

A STUDY OF MALAYSIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAVERS' DILEMMA IN CHOOSING A VARIETY OF COURSES AMONG FORM 6 STUDENTS IN PERLIS MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *Students who graduate from high school each year must choose the path they want to take. Since they must choose what they want to achieve in their lives, they must make this decision. Students will feel pressured by their results because the course they choose will determine their future careers. Some people worry about their decision, while others feel confident about it. The decision-making process needs to take into account several elements. Six SPTM students were given a questionnaire to determine the criteria that had been stated before. Following the analysis of the interviews, the researcher identified the following aspects that influence the decision-making process: role models, interests, and family influence. The findings of the study show that family influence is the main factor influencing students' decisions to enroll in a degree and they are more likely to do so. This research aims to inform and provide guidance to students through activities such as career orientation and course planning in this way students can determine the appropriate courses allocated for them.*

Keywords: *Form 6, High School, Dilemma*

Introduction

The final year of school is the most important time in a student's life. The last year one can claim to be a high school student. In addition to the numerous important tasks at hand, such as finishing projects and significant final exams, students are under a great deal of strain because this will be the pivotal moment in their lives when their future professions are determined. Now is the time for them to get serious and choose which university courses will best prepare them for their intended job path. Numerous elements come into play when making this choice, and they have the potential to have both positive and negative effects. It is no easy task because the decision they make will impact their lives for the next four to five years, if not longer, and that decision alone has the potential to be either a rewarding or traumatic experience. That being stated, there is a close connection between this problem and the unemployment rate. The majority of high school students make poor course selections, which raises the rate of giving up studying and also unemployment among recent graduates.

For students who have a Certificate of Education (SPM), Form 6 is an extension of their education that they may choose to study at the pre-university level. The Ministry of Education fully controls the sixth form in government schools (KPM). Students take the Malaysian Higher Secondary Certificate (STPM), which is administered by the Malaysian Examinations Council (MPM), at the end of sixth form. Among the 24 subjects available in Form 6, there are two majors available: science and art. Tingkatan 6. (n.d.). KPM. Retrieved April 2, 2024,

According to the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), the rebranding of Form Six colleges as pre-university institutions needs to go beyond "superficial" modifications. Syed Hussain Syed Husman, the organization's president, stated that a major overhaul of the curriculum is necessary to give STPM graduates the abilities that employers are looking for. He told FMT, alluding to the internet of things, that "generally, employers require computer or tech-related skills, as many jobs require some form of interaction with technology, especially the emerging technologies related to artificial intelligence and IoT."

Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek said with immediate effect, the education ministry has granted Form 6 college principals liberty to handle the student recruiting process. Minister Fadhlina Sidek stated that instead of waiting for an offer from the ministry as in the past, principals would now be able to directly extend offers to prospective students who require the chance to pursue their education. "After the Pewaris Generasi Madani gathering opened at Sekolah Menengah Sains Sultan Mahmud here today, the principals can find Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) school leavers who have not been given a place for higher studies without having to wait for an offer from the ministry," she said to reporters. Furthermore, according to Fadhlina, the freedom given also ensures that B40 students get more access to Form 6 coursework. Form 6 college principals given autonomy to recruit students (2023, July 23). Free Malaysia Today. Retrieved April 2, 2024.

Thus, this study aims to explore the factors that influence the decision making of students when it comes to choosing a variety of courses and to explore the reason behind their decision.

Problem Statement

The university's public courses are offered to three to five times as many students as there are core course units, such as physics, mathematics, computer science and chemistry. The reason is that students struggle to keep up with difficult content. Students participating in post-secondary education programs need to develop their social skills, self-control and communication abilities to continue their studies as these are ongoing issues that arise every year (Utusan Malaysia, 2024).

Nevertheless, selecting a subject for the next level of school is crucial since it will affect the pupils in the long run. As stated by Nadzri Mohammad and Abu Osman MdTap (2002) in Nurzatil et al. (2015), the proliferation of educational institutions providing a wide range of competitive, high-quality programs targeted at luring students has also made the process of choosing locations and programs more challenging. The information a person possesses about a career has a direct bearing on how accurately they choose a course. As a result, selecting the correct courses and university is crucial for advancing education since it will have a lasting effect on students because they will be studying for extended periods of time. It covers both the cost of studying and the adjustment of the campus environment. It is crucial to choose the appropriate study programmer depending on one's interests, demands, and location of study in order to succeed in one's chosen field of study and learn new things.

