Family influence on career choices as a predictor for psychological well-being of Thai university students

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Article Info

Abstract

The time one spends in university is very important in determining one's future career. In collectivistic countries like Thailand, family units can play a large role in shaping one's career path. The aim of this study was to investigate whether family Influence on career choices predicts psychological well-being in Thai university students. A total of 1268 participants took part in the main study. Participants were university students from different regions across Thailand. All participants filled out a demographic information questionnaire, the Family Influence scale, Thai Version, and the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being. The findings suggest that informational support, financial support, and family expectations predict all factors of psychological well-being. Values and Beliefs only predicted Personal Growth and Positive Relations with Others. The results have major implications for further understanding which types of family influence might positively influence psychological well-being in Thai university students.

1. Introduction

The family unit provides an important context for growth and development for individuals. It is therefore no surprise that research has shown that family influence can also greatly impact an individual's career choice (Fouad et al., 2015). The influence of the family on one's career choice can be observed in many ways. For example, parents may become a role model in terms of occupation towards their children, and additionally, they may also provide emotional and psychological support when their children would like to discuss career options (Chlosta et al., 2012; Mohd et al., 2010). Families may have a more significant impact on Asian youths than those from western cultures. Indeed, in a cross-cultural study that compared the factors that influence in career choices in Australian students and those from Taiwan and Hongkong, results indicated that students from Australia were more likely to make decisions based on aptitude in the subject matter. In contrast, students from Taiwan and Hongkong were more likely to be more impacted by family, among other factors (Auyeung & Sands, 1997). This is further supported by Akosah-Twomasi and colleagues' review (2018), which found that youth from collectivistic cultures are more likely to be influenced by their family than youth from individualistic cultures. While there is evidence that family influence can play a role in career choices for Asian youth as a whole, such research on those with a Thai background is lacking. Understanding the development of an individual's career choice is of paramount importance. This is because the development of career choice can indicate the quality of life and may be related to well-being (Kim et al., 2016).

Psychologists have long been interested in the study of psychological well-being, aiming to substantialize the causes and impacts of psychological well-being, and determine how to effectively measure it. At first glance, the average person may think of psychological well-being in terms of "happiness"; however, the scope of psychological well-being reaches much further than that. Psychological well-being refers to the efficacy of when people can successfully utilize their capacities in positive and creative ways (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The study of psychological well-being is highly important because not only does it shed light on positive emotions, but it also associated with physical health outcomes including longevity and chronic disease incidence and progression (Hernandez et al., 2018). Thus, psychological well-being does not simply mean "feeling well", but it also indicates a capacity of living well or "doing well" in life (Ryff, 1989; Shin &

Johnson, 1978). Due to its important link with both physical and psychological health of human beings, psychological well-being is a significant area of study.

One widely accepted standardized procedure used for the measurement of psychological well-being is the Ryff psychological well-being scale (Ryff, 2014; Ryff & Singer, 1996). The Ryff psychological well-being scale is a comprehensive scale that was developed based on combined theoretical frameworks in psychology, including Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, Rogers' Fully Functioning Person, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Jung's Maturity, Buhler's Basic Life Tendencies, Birren's Aging Mental Health, and Ideal Mental Health of Jahoda (Ryff, 1989, 1995). Psychological well-being comprises six dimensions as follows: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Personal Growth, and Self-Acceptance (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Although the research about psychological well-being is well established in western countries, there have also been many studies that attempt to examine psychological well-being in part or whole in Asian countries as well (Cheng & Chan, 2005; Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2001; Karasawa et al., 2011). The concept of happiness has also become a topic of interest within the Thai research community. Various studies have focused on subjective well-being, how people feel good about themselves, in Thailand (Camfield et al., 2009; Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2001; Kraithaworn, 2012; Neff, 2011; Neff et al., 2008). In addition, it has also been found that family factors are important in explaining Thai adolescent happiness (Gray et al., 2013). This underlines the importance of the family in the Thai context. Many of these studies, however, seem to focus heavily on the aspect of "feeling well". While research into that is no doubt valuable, the aspect of "doing well" seems to be lacking in the Thai research community, as very few have focused on both aspects of psychological well-being (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2004).

