

## **Cyber Media and Career Choices among Omani Youth (A Survey of College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa Students)**

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### **Abstract**

Cyber media has changed the way people, including the youngsters look at the world. The glut of information on diverse subjects, the possibility of social networking, gaming etc have attracted the young and the old alike.

In contemporary Oman where educational institutions offer a bouquet of courses both in the traditional learning and through online modes, students have a choice. The research aimed at identifying the use and influence of Cyber media in making career choices by Omani students in the College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa, and Sultanate of Oman. The survey method was found to be appropriate to seek answers to the research objectives and was exploratory in nature.

The study was aimed at first generation undergraduate students, who have limitations with the English language. A representative sample of 185 students-males and females was chosen using the stratified random sampling method. A semi structured questionnaire was framed to collect data. Among other findings, the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the cyber media usage and consumption pattern of the male and the female students. The Null hypotheses is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. Other null hypotheses that there is no difference among sexes on the importance of career counseling and there are no differences among sexes on their sources of career information are accepted. While on the most influential factor for career choice the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

**Keywords:** Cyber media, careers, career choices, education, Nizwa, Omani youth

### **Introduction**

Cyber media has changed the way people, including the youngsters look at the world. The glut of information on diverse subjects, the possibility of social networking, gaming etc. have attracted the young and the old alike. Today, Omani youth, have embraced this new medium to meet their information needs for education and diverse purposes thanks to the initiatives of the Sultanate which has bolstered the adoption of this new delivery platform.

Internet access is exploding in Oman. Not only is the sector growing at one of the highest rates of the region, but also the vast majority of users (estimated 90percent) are accessing the Internet using broadband connections (ADSL). Oman counted above 1.2 million internet users which constitutes over 42 percent of the total population. Cyber cafes, dot various part of the cities and towns and rural parts of the country. Omani youth flock to the Internet cafes even if it costs them. The Internet content consumed by youth and others is predominately generated and hosted outside Oman. If expanded access to satellite television and Internet exposes Omanis to the benefits of potentially alternative content, it also relegates them to the passive role of "content-consumers" in the globalizing market of information. Internet unquestionably represents an underutilized or even unexplored tool for reaching out to young Omanis with information, especially information delivered via audio formats such as real time streaming ("webcasts"), stored streaming audio files, or mp3 downloads delivered directly or through RSS feeds ("podcasts"). Cyber media is an extremely low cost solution when compared to the costs of radio.

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In contemporary Oman where educational institutions offer a bouquet of courses both in the traditional learning and through online modes, students have a choice. With each institution, be in the private or the public sectors competing for the same student market, students are at times in a fix on the career choices to make. Cyber media, family, friends, elders, teachers and career counselors and the mainstream media play a crucial role in decision making.

Career choices are challenging as the decisions made have a great impact on all the aspects of life. Choices are generally conditioned by many factors such as educational background, personal values, social beliefs, financial aspects and geographical factors but in the end, personal values play a key role and the rest of these factors influence more or less this set of values.

A wise career choice might be understood as a decision that has been taken upon a realistic filtering of all career options and personal competencies generally required for a particular job opening. It results in truly valuable expertise and personal satisfaction. Yet, career choices are not always positioned on this positive and happy side, as many persons who have chosen a certain career path realized that they were all wrong. Career choice is a tough decision but also a threshold that might be easily overcome provided one assesses the real abilities and match them with the courses Career planning is very important, and it needs to be done quite early in life. Making career choices is a challenging task and students ought to make these critical choices at a very important phase in their life cycle. Deciding what to achieve in life at a later stage depends to a large extent on the choices made early in

life. Students ought to have clarity about career related issues and setting their career goals lest they regret their decisions later.

The present study is undertaken against this background among the students of College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa, in the Sultanate of Oman.

Ever since inception, CAS have been admitting students into different majors of study to acquire skills and training so as to fit in properly in their chosen careers. But one yawning question that is begging for an answer is how students in these colleges chose their areas of study. In other words, how did these students choose the careers-(courses offered), they are pursuing in these colleges and universities as the case may be. Are the careers/courses in these colleges and universities drawn to cater for the needs of the local labor market, or was it just a curricula transfer from other countries? Did students know of the requirements these careers/courses demanded before choosing them? What influenced students in choosing a particular career? This research sought answers to these other pressing questions.

### Rationale of the Study

The primary purpose of the proposed study was to add to the existing body of knowledge. Other reasons that prompted this study include: paucity of literature on determinants of career choices in the Arab region more so in the case of Oman. This dearth and non-availability of a sound body of research profiling the career choices made by the students in the Arab world, particularly in Oman warrants the present study.

The research would be beneficial to stakeholders like students, employers and the policymakers. The data and information gathered are of immense value to the future generation of students. The study targeting students sheds light on why students chose a particular stream of study that would lead to a certain career, unlike other studies which profiled in-profession people after they had made their career choices. The study helps in formulating effective recruitment strategies and planning by the employers. The information obtained is to be used by policy makers to strategize and introduce newer courses at the college level in tune with the industry demands and the students' expectations.

The outcome of the study identifies the stages, areas and time of proper career counseling to the students. Besides, of course, the use of the information obtained as policy guidelines by the authorities for planning higher studies in Oman.

