

Career Choices Among Higher Secondary School Students in Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Prof. (Dr.) Sita Juyal¹, Mukesh Singh Negi², Dr. Kalpana Vishnoi³, Shabnam Khan⁴ and Namrta Semwal⁵

¹Principal, School of Education, Maya Devi University, Selaqui, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

²Assistant Professor, School of Education, Maya Devi University, Selaqui, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

³Assistant Professor, School of Education, Maya Devi University, Selaqui, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

⁴Assistant Professor, School of Education, Maya Devi University, Selaqui, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

⁵Research Scholar, School of Education, Maya Devi University, Selaqui, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

*Corresponding Author
Sita Juyal

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Abstract: This study investigates the factors shaping career choice preferences among secondary school students and their long-term impacts. It identifies intrinsic factors such as personal interests and skills, alongside extrinsic influences like parental expectations, peer pressure, socio-economic conditions and access to career information. The re-search utilises surveys and interviews with students, teachers, and parents, revealing a significant role of external pressures in shaping students' choices, often leading to a mismatch with their actual potential and aspirations. The study also highlights the critical role of school-based career guidance programs in helping students make informed decisions. However, these programs are inconsistently implemented across schools, limiting their effectiveness in aligning students' career choices with their strengths and long-term objectives. To address these challenges, the study recommends integrating structured career counselling into school curricula, encouraging active parental involvement in career discussions and exposing students to diverse career paths through mentorship programs and internships. These initiatives aim to support students in making decisions that resonate with their abilities and ambitions, ultimately contributing to personal fulfilment and broader societal development. By addressing both individual and systemic factors, the study underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to career guidance during the critical secondary school years.

Keywords -Career Choice, Secondary Students, Parental Influence, Career Guidance, Informed Decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Career choice is a critical decision for secondary school students, shaping their academic achievements, emotional well-being and future prospects. Career decisions are driven by a combination of personal interests, skills, family expectations, societal pressures, and the education system. Many students face conflicts between their passions and societal or parental expectations to pursue economically secure or prestigious careers. Such misalignments often lead to dissatisfaction, academic underperformance, and long-term career discontent. External factors, including socio-economic background and gender stereotypes, play a significant role in shaping career preferences. Privileged students typically have better access to resources like career counseling, while traditional gender roles influence career paths. Parental involvement is pivotal, either guiding or pressuring students in their decision-making. Schools and teachers also influence career choices through mentorship and career guidance programs, which help students align their interests and abilities with appropriate opportunities. Intrinsic factors, such as self-awareness and aptitude, are equally critical but often underexplored due to limited access to tools like aptitude tests. Addressing this gap is essential for aligning career choices with students' strengths and aspirations.

This study emphasizes the importance of career guidance and supportive systems involving parents, educators, and policymakers to help students make informed and fulfilling career decisions, ultimately benefiting both individuals and society (Querido, van den Broek, de Rond, M., Wigersma, & ten Cate, O, 2018) performed research to get knowledge about factors affecting the career preference of the medical students. A qualitative semi-structured interview has been used as a tool for data collection. The sample size was 24 students. The analysis concluded three sets of factors that influenced students' career preference, students' information collection, characteristics of patients' population, and traits of teams and colleagues within a particular specialty. The study can be particularly useful for educators and counselors to understand the factors for guiding medical students. A limited sample size within one institute could be a major limitation of the study. It can be broadened by considering other institutes with a larger sample size (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017) Carried out a study to study the factors affecting students' career choice. 432 students from public universities were considered as a sample for the analysis. Factors included in the study were gender, academic discipline, parental pressure, parents' background, income, media, and grades. ANOVA and t-test were applied for the conclusion. Results showed that peer influence and media also affect career choice. Work environment,

parents' profession, or pressure also has a role in career choice for students.

THE IMPACT OF CAREER CHOICE PREFERENCES

Personal Interests: Personal interests play a crucial role in shaping a student's career preferences. When students align their career choices with their passions and hobbies, they are more likely to experience greater satisfaction and motivation. This alignment can lead to better academic performance, as students feel more engaged and enthusiastic about their studies. Pursuing a career that matches personal interests also increases the likelihood of long-term career fulfillment. It encourages students to invest more time and effort in developing their skills. Ultimately, making career choices based on personal interests can lead to both personal and professional success. External influences, such as parental expectations, financial pressures, socio-economic background, cultural norms, and gender stereotypes, play a significant role in shaping students' career paths. While these factors can provide guidance and stability, they often restrict students' freedom to explore careers aligned with their passions and abilities, leading to stress, dissatisfaction, or unfulfilled potential. Parents' aspirations and financial constraints may push students toward high-earning or prestigious careers, while socio-economic advantages often create disparities in access to education and opportunities. Additionally, societal norms and gender stereotypes limit students' exploration of non-traditional paths. To empower students to make fulfilling career choices, it is crucial to address these external pressures through open dialogue, equitable resources, and efforts to dismantle stereotypes. Encouraging self-discovery and prioritizing individual interests over societal expectations can pave the way for more satisfying and well-rounded career decisions. Career choices are influenced by a complex interplay of personal attributes, external circumstances, and societal trends. Factors such as natural talents, developed skills, self-confidence, and emotional well-being significantly impact decision-making. Additionally, the availability of effective career counseling plays a crucial role in helping students align their interests, abilities, and aspirations with viable career options. External influences, such as economic trends and job market conditions, often shape students' preferences, sometimes at the expense of personal passion. Similarly, the growing emphasis on work-life balance demonstrates a shift in priorities among students, though these preferences may conflict with the demands of certain careers. To ensure students make informed and fulfilling career decisions, it is essential to adopt a holistic approach that addresses both internal and external factors. Providing continuous guidance, fostering self-awareness, and offering emotional support can help students navigate the challenges of career selection while pursuing paths that align with their abilities, values, and long-term goals.

