A Comparative Study of Students' Perceptions about Career Options in Art & Design

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Abstract: *This research aims to examine secondary and higher secondary students' perceptions about career options related to Art & Design studies. A comparative study approach is conducted between the secondary and higher secondary students who opted for Art & Design and the prospective students of Art & Design. Each data set includes 200 respondents from both types of students, making a data set of 400 respondents. Based on constructionism and symbolic, philosophical assumptions, quantitative research methodology has been induced to complete this research. The data is gathered through structured telephonic interviews to analyze the responses. For this research, a checklist was designed that included the same type of questions from both types of students. The results show that the students, specifically in the context of Pakistan, look forward to being employed in a lavish environment through seeking professional degrees apart from whether the field they are choosing would win their interest. This study recommends researching the institutes where Art & design is not a part of the educational programs to transmit the attention of authorities towards it.*

Key Words: Career Choices, Employment Opportunities, Art & Design Students, Pakistan, Art & Design Study

Introduction

Art is a means of expressing emotions that have suffered from serious issues. The reason is not only rooted in an individual's capacity but also in societal standards. Religious considerations and socio-economic placement have also slowed down the promotion of the culture and traditions of different societies through artistic expression. This societal complexity leads to a contrast, among which Art & Designs studies are perceived as achievable by the elite class only while on the other side, it would remain undesirable due to socio-economic considerations for middle and lower-middle classes. Hence, it would not be wrong to say that talented young people mostly prefer not to continue Art as a career option despite having enough capabilities due to socio-economic status (Baqai & Siddiqui, 2020). In Pakistan, religious beliefs also hinder pursuing art & design studies as a professional career. Art education was considered 'in service of nation-building efforts' or limited towards 'crafting' from its origin. Previous research has highlighted that instead of having capabilities and

passion, many young students could not achieve a successful career despite having the necessary motivation and skills (Baqai & Siddiqui, 2020).

Art & Design studies have been indistinct in Pakistan; there is still a need to work on developing awareness among the students. The majority of the population prioritize other disciplines over Art, considering it a lesser growth option than the other technical education options. While on the other side, Art & Design career options are perceived only for the elite class. This demands a need to develop useful insights for understanding these concepts, particularly from the student's perceptions. This study will help to identify those factors that affect students' perceptions before selecting a professional career after secondary & higher secondary levels of education. Additionally, this study has explored those factors that would help to encourage students in developing their perceptions regarding Art & Design studies and careers. Lastly, this study has compared and analyzed perceptions among

students who opt and who do not opt for a career in Art & Design studies as their professional career.

Career choices are the students' decision-making criteria to opt for a professional field that helps them to meet their individual needs (Gokuladas, 2010). Other than the competencies and self-assessment of individual skills, the decision-making criteria refer to the field of activity and depend on individual preferences for different career choices. According to Carpenter and Foster (1977), career choice depends on three broad factors: extrinsic, intrinsic, and interpersonal. Extrinsic factors include labor market conditions, salaries & wages, job security, employer brand, job availability, remuneration, and prestige of the job (Gokuladas, 2010). These factors help to develop perceptions about career choices for future roles. Intrinsic factors include those factors related to job and profession, such as working conditions, growth opportunities, authority and control, innovativeness and professional challenges, the content of the work, training, and development opportunities. Lastly, interpersonal factors consist of encouragement from personal relations like family, relatives, and friends. These factors also affect early exposure to a profession (Willis, 2009).

Students' perceptions of their career differ from culture to culture, their future aims, and their field of studies and industry. Previous experiences and associated values further influence perceptions of students' career choices in Art & Design studies. Willis et al. (2009) rearranged these factors into four main categories: personal identity, social, instrumental, and personal experiences. These four main categories include gender, ethnicity, family, professional status, job security, vocational training, and personal experience-related factors.