### Overview of Oman Education

Oman is a young nation whose quest for development took a dramatic turn when HM Sultan Qaboos Bin said took over the reins of power in 1970. Prior to 1970 Oman was a traditional society with little or no trained, and or educated workforce. The literacy level was low and most modern jobs and technologies were not available. Thus one crucial problem, His majesty's government faced was that of transforming Oman from a traditional to a modern society. This is in recognition of the fact that development and economic success of any given nation is achieved through an educated, trained and skilled work force. Government therefore, placed high priority to education in order to develop the much needed domestic workforce to take an active role in supporting and contributing to the nation's rapid development. The challenges facing Oman, particularly the need of self-sufficiency and the need to diversify the economy and keep pace with technological change, require new

educational goals to prepare Omanis for life and work in the new conditions created by the modern global economy. These will require a high degree of adaptability and a strong background in mathematics and sciences in order to independently apply rapidly changing technologies to Oman's needs. Hence, the focus on introduction and expansion of modern education, which has consistently been part of the country's development plan. This is clearly reflected in the planning document 2020 too.

Al-Belushi, Al-Adawi & Al-Ketani, (1999) <sup>[3]</sup>, quoting the Ministry of Development (1997), Oman's "Vision 2020"-listed the country's specific economic focus on education.

- To implement and improve the standards of basic education;
- To make secondary education more consistent with the requirements of the future society;
- To pay more attention to the science subjects;
- To introduce the teaching of computers in schools as a basic subject;
- To improve the teaching/learning of the English language in basic education;
- To provide schools with adequate human resources and educational equipment;
- To improve the status of teachers;
- To improve in-service training courses and workshops for all staff in the educational field; and
- To improve teaching methods and education practices according to new trends and to encourage the concept of learning by doing.

The proposed educational reforms are designed to achieve the knowledge and mental skills and attitudes that young Omanis will need to learn and adapt to the very different future most of them will face. The concern for the future is no better expressed than in the words of the ever visionary leader of the country, His majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who in his 2006 speech to the Oman Higher Education Council said:

*"... education, training and employment [is] an issue which we regard as the cornerstone of the future and the main stimulus enabling us to reach our goals".*

Keeping His Majesty's vision in view, the Sultanate of Oman's goals for the Seventh five-year economic plan (2006-2010) were aimed at education and empowerment of its people. The Government wants to encourage private sector enterprise through policies and incentives, and to stimulate trade and investment.

In this regard, the plan aimed at:

- Improving higher education opportunities
- Creating job opportunities to Omanis
- Enhancing the efficiency of the administrative system of the state
- Managing population issues and human resources development
- Ensuring women empowerment.

### Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Ministry of National Economy emphatically said the aim of government is to "develop human resources and the capabilities of the Omani people to generate and manage technological changes efficiently, in addition to facing continuous changing local and international conditions in a way that ensures maintaining the Omani traditions and customs...."

"Competition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be based upon the industries that depend on science and knowledge. The success

of nations in the coming century will be closely linked to the potentialities and skills of their people to cope with technological and scientific advances. This call for creativity, understanding and scientific invention.”

(Sultanate of Oman, ministry of National Economy. *Human resources development strategy*).

Converting its concerns into action, the government embarked on a series of new educational reforms. And the foundation stone of the higher education system was laid in 1986 with the establishment of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). Sultan Qaboos University was established with different fields of academic disciplines to realize this objective. The vision was to create new professions for the Omanis other than fishing, farming, and trading and equip them with the skills, training, and education they need to succeed in their chosen careers. Today SQU has more than 14,000 students and nine colleges offering programs in a range of areas, including Engineering, IT, Medicine, Science, Agriculture, Business, Education, Humanities, Law and Music. Ministry sources indicate that there are 24 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the private sector. The higher education system, both government and private, today consists of more than 60 HEIs with approximately 81,810 students. In addition more than 12,000 students are currently studying abroad.

### **Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS) and Profile of Nizwa CAS**

The Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS) were established in 2005 in pursuance of a Royal Decree. These colleges offer degree level courses in contemporary disciplines like Communications, Design, IT, and Business. These colleges are to impart knowledge so as to create a knowledge economy. CAS are run as a multi-campus programme spread over different cities in Oman, namely Nizwa, Sohar, Sur, Ibri, Rustaq and Salalah. Nizwaq CAS is one of the centres of excellence in Communication studies. Currently, the Nizwa CAS has total student strength of 1585 including 639 male and 946 female students across disciplines like Communication Studies, Design, IT, and Business Studies.

### **Literature Review**

The review of existing literature for this study was confined to the middle-east region only. Studies in the West and other regions of the world were not surveyed. A literature review on this topic yielded very thin amount of data and previous research, particularly in the case of Oman. Available studies were found to be loosely related to the proposed idea.

Ayman Elnaggar (2007) [4] in a study on The status of Omani women in the ICT sector Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, presented a gender sensitive assessment of the ICT space in Oman and the status of women within it, and to develop the seeds of an information base that provides gender analysis of opportunities and challenges in the ICT space.

Auhoud Albelushi (2004) [3] in her study focused on Gender Issues in Teacher Development: Career Choice and Commitment in Oman. She discussed the role of gender in career choice, career commitment and professional development, on the basis of interview data derived from a research study of female teachers in the Sultanate of Oman. While both these studies had a gender slant, simultaneously these studies targeted the working professionals and not the students. Other available studies were either from other countries or had a narrow focus.

