

Vocational Aspirations of High School Students

¹Shoaib Kiani, ²Sumara Masood-ul Hassan, ³Sidra Irfan

^{1,2,3} National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

¹kianishoaib@yahoo.com, ²sumara.assad@gmail.com, ³siddrah.irfan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The research was designed to explore in detail the vocational aspirations of the high school students. Majority of the students (N = 482) mentioned doctor, army, teacher, lawyer, and engineer as their vocational aspirations. The gender differences and the degree of agreement between vocational aspirations and vocational interests measured by SDS (Self Directed Search) were determined. The results provided support for the moderate degree of congruence for the vocational aspirations of doctor and teacher and a state of incongruence for the army, lawyer and engineer once compared with their vocational interests. The results may be helpful in the career decision making process and is valuable to the students, career experts, and educational policy makers.

Keywords: *vocational aspirations, vocational interests, congruence, Holland's mode*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the field of vocational interests, the work of Holland (1994 and 1997) stands out like a colossus. The Holland's theory specified a hexagonal structure of the degree of psychological similarity among the six personality types, wherein each of the six RIASEC (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) personality types appears on one point of the hexagon. It is assumed that adjacent types are most similar, types positioned opposite of one another on the hexagon are least similar, and alternating types have an intermediate level of similarity. The six personality types are summarized as; the realistic types perceive themselves as having mechanical and athletic abilities, and value the tangibles. The investigative types see themselves as being scholarly, intellectual, and value science. The artistic types like ambiguous, free, unsystematic activities, perceived themselves as expressive, original, introspective, and value aesthetic qualities. The social type like working with others to inform, train, cure, enlighten, see themselves as liking to help others, having teaching ability, value social / ethical concerns and activities. The enterprising types perceive themselves as aggressive, self-confident, sociable, value political and economic achievement. The conventional types tend to like activities that entail ordered manipulation of data and records; perceive themselves as conforming, orderly, value business and economic achievement. The SDS measures the six RIASEC (summary codes) personality types from the subscales Activities, Competencies, Occupations, and Self-ratings. The first three highest codes measured by SDS are of considerable value. The person used the first three highest summary codes to locate the suitable occupations from the occupational finder.

Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments stated that a realistic personality in a realistic environment would prove to be highly congruent with opportunities and rewards, existing to fulfill the interests and skills of the person. Hence "Congruency" is the primary concept that refers to the compatibility of the personality and the environment (French, Rogers, & Cobb, 1974). In the present study, the degree of

agreement (congruence) between the vocational aspirations and vocational interests were determined by employing the hexagonal model. When the first letter code of the current aspiration and the SDS are the same, the likelihood of a person maintaining that aspiration is very high. The first letter of the occupational code is most important, most descriptive, and more reliable. Although codes shift slightly from sample to sample, changes in the first letter of the code are infrequent. The data suggested that people with flat profiles, contradictory profiles or with rare summary codes, have the greatest need of professional assistance, constructive work experience and information (Holland, 1994).

There have been inconsistent results on gender differences in the structure of vocational interests. These differences may be due to the different characteristics of the samples used in different studies and to some extent due to cultural differences. Holland et al. (1997) found that the high school student profiles of the SDS reflected that females have comparatively lower mean scores on Realistic and Investigative types than the other personality types. Women are found to be more related to high Social and low Realistic which was also echoed by Fouad and Mohler's (2004).

This research attempted to address some of the gaps in the broader literature about adolescent as it is also identified by Rojewski (2005). The overwhelming majority of cross-cultural studies have been conducted with adults or late adolescents. Cross cultural studies revealed mix support for the Holland model. Rounds and Day (1999) suggested that different mental representations of the world of work across cultures might exist. Research showed that during adolescence interests crystallize and stabilize, and career goals and aspirations become more realistic in terms of adaptation to personal and environmental characteristics (Ali & Saunders, 2009; Martin et al. 2009). The outcome that is central to researchers is the degree of satisfaction that results from the congruence between interests and the work environments. There is a dearth of literature in the field of vocational interests and the work environment in Pakistani context. Hence there is a requirement to

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investigate the gender differences and the degree of agreement between vocational aspirations and vocational interests of Pakistani potential workforce. It is assumed that male are likely to aspire more investigative, realistic, and enterprising interests and female are likely to aspire more social, artistic, and conventional interests. Doctor, army, teacher, lawyer, and engineer as vocational aspirations of students are likely to have high degree of agreement with investigative, realistic, social, enterprising, and investigative (derived from Holland occupational classification codes) vocational interests respectively.

