

## Contextual Factors Affecting Social Work Career Choice among Qatari Students

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### Abstract

Career selection is deterministic and depends on a set of factors. While the international literature has documented that the social work profession is correlated with numerous characteristics, e.g., demographic and family psychosocial history, age, and sex, there is still no study that has examined the potential factors that may contribute to social work career choice in the Qatari context. The present study aims to investigate contextual aspects that may impact the career preferences of social work students. The potential demographic factors included age, cultural background (Qatari, non-Qatari), socio-economic status, and parents' educational backgrounds. A total of 166 undergraduate students aged 19-38 years (mean= 28.06 SD= 5.54) enrolled in a social work program were administered the Social Work Career Influence Questionnaire (SWCIQ). The SWCIQ-Ar was validated in the Qatari context and showed excellent construct validity and reliability. The results showed a positive association between age and family and personal experiences as a factor that affected the choice of pursuing a social work profession. The results also revealed that participants articulated several issues that affected their choice to choose a social work profession. Their job choices were affected by family and personal experiences, being a therapist, profession social respect, and the social change duty associated with the career, and these factors were sequentially influenced by their socio-economic status, marital status, and parents' educational levels. These findings are important for Qatar university policy makers to improve the efficiency and quality of social work in Qatar.

**Keywords:** Social Work Profession, Society, Qatar, Qatari Society.

### 1. Introduction

Making a career choice is a complex process and involves decisions at all levels of an individual's lifecycle. These decisions include investigation, the selection of a professional field, and the choice of practice after completing a professional experience at an entry level. Personal use of time, and other resources needed to making a career choice, the choice can be a lengthy process. Furthermore, there are two other factors that are related in the decision making process for pursuing social work career. The ecological viewpoint [1] refers to the "appropriateness" or "degree of agreement of a person's qualities and abilities with the demands of work" in relation to job satisfaction. The literature of professional psychology based on the theory of social learning and the concept of self-awareness [2, 3] refer to the belief of the individual in his/her abilities in a given situation [4].

Social work in general has been related to human history since ancient times. Its emergence was in response to the social problems that resulted from the industrial revolution, and it consequently increased interest in applying scientific theory to all aspects of the study. As a result, the number of

educational institutions that began to provide social work programs, which is one of the branches of social sciences and includes the use of social theory and social research methods, has increased in order research and benefit the quality-of-life of disadvantaged individuals and wider groups in society. Social action is closely related to the rest of the social sciences and is combined with the social sciences as a means to elevate living standards and conditions as well as to work to change the response of society to often chronic issues in a positive manner. Social work is a profession that establishes social justice and improves living conditions by supporting all means and possibilities that provide prosperity and prosperity for every individual, family, and community in society [5-7]. In the main time, it strives to handle and resolve social problems at all levels of society and attempts to improve the economic situation of society as a whole, especially among the less fortunate. Individuals engaged in social work are called "social workers" and are interested in identifying social problems as well as their causes, solutions, and their impact on the members of society. These individuals also work closely with families, organizations, communities, and other groups. The social work profession has begun to rely more on research and practice based on research and experimentation approaches, and it has tried to improve the efficiency and quality of social work. Social workers who practice social work as a career are those individuals with a qualified social service certificate [6].

Students' preferences on the issue of delinquency were investigated using self-reports that focused on "psychological causes", "losses and gains of casual explanations of deviance", and "social causes". Many students who exhibited a particular focus on social causes provided individual estimates of the gains and losses and in-depth psychological causes. However, students in Hungary gave personal estimates of profits and losses as the most important factor impacting their choice to become a social worker. This is perhaps due to Hungary's socialist political history. Other potential causes were supported most by Zimbabwe and least by Australia. Brazil and Australia showed the greatest difference when it comes to supporting social causes. Zimbabwe's responses were focused greatly on individual's actions over collective responses. Similarly, students in Hong Kong showed attributes that greatly surrounded individual interests and therefore may explain why they had greater preferences towards social causes. Furthermore, Confucian culture focuses on the importance of human factors being in the center of maintaining social environments in a moral manner, this is in order to protect social order, suggesting no tolerance for divergent behavior [7].

For over a century, social work has been practiced internationally as a profession and is at the forefront of social services provided in many nations [8]. Research conducted on the historical change of the social work occupation in different nations such as the USA [8], Australia [8], Canada [8], and elsewhere showcase three key characteristics of social work: first, a shortage of consensus surrounding tasks, technology, and goals (and many other topics) [9]; second, social work has a process that is constant and focuses on self-examination; iii) finally, while the core of social work worldwide share common similarities, the professional is socially constructed and therefore embodies the society in which the position is based [10].

Specialized social workers seem to want to evaluate and use their therapeutic skills in practice in order to manage this social protection program. Recruitment as well as subsequent retention of social workers is also an issue. Curriculum developers must at the very least continue in providing chances to promote personal skills and train the practitioners. From a logical point of view, it appears that after secondary education, and the maintenance of skills and development can also sustain the willingness to remain in the profession of social work [11]. The literature of social life and the work of social workers indicates that students have a history of achievements, which should ideally include the construction of a variety of choices [12, 13].

