

Comparison of the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and career counseling in reducing job choice helplessness among students

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to compare the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and career counseling in reducing job choice helplessness among students. The statistical population of this research included all students studying at the Bandar Anzali branch of Azad University during the 2023-2024 academic year. The sample consisted of 45 students who were purposefully select-

ed from volunteers willing to participate in the study. The participants were then randomly assigned to three groups: two experimental groups (entrepreneurship education and career counseling) and one control group. The instrument used in this research was the Job Choice Insolvencies Questionnaire. After conducting a pre-test, experimental interventions, and a post-test, the data were analyzed using covariance analysis and the Bonferroni post hoc test. The results of the covariance analysis indicated that both entrepreneurship education and career counseling are effective in reducing job choice helplessness among students. Additionally, there was no significant difference in the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and career counseling in reducing job choice helplessness; both methods were equally impactful. Therefore, both entrepreneurship education and career counseling can be utilized to reduce job choice helplessness among university students.

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Introduction

Having a job is important in the lives of most people because half of their daily hours are spent on work activities. Improving work quality has always been a priority for welfare states, as it lays the foundation for individuals' livelihoods and contributes to a country's economic development. Therefore, one of the essential and important aspects of studies related to issues concerning adolescents and young adults, as the human capital of a country, is paying attention to their job expectations.¹

The rapidly changing world of today has made career selection and decision-making so complex that an individual cannot secure a suitable job with just ordinary learning and obtaining a degree. In other words, the economic and job landscape today is not static or uniform, and there are no fixed and permanent rules governing it for individuals to base their decisions on. In such a situation, a job seeker needs specific mental, psychological, and social skills to navigate this unstable and highly variable world, to search for and adapt to a job that matches their talents, and to create new jobs or careers according to new needs and advancements.²

Choosing a career is one of the most important goals in the life of any university student. A job provides for most of a person's material and psychological needs. If accessing this source of need is met with significant difficulties and obstacles, it can lead to worry and anxiety. If an individual concludes that overcoming these obstacles is beyond their control or is likely impossible, they may experience job choice helplessness.² Job choice helplessness refers to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness about obtaining the desired job and the sense that any effort made in the pursuit of this job is futile.³

In today's modern societies, which are mostly equipped with information technology, the process of finding and applying for jobs has significantly changed. Entering the business world now

requires specific knowledge, skills, and characteristics. Graduates and job seekers need more precise planning to secure employment opportunities in this century, and it is advisable for this planning to occur during their student years. One of the most important educational plans for all job seekers is entrepreneurship education. The purpose of this education is to strengthen the entrepreneurial traits and capabilities necessary for starting and managing entrepreneurial businesses in the audience.⁴

The text discusses the impact of entrepreneurship education on developing individuals with high self-confidence, opportunity recognition, and a preference for starting independent businesses.⁵ Entrepreneurship education equips learners with essential knowledge, attitudes, and skills for self-employment, empowering them with self-confidence, creativity, and innovation.⁶ Research indicates that entrepreneurship education influences career choices. For instance, Muofhe and Du Toit found that it fosters job talent emergence, changes attitudes toward entrepreneurship as a lifestyle, alters career and personal perspectives, and develops abilities such as self-esteem, self-awareness, self-management, learning transfer, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving.⁷ Taatila's study showed that entrepreneurial skills are learned through real-life development projects and practical experiences, which strengthen and support entrepreneurial competencies.⁸

In addition to entrepreneurship education, another effective method for reducing distress and anxiety among job seekers is career counseling. This approach focuses on individuals' resources and talents rather than their deficiencies. Career counseling encourages individuals to recognize all the positive aspects of their real lives.⁹ Integrating the identification and development of strengths in interventions designed for individuals has achieved significant success in various areas. It seems that this approach, by clarifying individuals' goals, values, and resources, can enhance career planning and ultimately reduce the distress associated with career choice.¹⁰ Research supports the impact of career counseling on reducing anxiety related to career choice. For example, Jafari Noogh *et al.* found that career counseling positively affects career decision-making self-efficacy, career planning beliefs, and career distress.¹⁰ Owens *et al.* found that career counseling effectively reduces job-related turmoil.⁹

