

## **Gendered Perceptions: Career Guidance Needs at Higher Education Level in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

Career guidance had been a strong variable for consideration in democratic societies at global level. Individual autonomy and choice making is imperative for indulging in better market economy. Career guidance programs, if introduced at university level are very helpful for students in overcoming hesitation in career choices and selecting desirable study paths. The study compared career guidance needs among students at higher education level in Pakistan with reference to gender. Mix method design was adopted to extract data from graduating students enrolled in Management Sciences through questionnaire and semi structured interviews (male=100, female=100). Findings illuminated that male students ( $\mu=4.1$ ) have a clear idea about career guidance through internship programs whereas female students ( $\mu=3.1$ ) differed in their views about it. Male students suggested that career planning strategies, if implemented in their course may help designing lifelong careers whereas female students' focus was towards development of effective career skills only. It is suggested that career guidance is on the brink of coming a national reality at all of the educational levels, so it may be included as a vital part in curriculum. Furthermore, as female students in our society are given less projection so they may be provided with more chances of exposure towards their future careers.

***Keywords:** Perceptions, career guidance, career skills, career planning*

### **1. Introduction**

Guidance is preferably done by teachers as it cannot be considered apart from education. Through proper guidance students can get awareness about their interests, hidden potentialities, skills, and abilities. It encourages students to overcome their weaknesses and nourish their strengths (Dogar, Azeem, Majoka, Mehmood, & Latif, 2011). Career guidance is based on multiple techniques, services and processes designed to assist students to comprehend and have self-

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knowledge about work opportunities and career development. Career guidance significantly helps graduating students to make informed decisions about their future careers (Galliot & Graham, 2015).

After the accomplishment of a degree, the main problem faced by students is finding a good job related to their own interest and capabilities. This can only become possible when every individual is properly guided about the desired and suitable career field. Through suitable and appropriate recognition of career counseling needs solution of their problems can be offered that can make the students pleased and satisfied about their career choices (Crişana, Paveleab, & Ghimbuţ, 2014). Students are mostly not aware about the scope of their fields and in certain cases they do not even know about the existence of some careers. Every individual graduate is different from others in his knowledge, interest, aptitude and skills. Therefore, every student needs individual career guidance according to his abilities, interests and skills (Gibson & Mitchell, 2006).

Career guidance can facilitate students through step by step chain right from the beginning of their individual career. It can help them to overcome their career doubts, and gives them a flourishing career path. It's the role of teachers, counselor and parents as well to guide kids for appropriate career in future. Many of parents are not enough educated or they do not understand about the need and demand society and the changing nature in educational and professional field through the passage of time. So it becomes institutional responsibility to help students in selection of their career (Zaman, Choudhry, & But, 2014).

The origin of word guidance is "control". Abstract implications of direction are "to coordinate", "to bring up or to demonstrate the way". It is utilized in the implications of giving help to people, support, or data by a more educated individual to a less qualified. It is additionally utilized in the feeling of route a man's reasoning or activity in the correct path by helping him or her to distinguish what is correct and appropriate bearing to take care of his or her issues. As per a definition by UNESCO "Direction can be characterized as a procedure, formative in nature, by which an individual is helped to comprehend, acknowledge and utilize his/her capacities, aptitudes and interests and attitudinal examples, in relation to his/her goals". This definition depicts direction is a thought and in addition a methodology. As a process direction helps the person to explore their qualities and shortcomings and upgrade their critical thinking aptitudes through which they can settle on right decisions. It directs the people to perceive their issues and to comprehend their possibilities and shortcomings and to think legitimately about possible solutions.

Many researches (Bacanli, 2016; Christie, 2016; Eesley & Wang, 2017) have reflected that career guidance is ultimate requirement at higher education level. Career decisions are the most imperative decisions a student has to take in his/her life. Gender difference is a variable which cannot be ignored in this regard. Our universities are the nurseries for producing right work force required. Universities are mostly co-educational, so we need to consider gender differences in every aspect including guidance and counselling needs (Zahra & Malik, 2018). This study aimed at exploring the gendered perceptions of university students with reference to career guidance needs.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study**

Based upon extensive study of the related literature, research objectives were to explore and compare perceptions of male and female students regarding career guidance needs at higher education level.