Ahmed AL-Ansari and Al'a Alsadadi evaluated the Attitude of Arabian Gulf University Medical Students towards Psychiatry for the Ministry of Health, Manama, Bahrain.

Career choices among Saudi medical students (1997) identified the career choices, intended practice locations, and reasons for career choices of final-year Saudi medical students.

Arab business administration students: attributes and career decision making self-efficacy expectations, a study by Ikhlas A Abdalla explored the direct effects of internal orientation, self-esteem, instrumentality, expressiveness and the interactive effects of internality, instrumentality and self-esteem on the variance of career decision-making self-efficacy expectation,

Factors influencing the career planning and development of university students in Jordan examined the factors that have influenced the career planning among university students in Jordan.

### **Methodological Framework**

#### **Aim of the Study**

The proposed research aimed at identifying the use and influence of Cyber media in making career choices by Omani students in the College of Applied Sciences, Nizwa.

#### **Primary Objectives**

- To find out the use of cyber media and mainstream media habits of the respondents and ascertain if they are linked to career choices.
- To study whether cyber media, among other the career related sources of information accessed by students and influences the respondents in making career choices.
- To ascertain differences, if any, between male and female students with regard to the media habits.

#### **Secondary Objectives**

- To gauge the awareness levels of Omani students about career options
- To study the kind of career counselling support is available to students
- To list the family expectations while deciding careers
- To assess the individual and social factors that influence students in choosing their career.
- To enlist the job attributes and gender play a role in choice of job.
- To identify the pattern of career choices among students belonging to different disciplines in relation to the following; media habits, individual and social factors and factors related to the selection of jobs.

### **Methodology**

The survey method was found to be appropriate to seek answers to the research objectives. The proposed study is exploratory in nature.

The study was aimed at first generation undergraduate students, who have limitations with the English language. Hence, the study tried to seek responses asking respondents to choose from the given options. This was a more appropriate way as it did not ask the respondents to express their responses in detail.

The Universe includes all 1585 students of the College of Applied Sciences at Nizwa in the Sultanate of Oman as per statistics available in the Registration and Admissions section of the college. The probability sampling design was adopted. The respondents were chosen from across the different



disciplines-Communication Studies, Design, Information Technology and Business Studies.

A representative sample of 185 students-males and females was chosen using the stratified random sampling method. First the Universe was divided into four disciplines and from each discipline students pursuing different levels of courses were chosen. The respondents were accessed at the college campus. The survey was carried out over a period of three months which included designing the data gathering tool to administering it and finally collecting them.

**Data Gathering Tool**

A semi structured questionnaire was framed to collect data. The questionnaire had open and close ended questions. While there were more open ended questions which asked the respondents to choose from among the given options, there were a couple of open ended questions seeking more details.

The questions were on media habits, awareness of courses, counseling support, sources for career related information, individual and social factors and job attributes which influenced the decision making of students.

The test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire on a small sample size of same set of students, comprising equal numbers of boys and girls. The findings of this pre-testing were found free of any type of discrepancy. Post this exercise, the questionnaires were administered among the respondents for data gathering and then collected by the researchers. The coefficient of correlation was .96

**Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated for the present research

1. **Null Hypothesis (HO 1):** There is no significant difference in the cyber media usage and consumption pattern of the male and the female students
2. **Alternative Hypothesis (H 1):** There is significant difference in the cyber media usage and consumption pattern of the male and the female students
3. **Null hypothesis (HO 2):** The awareness levels of males regarding career options are the same as that of females.
4. **Alternative Hypothesis (H 2):** The awareness levels of males regarding career options are the not the same as that of females.
5. **Null Hypothesis (HO 3):** The individual and social factors that influence students in choosing their career are the same among males and females.
6. **Alternative Hypothesis (H 3):** The individual and social factors that influence students in choosing their career are not the same among males and females.

**Operational Definitions**

Terms used in the research have been operationally defined as follows:

**Career:** The courses offered by the college of applied sciences in major disciplines; Communication Studies, Design, IT and Business Studies.

**Job:** The professions chosen by the students after completing the degree.

**CAS:** acronym for Colleges of Applied Sciences runs by the Ministry of Higher Education, Oman.

**Omani Youth:** Students pursuing undergraduate degrees at the College of Applied Sciences-Nizwa.

**Career Counseling Support:** career advisory and the orientation programmes undertaken by schools, colleges,

teachers and the ministries to inform students of prospective career options and skilled required.

**Individual and Social Factors:** various personal traits and societal influences that help students choose courses and careers.

**Gender:** Males and Females

**Media Habits:** The media used by the students-radio, TV, internet, magazines.

**Heavy Media User:** 4-6 Hrs/Day.

**Moderate Media User:** 2-4 Hrs/Day **Light Media User:** Less than 2 Hrs/Day

**Region:** the administrative division of Omani territory in different regions and governorates.

**Stakeholders:** Intended beneficiaries of this study; policymakers, students and employers.

**Scope of the Study**

The study was based and executed at the college of applied sciences, Nizwa, Ministry of Higher Education, Oman. The said study encompassed the students of all majors offered at the college and covered all years of study during the degree programs.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter presents the data in the form of tables with frequencies and percentages. The tables have been supplemented with graphs for better comprehension and also chi square tests to ascertain the association between certain variables. The figures in parentheses indicate percentages which have been calculated based on the actual responses.