Considering the results that entrepreneurship education and career counseling have on improving individuals' decision-making and the significant role these two methods can play in various social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions, especially in personal matters, the necessity of teaching these two methods in societies becomes evident.¹⁰ Today, to make effective use of time and life, which are precious and entrusted to individuals, it is essential to employ methods and techniques for education that not only enhance individuals' innate talents but also assist society in achieving economic goals, particularly those related to youth employment. This goal cannot be achieved unless different educational methods are identified and taught at universities and educational centers. Following this, it is crucial to identify effective methods that can lead to a reduction in job choice helplessness and help individuals reach their main objectives.¹

The theoretical frameworks that support this study draw from both educational and psychological models. Theories of career development, such as Super's Theory of Career Development, highlight the role of self-concept and vocational maturity in career decision-making.¹¹ Similarly, social cognitive career theory by Lent, Brown, and Hackett emphasizes the influence of self-efficacy and outcome expectations on career choices, which are critical when considering the role of both entrepreneurship education and career counseling in reducing "job choice insolvencies".¹² These frameworks underscore the importance of psychological resources

and decision-making processes in shaping career outcomes. Previous research has demonstrated varying degrees of success in using educational interventions to address job choice helplessness among students.^{2,13} These studies provide evidence supporting our hypothesis that both entrepreneurship education and career counseling can effectively reduce the distress associated with career decisions.

Furthermore, given that no research has simultaneously compared these two methods to examine their impact on job choice helplessness, there is a felt need for this study. Therefore, this research seeks to answer the question: is there a difference in the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and career counseling in reducing job choice helplessness among students?

Materials and Methods

This research is applied in nature and employs a semi-experimental method, utilizing a pre-test and post-test design with a control group. The statistical population of this study includes all students enrolled at the Bandar Anzali branch of Azad University during the 2023-2024 academic year. The sample consisted of 45 students who were purposefully selected from volunteers willing to participate in the study. The criterion for inclusion was obtaining high scores on the Job Choice Insolvencies Questionnaire by Farahbakhsh and Shafie Abadi (2006), cited in Farah Baksh *et al.*¹¹ Participants were then randomly assigned to three groups: two experimental groups (one receiving entrepreneurship training and the other career counseling) and one control group. The first experimental group underwent six 1-hour sessions of entrepreneurship training, while the second experimental group received four 1-hour sessions of career counseling. The third group did not receive any training. After the completion of the training sessions, all three groups completed the job choice insolvencies questionnaire again. Students were assured that their results would remain confidential, and consent was obtained from them to participate in the study. This study was conducted following a standardized ethical review process approved by the Ethics Committee of the Islamic Azad University, Bandar Anzali Branch, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines for research involving.

Research tool

Job Choice Insolvencies Questionnaire

This test was developed by Farahbakhsh and Shafi Abadi (2006), cited in Farah Baksh *et al.*,³ to measure individuals' distress in choosing a job. The respondents' answers to this questionnaire reflect their concerns about the possibility of choosing a job after graduation. It consists of 26 questions on a Likert scale with five options (very high, high, medium, low, and very low), where the option "very high" is scored 5 and "very low" is scored 1. The total score from the various questions indicates the individual's level of distress regarding future job selection, with higher scores reflecting a greater sense of distress. The reliability of this test, based on Cronbach's α , was found to be 0.87, and its content validity was confirmed by career counseling experts, achieving a score of 0.81.³ The educational programs provided are presented in Tables 1 and 2.^{10,14}

The data collected was analyzed using the SPSS 26 software (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA). Statistical analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics methods, and in the inferential statistics section, covariance analysis and the Bonferroni post-hoc test were used at a significance level of 0.05. The assumptions for using covariance analysis were examined.

Results

The study sample consisted of 45 students from the Bandar Anzali branch of Azad University during the 2023-2024 academic year. The sample included 24 female students (8 in the entrepreneurship training experimental group, 9 in the career counseling experimental group, and 7 in the control group) and 22 male students (5 in the entrepreneurship training experimental group, 7 in the career counseling experimental group, and 10 in the control group). Descriptive statistics for the variable under investigation are shown in Table 3.