### **1.2 Research Hypothesis**

As it is a descriptive comparative study, so the researchers tested the following null hypothesis:

Ho: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students regarding career guidance needs at higher education level.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Career guidance had been a strong variable of consideration in democratic societies at global level. Our universities serve as feeders for supplying capable human resource. These institutions have to play a very proactive role in directing students towards right career choices matching with their capabilities. It is argued that for a student to be truly ready to make career choices there must be a positive interplay between their career planning, career exploration, knowledge of the world of work, knowledge of occupations and career decision making. Effective interventions such as career training, provision of career guidance materials and career counselling are expected to equip students for career decision making. Literature reviewed showed that, career guidance services in higher education are limited in scale, quality and are not well equipped to handle the challenges brought about by increased access to tertiary education. This study has taken into account the exploration of the variable of career guidance with reference to gender, so the findings may help the university management to adopt career guidance services on a serious note. The findings may also pave a way for career guidance experts to provide this service keeping in view the gender differences.

#### **1.4 Delimitations of the Study**

This study was delimited to the graduating male and female students of Faculty of Management Sciences from two public sector universities of Islamabad only.

### **2. Literature Review**

Career guidance is a process of serving students to decide the subjects or course of study according to their need and interest. Zaman, Choudhry and Butt (2014) further described that the role of guidance is also to assist learner to develop their hidden abilities to the maximum by the use of accessible resources and services. Whereas the prevailing situation in universities does not cater for this concept. Generally, the aim of career guidance is to help out students in their decision-making process according to their interests, skills and abilities, while taking into explanation current and future career opportunity. Students are confident to learn more about the world of service across different fields, so that they may take exact steps to get their objectives, targets and aspirations. Another perception indicated that career guidance can be related to planning of services and activities to assist a person of any age and at any point all through their life, to make educational, training and professional choices and to direct their career. “Career guidance” denotes organized programs that help individual career development and career supervision (Hooley & Dodd, 2015). Career guidance covers different areas, such as informing student about the present and future job opportunities, assessing, training, enabling, advocating, giving feedback, managing and advance or systems change (Eesley & Wang, 2017).

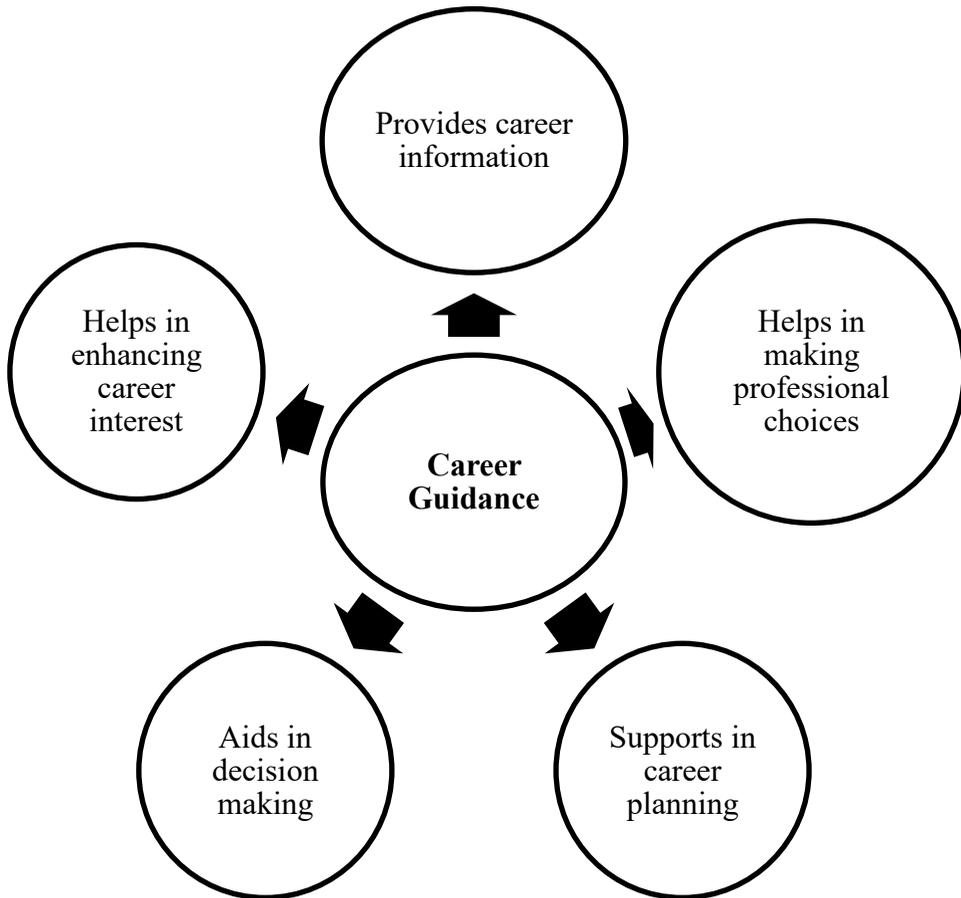
Bohndick, Kohl and Buhl, (2017) illuminated that another important role of career guidance in schools is to prepare students for the outer world. It is discovered by previous researches, that education along with career guidance has positive impact on the individuals’ academic achievement and well-being, for they support them in making good career decision. Education and career guidance is aimed at such goals as developing individuals’ self-awareness, self-direction as well as aptitude to establish feasible goals, and to learn constantly in order to put in value to their future place of work; helping students to investigate and make decisions based on suitable information towards their education and career leaning instructions; instilling in their minds the value of efficacy for all type of careers and how all these add towards the flat and strong implementation of the society; and, last but not least, equipping students with the skills and resources by which they may be able to positively connect their parents and other career influencers (Dogar, Azeem, Majoka, Mehmood & Latif, 2011; Loan & Van, 2015).