According to Felton et al. (1994), the business students in the United States who opt for an accounting career are less affected by intrinsic factors, for example, creativity, autonomy, and intellectual challenges in task completion. Instead, they are affected by extrinsic factors related to long-term remuneration and job market opportunities. Felton et al. (1994) also analyzed that those business students who opt for a non-accounting career are more concerned with intrinsic factors than the earnings, remuneration, and compensation as extrinsic factors. In another study by McGraw (2012), agricultural economics students' career choice is affected by previous professional experiences, career goals, skills,

and related factors. This combines intrinsic factors related to the job and extrinsic factors related to salaries and income streams. Moreover, the students who belong to rural areas are more influenced by extrinsic and interpersonal factors than students from an urban background. Gokuladas (2010) observed the differences across different study fields, particularly in engineering: computer science and Information Technology. Students belonging to this branch were more influenced by extrinsic and intrinsic factors while choosing a career in ICT, unlike non-computer science and IT students for whom an ICT career depends on interpersonal factors. Another survey on Art & Design students' career choices found that it is mostly influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. This includes those motivators for their choice that cover opportunities for favorable employment prospects, work, professional status, working conditions, and flexibility (Bayri, 2010). Art & Design students also identify initial coverage to Art & Design work as a factor that affects the choice of an Art & Design career. In particular, personal links or relations with an artist also play a dominant role as an interpersonal factor for selecting Art & Design career. Students can explain their career choice decision related to the rational economic model of higher education (Bayri, 2010).

According to Greenbank (2011), students' choice for university education in a particular area is mostly dependent on improved employability. Therefore, the university education choice, specifically related to the study area, is determined for students' preferences for their future career options (Ng et al., 2008; Kopanidis & Shaw, 2014). The universities' learning paths and specializations help shape the students' career pathways (Anana and Nique, 2010). University education in science & technology and business is more oriented towards employability and equips students with job-specific skills and practical knowledge. In contrast, education related to arts, humanities, and social sciences is more oriented towards increased learning activities (Bennett, 2004). A survey conducted on Australian students enrolled in three main areas that are business; social sciences, Art & design; sciences and technologies, show that students are selecting university study programs that are based on their specific values, and those values are linked with different career pathways (Kopanidis et Shaw, 2014). However, the prospective university student's option for a particular study program results from

their interest and career objectives (Kopanidis et Shaw, 2014). The decision of a particular university study program must be considered an initial predictor of student's career decisions, particularly in vocational and professional fields that include health, medical, or accounting but not in the study of Art & Design (Kopanidis & Shaw, 2014; Willis et al. 2009).

In a developing country like Pakistan, the evolution of art education began when John Lockwood Kipling founded Mayo School of Industrial Art, Lahore, in 1857, the only art school that later became a part of Pakistan. This school was renovated and renamed the National College of Arts (NCA) after independence. For a long period, NCA served as the only reputable art college in the field. Although Karachi is the country's main city, the first art school here was built in 1964 and was entitled Karachi School of Arts. Later on, art departments were built in different universities across the country. In Pakistan, Art education is not a top priority. Therefore, the realization in the implementation phase mostly remains uncertain and faces sudden changes. A major perception among the public about Art & Design studies is that art education is for the rich and elite. Students from underprivileged areas usually fight continuously on social and economic fronts. This study helps to identify factors that encourage students to opt for a career in Art & Design by finding effective solutions for barriers they face. This will help them develop a positive perception of Art & Design students for every class of society.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the different factors that affect students' perceptions before selecting a professional career at secondary & higher secondary levels of education
2. To explore the factors that encourage students to opt for a career in Art & Design
3. To compare and analyze perceptions among students who opt and who do not opt for a career in Art & Design

Research Questions

1. What are students' perceptions regarding Art & Design studies before choosing their professional career at secondary & higher secondary levels of education?

2. What are Art & Design students' perceptions and expectations from their prospective careers?
3. Which factors differentiate students' perceptions while deciding for a career in Art & Design?

Methodology

The current research is based on constructionism and the symbolic, philosophical assumptions to design the research methodology. The quantitative research methodology was applied for this research. This research design helps in understanding the similarities and differences of both types of students. It helps make assumptions from the participants' responses and their meaning (Merriam, 2002). A checklist was designed as a data collection strategy to gather responses from the prospective students who will start a career for their professional studies and from the students who have enrolled in their chosen career in Art and Design. The data was collected through structured telephonic interviews, and the responses were gathered in Google forms (due to covid restrictions and shift to virtual learning environment), which were further analyzed through frequency test of SPSS. The collected data was analyzed in comparing the responses of both categories of students to see if their expectations were achieved or not. The student's perception helps to explore those factors that encourage them to adopt a specific career. Lahore being the capital of the province and one of the biggest cities in terms of urbanization and population of the country, was chosen as the research site for the existing research. The prospective students were selected from different colleges who had just finished their exams and were waiting to get admissions in different higher educational institutes. The current students who enrolled in Art & Design studies were chosen from various Art & Design educational institutes operating across the city. Personal references in the various art institutes help in accessing the participants.

