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INTEREST IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: THE CURRENT TREND AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, management education is considered as elitist in higher education in India. Many young men and women with high scholastic records have been attracted to pursuing higher education in management field. The obvious reason for this trend is the high and lucrative remuneration and other positive consequences associated with MBA. The authors came across a number of cases of MBA pursuing students, who feel stressed out and have difficulty in coping with the non passionate subjects. And they become less motivated to perform in the academics. These in turn resulted in adjustment difficulties, anxiety and low self-esteem. All these dynamics could affect their academic performance in one hand and personality on the other hand. The present study explores career interest of the prospective MBA students in a popular B-School in India. The Thurstone's Interest Schedule (TIS) was administered to these subjects. The total sample size was 241. The ten core interest dimensions were regrouped into two clusters, namely management education oriented and non management education oriented dimensions. The analysis shows that only 55% of aspirants have core interest in management education oriented dimensions. The remaining 45% of aspirants whose core interest is in non management oriented dimensions.

KEYWORDS

Career interest, Career choice, Management education.

CASE 1

Mr. Nath (name changed) is a 4th Semester MBA student of a reputed management school came to meet one of the authors of this article for counseling of his own accord. During the counseling session, he expressed signs of depression and anxiety. The discussion went on to his interest in management studies and his family background. The assessment measure of depression showed he had mild amount of depression and could do well with counseling. Later assessment of his career interest showed he was least interested in management/ business education. This low interest in management education made him focus very little on the subject and made him less interactive in the classroom participation sessions. This has lead to poor assessment of him in internals by faculties, and also poor performance in the assignments. It got to be a vicious circle, where his peers also showed less inclination towards him and he was not able to do well in many team assignments. Finally he got low marks in all the subjects and a need arose for him to come for counseling sessions. The awareness he got in counseling and the choices he made thereafter, altering of his belief system, all put together, and helped him come out of depression within a fort night.

CASE 2

Ms. Anitha (name changed) is a top ranked student in engineering and joined a business school to do her MBA. She came to meet one of the authors of this article for counseling for irregularity in her attendance and missed the first internal test. Initially, she was not willing to talk and wanted full assurance about the confidentiality. When she felt reassured, she started talking about how she had difficulty in coping with the new subjects and how she thought of quitting the course. The interest and personality test revealed that she was least interested in management education and was inclined towards research. She was passionate about working in depth on the same project instead of knowing subjects in bits and pieces. The personality test also correlated with her interest dimensions and revealed that she could excel in the research area. She discussed these things with her parents and quit the college and joined Post-Graduate course in engineering.

CASE 3

Ms Sawani (name changed) has been referred by one of the faculty for counseling. Sawani was caught smoking marijuana. Sawani was reluctant to meet the counselor but cooperative. She was moderate in studies, but had a burning desire to work as a fashion designer. Her family was not interested in putting her for fashion designing. She came from an elite family, where everybody was into senior executive positions in various MNC's. The career interest test and personality assessment showed her burning desire for creative field. The counseling was focused on her de-addiction programme as well as career aspects. She left the MBA programme and started working on some fashion design projects.

All the above cases are revealing significant influence of one's core interest in career choices and later its effect on the behavior and personality of a person. The present study focuses career interest as a predominant factor in one's career choices.

MBA: A MOST SOUGHT COURSE OF THE PRESENT GENERATION

MBA as a course does not have a long history. It was started in Harvard University in 1908 with 80 students as an experimental basis. However, in Harvard itself, it grew enormously. Many research authors consider MBA degree as the popular academic qualification in the present day global market (Jain & Stopford, 2011). Even though there were speculations about MBA degree's effectiveness (Mintzberg, 2004), the recent study says that CEO's with MBA degree have higher level of corporate environmental performance (Slater & Dixon-Flower, 2010). However, recent survey says that there is a slight decline in MBA application volume compared to previous years and as well as with specific master's programmes (GMAC report, 2011). In India, IIM Calcutta and IIM Ahmedabad were the pioneers in initiating the MBA degree on a model similar to MIT Sloan School of Management and Harvard Business School respectively.

INTEREST: DEFINITION AND SCOPE

The nature and strength of one's interests, values and attitudes represent an important aspect of personality (Anastasi, 1990). Even though they are not mutually exclusive, the study of interest is important for understanding one's career choices. Interest has been defined as activities for which we have likings or dislike and which we go towards or away from (Strong, 1928). Another assumption is that an individual's preference for an occupation or selection for a course of study can be determined by his/her motivation, which is influenced by one's interests, values and preferences (Freeman, 1965). Super (1949, 1957) elaborated and classified interests into four types such as expressed, manifested, tested and inventoried interests. The majority of interest inventories are designed to assess the individual's interest in different fields of work (Anastasi, 1990). These interest inventories are not test of aptitudes. They indicate only the extent of similarity between interests and preferences expressed by those being examined and those of persons successfully engaged in the specified occupations or areas (Freeman, 1965).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study applies practice based research approach, where the focus is more on on-going process and its outcome. This study assesses the student's interest in management education programmes, when these students are in the process of joining the management programme after their graduation course. This assessment will enable the counselors to guide students to choose a field based on their core interests rather than racing with the trend.

NULL HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The MBA aspirants are expected to have a lot of passion about their future studies and this passion is supposed to be reflected in their interest test. The assumption is that when other things like remuneration and prestige associated with the occupation are constant, the student would choose the job to the best of his liking. In this case, the null hypothesis would be, "To do well, all the MBA aspirants will have the high score of interest in management oriented dimensions (H_01) or in the other way no MBA aspirants will have high score of interest in non management oriented dimensions on interest schedule (H_02)". However, the authors feel that the null hypotheses are mutually exclusive and need to be tested differently rather than combining the data.