Hooley and Dodd (2015) have reflected that career guidance goes a long way in attaining economic benefits for the society. Similarly, Nyaga, Oundo and Kamoyo (2014) advocated that career guidance helps university students attain social competence and they enter the work force as confident graduates, having self-knowledge about their chosen profession. Some gender studies have also been carried out on students' awareness towards career guidance in schools. These concluded that most girls did not consider career guidance as an important factor for making career choices (Andrea, 2014; Ibrahim, Aloka, Wambiya & Raburu, 2014). Whereas Parhar et al. (2013) presented the view that there was no difference in adequacy of direction and advising among female and male were found regarding career guidance. And discovered that there were no noteworthy contrasts among boys and girls in change in accordance with school conditions however in general the boys had higher scored about school alteration when contrasted with the girls.

Bacanli (2016) has reflected that females faced more difficulties in career decision making as compared to their male counterparts. Main causes could be over protective attitude of family towards female students, less importance towards their career paths or non-seriousness of female students by themselves. (Levin & Gati, 2015).

Theoretical background for this research study has been based on Circumscription and compromise theory (Gottfredson, 1981) which illuminates the developmental phases of an individual's view point about the available occupational choices. This theory reflects that we make cognitive maps of the professions by picking up an occupational stereotype from among the available professions around us. This cognitive map is based on very limited dimensions such as prestige level, field of work of a specific profession and gender preferences related to it. Young people begin to make decisions about career/occupational choices based on this mapping. Two stages namely circumscription (ruling out unacceptable career options on the basis of one's self-concept) and compromise (inclination towards those career choices which are accessible and compatible according to one's self-concept and cognitive map) are predominantly involved. According to this theory, when people have to forcefully compromise on their career choice then they are more likely to make concessions on field of work, then at social levels and so on. As the amount of compromise increases, lack of interest becomes visible in career decision (Hesketh, Elmslie & Kaldor, 1990; Blanchard & Lichtenberg, 2003). Keeping in view the above discussed theoretical concepts, if the students are provided career guidance then lesser levels of compromise may be manifested. Following

conceptual framework has been explored through descriptive survey research design:



*Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the Study*

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A descriptive survey design was adopted to explore the described problem.

#### **3.2 Sample & Sampling Technique**

Random sampling technique was used to extract 10% of the sample (100 male and 100 female) from a population of 1000 graduating students (500 male

and 500 female) of Management Sciences. These students were enrolled in two public sector universities in Islamabad.

### 3.3 Instrumentation

A self-constructed questionnaire based on extensive review of related literature on 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree) was used to retrieve the required data. This questionnaire was validated from two experts of the field who declared it valid for the data collection. Furthermore, its reliability was extracted through Cronbach's alpha and yields at 0.84. In addition to this, semi-structured interviews were also conducted. These interviews were transcribed and read carefully to determine codes and themes.

### 4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Thematic analysis was done to scrutinize the responses of semi-structured interview. Descriptive analysis and thematic analysis helped in getting in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study. The results are divided into two sections; section I related to analysis and findings of questionnaire and section II comprises of thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews from male and female students.