Another finding showed that the proportion of students' preferences for private practices increased from 85% to 54% of the entry program social work just before graduation. Carmen (1990) report that only 22.4% out of 687 respondents in social work schools reported having full-time or part-time private practices [14]. In similar a study, students from the USA and Israel universities stated that they needed more social groups" and used in the services cannot be defined, less stigmatic, while the

goal is not identifiable trends among British students. The readiness to work overexpressed and in the public sector. However, all of the included students at the university expressed similar business-related desires to operate without providing support to the chronically ill or in retirement homes [15].

The social work profession in Qatar has been studied in more recent years to distinguish the profession and its ideology and to unfilially define what is considered acceptable work practices. These studies seek to ensure that social work graduates can be included in the job market [16]. Therefore, decisions are being made about the skills and knowledge need to meet demands of the work. Also, it is widely understood that practices should be shaped through ethics and values of social work [11]. What is considered appropriate conduct in the social work field has been debated previously. Criticism was expressed about the weakening of the social work knowledge base for the advancement of technical competence [17]. Demographic data has been used to suggest that there is a need to attract people from a low socio-economic status to social work compared with other specialties [18]. Moreover, it is also reported that the socio-economic status affects both social work career choice and the area of interest [19]. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) reported that the social work population is more homogenous compared to other populations. Also, a large body of research reported that most social workers come from large cities and are predominantly white females [20].

## **2. The Present Study**

Students' attitudes and public ideas for the profession of social work within an Arab environment is controversial. Some students see the social work profession as a challenging, changing, high-profile profession that can create a change for many people. These students believe that the social work profession can play a crucial role at many levels of society and in various fields, including business, community change, and public policy. However, other students see the profession as low-profile job that is highly demanding and provides a low salary. Career selection is deterministic and depends on a set of factors. Since the 1950s, research has examined social work from multiple perspectives, including national perspectives using demographic and family psychosocial history [21]. Therefore, the present study examines the contextual aspects that may affect the students in social work undergraduate program when choosing their future careers. The potential demographic factors included age, cultural background (Qatari, non-Qatari), socio-economic status, marital status, and parents' educational levels. The Qatari community comprises more than 55 nationalities. Indeed, Qatar is one of the most culturally rich nations in the world where foreign residents comprise the majority of its population.

## **3. Hypotheses**

The main goal of this work is to examine the contextual factors that affect the social work students' career decision making. The potential demographic factors included age, cultural background (Qatari, non-Qatari), socio-economic status, and parents' educational levels. The following hypotheses were tested:

- H1:** There is a significant association between age and social work profession domains (profession social change, family and personal experiences, being a therapist and profession social respect).
- H2:** There are meaningful variations in social work profession determinants (family and personal experiences, being a therapist, profession social respect and profession social change) subject to cultural background (Qatari, non-Qatari), socio-economic status, and parents' educational levels.
  - H.2.1:** There are meaningful differences in the four social work profession domains subject to demographic variables.

**H.2.2:** There are significant interactions between levels of demographic variables in the four domains of the social work profession.

