

# The Career Development of The Female Funeral Director

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**Abstract.** The females are always the disadvantage group in the workplace. The female funeral director is much more the disadvantage of disadvantages. This research uses deep interview to 3 outstanding female funeral directors to find out: 1. the key factors and the reasons why they become funeral directors, 2. the difficulties they have to face and how they solve the problems, 3. the reasons that make them stay in this profession, 4. the career development direction, and 5. suggestions for those new-come female funeral director. The researchers build a bi-axis structure which base on the female career development literature to analyze the information gained from interviewing. The conclusions are as below: 1. The economic status changes severely and their close relative or friend's death are the mainly key factors. At the time there were friends who introduced them went into this profession fortuitously. They need higher monetary income and wish to pay warmer, better and more solemn funeral service for those bereaved families. 2. The great work pressure, the long uncertain working hours and pressure from their own families are the most difficult part they have to face. They keep exerting themselves in this hard period. As their economic status improved gradually and their performance gets better and better, they continue to communicate with their families to look for their support. 3. The reasons that make them stay in this profession is to gain the higher monetary income and achievement from the bereaved families. 4. The traditional concept still influences them deeply. They all say that they would not stay in this profession for more than 15 or 20 years. Especially there are 2 respondents say they wish to get married and departure from this profession after they have child. 5. Firstly is the personal trait, it should be fit to this profession. Secondly, to be a funeral director, she has to devote her time, health, spirit, patience and effort to this profession. It is not a game or just temporary income but a divine career. Thirdly, she has to strive to communicate with her families, boyfriend/husband and close friends to gain their acceptance and encouragement. Fourthly, breeding her high EQ to face and continue to fight the difficulties in this profession. At last, looking for a good mentor to accompany and teach her can make the whole career development easier.

**Keywords:** Funeral director, Female funeral director, Career development

## 1. Introduction

The females are always the disadvantage group in the workplace. There are many obstacles and interferes in the career path that could make their career interrupted and difficult to re-build. Due to the traditional concept of death, the funeral director is an occult and low-level occupation in the Chinese society. So the female funeral director is the disadvantage of disadvantages. The researchers wish to use deep interviewing method to collect 3 outstanding female funeral directors' career path information. We try to find out the key factors that influence their career choice and how they face and solve the problems. And wish the conclusions could be helpful for those females who want to be or will become funeral directors.

## 2. Research purpose

According to the previous discussion, the purposes of this research are to find out: (1) the key factors and the reasons why they become funeral directors, (2) the difficulties they have to face and how they solve the problems, (3) the reasons that make them stay in this profession, (4) the career development direction, and (5) suggestions for those new-come female funeral director.

## 3. Previous research

### 3.1. The role and job description of funeral directors

According to the definition of Taiwan Occupational Category Dictionary (Council of Labor Affairs, 2012), the funeral director is the one who plans, designs and complete the whole funeral ceremony. The content of their job include: (1) attentively at the point of death and take over the corpse, (2) communicate

with the bereaved families about the arrangement of whole funeral ceremony, (3) provide different custom services ( The 7<sup>th</sup> Day, The 10<sup>th</sup> Day, The 100<sup>th</sup> Day, The Anniversary and The 3-year Day of The Death) and sorrow counselling.

On the other hand, according to The Funeral and Interment Management Ordinance (Department of Civil Affairs, 2012), the funeral director's job include: (1) plan the funeral ceremony and consult the etiquette, (2) plan and design the funeral ceremony site layout, (3) design and write the related documents, (4) to instruct or to be the host of funeral ceremony, (5) attentively at the point of death and provide sorrow counselling, and (6) other affairs which approved by the competent authority.

Who wants to be an official funeral director should pass the test of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Funeral Service Certification by Council of Labor Affairs, get more than 20 school credits related to the funeral service profession and accumulate more than 2 years' practical experience in the legal funeral service companies. We can see the complexity and the strict conditions of this profession. It is not as easy as before to be a funeral director.

### **3.2. The female career development theories**

Females are always the disadvantage ones in the workplace. So the issue of females' career development is continuously noticed by researchers. Super had divided females' career development into 7 patterns: (1) the stable homemaking; (2) the conventional career; (3) the stable working; (4) the double-track career; (5) the interrupted career; (6) the unstable; (7) the multiple trail career (Super, 1957). Considering the concept of Super, the career development of females is gradually go out of the traditional path and head to diversification in 1960s.

Psathas' research pointed out 5 factors which will influence females' career choice: (1) marriage status; (2) family finances; (3) education and occupation of parents; (4) value; (5) social mobility and mate selection (Psathas, 1968). We can see that the family's social-economic status and opinions from her mate are decisively important for female.

Farmer adapted Bandura's social learning concept and used females' work motives to discover the factors influence their career development. He proposed 3 dimensions which will influence females' work motives then lead to different career path: (1) background: demographical data, math and lingual capability; (2) psychology: independent, cooperate, self-efficacy, expression, personal value; (3) environment: support of parents and teachers, working attitude (Farmer, 1985).

Betz & Fitzgerald had proposed a model of females' career choices, pointed out that females' past and current experience will influence their career development simultaneously. The independent variables in the model are the past work experience, school learning achievement, role model and encouragement from others (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987).

Cheng had researched about female principles of elementary school and used 3 dimensions as main factors which indeed influence females' career development: (1) role model, (2) key events and (3) important ones (Cheng, 2002).

## **4. Research method**

### **4.1. Research tools, data collection and analysis process**

For analysis need, the researchers take the literatures above as reference and create a bi-axis structure (as Fig. 1). The X-axis is the timeline of female career development which include 'Grow-up Background', 'Status of Current Work' and 'Future Plan'. The Y-axis is the factors which include 'Role Model', 'Key Events' and 'Important Ones'. The researchers use the bi-axis structure to design the interviewing questionnaire.