The data has been organized as follows. First, the tables indicate the sample profile, followed by tables on media habits. Third are the tables on respondents' awareness about courses, counseling support.

Next are the tables on career related sources of information followed by social and individual factors. Last, is the discussion on job attributes?

**Table 1:** Frequency and percentage distribution of respondent by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Males	51	27.4
Females	134	72.5
Total	185	100

Data in Table 1 reveals that the sample had nearly 75 per cent females and over 25 percent males.

**Table 2:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Department (Course of Study)

Course	Frequency	Percentage
Communication	76	41.1
Design	58	31.4
IT	24	13.0
Business	27	14.6
Total	185	100

Table 2 reveals that 40 percent of the total samples were from Communications department, while 31.4 percent were from Design Department. Respondents from Information Technology (IT) and Business Department were only 13 and 14 percent respectively. The reason why more students were chosen from Communication and Design departments was because they had more number of students as they run a full

program whereas IT and Business run only first and second year programs.

**Table 3:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Year of Study

Year of Study	Frequency	Percentage
First year	29	15.7
Second year	74	40.0
Third year	51	27.6
Final year	30	16.2
Total	185	100

Table 3 indicates that 40 percent of the sample was from second year, 27 percent from third year, and 16 percent each from first and final year.

**Table 4:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Region

Region	Frequency	Percentage
Dhakiliya	122	69.5
Bathina	26	14.1
Sharqiya	24	13.0
Dhahira	4	2.2
Muscat	6	3.2
Dhofar	3	1.6
Total	185	100

Table 4 reveals that an overwhelming majority of respondents representing about 70 percent were from Al Dhakiliya region, which is the catchment area for the college.

**Table 5:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondent's Media Habit

Media Habit	Frequency/Percent		Total
	Yes	No	
Newspapers	147(79.5)	38(20.5)	185
Radio	109(58.9)	75(40.5)	184
TV	165(89.2)	18(9.7)	183
Internet	176(95.1)	7(3.8)	183

Table 5 reveals that nearly 96 per cent use the internet. Only a meager seven percent admitted they don't use the internet. The popularity of use of the internet could be as a result of its availability in the college and the respondents' homes. Television ranked second with more than 88 percent of the respondents claiming they use TV. 18 percent said they don't use TV. Radio was the least used medium. Nearly 60 percent said they use radio.

**Table 6:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondent's Media Consumption in Hrs/Day

Time spent	Frequency	Percentage
4-6 hrs	44	23.7
2-3 hrs	95	51.3
Less than 2hrs	46	24.8
Total	185	100 (approx)

Table 6 indicates that over 50percent of the respondents spend 2-3 hrs/day consuming media products. A quarter of them

each spend less than 2 hrs a day and between 4-6 hours on media consumption. It can be inferred that Omani youths are average (moderate) media users/consumers.

**Table 7:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' most Used Media

Medium	Frequency	Percentage
Newspaper	13	7.0
Radio	2	1.1
TV	60	32.4
Internet	110	59.5
Total	185	100

The above table shows that almost 60 percent of the respondents use the internet more than any other medium. TV ranked second with one third of the respondents and a measly seven per cent citing using newspaper. The use of radio was just one percent. The popularity of the internet as the most used media is as result of its effectiveness as a medium of convergence. The poor readership of newspapers could be as a result of poor reading culture as a result of the presence of a strong oral tradition.

**Table 8:** Classification of Internet Users into Different Categories according to Hourly Usage/Day

Hours/Internet use		Sex		Total	Chi square	df	P value	S/NS
		Male	Female					
4-6 hours	Yes	13	29	42	2.12b	1	.145	NS
	No	1	0	1				
2-3 hours	Yes	26	66	92	.781	1	.377	NS
	No	0	2	2				
Less than 2 hours	Yes	10	33	43	.006	1	.937	NS
	No	1	3	4				
No response	Yes		1	1				
	No	-	-	-				
Total		51	134	185				

The above table shows that among the internet users, over 25 percent boys and 21 percent girls fell into the heavy user's category with 4-6 hours of internet usage every day. A substantial number with over 50 percent boys and close to 50 percent girls came across as moderate users who used it for 2-3 hours a day. So a whopping percentage of respondents, that is, 75 percent boys and over 70 percent girls turned out to be accessing internet between 2-6 hours. Another set of 19 percent boys and 24 percent girls agreed that they were light users consuming internet for less than two hours a day. The p-values for the heavy, moderate and light users are greater than .05 significance level. Thus it can be inferred that there is no statistically significant relationship between number of users and the gender.

**Table 9:** Gender and Most Used Media

Sex	Medium				Total	Chi square	df	P value	S/NS
	Newspapers	Radio	TV	Internet					
Male	8	0	20	23	51	11.716a	3	.008	S
Female	5	2	40	87	134				
Total	13	2	60	110	185				

In the data gathered on the most used media between boys and girl students, Internet emerged as a clear first choice for over 45 percent boys out of 51 and 64 percent girls out of 134 respondents respectively. This was followed by TV with 39 percent, while newspaper ranked as the third choice scoring 15 percent. Radio came at the bottom of the preference with a very miniscule percentage of 1.4 percent girls opting for it. On the contrary, none of the boys chose it. The p-value is lesser than .05 significance level. Thus it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant relationship the most used media and the gender.