#### Section I Descriptive analysis

Table 4.1

*Management Sciences Male Students responses about Career Guidance (n-100)*

S.No	Statements	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	M	S.D
CG1	Career guidance helps me to make decisions according to my interest	13%	2%	3%	45%	36%	4.0	1.41
CG2	I choose this field by my own choice.	10%	3%	12%	62%	13%	4.0	0.57
CG3	I have an idea about part time job.	0%	3%	25%	62%	10%	3.7	0.48
CG4	Internet is the main sources of getting information about career.	13%	8%	19%	55%	5%	3.2	1.11
CG5	Internship develops individual's interest in particular job.	11%	5%	13%	21%	50%	4.1	1.21
CG6	Career guidance program must be the part of curriculum.	6%	13%	7%	24%	50%	4.2	1.11
	Total						3.86	

Table 4.1 shows percentage of responses of male students regarding career guidance .83% students agreed strongly that career guidance helps them in career decisions.75% students agreed that they choose field according to their

choice.72% students were agreeing that they are aware about part time job. 60% students agreed that internet is the main source of getting career information.71% students agreed that internship develop individual’s interest in particular job.76% students were agreeing that career guidance must be the part of curriculum. Male students had a clear idea that internships develop career interest as they have chosen the respective field by themselves. Highest mean score on career guidance scale was about the statement that “career guidance must be the part of curriculum” ( $M= 4.2, SD= 1.11$ ). Overall mean of means is 3.86. Findings of this analysis are in line with the recommendations given by Christie (2016) who stated that career guidance at higher level is imperative and must be made a significant part of the curriculum of graduating students.

Table 4.2

*Management Sciences Female Students responses about Career Guidance (n=100)*

S.N	Statements	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	M	S.D
CG1	Career guidance helps me to make decisions according to my interest	15%	13%	21%	16%	35%	3.2	1.49
CG2	I choose this field by my own choice.	14%	6%	8%	29%	43%	3.5	1.60
CG3	I have an idea about part time job.	4%	0%	25%	71%	0%	3.7	0.48
CG4	Internet is the main sources of getting information about career.	14%	0%	42%	29%	15%	4.2	1.25
CG5	Internship develops individual’s interest in particular job.	13%	10%	21%	56%	0%	3.1	1.21
CG6	Career guidance program must be the part of curriculum.	2%	0%	12%	58%	28%	3.9	0.69
	Total						3.5	

Table 4.2 indicates the %age of responses of female students about career guidance scale .51% students strongly agreed that “career guidance helps them in career decisions”.72% students agreed that they selected field according to their interest.71% students were agreeing that “they are aware about part time jobs”.44% students agreed that “internet is the main source of getting career information”.56% students agreed that “internship develop individual’s interest in particular job”.86% students were agreeing that “career guidance must be the part of curriculum”. Highest mean score on career guidance scale was that internet is the main source of getting information about career ( $M= 4.2, SD= 1.25$ ). Overall mean of means is 3.5. Findings indicate that female students have less mean score about choosing the respective field of study by their own choice

as compared to their male counterparts (Koech, Bitok, Rutto, Koech, Okoth, Korir & Ngala, 2016).

Table 4.3

*Gender based difference of Management science students (n-200)*

Gender	M	SD	t	df	Sig(2-tailed)
Male	23.50	2.61			
Female	21.29	4.38	7.20	198	0.02

P<0.05

Table No 4.3 shows the comparison of male and female students of management sciences related to “students career guidance” by conducting independent sample t-test and indicated that there is a significant difference between the means score of male and female students (for male students,  $M=23.50$ ,  $SD=2.61$  and for female students  $M=21.29$ ,  $SD=4.38$ ). The value of  $t=7.20$  is highly significant at 0.02 where p is less than or equal to 0.05 levels. The null hypothesis of this study is not accepted.

### **Section II Thematic Analysis**

Major Themes	Gender	Sub Codes	%
Motive to choose this study program	Male	Entrepreneurship	93%
	Female	Work as a professional	84%
Positive aspect of current study program	Male	Gaining professional confidence	97%
	Female	Connection with the outside world	90%
Career planning strategies	Male	Developing life long careers	90%
	Female	Developing effective skills	89%
Main source of getting career information	Male	Field experts, Motivational speakers	98%
	Female	Internet, social media	97%
Justification for making career guidance as a part of curriculum	Male	Gives directions, sets professional goals	96%
	Female	Gives professional choices	89%
Role of self-awareness in an individual’s successful career planning	Male	Clarity about life long career planning	96%
	Female	Clarity about own interests for adopting a career	90%