Sample Size

The convenient sampling technique was used for this research. This was the most appropriate method to collect data as due to covid educational institutions were closed and it was difficult to access students. In total, four hundred students took part in the study; the sample was divided into two groups of two hundred

each, one was the group of students who were not interested in pursuing their graduate studies in the Art & Design sector while the same number of students who wanted to get admission in Art & Design education and wanted to build a career in the Art & Design sector.

Results

SPSS was used to analyze the responses collected from both categories of students. A frequency test was run on each question of both checklists, and the results were analyzed based on some similarities and differences in the existing data. These results lead towards important information that is further discussed in the next section.

The data after analysis highlighted seven key areas that do the current research deep enough to understand the students' perceptions and make a clear difference among those students who are going to start their graduate studies and those currently enrolled in Art & Design education. These key points include first & second choice of career, source of inspiration, types of job and careers after Art & Design education, financial earnings, Art & design study scope, and scholarship requirements. The table given below shows the results derived from both categories of students, and the maximum responses for each question in different questions are also analyzed below:

Table 1. Result of Options that were Selected by the Maximum Participants against each Checklist Item

Statements	Responses	Percentages	Statements	Responses
	Prospective Students	Current Students		Prospective Students
What is your first choice of career?	Other (social work, teaching, business and civil service etc.)	Art & Design	What is your first choice of career?	Other (social work, teaching, business and civil service etc.)
What is your second choice of career?	Other (social work, teaching, business and civil service etc.)	Art & Design	What is your second choice of career?	Other (social work, teaching, business and civil service etc.)
What / who inspired you to consider your career choices?	Family & friends	Myself	What / who inspired you to consider your career choices?	Family & friends
How do you see a career in Art and Design?	Yes (See a scope)	Other (preferred own business)	How do you see a career in Art and Design?	Yes (See a scope)
What type of jobs / careers comes in your mind regarding Art & Design sector?	Self-employment/ art teacher	No job prospects	What type of jobs / careers comes in your mind regarding Art & Design sector?	Self-employment/ art teacher
How do you compare financial perks/earnings in Art & Design careers compared to your chosen career?	No idea	No idea	How do you compare financial perks/earnings in Art & Design careers compared to your chosen career?	No idea
Will you be interested in getting scholarship opportunities for Art & Design career qualifications?	Yes	Yes	Will you be interested in getting scholarship opportunities for Art & Design career qualifications?	Yes

Discussion

In modern times, career choice is a significant matter of concern for students. The world is upgrading speedily (Bennett, 2004). To survive with this accelerated advancement, a student must be completely aware of their true career path. Especially in the context of Pakistani students, only a few

professional degrees are informed to them from the very beginning stages of their education. Under this foisted scenario, the ability of students to explore their career paths themselves terminates. The mental creativity and self-confidence of the students conceal (Bennett, 2004). From the primary level of education till the higher secondary level of studies, their minds lack a clear path of achieving goals. Furthermore, the concept of timely career counselling of the students is considered to be unimportant in this society (Bayri, G. 2010). Under the aforementioned review of the literature, the field of Art & Design is also among one those fields in which the students are never or very rarely raised awareness. Students are of the view that the field of Art & Design has professional careers, unlike the professional careers of the renowned fields in Pakistan, and they would not be able to win a handsome job after completing their graduate studies in this specific field. Moreover, the role of inspirations to mention here is also noteworthy. Mostly, the students seek inspiration from their family and friends. Unluckily only a countable number of students remain able to find any such person related to the field of Art & design which reduces their motivation towards choosing this field (Greenbank, 2011). Our research shows that the current students of Art & design only chose this field on the basis of their self-inspiration. They neither get inspired from anyone nor did they think much about their scope in future professional careers.

