

Factors Influencing Career Choice among Business Administration Students of Pokhara University

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Abstract

Career development theories imply that various factors might influence students' career choices. The study examined the existent factors influencing career choice among business administration students of Pokhara University. A quantitative paradigm guided the study. A purposive sample of 303 undergraduate and postgraduate students participated in the study. The data was collected using the Career Choice Scale (CCS), which looked at the four components of career choice: intrinsic, extrinsic, interpersonal, and institutional influences. The analysis of data was performed with SPSS and Amos. The results demonstrated that four factors, intrinsic factors such as personal interest, advancement in career, and personality traits; extrinsic factors such as prestigious job, well-paying employment, and job security; interpersonal factors such as parental support and influence, the influence of older siblings and peer influence, and institutional factors such as career counseling activities, teachers and educators' impact; type of academic program offered were found influential factors. The findings may have implications for Nepalese higher education institutions to guide and counsel students interested in a career in management. Understanding how students make career decisions allows efforts to guide students toward more realistic career choices.

Keywords: business administration students, career choice, Pokhara University

Introduction

Several studies argue that careers have two key aspects: internal and external (Ituma et al., 2011). These two characteristics are referred to as subjective (internal) and objective (external) careers (Hughes, 1937). Personal beliefs, motives, attitudes, and needs are part of the interior (subjective) career. Job titles, promotions, remuneration, and prestige are part of the external (objective) career. One of the most pressing challenges for university students in Nepal is deciding on a career path. Nepalese students, parents, and teachers in

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tertiary education have begun to analyze various careers critically. Many times, students, parents, and teachers are faced with a dilemma when choosing or suggesting a job. As a result, many studies on career choice have gained prominence in Nepal. A range of factors influences students' professional choices in Nepal. These factors are important because they affect the learner's career choice.

Previous research concludes that university students are influenced by intrinsic variables such as personality qualities, job satisfaction, professional progress, learning experiences, interest, enjoyment, curiosity, or pleasure (Gokuladas, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Nyamwange, 2016). Similarly, extrinsic elements, including prestigious jobs, job availability, and well-paying positions, have also influenced young people's career choices (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As a result, students may choose a career based on the ancillary benefits of that field, such as monetary compensation, job stability, employment accessibility, and job pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Edwards & Quinter, 2011; Bakar et al., 2014). Likewise, interpersonal factors include the impact of family members, teachers/educators, peers, and societal obligations (Gokuladas, 2010; Wu et al., 2015).

The literature discussed above reveals that much attention has been given to intrinsic, extrinsic, and interpersonal factors in the career choice literature in the past, especially in the developed part of the world. Although few researches were conducted in Nepal (Aryal & Shrestha, 2019; Maskey, 2019; Pandey, 2021; Ghimire, Regmi & Bhattarai, 2016; Shrestha & Sharma, 2021; Acharya, Kandel & Shrestha, 2020; Shrestha & Sapkota, 2021; Hayes & Shakya, 2013), who focused on career choices of medical students highlighting the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to a great extent. However, less focus has been given to the career choice of business administration students in higher education institutions in Nepal. Therefore, this study examined the intrinsic, extrinsic, interpersonal, and institutional factors affecting career choice among business administration students in higher education institutions in Nepal.

A thorough examination of the literature on career choice revealed two gaps that underscore this research. The first gap is theoretical, as most career choice studies have focused on intrinsic, extrinsic, and interpersonal factors. In contrast, institutional factors may significantly impact students' career choices in Nepalese higher education institutions but have not been addressed in most career choice studies in Nepal. The second gap is empirical since most career choice studies have been undertaken in the West. Only a few studies have been conducted on medical students in Nepal, with institutional factors not being addressed. Hence, this necessitates further research in business administration, which is yet to receive enough research attention.

The present study is crucial because career choice is a significant concern in Nepal's higher education system, but the government ignores the realities of students' decision-making. Furthermore, this research leads to a better knowledge of the institutional elements that influence job choices among Nepalese business administration students. The present study recommends what factors business administration students in Nepal consider the most when making their career decisions.

Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Career Theory is one of many theoretical models describing career process and choice decisions (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). According to this theory, three social-cognitive processes - self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectation, career goals, and intentions - interact with ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, social support, and any perceived barriers to shape a person's academic and career trajectories (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000; Blanco, 2011). These authors' claim backs up the concepts of social cognitive career theory, and they've created a three-dimensional framework to categorize the factors that impact professional choice. Carpenter and Foster (1977) stated that all career-influencing aspects stem from intrinsic, extrinsic, or interpersonal factors.

Intrinsic Factors and Career Choice

In most previous studies, personal interest proved to be a significant element in deciding a career (Caldera et al., 2003; Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, 2006; Gokuladas, 2010; Lent et al., 2010; Choi & Kim, 2013; Atitsogbe et al., 2018). According to Kumazhege (2017), interest is a crucial component in a person's professional choice, yet academic accomplishment or requirements may impact interest. Choi and Kim (2013) found that a person's interest can help them flourish and be content in their chosen profession. According to Amani (2013), a student's self-interest is a critical deciding element in choosing a career because it helps them achieve job satisfaction. Hui and Lent (2018) concluded that most students choose careers in which they are interested and those in which they believe they can study and work. Even when they fail, such students think they have what it takes to pursue such a profession, and they persevere in their studies until they graduate in that field. Gwelo (2019) and Raveenther (2017) found that students choose careers based on the expectation that the selected field would provide them with good job opportunities and complement their abilities and interests. Students' decisions are impacted by their interest in the course, their business skills and ambition, and the requirement for a vibrant and rigorous environment. Ryan and Deci (2000) and Nyamwange (2016) found that advancement in career and career matching the personality traits of students was the primary factor in career. Previous studies

(Agarwala, 2008; Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, 2006; Wüst & Leko, 2017; Yamashita et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Edwards & Quinter, 2011; Bakar et al., 2014) found a prestigious job as an important deciding factor for a career decision. These studies conclude that the type of career students choose is based on societal values.

Extrinsic Factors and Career Choice

According to Edwards and Quinter (2011), students opt for a career based on the benefits that the job/vocation can provide, for example, employment stability, work accessibility, job happiness, and monetary compensation. Aycan and Pasa (2003) concluded that social status, financial resources, affordability, and future employability are essential factors in a student's professional decision. Hafer and Schank (1982) concluded that career-related criteria such as employment stability, availability, and financial benefits are primary indicators in students' primary choices and, by extension, in their career decision. Students are more likely to choose jobs that will lead to a better and more stable future. The study emphasized the relevance of pay and earning potential in students' primary choices. Wust and Leko (2017) found that financial benefit was the most relevant element in choosing a career path. Income is the most crucial factor in deciding on a career, especially for financially self-sufficient and responsible students.

Interpersonal Factors and Career Choice

According to Agarwala (2008), fathers substantially influence students' professional choices, especially in patriarchal societies. In contrast, in matriarchal societies, the opposite is true because most of the students' fathers were professionals, which could be one of the driving causes for these kids to pursue their father's jobs. According to Bett (2013), peer influence shapes one's perception and attitude towards decision-making, including career choice.

Kumazhege (2017) established a relationship between family effects and career choices. According to Zhou et al. (2016), undergraduate students are more likely to enjoy their parents' ideal careers if they provide a comfortable living, contentment, prestige, performance, and social position. According to a study done in Kenya, when teens require employment planning advice, they turn to their parents (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). Various empirical investigations have proven the peer effect on a person's professional choice (Gwelo, 2019). According to Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015), peer relationships significantly impact academic success and job choice. Shumba and Naong (2012) found that family influences children's career choices and the learner's capacity to identify their chosen professional path.

Parental influence is regarded as one of the most influential aspects of professional decision-making studies (Ferreira et al., 2007). The most critical factors in the employment decision-making process are information and parental aid (Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Wong & Liu, 2010). According to Lent and Brown (1996), parental influence is an influential contextual variable that mediates the linkages between objectives and interests, goals and actions, and actions and accomplishments.

