

Factors Influencing Career Choice among Undergraduate Students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu

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Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing career choice among undergraduate students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu. Career choice is the dependent variable. The selected independent variables are family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, and peer influence. The primary source of data is used to assess the opinions of respondents regarding family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, peer influence, and career choice. The study is based on primary data of 125 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation and multiple regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of career choice among undergraduate students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu.

The study showed a positive impact of family influence on career choice. It indicates that family support leads to better career choice decision. Similarly, the study showed a positive impact of future job opportunities on career choice. It indicates that better future job opportunities attract students to pursue career in interested field. Likewise, the study also revealed a positive impact of personal interest on career choice. It indicates that students who are personally interested in a particular field are more likely to excel in it. Further, the study observed a positive impact of financial outcomes on career choice. It indicates that higher the financial outcomes leads to influence the career choice decision of the students. In addition, the study observed a positive impact of peer influence on career choice. It indicates that peer influence leads to encourage while choosing career.

Keywords: family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, peer influence, and career choice

1. Introduction

Career choice is a complex decision for undergraduate students since it determines the kind of profession that a student intends to pursue in life. As students try to make career choices, they face problems of matching their career preferences with their abilities in academic performance. Choosing a career is an extremely important decision that impacts on individual's entire future. Career exploration is defined as the extent to which possible careers are researched and considered. Navin (2009) argued that exploring career options before committing to a career, increases future career success and satisfaction. Thus, variables that influence career exploration in adolescents should be identified and acknowledged. Today, one has not only to make due career planning but also exhaustive career research before making a career choice so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions (Wattles, 2009). Each individual undertaking the process is influenced by many factors, including the context in which they live, their personal aptitudes, and educational attainment (Bandura *et al.*, 2001; Watson *et al.*, 2010). In most cases, the choice of careers, subjects, and courses of study and the subsequent career paths to follow are a nightmare for prospective undergraduate students (Issa and Nwalo 2008). Most often, choosing the right subject combination leading to the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future. Similarly, Ferry (2006) asserted that adolescent occupational choice is influenced by

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many factors, including life context, personal aptitudes, and educational attainment. Muraguri (2011) stated that an individual's choice of career is likely to be influenced by several factors including personal and cultural values, family background, career expectations and career guidance. Some also make career decisions by taking the path of least resistance for example, following a career path advocated by their parents or following in the footsteps of an elder sibling (Carlos *et al.*, 2009). According to Kerka (2000), career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and financial. Today, young people face a complex and rapidly changing society. It has been reported that regardless of great effort put forth by families, government agencies and non-governmental organizations, many young people encounter difficulties in the transition from the world of school to that of work (Atchoarena, 2005; and Nykanen *et al.*, 2010).

Humayon *et al.* (2018) examined the effect of family influence, personal interest and economic considerations on career choice amongst undergraduate students in higher educational institutions of Vehari, Pakistan. The study found that the family influence, personal interest and economic considerations exercised big influence on the career choice of students. Similarly, Pisker (2022) assessed the family influence in career choices. The study revealed that family choice has a positive and significant impact on career choice. Likewise, Vautero *et al.* (2021) investigated the family influence on undergraduates' career choice implementation. The result indicated that family values, expectations, and supports indirectly influence students' choice implementation through supports and barriers and self-efficacy. Moreover, Bates (2015) explored the influence of family on the career interests and choices of youth. The study concluded that family relationship factors and family dynamics influence the career choice and career development process of youths. Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) analysed the factors affecting students' career choice. The result showed the parents influence as most significant, followed by influence from peers, gender, print media, financial reasons, interest and others. Similarly, Chifamba (2019) assessed how parents influence their children's career decisions. The result indicated that parents (family at large) exert a very strong influence on their children's career decisions despite the modern trends such as the attachment individuation theory that states that most communities have become more individual centered than social in the way they live and make personal decision, particularly career decision. Likewise, Joseph (2012) investigated the impact of family influence and involvement on career development. The study showed that there is no significant relationship or differences among caregivers' (mothers, fathers, and other caregivers) involvement in career decisions.

Fouad *et al.* (2016) analyzed the family influence on career decision making in India and the United States. The study found that family support has a positive and significant impact on career choice decision. Similarly, Kim and Fouad (2016) examined the family influence on Korean students' career decisions from a social cognitive perspective. The study found that family informational support, family expectations, family financial support, self-efficacy, expectancy of outcome, career preparation behavior, and career preparation satisfaction have significant impact on career decision making. Moreover, Dewitt *et al.* (2023) explored family dynamics and relationships in female entrepreneurship. The result noted that though there are changes in family dynamics that encourage female entrepreneurship, women still find it difficult choose entrepreneurship as a career and there are unfair expectations that are placed on them. Din *et al.* (2022) investigated parents influence on career choice of medical undergraduates. The study showed that parents' education and socio-economic