Besides, the students run after the scope in a particular field in our society. They lack so much proper guidance that ends their choice for the field of Art & design (Kopanidis & Shaw, 2014). Another important aspect that is disclosed during our research is the finance factor. The field of Art & design holds creativity where students are assigned several doable projects, which makes it an expensive degree than the others. Our findings show that the current students of Art & design are mostly of the view that they will have to acquire their own business after the completion of it or they will have to launch their own brand. The expensive nature, less financial earnings and doubtful professional scope of the field of Art & design cease the involvement of the students in it (Kopanidis & Shaw, 2014). In a nutshell, there is a dire need for appropriate career counselling of the students from the beginning. Students should be given the freedom of choosing their career paths which makes them capable of winning their self-confidence. The role of family members and career counsellors should be of supportive nature for the student. Students should be raised awareness especially about the field of Art & Design. The artistic features of Art & design distinguish it from the other fields (Kopanidis & Shaw, 2014). Lastly, our research directs that the involvement of states and institutes in raising awareness among students about Art & Design is also significant. Students should be provided with some kind of scholarships which reduces the financial burden and expensive nature of choosing their career paths in Art & design and increases the enrollment of prospective students in it consequently, promoting the growth and capabilities of the students to present their countries on national and international platforms worldwide equally.

Future Recommendations

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct research in the following directions:

1. The research surveys can be conducted in institutes where the field of Art & Design is not a part of the educational programs in order to transmit the attention of authorities towards it.
2. Experts and educators of Art & Design can also be consulted to unfold several other points of issues being faced by the students in opting for this field as their professional career.
3. The role of career counsellors for the students cannot be overlooked as they exposit new ways and paths for the students. The lack of career counselling brings many complexities in the mind of students so, inculcating career counsellors for the secondary and higher secondary students as part of this research and interviewing them will make this research much finer.

Limitations of the Study

However, this study also includes some limitations. The sample size for the purpose of data collection can be increased by conducting interviews with students from cities other than Lahore. Additionally, the conduction of interviews for this research from the final year students of Art & design can also be a good enough source for the veritable understanding of this study. The institutes of graduate studies that do not offer Art & design can also be involved as a part of this research so that their opinions regarding the field of

Art & Design can also be taken into consideration for the purpose of more authenticity. This research can also be deported through the implementation of qualitative research methodology as it is more suitable for generating individual experiences and emotions for particular societal phenomena.

Conclusion

According to aforesaid findings of this research and discussion, it becomes apparent that the secondary and higher secondary students for their graduate studies lack career counselling and awareness. Students have little or no guidance regarding their professional careers. The option of choosing the expressive field of Art & design for their graduate studies is far away from their minds on the basis of multiple reasons such as its expensive nature, unclear and scuffling professional career, lack of awareness & inspiration, lack of real career counselling and impractical and unsupportive practices of platforms provided by the state for a successful national outcome. It is an essential need of the time to raise awareness about Art & design among the prospective students in order to stimulate their attention in choosing it and bringing excellence in it as a professional career. At the same moment, the institutes of graduate studies, public as well as private, should also encourage the students by offering creativity based professional degrees such as Art & design in order to assure a secured and bright future.

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Appendix A: Checklist Questions

S. No	Prospective Students	Current Students
1	What is your first choice of career?	What was your first choice of career at secondary(matric)/higher secondary (inter) level?
2	What is your second choice of career?	What was your second choice of career at secondary(matric)/higher secondary (Inter) level?
3	Which qualification do you plan to study after Matric/inter to achieve your career goal?	How does your current Art & Design qualification help in achieving your career goals?
4	What / who inspired you to consider your career choices?	Who inspired you to consider your career choice in Art & Design?
5	Do you plan to have your own business / work at some point in future?	Do you intend to have your own business or job in future after you completed Art & Design Qualification?
6	How do you see a career in Art and Design?	How do you see a career in Art and Design?
7	What type of jobs / careers comes in your mind regarding Art & Design sector?	What type of jobs / careers come in your mind regarding your current Art & Design qualification?
8	How do you compare financial perks / earning in Art & Design careers comparing to your chosen career?	a. If you were to choose a career other than Art & Design, what would you choose? b. How do you compare financial perks /income in Art & Design career comparing to the other career you stated above?
9	How do you rate your Art / Drawing / Co-curricular skills at school?	Do you believe that your previous skills in Art / Drawing / Co-curricular activities at school motivated you to choose the current Art & Design qualification?
10	Will you be interested in getting scholarship details for Art & Design career qualifications?	Do you think studying Art & Design qualification need financial assistance?
11	Any other suggestion or comments you would like to add on?	What would you suggest to students who want to study Art & Design qualification at secondary(matric) or higher secondary I(inter) level?