Institutional Factors and Career Choice

High schools play an essential role in assisting students in selecting career options since they act as a link between higher education and the job (Baloch & Shah, 2014). According to Dodge and Welderndael (2014) and Sun and Yuen (2012), if students have too many career possibilities or are unsure about the career path to take, in that case, school career counseling can help them choose their degrees and evaluate their potential abilities to increase their job market competitiveness. Kok and Low (2017) argued that students need career counselors to guide them in developing self-awareness in terms of personal potentials, interests, knowledge, skills, and weaknesses, as well as exploring career opportunities such as employment trends, competencies required in fields, employment requirements, and job descriptions. According to Walters (2010), among the several forces, educators are the factors in which pupils place the most astonishing faith in the job-choice process. The study examined the characteristics of teachers that Australian students believed to be helpful in their career choices.

It has been revealed that school courses significantly impact students' decisions to choose particular careers over others. School curricula impact occupations in Pakistan (Naz, Khan, Sheik, & Khan, 2014) and America (Faiter & Faiter, 2013). Shumba and Naong (2012) found the quality of instruction, school activities, procedures and policies, and learning tools are all factors to consider. As a result, the school exposes students to various activities to guide them toward specific careers. Lee, Lee, and Dopson (2019) concluded that faculty members performed the most crucial influence in determining students' career decisions. Academic advising systems allow students to get career advice and educational planning (Keller, Piotrowski, & Rabold, 1990). Different types of students can benefit from such systems, particularly unprepared, unwilling, or incapable of making professional decisions (Anderson, Creamer, & Cross, 1989; Gordon & Steele, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

According to the literature outlined above, most previous studies were based on intrinsic, extrinsic, or interpersonal aspects. In the context of Nepal, institutional factors such as

career counseling and guidance, teachers' advice, and programs offered have received minimal attention. As a result, the current study uses an "integrative approach" to fill these gaps in the career literature by looking at institutional elements and other factors that may directly impact the professional decision process of Nepalese business administration students. The proposed conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

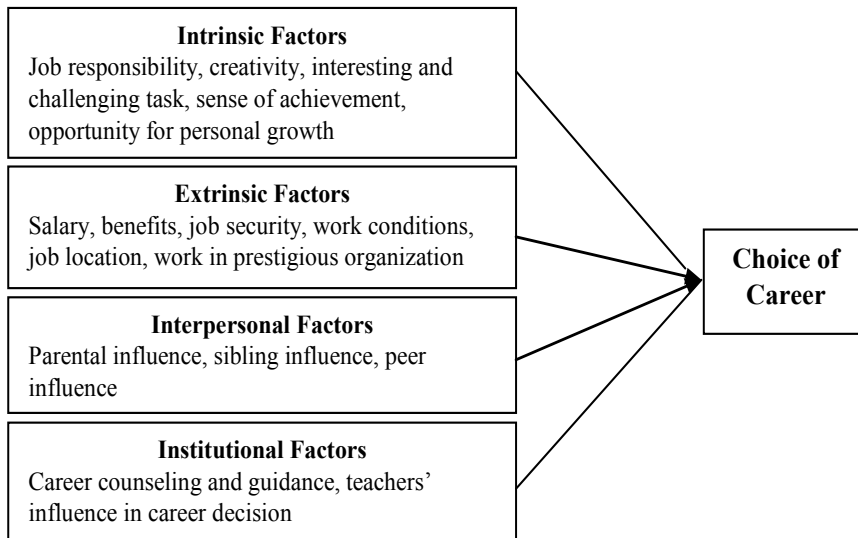


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Methodology

The positivist paradigm informs the methodological approaches of this research. A descriptive non-experimental survey design was adopted. A self-administered questionnaire was prepared to help increase understanding of business administration students' career choices by measuring four existent career choice factors derived from existing theories. The current study was carried out among business administration students of constituent college of Pokhara University. The college offers two undergraduate, BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) and BBA-BI (Bachelor of Business Administration in Banking and Insurance) programs and one postgraduate (Master of Business Administration) program. The study's target population was business administration students of both levels. The convenience sampling method selected 303 samples from three distinct programs.

A career choice scale was developed based on prior theories and literature to measure the critical research variables and collect data from the sample. Some changes were made to

ensure that the questionnaire suited the Nepalese context. Students were invited to participate in the study by responding to an online questionnaire. Students were not required to state their names or any other traceable information on the questionnaire to assure anonymity. A total of 750 students were sent the link to the google form questionnaire through Facebook Messenger and Viber, and in most cases, emails were used to send the questionnaire. The emails were received from the college administration after getting permission. Out of 750 participants, only 303 students participated in the study.