status has influence on the career choice of medical graduates. Similarly, Xing and Rojewski (2018) analysed family influences on career decision-making self-efficacy of Chinese secondary vocational students. The study stated that parental general psychosocial support was a statistically significant factor in predicting career decision-making self-efficacy, explaining 38.3% of the variance of this construct for Chinese secondary vocational students. Likewise, Choi *et al.* (2024) assessed the parenting attitudes, career adaptability, and bicultural acceptance perceived by multicultural youth. First, this study found that authoritarian parenting attitudes and bicultural acceptance attitudes have positive outcomes, and permissive parenting attitudes, bicultural acceptance attitudes, and career adaptability showed no relationship. Second, career adaptability and bicultural acceptance had a positive effect on career adaptability based on parenting attitudes and a negative one on bicultural acceptance. In addition, authoritarian parental attitudes had a negative impact on career adaptability. Third, authoritarian parental attitudes demonstrated significance for bicultural acceptance, and the rate of change in bicultural acceptance was negative over time.

Naz *et al.* (2014) analyzed the impact of peer and friends on career decision making. The study and its findings indicated that peer and friends have considerable impact towards career decisions and academic choices. Similarly, Mtemeri (2020) examined peer pressure as a predictor of career decision-making among high school students in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. The study revealed that students were influenced by their peers in the form of peer advice and encouragement. Peer education was also cited as another way in which students were influenced by their peers. There was no gender disparity between boys and girls as regards peer influence. Likewise, Ogunleye (2018) studied the peer pressure and parental influence on the choice of career among secondary school students in Ogun State. The findings indicated that parents and peer exert influence on students' career choices, but parental influence predominates mostly. Ahmad *et al.* (2023) examined the effects of parental and peer influence on youth's attitude towards career choices in Agriculture. The study found that youth from farming families are more prone to develop a highly negative attitude towards the agricultural profession under the influence of their parents and peers than youth from non-farming families. Similarly, Owusu *et al.* (2021) analyzed career aspiration of students and the influence of peers, teachers and parents. The findings indicated that teachers do not significantly influence the career aspirations of students, parental influence is a major determinant in the career aspirations of students, peers influence the career aspirations of male and female students differently, and the influence of peers on career aspirations of students does not vary on the basis of age and programme of study. Likewise, Kong *et al.* (2020) investigated the effects of financial rewards, parents and peers, and benefits and costs on choosing accounting career: a global perspective. The outcomes of the study concluded that students already having exposure to accounting in high school and having a major in accounting, desire to pursue a career in accounting.

Mbagwu and Ajaegbu (2016) analyzed the influence of parent's educational background on career choice of teenagers among senior secondary school students in Owerri. In conclusion, this study has not only shown that parents educational background influences teenagers career choice, it has also revealed that teenagers whose parents are from high educational background are more consistent and do not have much difficulties in making career choice when compared with those whose parents have low educational background. Similarly, Kumar (2016) examined the parental influence on career choice traditionalism among college students in selected cities in Ethiopia. The result revealed that there is a

significant influence of parents on career choice among students. Specifically, father's influence is found to be more significant on career choice decision making among students than their mothers. Likewise, Gwelo (2019) assessed the determinants of career choice among university students. The result stated that family, peer, opportunity and personality were key significant determinants of career choice. Further, Sharif *et al.* (2019) examined the factors influencing career choices. The study showed that earning a reputable social status, income, making difference in society and father's pressure have significant impact on pursuing a career among students.

In the context of Nepal, Hayes and Shakya (2013) analyzed the factors that influences Nepali medical students and young doctors while pursuing medical profession. The study concluded that serving the sick, personal interest and social prestige were the most significant influencing factors while choosing medical field as a career. Likewise, Lamichhane *et al.* (2022) investigated the factors influencing career choice among business administration students of Pokhara University. The results stated 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. Moreover, Gaire (2021) assessed the personal motivational factors and social factors influencing the career choice of MBA students. The study found that family influence is the strongest predictor among the social factors, and this predictor exhibited a strong association with the choice of public sector work. Similarly, peer influence was significant predictor of career choice, and peer influence exhibited a strong association with the choice of private sector work.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the factors influencing career choice among undergraduate students. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The major objective of the study is to examine the factors influencing career choice among undergraduate students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu. Specifically, it examines the relationship of family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, and peer influence with factors influencing career choice among undergraduate students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: section two describes the sample, data, and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and final section draws the conclusion.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data which were collected from 125 respondents through questionnaire. The study employed convenience sampling method. The respondents' views were collected on family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, peer influence, and career choice. This study is based on descriptive as well as causal comparative research designs.