## **4. Research Method**

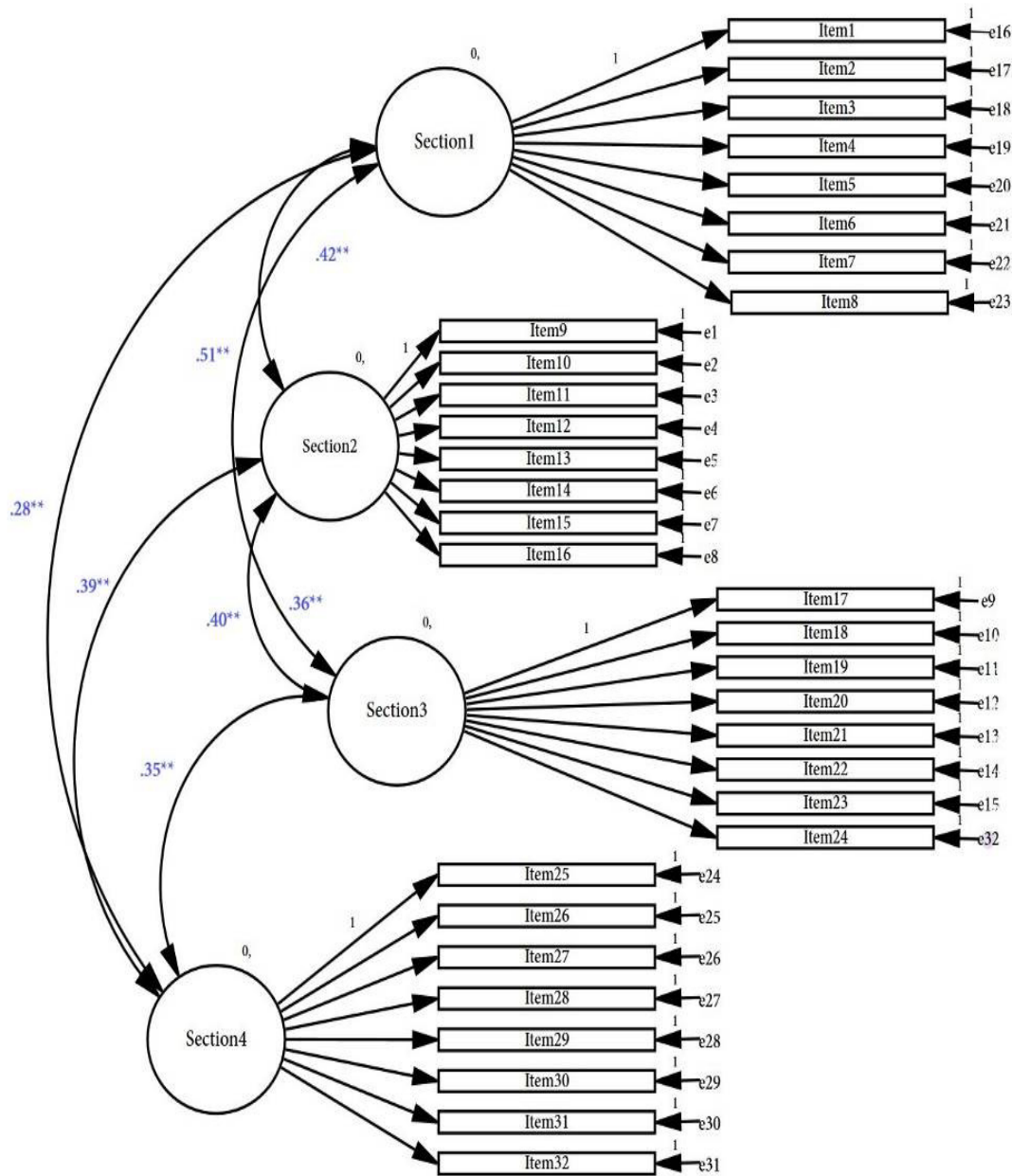
### **4.1 Participant**

A total of 166 undergraduate students aged 19-38 years (mean= 28.06 SD= 5.54; median= 28.21) who were enrolled in the Social Work Program at The Department of Social Sciences at Qatar University participated in this study. The participants completed an average of 76 credit hours. All participants were females due to the fact that the program's students are mainly female (males comprise 2.5% of all students). All participants completed an Online Arabic version of the SWCIQ.

### **4.2 Instrument**

To achieve the study objectives, the Social Work Career Influence Questionnaire (SWCIQ: [22]) was used to gather the data. The SWCIQ includes four parts: Part (a) contains demographic information, including, nationality, number of social work credits completed, age, and relationship status; Part (b) includes preferences of social work as a career, e.g., "have you made a career change to get into social work?"; Part (c) includes elements to measure future social work career goals. The final section includes Likert items from the SWCIQ to measure student attitudes to dimensions that include career decision making. Part (d) includes items that ask participants to specify "how much do you think has influenced your career choice?" The response sets included the following: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The English version of the SWCIQ was translated into Arabic and back-translated into English by two bilingual researchers. The Arabic version of the SWCIQ showed excellent reliability and validity. The Cronbach's alpha for the Arabic version of the SWCIQ was as follows: total score  $\alpha= 0.97$ ; subscale 1  $\alpha= 0.96$ ; subscale 1  $\alpha= 0.97$ ; subscale 1  $\alpha= 0.98$ ; subscale 1  $\alpha= 0.95$ . To examine the construct validity of the arabic version of the SWCIQ, A confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed. The analysis showed that the data fitted the four-factor model very well. The  $X^2$  was not significant, and the most well-recognized fit indices were at the recommended points. Figure 1 shows a schema for the four-factor model of the SWCIQ in the Arab context. The Arabic version of the SWCIQ was labeled as SWCIQ-Ar.

**Figure 1:** A schema for the four-factor model of the SWCIQ in the Arab context



### 4.3 Statistical Analysis

To examine the association between age and social work profession domains (i.e., profession social change, family and personal experiences, being a therapist and profession social respect), Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was employed. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed with analysis of demographic variables, including age, cultural background (Qatari, non-Qatari), socio-economic status (high, medium and low), marital status (single, married, and divorced), and parents' educational level (illiterate, primary, preparatory, secondary, university, and postgraduate) as independent variables and the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales (profession social change, family and personal experiences, being a therapist and profession social respect) as dependent variables to examine the main differences and interactions between the independent variables and the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales. Multiple comparisons using Tukey's HSD were performed between the education levels of fathers and mothers as well as marital status and socio-economic status in the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Testing Hypothesis H1

To test H1, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used, and the results indicated that there was a positive association ( $r=.14$ ) between age and family and personal experiences; but, there were no significant correlations between being a therapist, profession social respect, or profession social change.