Table 1

Initial Measurement Scale used for Data Collection

Measurement Items
<u>Intrinsic Factors:</u>
I would prefer a career that enhances my creativity (F1)
I would prefer to choose a career that is challenging (F2)
I would prefer to choose a career according to my interest (F3)
I would choose a career that provides me advancement in my career (F4)
I would choose a career that matches my personality traits (F5)
<u>Extrinsic Factors:</u>
I would choose a career that has enough non-financial benefits (F6)
I would choose a career that comes with prestige in society (F7)
I would look for a career that is associated with well-paying employment (F8)
I would prefer a career having good working environment (F9)
I would choose a career and the associated job based on its location (F10)
I would choose a career that secures my life (F11)
I would choose a career having higher employment opportunities (F12)
<u>Institutional Factor:</u>
I get support on career guidance provided by my college (F13)
My teachers help me in selecting a career (F14)
My college organizes a frequent career counseling program (F15)
The courses we are offered in the college helps us in career selection (F16)
<u>Interpersonal Factors:</u>
I can decide my career independently (F17)
My parents influence me to choose a career (F18)
I would choose a career that my peers have already decided on (F19)
My older siblings influence me in the family to choose a career (F20)

The self-administered online questionnaire had two sections. The first section addressed the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second section comprised 20 Likert scale items (statements), including items that examined intrinsic, extrinsic, interpersonal, and institutional factors on students' career choices. The detailed items used in measuring career choices are presented in Table 1.

The reliability and validity of the instrument were performed using various techniques. First, the items in the scale were adapted from previous research and few items were modified based on their suitability. Second, the reliability coefficient was calculated for the scale, which was 0.783, indicating high internal consistency in all items. Similarly, the construct and convergent validity of the scale was checked using composite reliability and average variance extracted. Besides, the issues of face and content validity were also addressed. SPSS and Amos were used to analyze the data. The characteristics of the respondents were examined using descriptive statistics. Exploratory factor analysis was used to verify the instrument, test the scale further in the Nepalese context, and demonstrate construct and convergent scale validity; confirmatory factor analysis was used. The survey was conducted from June to August 2021.

Results and Discussion

KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Two crucial measures are used to determine factor analysis. The first is the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure, which determines overall sample adequacy. KMO values for intrinsic, extrinsic, interpersonal, and institutional components are 0.644, 0.637, 0.670, and 0.795, respectively, higher above the acceptable limit of 0.6, indicating a large sample size to analyze the factor. The other measure is Bartlett's test of sphericity, having a value of 162.919 (intrinsic factor), 88.082 (extrinsic factor), 277.466 (interpersonal), and 439.308 (institutional aspect) and p -value < 0.001 . These results also suggest that the items of the survey's constructs have a highly significant correlation, resulting in factorial analysis. The results of KMO and Bartlett's test are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of the KMO test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.644
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	162.919
	df	3
	Sig.	0
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.637
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	88.082
	df	3
	Sig.	0
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.670
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	277.466
	df	3
	Sig.	0
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.795
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	439.308
	df	6
	Sig.	0

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Initially, exploratory factor analysis was run for 20 items using the principal component and a varimax in SPSS. The factor loading of 2 items in intrinsic factor – F1 and F2, three items in extrinsic factor -F6, F9, F10, and F12, and one item in interpersonal factor- F17 was found to be less than the acceptance limit of 0.50. So, these items were removed, and finally, EFA was run with 13 items, and all the extraction values were found above the 0.50 acceptance range.

The factor solution was determined based on the number of eigenvalues of more than one. Four factors had eigenvalues more critical than one. The first factor was an intrinsic factor comprised of 3 items (F3, F4, F5), the second factor was an extrinsic factor consisting of 3 items (F7, F8, F11), the third factor was an institutional factor which had four items (F13, F14, F15, F16), and the fourth factor was an interpersonal factor which had three items (F18, F19, F20). The percentages explained by each factor were 62.207% (intrinsic factor), 55.268%% (extrinsic factor), 66.151% (institutional factor), and 69.780% (interpersonal factor). Overall, these analyses indicated that four distinct factors greatly influence the career choice process among business administration students and that these factors were internally consistent.