Many factors affect students, and each student's perception of the importance of this aspect varies (Payne, 2003). He also emphasizes a pragmatic reasoning approach, which highlights how this notion of opportunity tends to limit this impressionable brain. There are conflicting data regarding the timeliness of decisions and the factors that influence them, including family history, ethnicity, and attitudes toward education. In the same vein, Maxwell et al. (2000) points out that various factors are considered when choosing a university course. The findings are consistent with a study conducted by Borchert (2002), which found that an individual's preferences and surroundings are considered when determining their job route. Additionally, it bears similarities to a study by Akhtar and Aziz (2011) that discusses students' reliance on peers or parents while choosing a subject. Assertion that people feel conflicted about whether to follow their passions or their chances of earning a stable income. Parallel to the statement of Cook in 2016, the influence of parents, including their tastes, expectations, encouragement, and inclinations, can have great results. Because they know that is what their parents want, most kids choose their courses just to appease their parents. Students only obey their parents' requests for fear of disappointing them (Sani, 2017).

Literature Review

A Description of Malaysian Higher Education.

According to Pui Ching in 2023, Malaysia has over a million students enrolled in public and private universities, private higher education institutions, polytechnics, and community colleges. With a total enrollment of 1,207,593, there are 20 Public Universities, 389 Private Higher Education Institutions, 36 polytechnics, and 104 community colleges in 2021. Since PUs and PrHEIs have significantly higher enrollment than polytechnics and community institutions, this research concentrates on them. For the year 2021, PUs and PrHEIs will account for forty-nine percent and forty-three percent, respectively, of all student enrollment. The remaining 7% and 1% attend community colleges and polytechnics, respectively Pui Chong (2023). There are now many distinct options for higher education due to the wide range of schools that vary in age, location, and enrollment. Unlike private institutions, PUs is financed by the government, therefore their costs are subsidised, making them accessible to a wider audience.

Factors that influence the decision making of students when it comes to choosing a variety of courses.

Peers, families, and parents could have an impact on the choice. Some students might be confused by these factors, which, regrettably, could result in their making bad decisions (Fuller, 2019). Parents, however, are the ones who determine their child's future job route among peers and family (Rahawarin et al., 2020; Šimunović & Babarović, 2020). Additionally, it is said that students typically select careers that are dominant in their families. Students look for professional paths that would enable them to work in the future in occupations that accommodate the demands of their various social and economic contexts (Bao, n.d.; Owusu, 2020; Trang & Hoa, n.d.). They have to work in different environments and leave their homes for some of those jobs.

According to various research (Harahap, Amanah, et al., 2021; Harahap, Shaikh, et al., 2022), students' selection of a university to further their education is influenced by the calibre of their professors. This means that when choosing a university, society, parents, and potential students should consider the calibre of the lecturers, who should be highly intelligent, knowledgeable, and skilled in science. This is because the calibre of the lecturers' instruction will determine the level of knowledge that students should expect to gain from their studies.

Malaysia Educational System

Four hierarchical levels make up Malaysia's highly centralized education administration: federal, state, district, and school, which is the lowest level. The Ministry of Education (MOE), which consists of the Curriculum Development Center, the school division, and the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (MES), is responsible for making important decisions and policies. Just like most other countries, Malaysians complete an 11-year academic system module where all decisions are made for students based solely on their academic performance. Students are required to study subjects that may or may not be interesting and take both major and minor exams, which are used to measure their academic achievement.

With over thirty years of expertise in the field of international education, Malaysia's distinct and well-organized higher education system provides you with the chance to pursue an international degree at a competitive cost. More than 100 public and private universities, including international branches of renowned universities from the US, UK, Australia, and Ireland, are located in Malaysia. The latter are provided either through a relationship with a Malaysian university or at their own abroad branch campus. First is Governmental Establishments University. Under the jurisdiction of Malaysia's Ministry of Education, public institutions are higher education establishments that receive government funding. Generally speaking, they fall into one of three main categories. In addition to undergraduate and graduate degrees, pre-university foundation year and certificate programs are occasionally offered by public universities. They fall into three main categories: comprehensive universities, focused universities, and research universities. As of right now, twenty such establishments exist. Community colleges and polytechnics that provide certificate and diploma programs. Public colleges that provide studies at the certificate and diploma levels. Second is Private Colleges. You can now choose from a wide variety of private universities that provide courses at every academic level that are on par with those offered by public universities. Universities frequently conduct substantial postgraduate research programmes, offer degrees in their names, and have larger campuses and student amenities than colleges. Another is Colleges at Universities. University colleges typically have smaller campuses and fewer students enrolled than universities. Private universities typically offer all levels of programming, albeit they typically have fewer faculties and prioritize undergraduate over graduate studies. After graduating from a respectable international university, students typically have the option of spending all of their time in Malaysia or just part of it there. Besides that, Certified Training Facilities also in Malaysia Education System. Institutions certified with the Department of Skills Development that offer training programs to give students particular technical and vocational skills are known as accredited skills training centers. These courses, which are approved by the Malaysian government, offer students the opportunity to pursue certifications recognized across the globe by organizations like TAFE (Australia), Confederation of Tourism, Hotel and Catering Management (UK), LCCI (UK), and City and Guilds (UK), among other international and professional associations. Language Institute, these types of educational institutions mostly provide language lessons, while some also provide computer literacy and other skill training. Last Malaysian colleges are typically privately owned establishments without the authority to grant degrees on their own. Nevertheless, they are typically permitted to provide degrees from other establishments, for example, through twinning agreements with respectable international universities in the USA, UK, and Australia. A-levels from the GCE, ACCA, ICAEW, CLP, and CAT are among the professional bodies whose qualifications are offered by some colleges. Even if the size of the campus and the number of students may be less, colleges often have first-rate facilities on par with universities and university institutions. Colleges, like universities, are limited to providing programmes that have been approved by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. (Malaysia Higher Education in Brief 2023).