This section describes the themes and sub-codes emerged from the semi-structured interviews. First theme was ‘*motives to choose the current study program*’. There was a difference in the sub-codes retrieved from this theme as the gender responses differed. Male students (93%) stated that choice of this program is based on the entrepreneurship concept of education. They were of the view that management sciences program will help them to start their own

business and become self-employed. Furthermore, only 7% male students were unclear in their answer to this theme. Whereas female students (84%) were of the view that this study program will help them to develop as career oriented professionals. Responses to the second theme '*positive aspects of studying business education program*' differed gender-wise as male students (97%) wanted to gain professional confidence whereas only 3% were unsure about this. Female students (90%) wanted to get a clear picture about outside world and career skills through this study program. Third theme was '*awareness about career planning strategies*' and sub codes emerged as '*developing lifelong careers*' for male students (90%) and '*developing effective skills*' for female students (89%). Fourth theme explored gender based viewpoints about getting information related to a career. Most of the male students (98%) responded to get this information from experts and motivational speakers whereas most of the female respondents (97%) stated to get it from social media/internet. Fifth theme was '*justification for making career guidance as a part of curriculum*'. Female responses (89%) sub-codes emerged as getting professional choices whereas male responses (96%) reflected that if career guidance is made a part of curriculum, it will help in establishing career goals and directions. The sixth theme was '*role of self-awareness in successful career planning*' and sub-codes for males (96%) emerged as it helps in clarity about life long career planning whereas females (90%) reflected clarity about own interest in adopting a career.

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study revealed a major difference between the career guidance perceptions across both genders. So, the researchers concluded that the null hypothesis has not been accepted. Male students were more oriented towards the career guidance needs for long term career planning whereas female respondents thought of getting guidance in order to have better understanding of the required profession. In addition to this, male graduating students perceived expert talk as an informational and socialization source whereas female students were lacking about this understanding. One of the major reasons behind this may be the cultural brought up of females in our society where they are given less chances of educational exposure as compared to their male counterparts. These findings are in line with the work of Hancock and Hums (2016).

Thematic analysis helped to get an in-depth awareness about gendered perceptions regarding career counselling at higher education level. Male and female students had different viewpoints about studying business management program. If the goal of studying certain program is different than need for career guidance also differs. It means that male students want more guidance in setting up their own enterprise whereas female students just want directions for

becoming good professionals. Shirokova, Osiyevskyy and Bogatyreva (2016) have also suggested that entrepreneurial intentions lie at the foundation of entrepreneurial process and curriculum of various study programs provides a foundation for this. An important finding of this study is awareness about career planning strategies regarding gender. Male respondents were more focused towards development of life long career planning strategies through career guidance whereas female counterparts had emphasis on development of effective professional skills through career guidance (Waaiker, Sonneveld, Buitendijk, van Bochove, & van der Weijden, 2016). It can be deduced that male students have long term focus through career guidance education whereas female students want to gain knowledge and skill about their future profession. This finding is consistent with the work of Hancock and Hums (2016) who have concluded that women pursue positions that align with their career interests, goals, and values. But they need to keep long term career goals in mind and they need to play active role in shaping their careers.

Major source of getting information about respective careers by male students is field experts and motivational speakers whereas female students mostly rely on internet and social media for getting career guidance. Donelan (2016) has also stated that women mostly rely on social media for career information and advancement. Root cause may be less opportunities for females to socialize with the experts of the field. Gender based finding related to justification for making career guidance as a major part of curriculum again indicated that male students have a focus towards setting professional goals in life whereas females reflected that it may help in making professional choices. It means that male students are more serious towards long term professional targets as compared to females (Eccles & Wang, 2016).

The results are similar to the study of Kansayisa (2018) which indicated a significant difference between male and female students regarding subject selection. As male students seem interested in mathematic skills while girls give the feeling about humanities groups. According to the study male are rational thinker and girls are more insightful in their decisions. Development mentorship program, promotion of positive optional experiences, and providing research opportunity are mandatory for career counseling enhancement (Kansayisa, 2018).

## **6. Conclusion**

The need for career guidance is on the brink of coming a national reality at all of the educational levels. Education is attained not only for self-awareness and lifelong learning but also as a source for economic and social benefits. The more a person is aware about his/her career, the more self-actualized professional he/she will be. If students' education commensurate with their aspirations and

abilities, he/she face lesser degree of frustrations and anxieties and exhibit greater degree of performance and achievement. Educated females form a major part of our population, thus they need to be given proper direction towards optimal use of their professional education. Teaching faculty need to appraise female students about the instrumental value of their degrees. Whereas, male students may also be guided and mentored to change their mind sets about gender stereotyping in adopting and pursuing a specific career.

### **7. Recommendations**

1. Internet and social media is a quick source of getting career guidance, so these may be focused by the students in addition to getting required information from experts of the field.
2. Career guidance program may introduce students towards adopting such careers which are based on their own interests as well.
3. More opportunities for motivational talks by experts of the field may provide a base for socialization and making functional career choices.
4. Long term career planning goals may help in developing effective career development strategies, so female students may be sensitized to focus towards strategic career guidance.
5. Students may be motivated through awareness seminars to lead a mission oriented rather than career-oriented life.

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