The main objective of this study is to examine whether family influence in career choices can predict psychological well-being in Thai university students. In doing so, we adopted the Thai version of the Family Influence Scale (Taesilapasathit et al., 2015) and developed a Thai version of the Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing. Conducting this study to examine whether career-choices can predict psychological well-being can contribute to further understanding of factors that predict the behavioral aspects in addition to the emotional aspects of psychological well-being in Thailand.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Data for the Psychological Well-Being, Thai Version, scale development were collected from 291 participants. All participants who volunteered to take part in the study were students at Thammasat University who at the time were enrolled in a psychology course. Samples were chosen from psychology courses due to convenience and due to these courses being popular choices of enrollment for students of various areas of study. This allows for heterogeneity in the sample.

The main study also employed convenience sampling. A total of 1,268 participants took part in the main study. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 24 and were students enrolled in 1 of 48 programs or majors in 1 of 8 universities across Thailand at the time of data collection. Initially, two-hundred participants from each university were invited to take part in this study. Two universities were selected from four regions across Thailand (central, north, north-east, and south). One university in each region was situated in urban areas, whereas the other was situated in more rural areas. This was to ensure as much diversity in the sample as possible.

2.2 Measurements

1. The Family Influence Scale, Thai Version, consists of 22 items ($\alpha = 0.81$) (Taesilapasathit et al., 2015). This scale was developed from Fouad and colleagues' Family Influence Scale (2010). Factors include Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Family Values/Beliefs.

2. The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Thai Version, was developed from the English version to make it appropriate for collecting data in Thai samples. It was developed from Ryff's scale (1989). Forward and back translations were conducted, in addition to assessments of the nature of constructs and internal consistency. The final scale used in this study consisted of 63 items.

2.3 Procedure

2.3.1 Scale Development

We obtained permission to use the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989) for this study. In order to assess Thai participants, the scales were then developed into the Thai version of the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being. Forward

translation of the scales from English to Thai used the committee approach. The scales were back-translated into English by a linguistics expert.

2.3.2 Scale Quality

Item Objective Congruence (IOC) Index assessment showed no item with an average rating of below 0.5. Internal consistency was assessed in all subscales. Four items were removed from the Autonomy subscale, six items were removed from the Personal Growth subscale, three items were removed from the Positive Relations with Others subscale, and eight items were removed from the Purpose in Life subscale. This left a total of 63 items to be used in the Thai version of the Psychological Well-Being Scale. Internal consistency scales are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1.

Internal Consistency of 6 Subscales of the Psychological Well-Being Scale, Thai Version

Subscale	Number of Items	Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)
Autonomy	10	0.768
Environmental Mastery	14	0.854
Personal Growth	8	0.711
Positive Relations with Others	11	0.866
Purpose in Life	6	0.802
Self-Acceptance	14	0.904

A confirmatory factor analysis found that the χ^2 (9, *N=291*) = 24.258, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.974, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.979, the Tucker-Lewis fit index (TLI) = 0.964, and the root-mean-squared error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.076. This indicates a good fit for the model (MacCallum et al., 1996). The structural equation model is shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1.

Structural equation model of the Psychological Well-Being Scale, Thai Version.
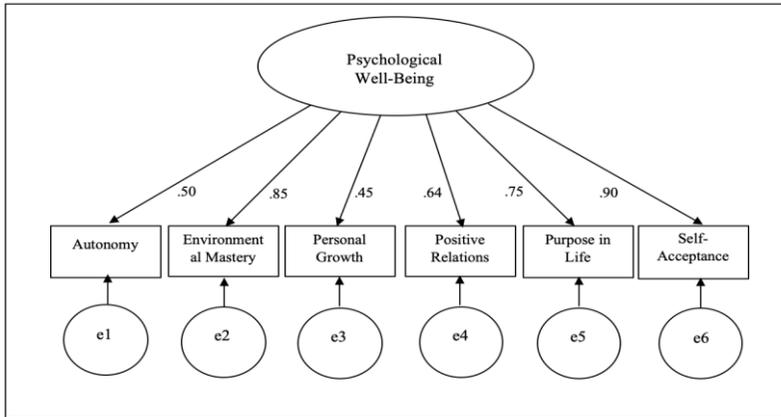
2.3.3 Main study

After the development of the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Thai Version, data were collected using the Family Influence Scale, Thai Version, and The Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being, Thai Version. Demographic information was also collected from participants. Data were analyzed using multiple regression (enter method). Informed consent was obtained from participants prior to taking part and all participants were debriefed following their completion of the study.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2.

