

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perceived Career-Choice Autonomy, Family Influence, And Decision Confidence Among Uzbek Adolescents: An Exploratory Cross-Sectional Survey

Mashrabova Dilshodaxon Anvarjon kizi

School No. 58, Class 11 "A", Uzbekistan

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Abstract

Background: Adolescents make career decisions while balancing interests, perceived abilities and family perspectives. Evidence describing these experiences among Uzbek adolescents remains limited. Objective: To describe career-choice priorities, family involvement and perceived autonomy, and explore associations of choice autonomy and interest alignment with decision confidence. Methods: An exploratory cross-sectional online survey collected responses from 62 adolescents aged 15–18 in Uzbekistan. One entirely blank spreadsheet record was excluded. Fourteen questionnaire items covered career preferences, family influence, perceived freedom, confidence and informational needs. We summarized frequencies and used Spearman rank correlations for exploratory associations between ordinal responses; Fisher's exact test was used for a restricted two-by-two comparison. Results: Personal interests (49/62; 79.0%), skills (31/62; 50.0%) and salary (27/62; 43.5%) were the most frequently endorsed career-choice considerations. Family support was reported by 43/62 (69.4%); 15/62 (24.2%) said they had changed career plans because of family opinions. High perceived career-choice freedom (4–5/5) was reported by 44/62 (71.0%). Freedom was positively associated with career decision confidence (Spearman $p = 0.481$, $p < 0.001$), as was alignment with interests ($p = 0.373$, $p = 0.0028$). In a restricted comparison of participants reporting either changed or unchanged plans, change status was not clearly associated with high freedom (Fisher's exact $p = 0.085$). Conclusions: In this nonrepresentative sample, personal interests predominated, while family influence and adolescents' sense of autonomy coexisted. Observed associations are exploratory and cannot demonstrate causality.

KEY WORDS

Career choice; adolescents; parental influence; autonomy; career decision confidence; Uzbekistan; cross-sectional study.

INTRODUCTION

Career decision-making in adolescence involves an evolving assessment of interests, competencies and opportunities, shaped in part by social relationships. Social Cognitive Career Theory emphasizes interactions between personal agency, social-cognitive processes and contextual supports or barriers

(Lent et al., 1994). Family involvement may be experienced as encouragement, advice or pressure, depending on the individual and situation. Existing research has explored parental behaviors in career development (Keller & Whiston, 2008; Dietrich & Kracke, 2009), and newer work has

considered perceived support and career-related influences among adolescents (Marcionetti & Zammitti, 2025).

This study offers an exploratory, locally situated examination of career priorities among teenagers residing in Uzbekistan. The aim is not to estimate national prevalence or test a causal theory, but to document perceived career-choice priorities and family involvement, then investigate a small number of associations suggested by the survey constructs.

Research questions: (1) What career considerations are most frequently endorsed? (2) How do participants describe family support, influence and freedom? (3) Are perceived choice freedom and interest alignment associated with confidence about career choice? (4) Among respondents with an identifiable yes/no history of changing plans due to family opinions, is change status associated with high reported freedom?

METHODS

1. Design, setting and respondents

This observational, cross-sectional study used an English-language online questionnaire and nonprobability convenience sampling. The author recruited volunteers through Telegram groups between 1 and 11 October 2026. The source workbook contained 63 rows, of which one had no substantive responses; analyses included 62 usable responses from self-reported teenagers aged 15–18 residing in Uzbekistan. Respondents reported residence in Andijan (33), Tashkent (7), Namangan (6), Fergana (4), Samarkand (4), Khorezm (2), Surkhandarya (2), Navoi (2), Karakalpakstan (1) and Jizzakh (1). Eligibility was based on self-reported age and region; independent age verification was not documented. Because recruitment occurred in volunteer Telegram groups, the sample is not representative of Uzbek adolescents.

2. Instrument and outcome definitions

The English-language questionnaire included 14 substantive questions covering age, region, career-decision status, intended career field, career-choice factors (multiple selection), family discussion and attitudes, perceived freedom (1–5 rating), reported changes in plans due to family opinions, alignment with interests (1–5), decision confidence (1–5), access to career information, and two open-ended prompts. Item wording was retained as recorded in the supplied workbook. No information is available about formal piloting, translation, or psychometric validation; single-item ratings

were therefore treated as descriptive ordinal responses rather than validated measures. Participation was voluntary.

3. Analysis

Descriptive results are counts and percentages using 62 as the denominator for fully answered closed-ended questions. For multi-select items, each selected category is counted independently, so totals exceed 100%. Associations between two 1–5 ordinal ratings were evaluated using Spearman's rank correlation. A prespecified-in-this-reanalysis exploratory contrast compared reports of having changed career plans ("Changed") versus not having changed ("No") against high freedom (rating ≥ 4). Participants who reported merely contemplating a change, not having decided, or declining to answer were excluded from this particular two-by-two comparison. Fisher's exact p-values are two-sided. These are secondary, exploratory analyses undertaken after inspection of the dataset; no correction for multiple testing was applied. Statistical significance alone should not determine interpretation.

4. Ethics and data stewardship

Participation was voluntary and the author reports that the questionnaire was anonymous. The author states that neither parental or guardian permission for respondents under 18 nor review or approval by a school, university, or research ethics committee was obtained before data collection. Voluntary participation alone does not establish that age-appropriate informed assent or consent procedures were implemented; the information shown to participants before completing the questionnaire has not been documented. No retrospective ethics approval or exemption is claimed. Because the sample included minors, these circumstances may limit the journals that can consider the manuscript. The author should seek guidance from an appropriate institutional research-ethics contact on applicable requirements and permissible data use before submitting or making respondent-level records public.