**Table 1:** Pearson’s correlations associated with age for the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales

Age	1	2	3	4
Profession social change	.142*			
Profession social respect	-.01	.30**		
Being a therapist	-.06	.34**	.34**	
Family and personal experiences	.02	.31**	.28	.39**

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

**Table 2:** descriptive statistics for the four SWCIQ-Ar’s subscales

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
Profession social change	33	40	37.81	1.74	-0.32	-0.62
Profession social respect	27	37	34.16	2.56	-0.02	-0.78
Being a therapist	19	40	31.03	5.45	-0.54	-0.27
Family and personal experiences	28	40	37.03	3.11	0.15	-0.99

**Testing Hypothesis H2:** The descriptive statistics shown table 2 indicated that the data were normally distributed, and the kurtosis and skewness are below the recommended cutoff points. As shown in table 3, the MANOVA results showed that there were meaningful differences between the three categories of marital status in the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales. There were also significant differences in the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales according to both the fathers’ and mothers’ education levels, respectively. However, there were not significant differences in any of the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales based on comparisons between the three levels of family socio-economic status. Moreover, the MANOVA revealed that there were significant two-way interactions between the marital status and socio-economic in the family and personal experiences, being a therapist, and profession social change; but, there were not significant interactions associated with the profession social respect. There were also significant interactions between marital status and the fathers’ education levels in the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales as well as significant interactions between the fathers’ and mothers’ education levels and significant three-way interactions between the mother’s and father’s education levels in the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales.

**Table 3:** MANOVA results of between-subjects effects for demographic variables and the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales

Source	Dependent	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Marital status	Family and personal experiences	2	13.98	11.18	<.01
	Being a therapist	2	19.21	6.96	<.01
	Profession social respect	2	68.14	5.99	<.01
	Profession social change	2	85.42	19.37	<.01
socio-economic	Family and personal experiences	2	1.22	.98	ns
	Being a therapist	2	2.06	.75	ns
	Profession social respect	2	30.25	2.66	ns
	Profession social change	2	.84	.19	ns

Source	Dependent	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Father's education	Family and personal experiences	4	3.92	3.13	<.05
	Being a therapist	4	19.03	6.90	<.01
	Profession social respect	4	28.94	2.55	<.05
	Profession social change	4	12.49	2.83	<.05
Mother's education	Family and personal experiences	4	4.63	3.70	<.01
	Being a therapist	4	6.59	2.39	ns.
	Profession social respect	4	90.65	7.97	<.01
	Profession social change	4	10.42	2.36	ns.
Marital × socio-economic status	Family and personal experiences	3	3.59	2.87	<.05
	Being a therapist	3	22.62	8.20	<.01
	Profession social respect	3	11.98	1.05	ns
	Profession social change	3	21.24	4.82	<.01
Marital status × father's education	Family and personal experiences	8	8.97	7.17	<.01
	Being a therapist	8	13.10	4.75	<.01
	Profession social respect	8	68.98	6.07	<.01
	Profession social change	8	21.16	4.80	<.01
Marital status × mother's education	Family and personal experiences	5	3.72	2.98	<.05
	Being a therapist	5	8.76	3.17	<.01
	Profession social respect	5	29.31	2.58	<.05
	Profession social change	5	27.67	6.27	<.01
socio-economic × father's education	Family and personal experiences	6	.49	.40	ns
	Being a therapist	6	4.42	1.60	ns
	Profession social respect	6	29.87	2.63	<.05
	Profession social change	6	12.40	2.81	<.05
Father's education × mother's education	Family and personal experiences	9	19.21	6.96	<.01
	Being a therapist	9	68.14	5.99	<.01
	Profession social respect	9	85.42	19.37	<.01
	Profession social change	9	1.22	.98	<.01
Marital status × father's education × mother's education	Family and personal experiences	5	2.06	.75	<.05
	Being a therapist	5	30.25	2.66	<.01
	Profession social respect	5	.84	.19	<.01
	Profession social change	5	3.92	3.13	<.01

The analysis also indicated that there were no significant differences between Qataris and non-Qataris in any of the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales. Mean scores of the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales based on the Qatari and non-Qatari groups are displayed in figure 2.

Using the Tukey HSD test for Post-hoc comparisons, the results showed that the mean scores for the four levels of the educational background of fathers were not statically different with respect to the family and personal experiences. Nevertheless, the mean scores where the education level of the fathers was illiterate were statistically different from the mean scores of education levels that were primary, preparatory, secondary, and university levels in the being a therapist—that is, the students with fathers that had illiterate levels of education were very keen to report that they chose the social work profession being a therapist compared with their counterparts whose fathers had higher levels of education. Likewise, the mean score of the sample that had fathers with an education level of illiterate was statistically different from the mean score of preparatory and university levels in the profession social change . Finally, the post-hoc comparisons did not show any other significant mean score differences between the level of the father's education in any of the four sections of the factors affecting career choice. The mean scores are displayed in figure 4.