2. INSTRUMENTS

Demographic sheet along with Future possibilities questionnaire which asked two questions about the vocational aspirations of the students were administered. The first question was "What career do you intend to adopt in future?". The second question was "If you have more than one career choice, please write in order of preference". The SDS (Holland, 1994) consisted of an assessment workbook, which is scored by the client, and a reusable booklet, the Occupations Finder. Internal consistency coefficient for the assessment scales range from .84 to .92 for males and .86 to .91 for females (age range 14 to 18). Various studies have looked at the cross-cultural validity of Holland's theory in Pakistan, such as Khan, et al. (1990) and Siddiq (1999). The SDS was translated in Urdu by Naheed (1988) and the procedures used in translation were direct translation, team or committee approach and back translation. Field probe techniques were used for cultural adaptation and modification. The Urdu version of SDS is used in the present study.

3. SAMPLE

The convenient sampling technique was used for the selection of government schools. 2 boy schools and 2 girl schools were selected from urban areas of Rawalpindi while 2 boys and 1 girl school was selected from rural areas of Rawalpindi. In each school 100 students were randomly selected. 50 students each from 9th and 10th class were selected. In each class 25 students from science group and 25 students from Arts group were selected using the systematic random sampling techniques. Overall 400 boys and 300 girls were selected.

4. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

After scrutinizing the data, the sample consisted of 482 students were selected based on the five most preferred vocational aspirations of the students (doctor, army, teacher, lawyer, and engineer). There are 243 male students and 239 female students. Their age range is from 14 years to 19 years, with a mean age of 15.66 years. The average fathers' income is Rs. 7669/- approximately.

5. RESULTS

In this study gender differences on vocational aspirations of the students were computed. The degree of agreement between vocational aspiration and vocational

interests were also explored. The finding in table 1 showed that Doctor seems to be favorite career for both boys and girls. Male preferred Army predominantly while Teaching is the profession which the girls liked most. Lawyer as a profession is the favorite for the female while Engineering is more liked by boys.

Table 1: Vocational aspirations of students (N = 482)

Vocational aspiration Gender	Doctor	Army	Teacher	lawyer	Engineer
Male (N= 243)	75	124	7	10	27
Female (N= 239)	118	15	51	45	10
Total	193	139	58	55	37

Table 2: The frequencies of highest summary codes of male (N = 243) and female (N = 239) students on six personality types measured by SDS

Gender	SDS Summary Codes					
	R	I	A	S	E	C
Male	21	50	24	43	32	114
Female	4	49	63	83	20	60

Note. SDS = Self Directed Search. Read R as realistic, I as investigative, A as artistic, S as social, E as enterprising, C as conventional.

The results in table 2 showed that male students have preference for Conventional interests followed by Investigative and Social interests. Female students have preference for Social codes followed by Artistic and Conventional codes (codes having equal scores were also considered). Overall the results proved that male students aspired more Realistic, Enterprising, and Conventional interests as compared to female students. While female students aspired more Social, Artistic interests as compared to male students.

Table 3: Frequencies of SDS highest Summary codes of students based on their vocational aspirations (N = 482)

Highest Summary Codes	R	I	A	S	E	C
Doctor (N = 193)	5	48	24	47	15	54
Army (N = 139)	7	27	14	24	20	47
Teacher (N =58)	0	4	16	21	3	16
Lawyer (N = 55)	2	5	10	24	3	11
Engineer (N = 37)	4	5	9	5	3	13

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Note. SDS = Self Directed Search. Read R as realistic, I as investigative, A as artistic, S as social, E as enterprising, C as conventional.

Table 3 showed the frequencies of SDS summary codes for students. The students whose prospective vocational choice is doctor; the dominant summary code is Conventional as 54 students' highest code followed by Investigative as 48 students' highest summary code. Doctor should have an Investigative type as their first summary code according to Holland's classification. This showed that those opted for doctor has some parity between vocational aspiration and SDS codes.

For Army as vocational aspiration, the dominant summary code is Conventional as 47 students' highest code followed by Investigative as 27 students' first choice. This showed the degree of incongruence between vocational aspiration of Army and SDS summary code which should be Realistic. For teachers, the dominant summary code is Social as 21 students' highest code followed by each Artistic and Conventional as 16 students' highest summary code. This showed that those opted for teachers have moderate degree of congruence between the vocational aspirations of teacher and original summary codes which should be Social.

