Clarity of Career Goals – Some have well-defined goals (doctor, teacher, IAS officer), while others are still exploring options.	<p>"I think about my future career as an IAS officer regularly, almost daily."</p> <p>"My goals have always been changing since I was little... but now, I think I want to be a doctor."</p>
	Factors Influencing Career Decisions – Stability, financial security, personal interest, and societal expectations.	<p>"I believe grades are very important. They are crucial for my career."</p> <p>"I think about the pay and whether it will be of my liking."</p>
2. Self-Perception and Competence	Confidence Levels – Ranges from high self-confidence (8-9/10) to self-doubt and uncertainty (5-7/10).	<p>On a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate myself at a solid 8."</p> <p>"I think I am like a solid 6 or something."</p>
	Strengths and Abilities – Analytical thinking, creativity, communication, perseverance, technical skills (music, computers, sports analytics).	<p>"I am good at analytical thinking, problem-solving, and long-term goals."</p> <p>"I consider my strengths to be my ability to connect with</p>

		students and my creativity in teaching methods.”
	Challenges and Weaknesses – Procrastination, time management, public speaking, decision-making, screen time addiction.	<p>"Sometimes I struggle with time management. It's very hard to handle a large amount of information."</p> <p>"I procrastinate a lot. I say I will do it, but I keep delaying it."</p>
3. Influences on Career Choices	Parental and Family Influence – Some students feel supported, while others face pressure to follow specific career paths.	<p>"My father was my biggest inspiration for taking science. He was a chief engineer, and I wanted to pursue that."</p> <p>"My parents are supportive, but at the same time, they are also insecure about me going far for further studies."</p>
	Role of Teachers and Mentors – Guidance from teachers, school counselors, and inspirational figures.	"I find inspiration from my former music teachers and composers I admire. Their passion for music motivates me to inspire my own students."
	Media and External Factors – YouTube, role models, and exposure to successful individuals in desired fields.	<p>"Whenever I sit in front of a computer, I get really inspired to learn more about it."</p> <p>"I have been watching a lot of musicians in my life, and they have inspired me to take up music."</p>
4. Career Decision-Making Strategies	Passion vs. Practicality – Some prioritize passion-driven careers, others choose financial stability, and some prefer a mix of both.	"I prefer a mix of both something I like doing but also something that provides stability."

		"I will prefer a job that I enjoy doing because I love teaching."
	Alternative Career Plans – Backup career options in case the primary choice doesn't work out.	"If it doesn't work out, I will have to look for something else, but I haven't figured that out yet."
	Risk vs. Stability in Career Choices – Some believe in taking risks, while others prefer secure and stable jobs.	"I believe he should take the risk and follow his dreams instead of choosing a safe option."
5. Future Career Expectations	Short-Term (5 Years) – Pursuing higher education, skill development, and internships.	After my 12th, I plan to pursue higher education in psychology." "I will be focusing on skill development and getting relevant internships."
	Long-Term (10 Years) – Vision of success, professional growth, and achieving personal fulfillment.	"I imagine myself being successful, having my own business, and being financially independent."
	Work-Life Balance and Satisfaction – Seeking financial stability, happiness, and career satisfaction.	"I want to have a job that makes me happy but also provides financial stability."
6. Strategies for Success	Hard Work and Persistence – Commitment to continuous learning and skill-building.	"I know that if I work hard, I can achieve anything."
	Overcoming Challenges – Developing time management, reducing procrastination, and improving decision-making	"I am working on improving my time management by making daily to-do lists."

	skills.	
	Building Competence and Adaptability – Lifelong learning and adaptability in changing career landscapes.	"I believe in lifelong learning. I want to keep upgrading my skills no matter what field I choose."

4. Discussion

The study aimed to explore the qualitative inquiry into the understanding of the relation between Future Time Perspective, Perceived Personal Competence and Career Decision Making among Pre-University Students. The study was conducted among 14 individuals, 7 males and 7 females between the ages 16-18. The data was collected by using an interview method. Questionnaire was prepared by the investigators and was reviewed by experts who have knowledge in the field of study.

