

PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON CAREER CHOICES

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In the early years, hundreds of studies were conducted in trying to understand the different factors that influence a young adult's choice of a career. While confirming the influence of other personal and environmental factors, such as, personality, school and the role of peers and teachers on career aspirations, researchers unanimously proved that a large number of variables influencing students' occupational goals were linked to their family environment. These include: level of parental education, family size, employment and social economic variables like parental income. In addition, the majority of papers published on this subject consistently ranked parents as the most important and influential individuals regarding career decisions, as compared to teachers, peers, counselors and others.

The facts

It was consistently found that adolescents' own aspirations are influenced by their parents' aspirations or expectations of them. Adolescents who perceive their parents to have high educational expectations of them are likely to have higher aspirations for themselves.

Parental support and encouragement were found to influence vocational outcome. Through interactions, such as, conversations and through verbal and non-verbal reactions, parents conveyed their influence to their children, which in turn affected what children thought, said and perceived about various careers. This eventually affected the children's attitudes and behaviors towards work.

Parenting style, support, responsiveness and guidance may even have more influence than family demographics. This proves how children from impoverished, low educational and disadvantaged social economic backgrounds can have great academic achievements and proceed to more fulfilling and prosperous careers.

Dealing with challenges

While supporting a child's career development can be exciting for a parent, there are often many challenges that face both parents and children and, eventually, the career choices that result.

While all parents want the best for their children, there is always the danger of them trying to "live their dreams" through their children. On the one hand, children may be subconsciously influenced to tread the same professional paths as their parents, keeping the trade in the family. Children may be discouraged from exploring and considering other non-traditional career paths, even if their natural abilities and talents are more in agreement with a different professional or career life than that of their parents. On the other hand, parents may also become overly-involved in career decisions because they want their children to be more content in a career than they are in their own jobs. Children may begin to identify and accept their parents' views and neglect to challenge them or assess their validity, with negative consequences on their own career choices.

Questions:

- 1) Do you think parents should take part in the decision making of our future careers?
- 2) Did your parent influence your choice of career when you were growing up?
- 3) Why do you think parents want to pick our career for us from time to time?
- 4) If you are parent, would you help your child to select his/her career?
- 5) Do you sometimes feel that your parents are imposing their dreams on you?
- 6) Do you thinking having a poor economic background can affect your education and career choice?
- 7) Would you rather live in regret of not choosing your own dream or live in a normal paying career?
- 8) If your parents does not want to support you would you have the courage to go against their will, if "yes" why and if "no", why also?
- 9) Do you think it is better to chase excellence, or to let excellence chase you?
- 10) Are you studying what you want to study or is it something that your parents picked out for you?