Table 3

Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items/ Factors	Initial	Extraction	Factor loading	Total variance explained
<u>Intrinsic Factor</u>				
F3	1	0.553	0.842	
F4	1	0.708	0.708	62.207
F5	1	0.604	0.744	
<u>Extrinsic Factor</u>				
F7	1	0.528	0.726	
F8	1	0.566	0.752	55.268
F11	1	0.565	0.752	
<u>Interpersonal Factor</u>				
F18	1	0.746	0.864	
F19	1	0.765	0.875	69.78
F20	1	0.582	0.763	
<u>Institutional Factor</u>				
F13	1	0.622	0.847	
F14	1	0.636	0.82	66.151
F15	1	0.717	0.797	
F16	1	0.672	0.788	

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Figure 2 shows the path diagram of the proposed measurement. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to confirm further the results obtained from exploratory factor analysis.

The study used analysis of moment structures (AMOS) to run confirmatory factor analysis and empirically test the theoretical model proposed in Figure 2 and validate its factors using the data collected. Factor analysis explains the associations among more fundamental variables (the elements), and confirmatory factor analysis examines how the obtained data fit a proposed factor structure/model.

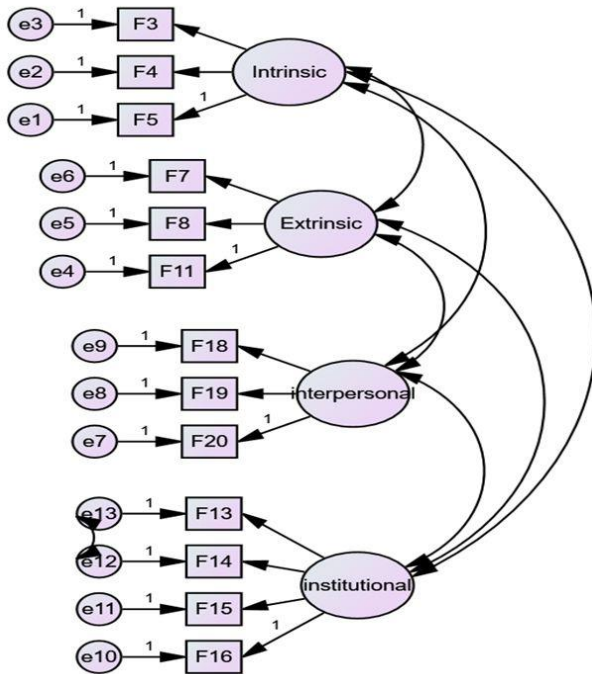


Figure 2. Path diagram of confirmatory factor analysis

All 13 items loaded in exploratory factor analysis were allowed to load on confirmatory factor analysis. The result shows that every item has significant loading. The result fits all indexes (CMIN/DF is 2.686, GFI is 0.927, CFI is 0.919, RMSEA is 0.093). Likewise, average variance extracted (AVE) development is equal to or greater than 0.5, and composite reliability (CR) is more significant than 0.7, which shows the scale's concurrent and construct validity.

The results indicated that intrinsic factors such as personal interest were essential in the career choice, which aligns with the prior studies (Caldera et al., 2003; Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, 2006; Gokuladas, 2010; Choi & Kim, 2013; Atitsogbe et al., 2018). However, the previous study of Chinese students (Li, Hou, & Jia, 2015) indicated that social comparison significantly influences personal interests, which substantially relates to university students in Nepal. Similarly, advancement in career was another major factor in career selection which confirms the findings of previous studies (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Nyamwange, 2016). Likewise, career matching students' personality traits was another critical factor consistent with the past studies (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Nyamwange, 2016).