Methodology

Research Design

The main focus of this study work was on the student factors that affect their decision-making when selecting different courses. Furthermore, it appeared that the qualitative research design would best serve the investigation's goals. To learn more about the subject in-depth, a case study is employed to understand the reasons behind students' experiences and decisions. Sixth grade STPM students from a Malaysian school were selected to take part in the interview phase of this study.

Sample of the Study

The sixth-grade STPM students who responded to the interview questionnaires in this study came from a variety of family backgrounds and expressed interest in selecting a degree-level course. The research paper was done at SMK Tengku Sulaiman, Perlis with all of the participants being students from geography classes. Six STPM students were chosen for this study, and the researcher conducted interviews with them to learn more about the elements that affect students' decisions to choose between different courses and the rationale behind those choices. The table below tabulates the backgrounds of the participants.

Respondents' Background

Respondent	Age	Gender	Area of Interest
A	19	Male	Degree In business
B	19	Male	Degree In Sports
C	19	Male	Degree In Sports
D	19	Male	Degree In Safety
E	19	Female	Degree In Education
F	19	Female	Degree in business

The researcher employed semi-structured interviews as the study's instruments and a qualitative technique. The respondents are free to share their ideas and opinions about the courses they would like to take at the university level, the factors that went into choosing those courses, and the rationale behind those factors

The interview question in this study aimed to elicit the relevant information. Thus, the questions for the interview are separated into two sessions. First section of the interview question is Sharing personal background of the education and the courses they want to choose for further studies. Second section is focus on the factor in choosing a variety of the courses and what the reason behind the decision is.

The interview questions are therefore divided into two sections: 1 and 2. Parts for the questions during the interview:

Section 1 of the interview question:

- Sharing personal background of the education and the courses they want to choose for further studies.

Section 2 of the interview

- Focus on the factor in choosing a variety of the courses and what the reason behind the decision is.

Findings

This chapter examines the topic of the interview as well as the questions and responses provided by the interviewees. evaluating their perspectives on the courses they wish to take further, as well as their educational background and knowledge about future studies. It is vital to research the benefits and drawbacks of selecting the courses. As a result, the interview was done, and thematic analysis was used to identify and classify the common themes.

- Theme 1: Having Prior knowledge of the courses they want to take in degree level.
- Theme 2: Family becomes a major influence in choosing the courses
- Theme 3: Awareness of advantages and disadvantages by taking the course.

The information or data for this study were gathered through an interview session, based on the questions posed to a chosen group of interviewers. As a result, the interview with these six individuals was recorded, taped, transcribed, and put in the correct order.

Theme 1: Having prior knowledge of the courses they want to take in degree level.

Six of the students knew about choosing the course at the degree level. Based on the interview, all students mentioned which course they wanted to choose for further studies.

Respondent A:

"...I want to continue in business. I want to continue in Degree in business"

Respondent B:

"..... in the study. I'm targeting it if possible. I want to find a field related to sports that I'm interested in. If I think I do something I'm not interested in, that thing becomes a burden to me. Further study in sport degree. I don't care about promises related to sports. Deities or physios"

Respondent C:

".....education, I don't know what to call it, science. But I already entered here so can't, degree in education right? Yes, education."

Respondent D:

".....all I know is that I want to enter UPNM. Because I asked in the army. Especially TUDM. I do martial arts, taekwondo, and badminton."

Respondent E:

".....I want to participate in a sports-related degree."

Respondent F:

".....ahh Business management. Business management. Good. It's a degree, eh. Degree, right? Yes, yes. Okay"

All students have a goal of what courses that they want to continue for further studies. They have an aim with courses that they want to continue studies. When choosing a course

and making important decisions, students will take certain factors into account. Galliot and Graham (2014) suggested four assessment components, such as personal resources, educational resources, and present functioning in terms of both subjective and objective measurements, to improve students' capacity to choose a job. Almost all Malaysian secondary-level students have the desire to continue their studies at IPT. This is the last chance to get quality work throughout the student's learning period Bakar et al. (2012). Accordingly, an important step that needs to be taken to confirm what they believe is true is the development of a solid HEI.