**Table 4:** Multiple comparisons (Tukey’s HSD) between fathers’ educational levels in the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales

Dependents	Edu. levels	Edu. levels	Mean Diff.	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Family and personal experiences	Illiterate	Primary	.14	ns.	-.86	1.14	
		Preparatory	.73	ns.	-.22	1.68	
		Secondary	.02	ns.	-.90	.94	
		University	.18	ns.	-.77	1.13	
Being a therapist	Illiterate	Primary	1.68*	<.05	.28	3.09	
		Preparatory	2.12*	<.01	.79	3.45	
		Secondary	.231	ns.	-1.06	1.52	
		University	1.40*	<.05	.06	2.73	
	Primary	Preparatory	.43	ns.	-.97	1.84	
		Secondary	-1.45*	<.05	-2.82	-.09	
		University	-.29	ns.	-1.70	1.12	
	Preparatory	Secondary	-1.89*	<.01	-3.17	-.60	
		University	-.72	ns.	-2.06	.61	
	Secondary	University	1.17	ns.	-.13	2.46	
	Profession social change	Illiterate	Primary	1.09	ns.	-.66	2.84
			Preparatory	1.80*	<.05	.15	3.46
Secondary			.33	ns.	-1.27	1.93	
University			1.84*	<.05	.18	3.50	
Primary		Preparatory	.71	ns.	-1.04	2.46	
		Secondary	-.76	ns.	-2.47	.94	
		University	.75	ns.	-1.01	2.51	
Preparatory		Secondary	-1.47	ns.	-3.08	.13	
		University	.04	ns.	-1.63	1.70	
Secondary		University	1.510	ns.	-.10	3.12	

The examination of the individual differences between the levels of the education of mothers in the four subscales showed that the mean score for the group whose fathers’ were illiterate were statistically different from the mean score of primary and the secondary levels in the family and personal experiences. The mean scores are displayed in figure 5. These values were also statistically different compared with the following groups primary, preparatory, secondary and university levels in the being a therapist. Nevertheless, between the Illiterate Primary, Secondary and the university level in the profession social respect. Finally, there were significant differences only between the primary and predatory level of mother’s education in the profession social change.

**Table 5:** Multiple comparisons (Tukey’s HSD) in the four subscales based on the education levels of mothers

Dependent	Edu. levels	Edu. levels	Mean Diff.	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Profession social change	Illiterate	Preparatory	1.86*	<.01	.60	3.13
		Secondary	1.32*	.001	.38	2.25
	Preparatory	University	-1.27*	<.05	-2.49	-.05
Profession social respect	Secondary	Preparatory	1.27*	<.05	.05	2.49
		Illiterate	-2.15*	<.01	-3.53	-.76
		Primary	-1.66*	<.01	-2.94	-.38
		University	-1.35*	<.05	-2.65	-.05
Being a therapist	Illiterate	Primary	-3.39*	<.01	-6.07	-.71
		University	-3.39*	<.01	-6.10	-.67
	Secondary	University	-4.46*	<.01	-8.13	-.78
		Preparatory	4.46*	<.01	.78	8.13
Family and personal experiences	Primary	Preparatory	2.26*	<.05	.12	4.39

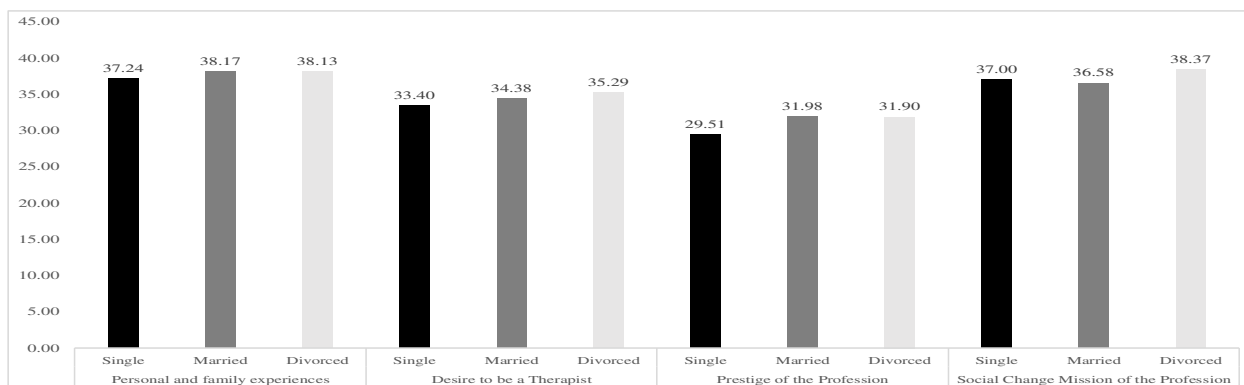


For the multiple comparisons between the marital statuses in the four factors affecting the social work career choices, using the Tukey HSD test for the post-hoc comparisons, the analysis showed that the mean scores for the three marital statuses (single, married, and divorced) were statically different in the family and personal experiences, being a therapist, profession social respect and the profession social change. The mean scores are displayed in figure 3. Divorced students reported much higher scores in all of the four domains compared to married students. The lowest scores were reported by the single students. For the multiple comparisons between the socio-economic status in the four factors contributing to the social work career choices, the post-hoc comparison mean scores are displayed in figure 6. Finally, there were no significant variations between the levels of the socio-economic status, except between the low and high levels in the mean difference scores associated with the profession social respect.