**Table 10:** Internet Users and General Media Sources for Career Information

Internet	Medium				
	Newspapers	Radio	TV	Internet	Total
Yes	40	0	11	127	178
No	2	1	0	4	7
Total	42	1	11	131	185

Information on the usage and access of various media for seeking career related information too vindicated the pivotal role played by internet. Out of 178 respondents, over 71 percent ticked Internet as their first choice. Here newspapers came as the second preferred choice with over 22 percent followed by TV with over 6 percent while Radio was completely dismissed as source for career related information.

**Table 11:** Internet Users and other Sources of Information on Career (Media and non-Media Sources)

Internet users	Career sources				Total
	Friends and family	Media, teachers	Friends, family and media	No response	
Yes	51	29	68	30	178
No	0	2	1	4	7
Total	51	31	69	34	185
Chi Square	-	.163	.828	5.100	
df		2	2	3	
P value		.922	.661	.165	
S/NS		NS	NS	NS	

The above table studies the choice of respondents about their different sources and influences shaping their career choices and seeking career related information. Here too, media along with some other came across as a strong tool for accessing career related information. Out of a total of 178, over 54 percent respondents opted for Media as a strong career related information seeking source. Through a data reduction technique, media featured in multiple categories like media and teachers and friends, family and media. The p-values for different types of career sources among the internet users – both media and non-media are greater than .05 significance level. Thus it can be inferred that there is no statistically significant relationship between Internet users and their sources of career information.

**Course Awareness**

**Table 12:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Awareness about Courses

Awareness/choice	Frequency	Frequency	No response
	Yes	No	
Idea	69(37.3)	110(59.5)	6 (3.2)
Career choice	99(53.5)	84(45.4)	2(1)
Career specialization	144(77.8)	40(21.6)	1(.5)

On whether respondents have an idea about the careers they chose, 37 percent responded positively 60 percent did not have any idea. Regarding awareness on career choice, over 50 per cent were aware of their career choice, while 45 percent were not. On awareness about career specialization, over three fourths were aware, from this table it is evident that there is need for career counseling as a good number of the respondents did not have any idea of their course of study, career choice, and career specialization before choosing them.

**Table 13:** Change of Course Midway

Change Midway	Frequency	Percent
Yes	29	15.7
No	156	84.3
Total	185	100

Eighty four percent of the respondents said they would not change the course mid-way.

**Table 14:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Institutional Counseling Mechanism Available to Respondents

Counseling	Frequency (percent)	Frequency (percent)
	Yes	No
Counseling in school	58(31.4)	125(67.6)
Need for counseling	121(65.4)	34(18.4)
Orientation about jobs	110(59.5)	55(35.1)
Counseling about Jobs	149(80.5)	30(16.2)

Table 14 reveals that about 65 percent said they had course counseling while about 18 percent did not. There is need for career counseling in schools as almost 68 percent of the respondents said they didn't have school counseling as against 31 percent respondents who did. Almost 60 percent of the respondents had orientation about their career, while about 35 percent did not. More than 80 percent were counseled about jobs, while more than 16 percent were not.

**Table 15:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents and Type of Counselors

Who	Frequency	Percent
Counselors	20	10.8
School teachers	52	28.1
Did not respond	113	61.1
Total	185	100

Table 15 shows that 11 percent were counseled by professional counselors, perhaps because they were not available. Nearly 30 percent said they were counseled by school teachers while over 60 percent respondents did not respond. This could be because they did not have access to both the professional counselors and school teachers. This again points to the non-availability of professional counselors.

**Table 16:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Usefulness of Training for the Job Market

Training	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	169	91.4
No	14	7.6
99	2	1.1
Total	185	100

Table 16 reveals that training or counseling for the job market is very useful as 91 per cent respondents responded positively. Only eight per cent respondents responded negatively as to the usefulness of counseling for the job market.

**Table 17:** Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' and Awareness about Professional Skills for Job

Professional skills	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	128	69.2
No	52	28.1
Total	180	97.3

Table 17 indicates that, about 70 percent of the respondents were aware of the professional skills required for the job they would do, there is still need for counseling in this area as over a quarter of them didn't have awareness about professional skills required in their job.

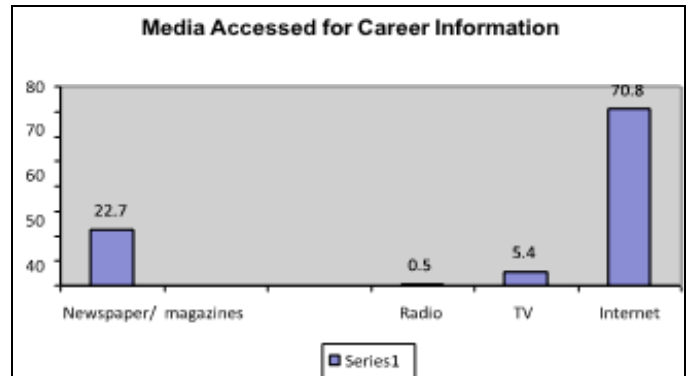
**Table 18:** Sex versus Importance of Career Counseling