Based on Table 3, it can be stated that the average score of job choice helplessness in the post-test for the two experimental groups (entrepreneurship training and career counseling) has decreased

compared to the pre-test. In contrast, this score in the control group did not change significantly between the pre-test and post-test. To further examine the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training and career counseling on reducing job choice helplessness among students, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used. For this purpose, the assumption of normal distribution of the job choice helplessness scores was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which resulted in a Z statistic of 4.15. This was not significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the distribution of the variable in the sample was normal. Additionally, Levene's test was employed to assess the homogeneity of variances. It was observed that the p-value for the dependent variable across different measurement stages was greater than 0.05 and not significant. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated. The results of the ANCOVA are shown in Table 4.

Table 1. Entrepreneurship training sessions.¹⁴

Sessions	Session overview
First	Introduction session: define work and job
Second	explain the difference between them. Encourage a mindset focused on job creation rather than job seeking to foster entrepreneurial motivation. Highlight top entrepreneurs and provide training on time management.
Third	Conduct needs assessment through observation, study, reflection, and interviews with others to identify 100 different needs.
Fourth	Select ideas from the identified needs and draft initial plans for them.
Fifth	Learn how to write a business plan.
Sixth	Engage in discussions about transforming ideas into actionable plans

Table 2. Career counseling training sessions.¹⁰

Session	Sessions overview
First	Initial short-term interview - gathering information about clients' previous experiences - assisting in identifying career goals - identifying at least three prominent abilities - role-playing life roles and examining the competencies used to perform these roles - reflecting on feelings and content - applying several specific techniques such as multiple voices, reframing - completing the Values in Action Strengths Questionnaire.
Second	Expanding clients' awareness of their capabilities - linking capabilities with career goals - identifying suitable solutions - implementing the exception question technique - assigning two separate tasks to clients: i) utilize three or five prominent capabilities for job searching at least three times during the upcoming week; ii) report three job search-related activities they successfully completed that week, which helped identify their prominent capabilities.
Third	Review of assignments - using metaphorical marking techniques and sentence completion - counselor discussion on abilities and their meaning for clients - describing personal life when they possess the desired abilities - giving two separate assignments to clients for the following week: i) utilize three to five prominent strengths for job searching at least three times during the upcoming week; ii) report three job search-related activities they successfully completed that week, which helped identify their prominent strengths.
Fourth	Review of assignments - use of marking techniques - summarization - evaluation by the counselor and client of significant changes in the development of skills experienced during the process - identification of areas needing further work - visualization of clients' lives after 6 months.

Table 3. The mean and standard deviation of the variable "career choice distress" in the three groups (entrepreneurship training, career counseling, and control).

Variable	Stage	Control group		Entrepreneurship education group		Career counseling group	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Job choice helplessness	Pre-test	75.2	3.25	76.7	3.24	74.94	3.71
	Post-test	74.8	3.41	35.12	1.20	34.28	1.27

M, mean; SD, standard deviation.

Table 4. Results of covariance analysis on pre-test and post-test scores for the variable of job choice helplessness.

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Significance level	Effect size
Job choice helplessness	1356.39	2	638.61	34.91	0.02	0.61

Based on the figures obtained from Table 4, after adjusting the pre-test scores, there is a significant effect on the between-subjects factor in the group. The scores indicate that the average of the experimental group, which underwent training, has significantly decreased. Therefore, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship training and career counseling are effective in improving students' job choice helplessness ($F=34.91, p \leq 0.05$). Hence, it is essential to determine the sources of these effects, meaning it should be identified which methods of entrepreneurship training and career counseling contribute to reducing students' job choice helplessness. In this regard, the Bonferroni post-hoc test was used, and the results are presented in Table 5.