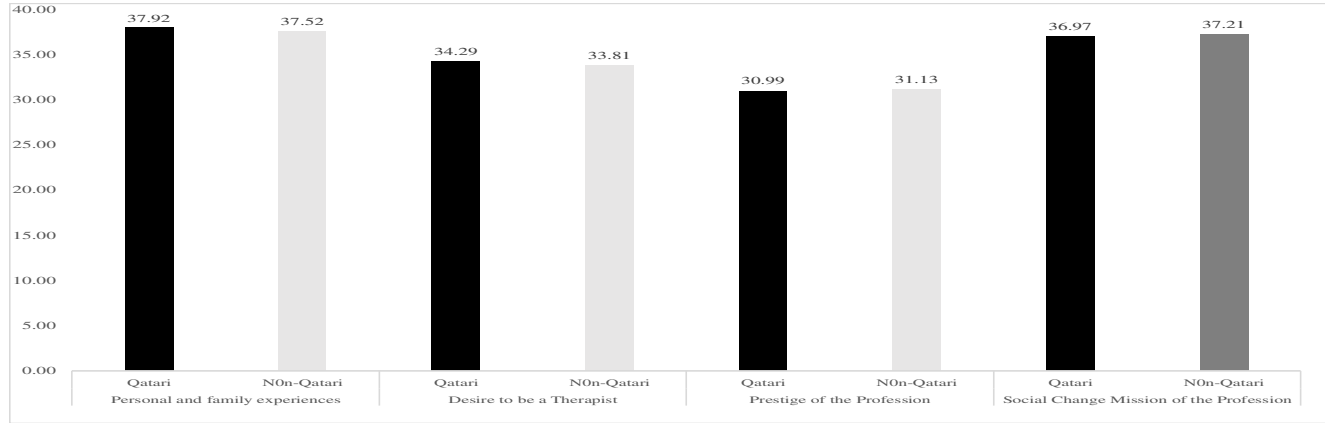
**Table 6:** Multiple comparisons (Tukey’s HSD) in the four subscales based on marital and socio-economic status

Dependents	(I) Marital status	(J) Marital Status	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Profession social change	Single	Married	-.93*	<.01	-1.48	-.37
		Divorced	-.893*	<.01	-1.65	-.13
Profession social change	Divorced	Single	.89*	<.01	.13	1.65
		Married	-.04	ns.	-.77	.70
Profession social respect	Single	Married	-.98*	<.01	-1.79	-.17
		Divorced	-1.89*	<.01	-2.99	-.80
Profession social respect	Divorced	Single	1.89*	<.01	.80	2.99
		Married	.91	<.01	-.15	1.97
Being a therapist	Single	Married	-2.47*	<.01	-4.22	-.73
		Divorced	-2.39*	<.01	-4.75	-.04
Being a therapist	Divorced	Single	2.39*	<.01	.04	4.75
		Married	-.08	ns.	-2.37	2.21
Family and personal experiences	Single	Married	.47	ns.	-.58	1.42
		Divorced	-1.367*	<.01	-2.71	-.02
Family and personal experiences	Divorced	Single	1.37*	<.01	.02	2.71
		Married	1.78*	<.01	.47	3.10