Factors		Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	p value	S/NS
Job Counseling	Yes	37	112	80.5	4.650	2	.098	NS
	No	13	17	16.2				
Training during course	Yes	44	125	91.4	2.342	2	.310	NS
	No	06	08	07.06				

On the importance of career counseling, around 81 percent respondents acknowledged the vital role counseling plays in enlightening students about the job market demands. They believed that career counseling should be made available all through the course. Only 17 percent did not think career counseling had a major effect on the prospective job seekers. Also, an overwhelming 92 percent felt that training during the course would help in preparing the students for the job market in a better way. Only a miniscule percentage did not believe in training during course playing a vital role. There is no statistically significant relationship between the gender and career counseling and gender and training during the course (chi-square with two degrees of freedom = 4.67 and 2.342, p = 0.098 and .310 respectively). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no difference among sexes on the importance of career counseling is accepted.

**Table 19:** Sex versus Media Sources for Career Information

Medium	Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P value	S/NS
Newspaper/magazines	13	29	22.7	13.69	4	.008	S
Radio	01	01	.5				
TV	07	03	5.4				
Internet	30	101	70.8				



**Fig 1:** Media Accessed for Career Information

More than 70 percent of the respondents hit the Internet for sourcing career related information. This is followed by newspapers/magazines, opted by around 23 percent. TV, surprisingly, did not come across as a strong source, accessed only by around 6per cent. While the use of Radio as a source on career related issue was negligible with only .5 percent accessing it. The chi square value-13.69 at four degrees of freedom at a probability value of .008 indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship association between media sources for career information.

**Table 20:** Sex versus Sources for Career Information

Medium/Sources	Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	p value	S/NS
Media	0	01	.5	8.382	4	.079	NS
All of them	19	60	42.7				
Friends and family	06	03	4.9				
Friends, media, teacher	18	55	39.5				

On gender preferences for different sources related to career information, 43 percent chose the option "All of them", which included Friends, family, Relative's, Media and Teachers. Around 40 percent chose only Friends, Media and Teachers. Since the chi square value 8.382 at p value-.079 is greater than .05, it can be inferred that there is no statistically significant relationship between sex and sources for career information of the respondents. The null hypothesis that there are no differences among sexes on their sources of career information is accepted.

**Table 21:** Sex versus Most Influential Sources for Career Information

Sources	Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	p value	S/NS
Friends and family	19	32	27.6	27.641	3	.000	S
Edia and teachers	02	29	16.8				
Friends, family and media	11	58	37.3				



With regard to the most influential source of information among the many sources for information, Family and Friends and media were cited by 37percent of the respondents, 28 percent opted for friends and Family only and 17 percent said they relied only on Media and Teachers.

The chi square value being 27.641, at three degrees of freedom and p value-.000, it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant relationship between sex and most influential sources for career information of the respondents.

**Table 22:** Sex versus Most Influential Medium for Career Information

Medium	Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	p value	S/NS
Newspaper/magazines	10	18	15.1	9.326	4	.053	S
Radio	02	02	2.2				
TV	13	16	15.7				
Internet	19	65	45.4				

Figures in the table 22 reveal the most influential medium for career as against gender nearly 50 percent (45.4 percent to be precise) chose Internet as the most influential medium for career related information while Newspapers/Magazines stood at 15.1 percent, Radio at 2.2per cent and TV at 15.7percent. Since the chi square value 9.326 at p value-.053 is equal to .05, it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant relationship between sex and the most influential medium for career information.

**Table 23:** Sex versus Individual and Socio-Cultural Factors

Factors		Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P value	S/NS
Interest	yes	42	109	81.6	1.616	2	.446	NS
	No	09	21	16.2				
Aptitude	yes	26	59	45.9	5.396	2	.067	NS
	No	25	62	47				
Expectation	yes	33	56	48.1	9.957	2	.007	S
	No	18	67	45.9				
Family	yes	39	116	83.8	6.470	2	.039	S
	no	12	14	14.1				
Elders/teachers	yes	35	84	64.3	2.160	2	.340	NS
	No	16	45	33.0				
Friends	yes	36	86	65.9	.845a	2	.655	NS
	No	14	43	30.8				
Prestige of Job	yes	33	71	56.2	2.688a	2	.261	NS
	No	17	55	38.9				
Social Respect of Job	Yes	36	91	68.6	.524a	2	.769	NS
	No	13	34	25.4				

The table 23 reflects the role of individual and social factors and sex while choosing careers. Respondents cited that family was a major factor in deciding about the career as 83 percent said so. The second major factor was Interest-81.6 percent, and Social respect of Job (68.5 percent) was the third factor cited. Nearly fifty percent of them said aptitude. Approximately two thirds of the respondents each said friends, elders and teachers. There is no statistically significant relationship between the sex and individual and social factors such as interest, aptitude, social respect for the job, prestige, friends, elders and teachers given the probability values are greater than .05. However, there is a statistically

significant relationship between sex and expectation and sex and family as the probability values are below .05.

**Table 24:** Sex versus Most Influential Factor for Career Choice

Factors	Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P value	S/NS
Family, friends and Interest	14	67	43.8	20.314	4	.000	S
Family social, respect of job, professional respect	03	21	13.0				
Friends, respect of job, Elders	07	07	7.6				
Interest, expectation, social respect of job	06	17	12.4				
No response	21	22	23.2				

On the most influential factor for career choice in terms of gender, less than 50 percent of the respondents said Family, Friends and Interest.