Further, in the above hypotheses statements like, "All the MBA aspirants" does not mean that at the absolute level of 100%. Similarly, "No subjects" means 0% of the total number of aspirants. It is relative and arbitrary. We are considering 95% of the expected data as 'ALL' the MBA aspirants and 5% of the expected data as 'NO' MBA students...

METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study explores the students' career interest through a test and groups them according to either management education oriented dimensions or non management oriented dimensions. The Percentage analysis and Chi-Square analysis are carried out to show case the significance impact of this trend and its consequences on future academic issues.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

The subjects are aspirants of MBA course in a reputed management college in India. The protocol of the college is to invite the students to have an open session with the faculty of the college and get the gist of its culture and process. During this time they also go through an interest test to know their core interest areas. The total number of aspirants to go through this test was 251 of an academic year and 241 valid test profiles were taken for the study. The method of sampling is convenient sampling of random subjects.

The average age of the aspirants is 21.39 years and 96 aspirants were females and 145 were males. However, gender as a variable was not studied in the present study. Another assumption about the subjects was that all the aspirants had cleared the aptitude test, which was a mandatory requirement for any MBA admission. This was not verified by the authors. The actual educational background of the aspirants was B.A. (5), BBA (16), B.Com (66), BBM (73), BCA (10), Engineering (51) and others (6).

TEST MATERIAL

Thurstone interest schedule was used for exploring the Students' Career Interests (Thurstone, 1948). The reliability of the instrument is 0.90 to 0.96 and can be used for students above secondary schooling. The test consists of 100 different job designations. The test assesses individuals ten career interest dimensions, namely, Physical science, Biological science, Computational, Business, Executive, Persuasive, Linguistics, Humanitarian, Artistic and Musical. Business, Executive and Persuasive career interest dimensions are directly related to courses in management education and it can be hypothesized that students who are aspiring to study MBA have high interest in one of these career interest dimensions. Computation is close to Education in Finance and Accounting services and it is considered to be appropriately included in management education oriented dimensions by management experts. However, authors have not come across any research evidence to support this opinion. Physical science, biological science, linguistics, humanitarian, artistic and musical dimensions were considered as non management education oriented interest dimensions.

PROCEDURE

The schedule was administered in a group of 25 and above. Individual queries were also made and the responses noted. Response sheets were scored and interpreted as described in the manual. For analysis purpose, only highest career interest and second highest career interest were considered as equal in terms of weight age for further discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the article focuses on descriptive analysis of the data obtained through TIS test.

TABLE 1: THE RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION OF MBA ASPIRANTS' CAREER INTEREST ON TIS (n=241)

Particulars	PS	BS	C	B	E	P	L	H	A	M	Total
Highest score	13	7	60	65	34	5	18	7	50	27	286
Second Highest Score	17	8	32	66	42	23	37	18	42	24	309
Total	30	15	92	131	76	28	55	25	92	51	595
% of responses	5.042	2.521	15.46	22.016	12.773	4.705	9.243	4.20	15.46	8.57	100

Source: Authors calculations.

TABLE 2: CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

SI Number	Observed frequencies	Expected frequencies	Obtained Chi value	Table Chi value	Interpretation
Management oriented dimensions	327	565.25	100.4212	3.84	Rejecting the null hypothesis
Non management oriented dimensions	268	29.75	1908.002	3.84	Rejecting the null hypothesis

Source: Authors calculations.

The above table shows that in the management oriented dimensions, the obtained Chi value is quite higher than the Table chi value i.e. $\chi^2_{.05}(1) = 100.42 > 3.84$. This means the null hypothesis H_01 has to be rejected. In the non management oriented dimensions, the obtained chi value is also quite higher than the table chi value i.e. $\chi^2_{.05}(1) = 1908 > 3.84$. This would also lead us to reject the appropriate null hypothesis H_02 .

The rejection of both null hypotheses forces us to formulate alternative hypotheses and there are follows:

In the first null hypothesis, All the MBA aspirants will have the high interest in management oriented dimensions is not accepted means that 95% of the MBA aspirants will not have high scores of interest in management oriented dimensions and in the present case it is only 55%. That allows us to say that:

H_{a1} : All the MBA aspirants will not have the high scores in management oriented dimensions of the assessed interest schedule.

In the second null hypothesis case, no MBA aspirants will have high scores of interest in non management oriented dimensions on interest schedule has not been accepted indicates there are more than 5% of MBA aspirants, who have high scores in non management oriented dimensions in the assessed schedule.

H_{a2} : There will be many MBA aspirants will have high scores of interest in non management oriented dimensions on the assessed interest schedule.

The consequences of accepting the alternative hypotheses are generally not positive in terms of students' career and personal life. Students, who showed high interest in non management oriented dimensions, may get into problems, if they join the MBA course as they aspired. It will be difficult for them to cope up with pressure of studying extensively and they may end up with low academic performances, in which case, the emotional well being and self-esteem will be negatively affected. This can in turn lead to depression or some other psychological problems. On the other hand the low in interest will affect the student's motivation to participate in classroom activities and pull the overall classroom performance down. For teachers, all these factors will affect the teacher's interaction with students and at times it may de-motivate the faculty. On organisational level, the low performers may often show unrest, which in turn would take away the focus of the management from academic to non academic issues. Eventually, the reputation of the institute may come down.

CONCLUSION

The result and the following discussion reveal that students are aspiring to study MBA without strong interest or knowledge of management education. This trend has a lot of consequences on different level: On individual level, on faculty level, and finally-at the organizational level. Career counseling and guidance with the support of psychometric tests could help to minimize the harm coming out of these issues, and maximize the candidate's success in his long career.

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