The means and standard deviations of the Family Influence Scale, Thai Version, and the Psychological Well-Being Scale, Thai Version

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Informational Support	3.83	.580
Financial Support	4.16	.620
Family Expectations	3.23	.730

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Beliefs and Attitudes	2.86	1.024
Autonomy	3.62	.525
Environmental Mastery	4.02	.547
Personal Growth	4.67	.618
Positive Relations with Others	4.09	.759
Purpose in Life	4.21	.755
Self-Acceptance	3.78	.619

Pearson correlations are shown in **Table 3.**

Table 3.

The Pearson correlations of the Family Influence Scale, Thai Version, and the Psychological Well-Being Scale, Thai Version

Psychological Well-Being	Family Influence on Career Choices			
	Informational Support	Financial Support	Family Expectations	Beliefs and Attitudes
Autonomy	.044	.104**	-.170**	-.125**
Environmental Mastery	.253**	.231**	-.106**	-.091**
Personal Growth	.184**	.243**	-.156**	-.140**
Positive Relations with Others	.171**	.208**	-.201**	-.192**
Purpose in Life	.260**	.197**	-.071*	-.037
Self-Acceptance	.241**	.198**	-.064*	-.008

**Correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$

* Correlations are significant at $p < 0.05$

3.2 Family Influence on Career Choices on Autonomy

Multiple regression (enter method) was conducted to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes predicted Autonomy. Preliminary analysis showed that Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Autonomy. The data were then reanalyzed using the multiple regression (enter method) to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family

Expectations predicted Autonomy. The analysis showed that all three factors predicted autonomy ($F(3, 1266) = 19.531$, $p < .001$, $r^2_{adjusted} = .042$). Coefficients are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4.

Coefficients of Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations on Autonomy

Model	β	t	Sig.
Informational Support	.063	2.111	.035
Financial Support	-.191	-6.716	<.001
Family Expectations	.087	2.989	.003

3.3 Family Influence on Career Choices on Environmental Mastery

Multiple regression (enter method) was conducted to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes predicted Environmental Mastery. Preliminary analysis showed that Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Environmental Mastery. The data were then reanalyzed using the multiple regression (enter method) to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Environmental Mastery. The analysis showed that all three factors predicted Autonomy ($F(3, 1266) = 55.953$, $p < .001$, $r^2_{adjusted} = .115$). Coefficients are shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5.

Coefficients of Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations on Environmental Support

Model	β	t	Sig.
Informational Support	.245	8.544	<.001
Financial Support	-.173	-6.327	<.001
Family Expectations	.159	5.700	<.001

3.4 Family Influence on Career Choices on Personal Growth

Multiple regression (enter method) was conducted to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes predicted Personal Growth. Analysis showed that Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family

Expectations predicted Personal Growth ($F(4, 1263) = 40.833$, $p < .001$, $r^2_{adjusted} = .112$). Coefficients are shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6.

Coefficients of Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes on Personal Growth

Model	β	t	Sig.
Informational Support	.184	6.329	<.001
Financial Support	-.172	-5.249	<.001
Family Expectations	.182	6.474	<.001
Beliefs and Attitudes	-.069	-2.120	.034

3.5 Family Influence on Career Choices on Positive Relations with Others

Multiple regression (enter method) was conducted to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes predicted Positive Relations with Others. Analysis showed that Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Positive Relations with Others ($F(4, 1263) = 44.628$, $p < .001$, $r^2_{adjusted} = .121$). Coefficients are shown in **Table 7**.

Table 7.

Coefficients of Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes on Positive Relations with Others

Model	β	t	Sig.
Informational Support	.196	6.781	<.001
Financial Support	-.190	-5.830	<.001
Family Expectations	.145	5.158	<.001
Beliefs and Attitudes	-.116	-3.559	<.001

3.6 Family Influence on Career Choices on Purpose in Life

Multiple regression (enter method) was conducted to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes predicted Purpose in Life. Preliminary analysis showed that Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Purpose in Life. The data were then

reanalyzed using the multiple regression (enter method) to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Purpose in Life. The analysis showed that all three factors predicted Purpose in Life ($F(3, 1266) = 46.949$, $p < .001$, $r^2_{adjusted} = .098$). Coefficients are shown in **Table 8**.

Table 8.