There is a statistically significant relationship between sex and most influential factors for career choice as the chi square value stands at 20. 314 at four degrees of freedom at a p value of .000. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis that there are differences among sexes on the most influential factor for career choice is therefore accepted.

**Table 25:** Job Attributes versus sex

Factors		Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P value	S/NS
Gender	Yes	31	94	67.6	1.545	2	.462	NS
	No	17	33	27.0				
Mixing of Sexes at workplace	Yes	35	72	57.8	3.612	3	.306	NS
	No	15	58	39.5				
Long Hours	Yes	19	45	34.6	.225	2	.894	NS
	No	31	86	63.2				
Night Shifts	Yes	20	21	21.6	13.047	2	.001	S
	No	30	08	74.6				
Outdoor Work	Yes	29	73	55.1	2.825	3	.419	NS
	no	9	55	40.0				

The table 25 reveals various factors considered when taking up a job. 67.6 percent believed they will choose a job in tune with their gender. Nearly 60 percent of the respondents said yes to jobs with mixed genders at the workplace. But Long Hours and Night Shifts were perceived as obstacles. Over 60 percent said they will not choose a job which requires Long hours while 74.6 percent had similar views about Night Shifts. There is no statistically significant relationship between the sex and job attributes-long hours, mixing of genders, outdoor work, and gender except between sex and expectation and sex and night shifts where the chi square value is 13.04 at 2 degrees of freedom and the p-value being .001.

**Table 26:** Most Decisive Job Attributes versus sex

Factors	Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	Df	P value	S/NS
Personal liking for job	36	102	74.6	1.312	2	.519	NS
Family's approval	13	30	22.2				



Data in Table 26 indicates the response about the decisive factor when taking up a job. Nearly 75 percent said personal liking of the job was more important while 22.2 percent said they will need their family’s approval. There is no statistically significant relationship between the sex and most decisive job

attributes-personal liking for job and family’s approval with a chi square value of 1.312 at 2 degrees of freedom and a p value of .519

**Table 27: Sex versus factors to Consider Job**

Factors	Male	Female	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P Value	S/NS
All of them	17	46	34.1	2.653	3	.448	NS
Social prestige, salary professional respect	12	41	28.6				
Professional respect, salary, contribution to society, growth prospects	09	26	18.9				
No response	13	21	18.4				

On other factors having a bearing on the selection of job, respondents cited a combination of factors. Over one third of the respondents gave the option “All of them” which contained Social prestige, professional respect, salary, Growth prospects and contribution to society.

There is no statistically significant relationship between the sex and factors considered for job-Social prestige, salary, professional respect contribution to society, growth prospects with a chi square value of 2.653 with 3 degrees of freedom and a p value of .448.

**Table 28: Course versus Job Attributes**

Factors		Communication	Design	IT	Business	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P value	S/NS
Gender	Yes	53	33	20	19	67.6	14.059	6	.029	S
	No	19	23	04	04	27.0				
Mixing of gender	Yes	46	38	06	17	57.8	43.783	9	.000	S
	No	30	20	17	06	39.5				
Long Hours	Yes	23	24	10	07	34.6	26.387	6	.000	S
	No	53	34	14	16	63.2				
Night Shifts	Yes	13	16	05	06	21.6	14.261	6	.027	S
	No	60	42	19	17	74.6				
Outdoor Work	Yes	40	32	14	16	55.1	8.234	9	.511	NS
	No	32	24	10	08	40.0				

Respondents from different streams of study were asked about the various factors considered when taking up a job. Together 74.6 percent agreed that Night Shifts was a factor 67.6 percent felt that their gender would influence their choice of job, 63.2 percent across all streams also felt long hours of work was a factor.

There is a statistically significant relationship between the course and job attributes-long hours, mixing of genders, outdoor work, and gender except between sex and outdoor work where the chi square value is 8.234 at 9 degrees of freedom and the p-value being .511.

**Table 29: Course versus Job Factors**

Factors	Communication	Design	IT	Business	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P value	S/NS
All of them	23	27	03	10	34.1	55.477	8	.000	S
Social prestige, salary, professional respect of job	29	19	0	05	28.6				
Professional respect, salary, contribution to society, growth prospects	16	08	05	06	18.9				
No response	08	04	16	06	18.4				

Respondents from different streams were asked to identify more factors they consider in the selection of job Over thirty percent said “All of them” which contained social prestige, professional respect, salary, growth prospects and contribution to society. 18.4 percent of those surveyed did not respond to this question.

There is a statistically significant relationship between the course and other factors attached to job such as social prestige, salary, professional respect contribution to society, growth prospects.

**Table 30: Course versus Most Decisive Factor**

Factors	Communication	Design	IT	Business	Percent	Chi-Square	df	P value	S/NS
Personal liking for job	55	47	18	18	74.6	14.388	6	.026	S
Family's approval	21	10	06	06	23.2				

The table reveals the importance given by respondents from different streams of study about the decisive factor when taking up a job. Here, the majority (74.6 percent) gave more importance to “personal liking for the job” while only 23.2 percent would give “family’s approval” more importance. There is a statistically significant relationship between the course and most decisive factor such as Social prestige, salary, professional respect contribution to society, growth prospects with a chi square value of 14.38, at six degrees of freedom and a p value of .026.