	Grow-up Background	Status of Current Work	Future Plan
Role Model			
Key Events			
Important Ones			

Fig. 1: The bi-axis structure

After drawing up the questionnaire, the researchers invite another Ph., D. who has much experience about qualitative research to discuss the content, wish to make sure the validity of the questionnaire. In the interviewing process, the researcher keeps communicating with the respondent to make sure what she says and what he interprets are aligned. After interviewing 3 respondents, the researcher gets word by word documents and starts the analysis process. The first step is lining and coding the key sentences. Then proceed the primary coding to interpret the meaning of each lined sentence. The third step is to proceed secondary coding to conclude important concepts. The final step is to put the concepts into the bi-axis structure. In the process of interview and analysis, we take hermeneutics as our philosophical basis. By the interpretation cycle of researchers/respondents, manuscript/insight and whole text/part text, we wish to build the ‘trueness’ through the ‘communicate’-‘record’-‘analysis’-‘write’ 4-step process to refine the materials and to get closer to the ‘trueness’.

## 4.2. Research objects and limits

The research objects are 3 outstanding funeral directors. They all have worked as funeral director for more than 6 years and recommended by a famous life rites company for their outstanding performance. Because of this research is a qualitative research, the result cannot be inferred to other female funeral directors.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Base on the bi-axis structure, the discussion and conclusions are as below.

### 5.1. Grow-up Background

The family education style of 3 respondents are all tend to free, open, respectful and democratic. Their parents all respect their occupational choice and maintain good parent-child relationship. The role model in their grow-up background is their father. Their father’s responsible, diligent, decent and helpful personal trait influence them deeply. They are all not aspire to be funeral directors before enter this occupation. The reasons make them become funeral directors include 3 kinds of key events. (1) Economic status. Their family’s economic status became worse suddenly, need monetary income to make up their basic living condition. (2) Close relative or friend’s death. Their close relative (ex. grandparent) or friend (ex. boyfriend) died just before they became funeral directors, they felt that the process could be warmer, better and more solemn. (3) It is a more challengeable job. Their brave and undefeatable personality make them want to face the challenge of this job. Be influenced by the key events, they were introduced into this profession by their friends. Before they went into this profession, they have communicated deeply with their families (include parents and husband/boyfriend) to get their preliminary support. So the friends who introduce them went into this profession and their families are all important ones.

### 5.2. Status of Current Work

After they become official funeral directors, their families complained about them because of the great work pressure and the long uncertain working hours. The role model in this period is their mentor. Mentoring is the traditional way to breed an official funeral director. The respondents not only learn the competence of this profession from their mentors, but also learn the spirit of their mentors. By the warm response from the bereaved families, they find the power and achievement to keep them go forward . So the most successful service experiences are the key events in this period. As their economic status improved gradually and their performance gets better and better, they continue to communicate with their families to

look for their support. Their families finally can accept and support them, so the important ones are their families.

### 5.3. Future Plan

To be an outstanding funeral director, she has to pay much more time, patience, health and great effort to gain the support and encouragement from her families, her friends and families of descends. Because of the particularity of this profession, female funeral directors feel much more pressure than males. They will still treat their mentor as their role model. They all say that they would not stay in this profession for more than 15 or 20 years. Especially there are 2 respondents say they wish to get married and departure from this profession after they have child. So the traditional concept still influences them deeply. So the key events of their career change are marriage and give birth to children. The important ones are their husband and children.

### 5.4. Conclusion

The filled bi-axis table is as Fig. 2.

	Grow-up Background	Status of Current Work	Future Plan
Role Model	● Father	● Mentor	● Mentor
Key Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic status</li> <li>● Close relative or friend's death</li> <li>● A more challengeable job</li> </ul>	● The most successful service experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marriage</li> <li>● Give birth to children</li> </ul>
Important Ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Friends who introduced them went into this profession</li> <li>● Families (means parents and boyfriend/husband)</li> </ul>	● Families (means mainly parents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Husband</li> <li>● Children</li> </ul>

Fig. 2: The bi-axis table

According to the research purposes and discussions above, the conclusions are as below:

- (1) The key factors and the reasons why they become funeral directors: the economic status changes severely and their close relative or friend's death are the mainly key factors. At the time there were friends who introduced them went into this profession fortuitously. They need higher monetary income and wish to pay warmer, better and more solemn funeral service for those bereaved families.
- (2) The difficulties they have to face and how they solve the problems: the great work pressure, the long uncertain working hours and pressure from their own families are the most difficult part they have to face. They keep exerting themselves in this hard period. As their economic status improved gradually and their performance gets better and better, they continue to communicate with their families to look for their support.
- (3) The reasons that make them stay in this profession: to gain the higher monetary income and achievement from the bereaved families are 2 main reasons that make them stay in this profession.
- (4) The career development direction: the traditional concept still influences them deeply. They all say that they would not stay in this profession for more than 15 or 20 years. Especially there are 2 respondents say they wish to get married and departure from this profession after they have child.
- (5) The suggestions for those new-come female funeral director: firstly is the personal trait, it should be fit to this profession. Secondly, to be a funeral director, she has to devote her time, health, spirit, patience and effort to this profession. It is not a game or just temporary income but a divine career. Thirdly, she has to strive to communicate with her families, boyfriend/husband and close friends to gain their acceptance and encouragement. Fourthly, breeding her high EQ to face and continue to fight the difficulties in this profession. At last, looking for a good mentor to accompany and teach her can make the whole career development easier.

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