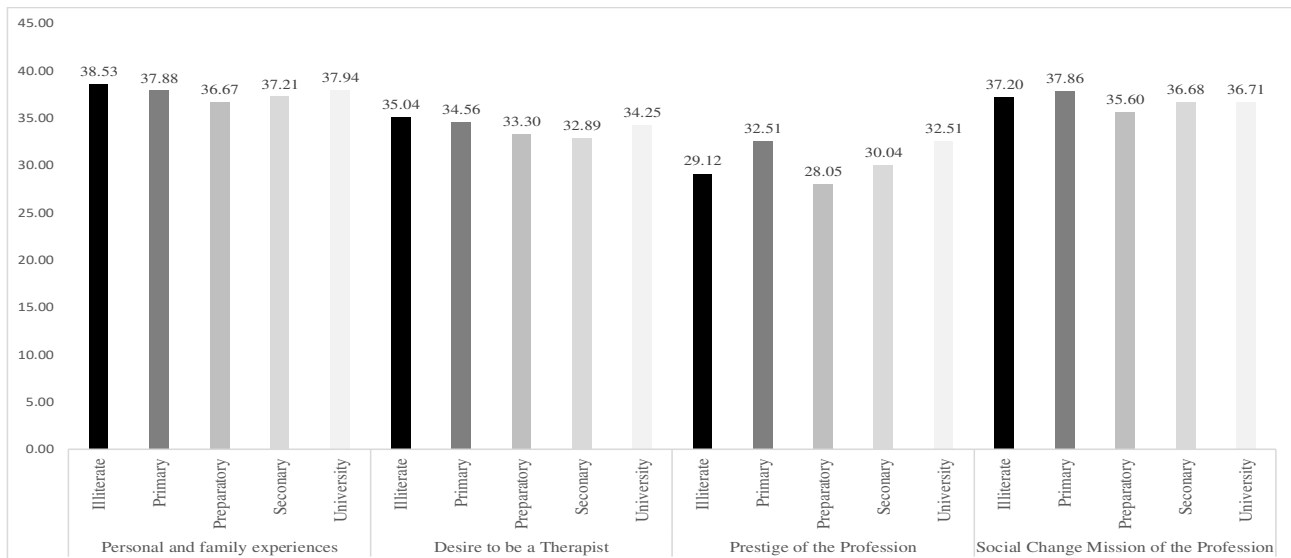
**Figure 2:** Mean scores of the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales based on marital status



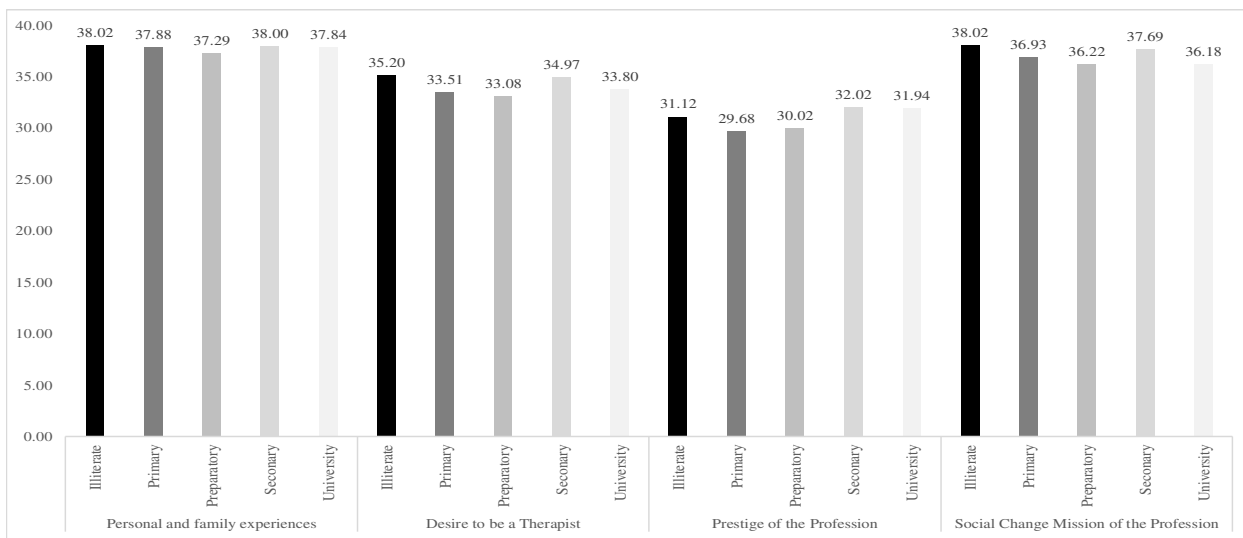
**Figure 3 Figure 4:** mean scores of the four SWCIQ-Ar's subscales nationalities



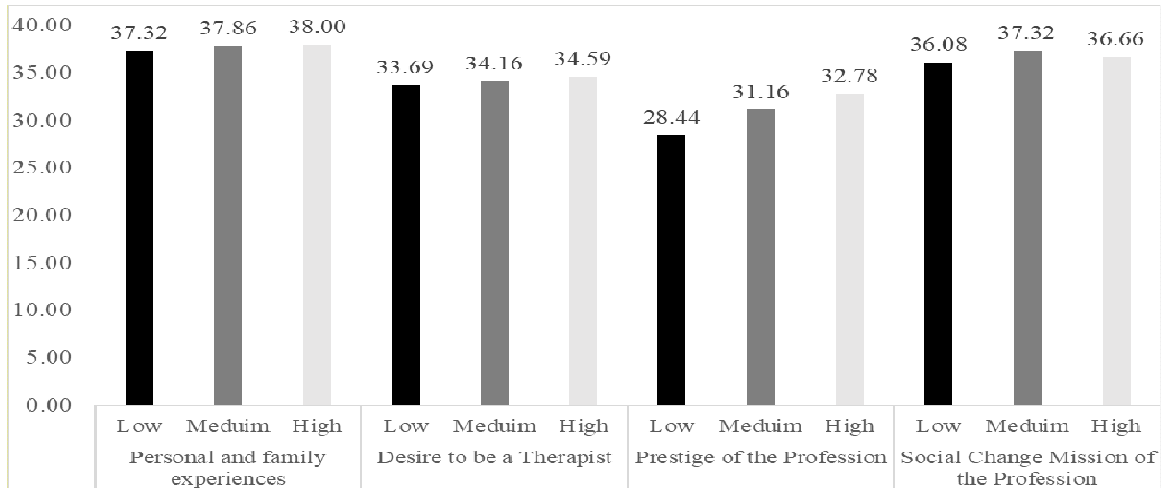
**Figure 5:** Mean scores of the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales based on the educational level of fathers