The selected participants were chosen based on the screening questions. All fourteen participants were briefed about the study and their roles before the interview, and their confidentiality has been maintained. The analysis of the data collected gathered several themes and sub themes. Six major themes have been derived from the analysis: 1) Career Awareness and Planning 2) Self-Perception and Competence 3) Influences on Career Choices 4) Career Decision-Making Strategies 5) Future Career Expectations 6) Strategies for Success. Career Awareness and Planning revealed variations in career thought frequency, clarity of goals, and factors like financial security and societal expectations. Self-Perception and Competence highlighted different confidence levels, identified strengths such as analytical thinking, and challenges like procrastination. Influences on Career Choices showed the role of parental support, guidance from teachers, and media exposure in shaping decisions. Career Decision-Making Strategies balanced passion with practicality, included backup plans, and weighed risk versus stability. Future Career Expectations focused on short-term goals like higher education, long-term aspirations for financial independence, and work-life balance. Lastly, Strategies for Success emphasized persistence, time management, and continuous learning to navigate career paths effectively.

Career Awareness and Planning

Frequency of Career Thoughts: Students varied in how frequently they thought about their future careers. Some reported thinking about it daily, while others reflected occasionally. Career-related thoughts indicate engagement in decision-making. The study on **future time** perspective and career decisions (Walker & Tracey, 2023) found that students with a strong FTP engage more frequently in career planning. Similarly, Adragna (2023) highlighted that students at academic risk may think less about careers, leading to lower aspirations.

Clarity of Career Goals: Some students had clear career goals (e.g., doctor, teacher, IAS officer), while others were still exploring options. The study on career adaptability and career anxiety (2023) found that higher adaptability leads to clearer career goals and lower anxiety. Additionally, the research on occupational knowledge and career certainty (2023) suggests that understanding career options enhances clarity, supporting the need for career education programs.

Factors Influencing Career Decisions: Students cited financial security, personal interest, and societal expectations as key influences in their career choices. Research on career adaptability and employability (2023) suggests that financial considerations impact career decisions, especially in competitive job

markets. The study on the role of motivation and FTP in career development (2023) found that intrinsic motivation (personal interest) and extrinsic factors (societal expectations) interact in shaping career paths.

Self-Perception and Competence

Confidence Levels: Students rated their confidence differently, with some feeling highly competent (8-9/10) and others experiencing self-doubt (5-7/10). Self-efficacy is crucial in career decision-making. The study on self-esteem, self-efficacy, and career difficulties (2023) found that students with high self-efficacy face fewer challenges in making career choices. Additionally, Bandura's self-efficacy theory (2001) supports the idea that confidence influences persistence in career exploration.

Strengths and Abilities: Students identified strengths such as analytical thinking, creativity, and perseverance. The study on competencies and career preparedness (2023) found that career success is linked to strengths like critical thinking and problem-solving. Similarly, the research on personal competencies and market value of occupations (2023) emphasizes that certain skills enhance employability.

Challenges and Weaknesses: Common challenges included procrastination, time management, and difficulty in decision-making. The study on interest and competence flexibility in career decisions (2023) found that decision-making difficulties stem from uncertainty and lack of adaptability. Research on psychological flourishing and career difficulties (2023) suggests that students with strong emotional well-being manage these challenges better.

Influences on Career Choices

Parental and Family Influence: Some students felt supported in their career choices, while others faced pressure to pursue specific careers. Adragna (2023) found that parental influence on career choices is complex, with some students following family expectations while others resist them. Research on career adaptability and career anxiety (2023) shows that perceived parental support can reduce career uncertainty.

Role of Teachers and Mentors: Teachers, school counselors, and mentors played an essential role in guiding students' career decisions. The study on career decision-making self-efficacy (2023) found that mentorship positively influences career confidence. Research on educational policies and career preparedness (2023) suggests that structured career guidance programs improve students' readiness for future careers.

Media and External Factors: Students mentioned being inspired by YouTube, role models, and professionals in their desired fields. The study on media influence and career choices (2023) found that online resources expose students to diverse career paths. Research on self-perceived employability (2023) suggests that external influences shape career aspirations and self-confidence.