### Findings and Conclusions

The following are the finds of the study keeping in view the objectives of the study.

On media consumption the findings demonstrated that the Omani youths are average (moderate) media users/consumers spending around 2-6 hrs/day. And among the media consumed, there is a clear preference for the new media by the student users as an overwhelming 96 percent surveyed, use the internet. Television emerged as the second favorite. Data analysis further emphasized on the users’ has embraced the new media, as most of them used Internet.

A closer look at the data reveals that there is no conspicuous pattern among the internet users only-males and females and their consumption patterns. This leads to conclusion that there are no significant differences in the reasons for usage and consumption pattern of cyber media between the male and female students. Majority of both ranged from moderate to heavy internet users; both sexes chose Internet as the most used media; for career related information too both mostly accessed internet only.

One of the basic objectives set out by the research was to find the relationship, if any between Media usage and effects on career choices.

The study found a clear association between Media habits and career choices. Data gathered in response to identify the Media sources for accessing career related information echoed the larger usage pattern of media consumption by Omani youths.

Majority of the respondents use the Internet as a source to search career related information. Among those choosing Internet as a source nearly 50per cent (45.4per cent to be precise) also chose Internet as the medium for accessing info on career; they rated Internet as the most influential medium for career related information. TV, surprisingly, did not figure as a major source for career information, accessed only by around 6per cent.

There is a low level of awareness among students regarding the availability of courses. Almost 60 percent of the respondents did not have any idea of their course of study before they chose the course. Low awareness levels could be attributed to lack of institutional counseling support available to the students. Almost 68 percent of the total sample didn’t have counseling during their school. And whatever little had it, were not really professional in nature. Only 11 percent among those who were counseled had it from professional counselors.

There is a greater significance attached to training and awareness about professional skills required for the job as a vital factor in career choices. 81 per cent vouched for the usefulness of training or counseling for the job market. Yet some gaps need to be filled in this area as a substantial percentage of 28 percent of the total sample were found to be unaware about professional skills required for their prospective jobs. An overwhelming 92 percent respondent

said that training during the course helps them prepare for the job market. This demonstrates the ever increasing necessity of training during course enhancing the employability factor of the students.

The research study also tried to investigate the individual and social factors that influence students in choosing their career. The study found that the family played a role in career choice. This is understandable given the cohesive nature of the Omani society. Among the most influential factor on career choice, over 65 percent cumulatively opted for family. Among other social and individual factors influencing choice of careers, 83 per cent voted for family as a factor, Interest and Social respect of Job.

On whether job attributes led to job selection, the findings were quite progressive in nature. Although close to 68 percent believed their gender would influence their choice of job, they were open to jobs that required mixing of genders and outdoor work. But Long Hours and Night Shifts were perceived as possible deterrents.

Nearly 75 percent of the respondents said their personal liking of the job would prevail over every other factor. This is besides the social prestige attached to jobs

Also most of the findings on different parameters were gender neutral as there was no strikingly different response pattern between male and female students.

There was no distinct pattern on the pattern of career choices among students from different disciplines in terms of job attributes and the most decisive factor.

### Relationships between Variables

The study found that the Null Hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the cyber media usage and consumption pattern of the male and the female students is accepted rejecting the alternate hypothesis that there is significant difference in the cyber media usage and consumption pattern of the male and the female students.

Other null hypotheses that there is no difference among sexes on the importance of career counseling and there are no differences among sexes on their sources of career information are accepted. While on the most influential factor for career choice the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

### Implications of the Study

In conclusion, this study besides adding to the existing body of knowledge on the subject is relevant in many other ways. It is among the first few studies profiling the factors influencing the courses of studies opted and the career chosen by Omani youth, which not only has effect on them but also on the society and the future workforce. Also, it serves as an important and vital piece of empirical research work documenting various factors like individual, social and Systemic which have influence on the selection of courses by the students, which in turn have a bearing on the career choices made by them. The study also works as a document of importance to various stakeholders like Government, Employers, Family, Teachers, Media and the Students.

Findings about low level of awareness and avenues among students regarding the availability of courses warrant immediate attention of policy makers. This lack of a scientific approach of academic guidance should be made an integral part of the educational system.

Institutional counseling support in the form of training and course orientation programs should be made available to the students both during and post school years.

Also care should be taken to implement such training programs through professionals and teachers who not only guide students about future academic prospects but also identify their strength, work to eliminate their weaknesses and finally channelize their potential to their own best use and in return to be used best by the nation.

The data indicates absence of TV as the dominant source of career information, despite greater penetration of TV in Oman. Greater synergy between educational planners, media practitioners to make TV programs targeting youth on generating awareness of educational opportunities and career choices could help. A case in point could be using the public television Oman TV for this purpose, by starting a couple of shows on education and career.

And third, and but very importantly, integrating industry training as a mandatory part of degree program shall be of immense value to the students and the employers both. A hands-on experience in the form of summer training/Internship/industry-education sector liaison will go a long way in exposing students to the needs of the jobs and preparing them to be industry-ready by the time they finish their studies. It will be a win-win situation for all stakeholders. Students get better skilled, industry gets better skilled workers and the nation gets a pool of skilled workforce.

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