

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT LIFE AND THEIR IMPACT ON CAREER ORIENTATION

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Abstract. This article explores the psychological characteristics of student life and their impact on career orientation, focusing on the transitional period of higher education. Drawing on theories of developmental psychology and motivation (Maslow, 1943; Erikson, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 2000), as well as empirical studies in Uzbekistan and internationally, the research highlights how stress, identity formation, autonomy, and social influences shape students' professional decisions. Findings show that while external factors such as parental expectations and societal norms play a role, intrinsic motivation and personal growth are the most significant predictors of sustainable career orientation.

Keywords: student period, psychological development, career orientation, motivation, autonomy, Uzbekistan.

1. Introduction

The student period is widely recognized as a critical stage in personal and professional development. Psychologists define this life phase as a period of identity formation, cognitive maturity, and social integration (Erikson, 1968; Arnett, 2000). Career orientation is deeply influenced by the psychological features of this stage, including emotional stability, autonomy, and motivation.

According to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, students begin to strive for self-actualization once basic physiological and safety needs are met, making career decisions not only a practical but also a psychological process. Similarly, Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory underscores the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation during student years.

This study examines how the psychological characteristics of student life in Uzbekistan affect career orientation, drawing parallels with international findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Developmental Psychology Perspectives

Erikson (1968): Defines student years as the stage of identity vs. role confusion. Successful resolution results in a stable career orientation and a sense of purpose.



Arnett (2000): Describes the student period as “emerging adulthood,” marked by exploration in love, work, and worldviews.

Piaget (1972): Suggests that cognitive maturity at this stage allows abstract thinking, essential for long-term career planning.

2.2 Motivational Theories

Maslow (1943): Students seek self-actualization, and career choice becomes a path to achieving personal potential.

Deci & Ryan (2000): Emphasize autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core components of career motivation.

McClelland (1961): Highlights achievement motivation, noting that students with a high need for achievement show stronger persistence in career orientation.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Nishimura (2017): Found that Japanese students’ motivation is closely tied to autonomy and social relationships.

Karimov (2023): In Uzbekistan, intrinsic motivation was found to be more stable than external motivators such as financial benefits.

Iskandarov & Iskandarova (2022): Reported that while external pressures (parental expectations, societal norms) affect initial decisions, internal motivation sustains long-term commitment.

Koyanagi et al. (2021): Demonstrated the role of social capital in reinforcing academic and career motivation.

2.4 Research Gap

Although much is known about psychological development during student years, there remains limited empirical work in Uzbekistan linking these characteristics directly to career orientation. This study aims to address that gap.

3. Methodology

Participants: 120 students of Gulistan State Pedagogical Institute, aged 18–24, from various faculties.

Methods:

Survey: 20 Likert-scale questions measuring autonomy, stress management, and career aspirations.

Interviews: 25 semi-structured interviews on personal challenges and career goals.

Observation: Student participation in extracurricular clubs and volunteer activities.



Analysis: Quantitative data analyzed with SPSS (correlation and chi-square tests); qualitative data analyzed using thematic coding.

Ethical Considerations: Informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation were ensured.

4. Results

4.1 Survey Findings

64% of students reported that personal interest and talent were the main factors influencing their career choice.

41% acknowledged parental or societal influence in shaping career decisions.

Autonomy correlated strongly with self-reported motivation ($r = 0.71, p < 0.05$).

53% stated that participation in extracurricular activities improved their confidence in future career plans.

4.2 Interview Findings

Many students described the university period as a time of both stress and self-discovery. Several participants emphasized the conflict between personal aspirations and family expectations.

Students active in social and volunteer work expressed greater clarity about career orientation.

4.3 Observation Findings

Students engaged in clubs and leadership activities demonstrated stronger planning skills and higher resilience.

Passive students showed more uncertainty and reported higher stress levels.

5. Discussion

The results confirm developmental and motivational theories:

1. Identity Formation: Consistent with Erikson (1968), students who actively explore career options show less role confusion and stronger career orientation.

2. Intrinsic Motivation: As Deci & Ryan (2000) suggest, autonomy and competence are critical. Students with greater independence in academic tasks reported higher motivation.

3. The Role of External Influences: While parental expectations were significant, they often conflicted with students' personal aspirations, echoing findings by Iskandarov & Iskandarova (2022).



4. Social Capital: Participation in extracurricular activities reinforced motivation and confidence, supporting Koyanagi et al.'s (2021) findings.

5. Stress and Resilience: Students who managed stress through active engagement (clubs, volunteering) were more confident in career planning, in line with Nishimura (2017).

For Uzbekistan, these results highlight the need for structured career counseling, extracurricular engagement opportunities, and curricula that promote autonomy and personal growth.

6. Conclusion

The study shows that the psychological characteristics of student life—identity exploration, intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and social engagement—are decisive in shaping career orientation. While external pressures remain significant, fostering intrinsic motivation and resilience is crucial for long-term success.

- Introduce structured career counseling services.
 - Incorporate goal-setting and personal development modules into curricula.
 - Expand extracurricular and volunteer opportunities to strengthen social capital.
- Promote autonomy and independent decision-making among students.

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