The contents of Table 5 indicate that entrepreneurship training and career counseling are superior to the control group. Additionally, no significant difference was observed in the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training and career counseling in reducing students' job choice helplessness.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to compare the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and career counseling in reducing job choice helplessness among students. The results of the covariance analysis indicated that both entrepreneurship education and career counseling are effective in reducing job choice helplessness among students. Furthermore, there is no difference in the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and career counseling in reducing job choice helplessness among students; both are equally impactful. These findings are consistent with both domestic and international research conducted in this field.^{1,2,6-10}

In explaining the results obtained, it can be said that when individuals feel they have sufficient coping skills to manage decision-making problems, they experience less anxiety. Participants with a higher external locus of control tend to use problem-focused strategies to reduce anxiety and distress related to career choice. When access to the desired job for a student is threatened, it initially causes anxiety. If this anxiety and concern are not alleviated over time, and the individual concludes that the issue of career choice is unsolvable and that overcoming job-related obstacles is beyond their control or possibly impossible, career choice distress will develop.¹⁰

The method of teaching entrepreneurship, by engaging students with real environments and actual issues, seems to be able to nurture individuals' talents and curiosity, bringing them into the field of action. The advantage of this method is that the learner conducts the research and investigation, which significantly impacts learning. In fact, the learner independently learns creativity in problem-solving and dealing with ambiguous situations.¹⁵ Educational and career advisors believe that increasing individuals' awareness and entrepreneurial abilities provides the groundwork for identifying opportunities, utilizing them, and planning their career paths, thereby fostering and strengthening their self-employment mindset.¹⁶ Entrepreneurship education has had a positive and significant impact on students' self-employment attitudes.

This education increases students' awareness of self-employment capabilities, enabling them to identify opportunities, understand how to utilize them and recognize different career paths, ultimately reducing their job choice helplessness.¹³

In explaining the impact of career counseling, it can be said that in career counseling, group members are encouraged to explore and discuss their strengths. For example, in this type of counseling, individuals are tasked with identifying their successful activities in life and determining the role of their competencies in these successful activities. This not only enhances students' self-awareness but also fosters a sense of self-confidence in making decisions about their future career direction. Essentially, they realize that they have good resources at their disposal for pursuing their future careers. A key aspect emphasized in career counseling is that individuals are given responsibility and are encouraged and involved in decision-making.¹⁷ This perspective fosters a positive attitude in individuals toward themselves and their future, which can significantly enhance their sense of self-efficacy regarding career decisions. Most students face concerns and anxiety about choosing a career towards the end of their studies. If the necessary guidance to address these concerns is not provided, students may ultimately experience helplessness in making career choices. However, it is important to note that everyone possesses inherent strengths or resources that are key to their ability to cope with anxiety and psychological distress.¹⁸ In other words, if individuals are confident in their ability to control situations and have the necessary skills to manage stressful conditions, they will experience less anxiety and distress. In career counseling, instead of identifying deficiencies and focusing on weaknesses, students are helped to recognize and understand their capacities and strengths. In this type of career counseling, students are encouraged to discover job-related strengths and use these strengths for career exploration and planning. Therefore, this type of career counseling can instill in students the belief that they possess the necessary abilities and talents for exploration, decision-making, and entering a career. This approach can effectively reduce the helplessness associated with career choice.¹⁹

This research faced several limitations. The study population was limited to students from the Bandar Anzali branch of the Islamic Azad University, which necessitates caution when generalizing the results to other populations. Purposeful sampling was another limitation of this study. It is recommended that future research designs incorporate random sampling for similar studies. Additionally, it is suggested to compare these educational methods with other educational approaches in the field of career development. Another limitation of the current research is that the protective effect of psychotherapy interventions on career-related issues and decision-making has not been assessed. This aspect could be important.

Conclusions

The results of this research show that both entrepreneurship education and career counseling have an effective role in reducing students' job choice helplessness. Entrepreneurship education strength-

Table 5. Pairwise comparison of the effects of entrepreneurship education and career counseling on reducing career choice distress among students.

Comparison	Mean difference	Standard error	Significance level
Entrepreneurship Career counseling	0.84	0.62	0.11
Entrepreneurship Control	39.68	1.22	0.04
Career counseling Control	40.52	1.14	0.04

ens students' creativity and curiosity by providing a real environment and encouraging research. On the other hand, career counseling helps students identify their strengths and gain the confidence needed to make career decisions. The combination of these two approaches can lead to increasing self-efficacy and reducing anxiety in choosing a job. Compared to previous studies, our research offers a comprehensive comparison between two distinct educational approaches (entrepreneurship education and career counseling) in reducing job choice helplessness. While both methods were found effective, our study uniquely highlights their equal impact on students' career decision-making processes. However, limitations include its focus on a single university branch, which may affect generalizability.

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