The vocational aspiration of lawyer has Social as 24 students' highest summary code followed by Conventional (11) and Artistic (10). According to Holland classification, the vocational choice of lawyer should have Enterprising as their first summary code. This showed that those opted for lawyers have degree of incongruence between the vocational aspirations and their vocational interests. Similar results were indicated for the students whose prospective vocational choice is engineer. 13 students' highest code is Conventional followed by Artistic. This showed that those opted for engineering have high degree of incongruence between the vocational aspiration of engineer and original summary codes of Realistic and Investigative.

Table 4: Frequencies of scores obtained from highest Summary codes based on five groups of vocational aspirations of students via hexagonal model (N = 482)

Vocation al aspiration s of students	Highest summar y code from classific ation booklet	Frequencies of scores obtained from highest summary codes based on hexagonal model							
		1		2		3		4	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Doctor (N = 193)	I	6	6	44	53	8	28	17	31
Army (N = 139)	R	15	3	23	4	7	7	6	1
Teacher(N = 58)	S	0	0	4	16	3	14	0	21

Lawyer(N = 55)	E	0	3	4	9	6	31	0	2
Engineer(N = 37)	I/R	3	0	14	1	7	7	3	2

Note. M = Male, F = Female. I = Investigative, R = Realistic, S = Social, E = Enterprising. 4 score means that highest summary code and Holland classification code correspond with each other; 3 means that highest summary codes and Holland classification codes are adjacent on the hexagon; 2 means that the highest summary codes and Holland classification codes are on alternate on the hexagon; and 1 means that the highest summary codes and Holland classification codes are on the opposite side on the hexagon.

The results in table 4 indicated the frequencies of scores comparing highest summary scales of vocational aspirations and SDS. For vocational aspiration of doctor (N = 193), the highest summary code of 17 male students matched with their highest prospective code while 31 female students' highest summary code matched with their highest vocational aspirations code. 139 students opted for army as their vocational aspiration; only 6 male and 1 female students vocational aspirations matched with their highest summary code i.e., Realistic. For teacher (N = 58), only 21 female student highest summary codes matched with their highest prospective vocational choice code. Only 2 female students highest code matched with highest vocational aspirations code for lawyer (N = 55). 37 students opted engineer as their vocational aspirations, 3 male and 2 female students highest summary code matched with their highest prospective choice code. Overall the results provided partial support for the vocational aspirations of doctor and teacher, while there is a state of incongruence between the vocational aspirations of army, lawyer and engineer and their vocational interests.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Literature supported the facilitative role of the use of occupational daydreams within the context of career counseling. Previous researches also supported the conclusions drawn in the present study that male aspired more conventional and investigative interests, while female aspired more social and artistic interests (Proyer & Hausler, 2007; Tak, 2004). Females are coming out and adopting different occupations which were not considered suitable earlier. During the past few decades, the government has provided lot of job opportunities to female in different departments. Hence they are competing neck to neck with their male counterparts. Therefore appropriate and ample career opportunities for male and female should be planned and provided by the government according to their interests.

There was a state of incongruence between the vocational aspirations of army, lawyer and engineer once compared with their vocational interests among high school students. Reardon and Lenz (1998) indicated that lack of congruence between expressed and assessed summary codes, low consistency, low coherence among

aspirations, and a high point code in the Realistic or Conventional area, were likely candidates for more intensive interventions provided by more highly trained personnel. The results of present study indicated that there is a requirement for urgent and timely intervention at the high school level to guide and counsel the Pakistani youth for the future productive workforce. Career counselors should be employed in government high school as there is no institutional support or mechanism where career guidance is provided to the students.

Furthermore, the scores on the Realistic and Investigative scales, or score on Artistic and Social scales by using SDS, could be used along with other information to make decisions on the assignment of science and arts tracks to students.

In addition, no published research has been found on occupational aspirations and expectations of Pakistani adolescents. The research may contribute to a better understanding of different dimensions related to students of government schools representing large segment of society in Pakistan. The findings may be valuable in the field of career counseling as well as for policy makers in the field of education. The most salient feature of Holland's model as applied to high school students is that vocational aspirations are predictive of vocational interests was not generally supported in the study. This aspect of the current findings raised an important question mark for the wide ranging applicability of the Holland model to high school students in Pakistan. This is especially important in an educational context in which students have to make an early decision to circumscribe their career development and choices. The Urdu translated version may not be the true substitute of original version. Notwithstanding the limitations of the current study, it represented an initial investigation into an area that is under researched in Pakistan and merits further inquiry to inform theoretical development in this area and to guide student advising and career counseling.

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AUTHOR PROFILE

Dr Shoaib Kiani has done his Doctorate in Psychology from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad in 2011. He is presently serving as Head of Department Behavioral Sciences in Defense Academy Abbottabad.