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Educational System: The educational system significantly influences students' career choices by emphasizing certain subjects like science and technology, which may limit exposure to other fields such as the arts or humanities. Limited access to career information, like job fairs and workshops, can further restrict students' exploration of diverse career options. Teachers play an essential role in guiding students by providing mentorship and helping them identify their strengths. Schools with strong career services, mentorship programs, and internship opportunities enhance career exploration and informed decision-making. Additionally, peer pressure often influences students' career choices, especially during adolescence, leading them to follow friends' paths, even if they don't align with their own interests or strengths. Internships and work experience can expose students to real-world career opportunities, helping them decide whether a certain field is a good fit for them. Lack of exposure can result in poor career decisions. **Extracurricular Activities Involvement** in extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, or volunteer work can shape career preferences by developing leadership skills, interests in specific fields, and teamwork abilities.

Career Choices Among Higher Secondary level students in Doiwala Block, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Career choices among higher secondary students in the Doiwala Block of Dehradun, Uttarakhand, are significantly influenced by traditional values, family expectations, and financial conditions. Professions like government jobs, teaching, medicine, and engineering are still highly preferred due to their perceived security

and social respect. In semi-urban and rural areas like Doiwala, Raipur, Vikasnagar, and parents play a dominant role in guiding students' career paths. Although Commerce and Humanities are gaining interest, awareness about diverse career options remains limited compared to urban regions. However, the educational landscape is gradually shifting. With Dehradun emerging as an educational hub and the government's initiatives in vocational training and entrepreneurship, students are slowly exploring alternative career paths. Fields like hospitality, small business ventures, and agriculture-related professions are becoming more attractive. Despite traditional influences, exposure to new opportunities and policy support is beginning to broaden students' perspectives and choices regarding their future careers.

CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS TO VARIOUS PROFESSIONS.

Individual Counseling one-on-one counseling sessions can be conducted by career experts to help students identify their strengths, interests, and aptitudes, which can be matched with suitable professions. **Subject Choice Guidance** Students often need guidance on selecting subjects in their higher secondary level (e.g., Science, Commerce, Humanities). Career counselors can assist them in aligning their subject choices with future career aspirations. **Organize workshops and seminars** with career counselors, professionals, and subject experts to guide students in understanding various career options. **Guest Lectures and Interaction with Professionals.** Schools can arrange for guest lecturers from professionals across various fields like engineering, medical sciences, management, arts, design, and social sciences, among others. **Industry Visits and Internships** Students can be taken on field trips to different industries or institutions to gain firsthand experience and knowledge about specific professions.

Psychometric Testing and Career Assessments to Information & Resources

Interest and Personality Assessments, These can help understand students' personalities and how they align with certain professions. **Aptitude Tests** Administering aptitude and psychometric tests to assess students' cognitive abilities, skills, and interests. The results can guide the students toward career paths that suit their natural inclinations and abilities.

Career Fairs and College Expos, Organize career fairs where students can meet with representatives from various universities, colleges, and industries to get information about the educational and training requirements for different professions. **Resource Centers** Set up career resource centers in schools that provide brochures, pamphlets, and access to online platforms that explain various career options.

Parental Involvement & Local Support in Collaboration **Parent-Teacher Meetings,** Hold meetings with parents to discuss the career aspirations of their children and how they can support their career choices. **Workshops for Parents,** Involve parents in workshops where they can be educated on emerging career trends and how they can guide their children effectively. **Collaboration with Local Colleges and Universities** Work with local educational institutions to facilitate career exploration activities and ensure that students are aware of the available options post higher secondary education. **Government Schemes and Programs** Many state and central government schemes exist for career counseling, scholarships, and vocational training. These programs can be integrated into the professional selection process.

Skill Development and Vocational Training

Vocational Courses Promote awareness about vocational education programs and skill development courses in areas like IT, hospitality, healthcare, and engineering. **Training Centers and Certifications:** Collaborate with local training centers offering certification courses in various trades that can provide students with practical skills for immediate employment. **Mentorship Programs** Establish mentorship programs where older students, alumni, or professionals mentor younger students in their career development journey. **Peer Career Guidance:** Encourage peer discussions and group activities that allow students to share career information and experiences with each other.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complexity of career choices among secondary school students, influenced by personal interests, skills, family expectations, socio-economic background, and societal pressures. Aligning career choices with personal passions and abilities is crucial for long-term satisfaction. Parental guidance should balance support with freedom for exploration. Career counseling, mentorship, and school resources play a key role in helping students make informed decisions. Socio-economic factors and gender stereotypes further shape career paths. The study advocates for an integrated approach involving educators, parents, and policymakers to support students in making fulfilling career choices.

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