Table 4

The output of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Items	Constructs	Factor loading	P-Value	AVE	CR
F5	Intrinsic	0.633	0.0001		
F4	Intrinsic	0.797	0.0001	0.537833	0.775741
F3	Intrinsic	0.558	0.0001		
F11	Extrinsic	0.7	0.0001		
F8	Extrinsic	0.72	0.0001	0.458545	0.716468
F7	Extrinsic	0.606	0.0001		
F20	interpersonal	0.586	0.0001		
F19	interpersonal	0.848	0.0001	0.563255	0.790875
F18	interpersonal	0.792	0.0001		
F16	institutional	0.791	0.0001		
F15	institutional	0.816	0.0001	0.537447	0.821393
F14	institutional	0.665	0.0001		
F13	institutional	0.645	0.0001		

CMIN/DF= 2.686; GFI=0.927; CFI=0.919; RMSEA=0.093

The prestigious job was identified as another deciding factor for career decisions in the study, which corroborates with the previous research (Agarwala, 2008; Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, 2006; Wüst & Leko, 2017; Yamashita et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Edwards & Quinter, 2011; Bakar et al., 2014). However, the previous study of Japanese students (Yamashita et al., 1999) indicated that they didn't give higher importance to prestigious jobs. Similarly, well-paying employment was an influential extrinsic factor (Agarwala, 2008; Wust & Leko, 2017; Tao et al., 2018; Choi & Kim, 2013; Hafer & Schank, 1982) which is consistent with the present findings. However, well-paying employment was not influential among engineering students in India (Gokuladas, 2010) and Japanese senior college students (Yamashita et al., 1999). Furthermore, job security was also considered an influential factor in the present study, affirming the Croatian students' findings (Wust & Leko, 2017). This finding can directly link the Nepalese students opting for careers in government jobs.

Findings on interpersonal factors revealed that the influence of parents, older siblings in the family, and peer influence also motivate the students to select a particular career

which aligns with the findings of Agarwala (2008); Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006); Polenova et al. (2018); Gokuladas (2010); and Wu et al. (2015) who concluded that students who are influenced by interpersonal factors highly value the opinions of family members and significant others. These findings characterize the context of Nepalese university students who are highly dependent on their parents, siblings, and peers who inspire, motivate and pressurize students to opt for a particular career.

The findings of the present study also indicate that career counseling programs offered by the college are essential factors influencing career choices which are also consistent with the results of past studies (Shumba & Naong, 2012; Kok & Low, 2017; Dodge & Weldernda el, 2014; Sun & Yuen, 2012). However, not all higher education institutions provide career counseling programs focusing on students' career choices in Nepal. This is due to the lack of professional career counselors in higher education institutions. However, students in private universities and colleges have benefitted from such programs.

The study finding also revealed that the type of program students are offered also determines their career selection, which aligns with previous results (Naz et al., 2014; Faiter & Faiter, 2013). This brings to the fact that higher education institutions need to introduce market-oriented academic programs, and students can quickly grab employment opportunities in their careers.

Teachers and educators play an essential role in students' career decisions (Yamashita et al., 1999; Gokuladas, 2010; Cheung et al., 2013; Cheung & Arnold, 2014). On the other hand, Cheung et al. (2013) concluded that students in Hong Kong perceive teachers' efficacy higher than parents due to a lower level of parental education. Furthermore, Cheung and Arnold (2014) found that students were most reliant on teachers, peers, and parents. These findings are highly significant in the Nepalese context, where most parents are poorly educated and unable to decide their children's careers. Therefore, teachers and peers play an essential role in determining employment. However, most teachers in higher education institutions are not equipped with up-to-date knowledge about the job that students want to pursue; they cannot provide support and professional guidance to students seeking careers.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that four factors, intrinsic factors such as personal interest, career advancement, and personality traits; extrinsic factors such as prestigious jobs, well-paying employment, and job security; interpersonal factors such as parental support and influence; older sibling influence, and peer influence, and institutional

factors such as career counseling activities, teachers, and educators, all play a role in choosing career among business administration students in Nepal.

The study's findings have implications for Nepalese higher education institutions (HEIs) in career guidance and counseling for students aspiring to a management career. By carefully examining how students make their career choices, an effort can guide students toward more realistic career choices. Future research should encompass a more significant geographic area and higher education institutions, including a broader sample of public and private colleges. Furthermore, the study did not look into the impact of demographic factors, which could be explored in the future.

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