RESULTS

1. Respondent profile and career preferences

Of 62 respondents, 24 were 15 years old (38.7%), 22 were 16 (35.5%), 13 were 17 (21.0%) and three were 18 (4.8%). On the career-decision item, 29 participants reported having selected a career, 25 were considering several and seven were undecided; one did not answer this item. The most frequently reported intended career fields were education/teaching (16),

business/finance (13), IT/technology (9) and law (8).

2. Influencing factors

Reported factor (multi-select)	n / 62	%
Interests	49	79.0
Skills	31	50.0
Salary	27	43.5
Job availability	15	24.2
Education cost	6	9.7
Parents' opinion	5	8.1
Teachers' advice	3	4.8

Multiple selections were permitted. A low proportion choosing "parents' opinion" as a top influencing factor does not imply an absence of family influence, because distinct questionnaire items elicited family discussion, support and changed plans.

3. Family perspectives, freedom and information needs

Forty-three respondents (69.4%) reported that their family supported their career choice; nine (14.5%) reported receiving advice, two (3.2%) reported that their family wanted a different career, and the rest gave other or uncertain responses. Fifteen (24.2%) said they had changed plans

because of family opinions; 35 (56.5%) had not, six had considered changing, four had not chosen a career, and two preferred not to answer. Forty-four (71.0%) rated their freedom to choose a career as 4 or 5 out of 5. Forty-six respondents (74.2%) stated they had some information about careers but needed more; 14 (22.6%) did not know where to find information, and two had not considered the issue.

4. Exploratory associations from respondent-level data

Comparison	Analysis set	Estimate	Two-sided p
Freedom (1–5) × confidence (1–5)	n = 62	Spearman $\rho = 0.481$	<0.001
Interest alignment (1–5) × confidence (1–5)	n = 62	Spearman $\rho = 0.373$	0.0028
Changed plans (yes/no) × high freedom (≥ 4)	n = 50	Fisher OR = 3.50 for low vs high freedom, changed vs unchanged	0.085

For the changed-versus-unchanged subset, 8/15 respondents who had changed plans reported high freedom, compared with 28/35 who had not changed plans. The corresponding contingency cells were: changed—7 low, 8 high; unchanged—7 low, 28 high. The exact-test result was not statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; the sample is too small to rule out a meaningful association. Because the two correlations and this comparison were identified for exploratory secondary analysis, their p-values should not be presented as confirmatory evidence.

5. Open-ended questions

Fifty-five respondents supplied some text to the prompt about career-choice considerations; 53 supplied text about difficulties. Examples mention interests, personal abilities,

salary, job opportunities, uncertainty, failure and family disagreements. No independently audited coding framework or intercoder assessment was available. Accordingly, these responses are treated as illustrative contextual material rather than as a formal qualitative thematic analysis. Original responses include personal expressions and some non-English text and should not be published verbatim without appropriate ethical and translation review.

DISCUSSION

Personal interests were the leading endorsed career consideration, followed by perceived skill fit and salary. The coexistence of high family support, high choice freedom and some reported plan changes underscores the limitation of treating parental involvement as unidimensionally supportive

or restrictive. These findings align in general subject matter with literature recognizing multiple forms of career-specific parental behavior (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009), but the present items cannot determine underlying mechanisms.

A distinctive contribution of the respondent-level reanalysis is that perceived autonomy and interest alignment were each positively associated with reported decision confidence. These associations are compatible with career-development accounts highlighting agency and contextual support, yet directionality remains unknown. For instance, confident adolescents might perceive greater freedom, greater perceived freedom might facilitate confidence, or both may reflect unmeasured factors. Single-item measures and a small convenience sample further limit interpretation.

Participants' stated demand for more career information suggests a potential practical focus for guidance services, but the survey did not evaluate any intervention or its outcomes. Future studies could include validated measures of parental career support and interference, a defined recruitment frame, multiple geographic regions, and qualitative interviews with explicit consent and coding procedures. Prospective designs may be needed to evaluate how confidence and preferences evolve over time.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations include nonprobability sampling; concentration in Andijan; $n=62$; a one-time self-report instrument lacking documented validation; lack of socioeconomic and schooling covariates; exploratory post-hoc association tests with no multiplicity correction; possible common-method bias; and incomplete documentation of recruitment and ethics procedures. No national representativeness, causal impact, or gender-based conclusions can be inferred. The finding based on only 50 yes/no responses may be sensitive to excluded categories and must not be generalized to all participants.

CONCLUSION

In this sample of 62 Uzbek adolescents, personal interests were frequently prioritized and respondents generally described family support and considerable freedom. Career-choice freedom and alignment with interests were positively associated with reported confidence, while evidence concerning changed plans and freedom was inconclusive. The study provides exploratory evidence suitable for informing better-designed future research rather than establishing national patterns or causal relationships.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent: No prior review or approval by an institutional research ethics committee was obtained, and parental or guardian permission was not obtained for respondents younger than 18. Participation was voluntary and the questionnaire was reported to be anonymous. Formal participant assent and informed consent procedures were not documented. Data availability: Individual-level participant data are not publicly available in connection with this manuscript. Any future sharing would require appropriate consideration of participant privacy, permissions, and ethical requirements.

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