Career Decision-Making Strategies

Passion vs. Practicality: Some students prioritized passion, others financial stability, and some aimed for a balance of both. Research on motivation and career development (2023) found that career satisfaction is highest when passion aligns with financial security. The study on career adaptability and employability (2023) supports balancing both factors for sustainable career success.

Alternative Career Plans: Many students had backup career options in case their primary choice did not work out. The study on career adaptability and career transitions (2023) found that students with contingency plans experience less career-related stress. Research on self-perceived competency and

employability (2023) supports the need for multiple career pathways.

Risk vs. Stability in Career Choices: Some students believed in taking career risks, while others preferred job security. The study on FTP and career anxiety (2023) found that students with a strong future orientation are more willing to take career risks. Research on career decision-making self-efficacy (2023) suggests that risk-takers often exhibit higher confidence in their abilities.

Future Career Expectations

Short-Term Goals: Students planned to pursue higher education, skill development, and internships. The study on career preparedness and employability (2023) found that structured skill development improves job prospects. Research on career adaptability and FTP (2023) highlights the importance of planning early career steps.

Long-Term Goals: Students envisioned financial independence, professional growth, and personal fulfillment. Research on career maturity and FTP (2023) found that students who align present actions with long-term goals are more successful. The study on motivation and future career development (2023) supports the importance of long-term planning.

Work-Life Balance and Satisfaction: Students aimed for careers that provided both stability and happiness. The study on career satisfaction and well-being (2023) found that work-life balance is a crucial factor in long-term career fulfillment. Research on psychological flourishing and career decisions (2023) suggests that emotional well-being enhances career satisfaction.

Strategies for Success

Hard Work and Persistence:

Students emphasized the importance of continuous effort and resilience in achieving career success. The study on career preparedness and perceived employability (2023) found that students who actively engage in career development efforts have higher employability. Research on self-efficacy and career success (2023) suggests that persistence is a key trait in overcoming career-related challenges.

Overcoming Challenges: Students worked on improving time management, reducing procrastination, and enhancing decision-making skills. Research on career adaptability and decision-making difficulties (2023) found that students who develop structured coping mechanisms experience smoother career transitions. The study on psychological flourishing and career confidence (2023) highlights that emotional resilience plays a role in overcoming career obstacles.

Building Competence and Adaptability: Students recognized the need for lifelong learning and skill development to stay competitive in the evolving job market. The study on competency flexibility and career decision-making (2023) found that individuals with high adaptability navigate career uncertainties more effectively. Research on self-perceived competency and perceived employability (2023) supports the idea that continuous skill-building enhances job prospects.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that Future Time Perspective (FTP) plays a significant role in career decision-making among pre-university students in India. Students who frequently think about their future careers and set clear goals tend to exhibit a more structured approach to decision-making. Those with a strong sense of the future actively engage in career exploration, develop contingency plans, and balance passion with practical considerations. However, some students struggle with uncertainty and lack of

clarity, indicating that while FTP is influential, it does not guarantee decisive career choices for all individuals.

Personal Competence was found to be a key factor in career decision-making. Students who displayed higher confidence levels, recognized their strengths, and effectively managed challenges were better equipped to make informed career choices. Conversely, students who faced difficulties such as procrastination and self-doubt experienced greater career uncertainty. The ability to navigate obstacles, develop necessary skills, and maintain self-belief appeared to enhance decision-making effectiveness.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that Personal Competence moderates the relationship between FTP and career decision-making. While a strong future orientation provides a framework for career planning, it is the level of personal competence that determines whether students can act on their future goals. Those with high competence are able to translate long-term aspirations into concrete actions, while those with lower competence struggle to bridge the gap between future intentions and immediate steps. This suggests that FTP alone is insufficient—students need the confidence, skills, and resilience to act on their career plans effectively.

Overall, the study highlights the complex interplay between future orientation, self-perceived abilities, and career choices. While a strong sense of the future and personal competence contribute positively to career decision-making, external influences and individual challenges shape how effectively students navigate their career paths. These findings underscore the importance of career counseling, mentorship, and structured skill development programs to help students enhance their competence and make well-informed career decisions.

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