Choosing a course can be challenging for students because many variables influence their choices. Future career choices are one of the most important that high school students must make. Martin (2010) Their academic success can be hindered by poor course selection. Course choices can be difficult for students. According to Cook (2016), research findings support the notion that people are divided between following their passions and the possibility of a stable job that goes with it.

Theme 2: Family becomes a major influence in choosing the courses

Four students agree family becomes a major influence in choosing the courses. Based on the interview, four students mentioned that their family members influenced them in choosing the courses.

Respondent A:

"..... besides that, the factor that influences me is my own family, that is, my brother is also involved in the course I mentioned earlier."

Respondent B:

".....continue the Degree in business Continue family legacy Business family."

Respondent C:

".....because of my mother. She is a merchant. It's like a cake business. So, She told me to ask to trade as well so that it is easy to get a job like that. How can you know a little about this business? Maybe you can make it bigger later."

Respondent D:

;".....my sister encouraged me to continue in the field of sports because my sister is also in that field."

The influence of parents, including their tastes, expectations, encouragement, and inclinations, can have great results. Because they know that's what their parents want, most kids choose their courses just to appease their parents. Students just give in to their parents' requests because they dread disappointing them. (Sani, 2017). While students value their input, it's crucial to remember that they must make the choice that best fits their abilities to avoid long-term difficulties (Afterschool.my, 2017). Chen and Liew (2015) propose that parental expectations and guidance have a significant role in shaping their child's choice of postsecondary education.

Theme 3: Awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of taking the course.

Six of them knew the advantages and disadvantages. Based on the interview, all students mentioned which course they want to choose for further studies will have pros and cons.

Respondent A:

Advantages

“.....benefit. Sports education. Yes. Huh. I will do it myself. We are not interested in this thing, we have to make nails with a craftsman and people knock on them, so if we do things that we are interested in, we don't have to wait for people to knock on us. We have already made it clear so you can do your own. After that, I liked my experience, I think there are many reasons, what kind of issue, what do you want to do if the engine is bent, what do you want to do.. There is more, will make it easier for me to make it easier for you because I feel like it I rarely see it but I can still remember it”.

Disadvantages

“.....competition which may be many competitions which may be many, people who want to know us are slow to get take time because people want to be coaches because our people don't have a record like taking this team to the championship with this thing”

Respondent B:

Advantages

“.....so far I have knowledge about business. Opportunity itself If no one works. Can work alone can offer as well.”

Disadvantages

“.....I think the cost is Higher Cost. The cost is high, things are all increasing, right. For competition in terms of Competition from outside, right now there is a lot of business”.

Respondent C:

Advantages

“.....goodness like this is opening a business”.

Disadvantages

“.....it's also high risk if it's business, most of the time doing business has to be good at marketing. Because there are many people in this business. A lot of competition”.

Respondent D:

Advantages

“.....ha, yes, has finished the degree, easy to get a job, maybe”.

Disadvantage

“.....disadvantages, for example, if you get like Sabah Sarawak, it will be difficult to stay away from your family”.

Respondent E:

Advantages

“.....okay so, the future is guaranteed”

Disadvantage

“.....there's a reason I can't find another job for that job”.

Respondent F:

Advantages

“..... easy to get a job. The future is assured”.

Disadvantage

“.....don't have any negative impact in degree.”

Making informed course selections is critical to academic success in college. In college, students have a wide selection of courses to choose from, and they are responsible for making their study schedule. For them, following their path and arriving at their destination is a dream come true. Realizing those wishes requires knowledge and information, including understanding one's abilities and limitations as well as the conditions required to achieve the objective (Martin, 2010).

Conclusion

Parental involvement in a student's education may hurt the student, making it more difficult for them to select the course they had intended to take. To force that pupil to meet a particular academic standard, they can persuade their parents to provide them the freedom to make decisions. Instead of placing pressure on them in a way that makes them feel compelled, it can help them reach their full potential. Form 6 students face a complex graduation dilemma that includes multiple barriers and contributing variables. Prioritizing interests, abilities, and long-term objectives is important for students as they work through the decision-making process not only because of family influence and ask to do so they must follow it. Furthermore, filling the knowledge gap with better guidance and counseling services may help people make better decisions for their future degree courses. By explaining to parents, the value of letting children make independent decisions based on their interests and strengths, we can reduce unnecessary pressure and create a nurturing atmosphere for our kids. By providing Form 6 students with the necessary tools, educational institutions may help them overcome the leavers' dilemma and make decisions that are in line with their own goals and abilities.

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