Coefficients of Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations on Purpose in Life

Model	β	t	Sig.
Informational Support	.257	8.860	<.001
Financial Support	-.140	-5.075	<.001
Family Expectations	.119	4.228	<.001

3.7 Family Influence on Career Choices on Self-Acceptance

Multiple regression (enter method) was conducted to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, Family Expectations, and Beliefs and Attitudes predicted Self-Acceptance. Preliminary analysis showed that Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Self-Acceptance. The data were then reanalyzed using the multiple regression (enter method) to see if Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations predicted Self-Acceptance. The analysis showed that all three factors predicted Self-Acceptance ($F(3, 1266) = 41.365$, $p < .001$, $r^2_{adjusted} = .087$). Coefficients are shown in **Table 9**.

Table 9.

Coefficients of Informational Support, Financial Support, and Family Expectations on Purpose in Life

Model	β	t	Sig.
Informational Support	.232	7.939	<.001
Financial Support	-.126	-4.542	<.001
Family Expectations	.128	4.541	<.001

4. Discussion

The main purpose of this was to examine parental influences on career choices and their influence on psychological well-being in Thai university students. The results show that three factors of parental influence, Informational Support, Financial Support, and Parental Expectations, can predict all six components of psychological well-being. This seems to suggest that family influence on career choices does indeed have an effect on psychological well-being as a whole.

That certain aspects of parental influence among Thai student participants have a positive effect on psychological well-being seem to conform to the literature. Benito-Gomez and colleagues (2021) conducted a study to explore the effects of support on student adjustment. Results seem to suggest that supportive behaviors from parents contributed to student adjustment.

While one might suspect that financial support should have a positive impact on psychological well-being, it is interesting that this study found that it predicted a negative effect. Indeed, it was reported that parental financial support can lower a student's self-efficacy (Mortimer et al., 2010). Self-efficacy is an important component of emotional well-being (Bandura, 2010). In a study by de Caroli and Sagone (2014), it was found that generalized self-efficacy was positively linked with psychological well-being. These results have implications for how parents may influence psychological well-being of Thai university students based on the type of support they give.

Additionally, parental expectations communicated can result in a student feeling obligated to fulfill those expectations. Fuligni and Pedersen (2002) conducted a study on family obligations (sense of duty to family) and found that family obligation was linked with positive well-being. This seems to explain how parents communicating their expectations about which potential career choices they might approve of to their children may have a positive effect on psychological well-being.

The results show that parental family values and beliefs predicted less personal growth and positive relations with others. This subscale assessed mainly whether parents expected their children to consider religious and family values when making career choices. Barni and colleagues (2011) conducted a study on value transmission in the family and assessed the level of youth acceptance of the values their parents attempted to transmit. The findings indicated a moderate level of acceptance of values as a

whole. More interestingly, when further investigating which values adolescents in the study were likely to accept and which they were not, they found that adolescents did not accept conservative values. The failure to accept certain conservative family values such as considering religious beliefs in career choice may result in conflict within the family. This may explain why family values and beliefs predicted less personal growth. While many studies do find that religious beliefs can have a positive impact on relations with others, problems may arise when these religious beliefs cause conflict between the youth and their family (Bartkowski, 2008). Perhaps these problems may arise when they come into contact with others as well, or cause a spillover effect. In particular, past parent-adolescent conflict has been shown to predict aggression (Smokowski et al., 2015). This suggests that parental transmission of certain types of family values may have a negative impact on children.

Overall, the results in this study suggest that parental influence on career choices can positively or negatively affect psychological well-being among university students. These results have implications not only for further understanding psychological well-being in Thai university students, but also for positive parenting practices.

In this study, we collected data on randomly selected cohorts of university students across Thailand. As data collection was done with cooperation from lecturers in each data collection site, we were unable to control such variables such as familial background, year of study, or major of study. Thus, because of the cross-sectional and descriptive nature of the study, we were unable to ascertain whether there was a change over time in how family influence in career choices might influence psychological well-being. In addition, while we found that family influence on career choices does indeed predict psychological well-being, we did not focus on factors that may have influenced different levels of family influence in each subscale. Future studies should be conducted longitudinally to investigate factors that might cause or that may influence each subscale in the family influence on career choices scale. Identifying such factors will allow for better understanding of family influences as a whole on psychological well-being in Thai university students.

5. Acknowledgements

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