**Figure 5:** Mean scores of the four SWCIQ-Ar's subscales based on the educational level of mothers



**Figure 6:** Mean scores of the four SWCIQ-Ar’s subscales based on socio-economic status



## 6. Discussion

Career selection is deterministic and depends on a set of factors. Since the 1950s, research has examined social work from multiple perspectives. These studies have used demographic, psychosocial history and family oriented contextual factors to understand the social work profession on a national scale [22]. The present study examined the demographic factors that influenced the social work students’ career choices in an Arab context. Potential demographic factors included age, cultural background (Qatari, non-Qatari), socio-economic status, and the educational backgrounds of the students’ parents. The participants articulated many factors that affected their choice of the social work profession. Their job choices were affected by profession social change, family and personal experiences, being a therapist and profession social respect. These factors were, in turn, influenced by their socio-economic status, marital status, and the educational levels of their parents [23]. Also, the results showed differences between low and high levels of perceiving the profession social respect.

The current results are consistent with findings from previous research that previous family experiences—for example caring for other family members, experiencing unusual financial difficulties, crisis orientation for life, and parental confusion—motivate students to choose a career in social work [23]. Sellers and Hunter (2005) stated there are signifiers that violence within the family and psychopathology are viewed by students as affecting their preference for a social work career [19, 21, 22, 24]. Furthermore, Bigger staff (2000) found a strong positive association in the desire for practicing in the private sector and family involvements. Students with a history of family troubles affected their social work career decision making to pursue health or mental health practices [22].

Research indicates that an important dimension to consider with students is personal experiences and family life [22, 25-27]. These experiences include social issues, services provided to families similar to the services they have received, and childhood experiences. Lackie (1983) included more than 1,500 social workers in his investigation and found that they were commonly the first born in their families[23]. [22] concluded that social workers show signs of excessive identification; however, it is historically biased to apply these same findings to our modern society that has generally moved away from psychodynamic terms. Moreover, the findings of the present study supported the previous finding in Western cultures that private practice and social workers affect students’ partialities to the social work profession [12, 28]. These investigations showed that social work credentialing impacts students towards the private sector as opposed to governmental positions. There is high indication that in some point in their career, social workers will enter private practice. Butler (1990) found that from 265 students that were interviewed as part of a MSW course, 63% believed they are likely go in to the private sector over the public sector [12]. However, there is refuting evidence that

suggests that the majority of students do not enter private institutions. Butler (1992) found 22.4% of all respondents in an MSW program in a total of 11 schools planned to enter private practice. This provides a great insight into social workers' initial career choices. These results reflect that the effects of contextual factors on social work career preferences are universal and are most likely not subject to cultural effects [28].

Finally, participants' personal values and prestige of the profession of social work in addition to the profession social change are also taken into consideration [22, 29]. These represent the main values of the profession related to achieving social justice. This is reflected in the beliefs in the dignity and work of the people, equal rights and opportunities, ability to access basic resources, and beliefs surrounding the worth of people [29].

Noteworthy interactions were found between marital status and the education levels of fathers in the four SWCIQ-Ar subscales. Also, significant interactions were found between the education levels of fathers and mothers as well as significant three-way interactions between the marital status and the education levels of fathers and mothers in the four main factors that influenced the choices to pursue social work as a future profession. Another finding was that the personal experiences of students (e.g., divorce) were a crucial factor that possibly affected their choices. For example, divorced students reported much higher scores compared to married and single students in family and personal experiences, being a therapist, and profession social change as factors mediating their inclination in seeking social work. The lowest scores were reported by the single students.

One limitation in this study that may interfere with its generalizability to other contexts, is that the study used a convenience sample from the main university in Qatar, which contains more than 55 nationalities from different ethnic backgrounds.

## **7. Concluding Remarks**

The present investigation examined the contextual factors that affected the career preferences of social work students. The two hypotheses were verified and the results indicated that potential demographic factors included age, cultural background (Qatari, non-Qatari), socio-economic status, and parents' educational backgrounds. The results showed a positive association between age and family and personal experiences as a factor affecting students' choices to pursue a social work profession. Socio-economic status, marital status, and the educational levels students' mothers and fathers affected their job choices in which profession social change, family and personal experiences, being a therapist and profession social respect were factors. These findings are important to Qatar university policy makers to improve the efficiency and quality of the social work profession in Qatar.

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