The model

The model used in this study assumes that career choice depends upon various factors associated with undergraduate students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu. The dependent variable selected for the study is career choice. Similarly, the selected independent variables are family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, and peer influence. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

Career choice = f (family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, peer influence)

More specifically,

$$CC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FI + \beta_2 FJO + \beta_3 PI + \beta_4 FO + \beta_5 PEI + e$$

Where,

CC = Career choice

FI = Family influence

FJO = Future job opportunities

PI = Personal interest

FO = Financial outcomes

PEI = Peer influence

Career choice of undergraduate students was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the students were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree. There are 5 items and sample items include "Career choice of undergraduate students depends on family influence", "Future job opportunities affects the career choice of undergraduate students" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.852$).

Family influence was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the students were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree. There are 5 items and sample items include "The expectations of my family significantly impact my career decision-making process", "My family provides me with valuable insights and advice regarding career options" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.790$).

Future job opportunities were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree. There are 5 items and sample items include "Future job opportunities heavily influence my choice of career path", "I believe that job security plays a significant role in my career decision-making process" and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.800$).

Personal interest was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree.

There are 5 items and sample items include “I consider my personal interests when deciding on my career path”, “I believe my personal interest lead to fulfilling career opportunities” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.887$).

Financial outcomes were measure using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Earning a high salary is important to me when considering potential career paths”, “I would prioritize financial gain over job satisfaction and personal fulfillment in my career choice” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.854$).

Peer influence was measure using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly agree and 5 for strongly disagree. There are 5 items and sample items include “My peers’ opinions heavily influence my career decisions”, “I make career decisions based on my own interests and goals, regardless of peer opinions” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.836$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with the hypothesis formulation.

Family influence

Family influence, on the career choice of undergraduate students, refers to the impact that parents have on shaping their children’s career decisions. Sarwar and Azmat (2013) showed that influence of family may be positive or negative depending on the awareness and exposure to the global situation. According to Martin *et al.* (2014), family can push their children to select the career that match their plans. Similarly, Ferry (2006) revealed that family influence has a positive impact on career choice. Likewise, Simmons (2008) showed that individual career choice is largely influenced by the parents who plan and shape their youths according to their determination. Further, Amatea *et al.* (2006) found that monitoring homework, social activities, and children’s school performance supported achievement among students. In addition, Guay *et al.* (2003) concluded that there is a significant relationship between parental influence and career choice. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between family influence and career choice.

Future job opportunities

Future job opportunities refer to the potential employment prospects that are expected to arise. Koech *et al.* (2016) stated that students showed an ambition and ability in pursuing a particular career, however, if they are not guided on making the right choices at the right time, their dreams will end being unrealistic. A career can be marketable for a particular time but after some technological innovation, the whole career could lose its marketability. Students make a vital decision on career choice while lacking clear information on what exist in the global market. It is globally accepted that education is a solution to social and economic challenges of any nation. This is why students spent several years in education with the belief that they have invested for a future gain (McWhirter *et al.*, 2000). Based on it, this

study develops the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between future job opportunities and career choice.

Personal interest

Personal interest refers to the students' personal interest in their chosen professions (Liaw *et al.*, 2017). According to Holland (1966), individuals choose career environments that best fit their personality and interest. Personal interests are learned from parents, in school, from friends, and from your life-long experiences. Similarly, Ahmed *et al.* (2017) found that personal interest is a factor that impacts career choices made by the students in Kenya. Likewise, Ahmed (2014) stated that there is a positive and significant relationship between personal interest and career choice. Further, Anojan and Nimalathasan (2013) indicated that personal factors are the greatest influential factor in comparison to their family, professional, and market-oriented factors and factors related to university. In addition, Syakurah *et al.* (2017) found that personal interest is the most chosen determinants in choosing career choices. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between personal interest and career choice.

Financial outcomes

Financial outcome refers to the monetary results or consequences of a particular decision. In the context of career choice, financial outcome could include factors such as salary, benefits, job security and overall earning potential. Ahmed *et al.* (2017) found that financial support has a positive impact on career choice. Similarly, Kerka (2000) stated that piece of information utilized by individuals and financial resources at their disposal significantly interfere in individuals' decision-making process of career selection. However, Ushure (2014) concluded that limited finances available to students have negative impact in career choice decision. Further, Bochert (2002) found that financial opportunities opened to an individual can contribute significantly in one's choice of desirable career. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₄: There is a positive relationship between financial outcomes and career choice.

Peer influence

Peer influence refers to the impact that individuals within the same social group, such as friends, classmates, or colleagues, have on each other's attitudes, behaviors, and decisions. Naz *et al.* (2014) found that peer and friends have significant impact towards career decisions and academic choices. Similarly, Oduh *et al.* (2020) found a significant impact from peer group on career choice of students. Likewise, Farooq (2023) stated a positive relationship between peer influence and career choice. Further, Mtemeri (2020) revealed that students are influenced by their peers in the form of peer advice and encouragement. In addition, Okwunolu *et al.* (2023) revealed a positive correlation exists between peer pressure and career choice of students. Moreover, Koech (2016) stated that friends and friend's advice have a great impact on career choice decision of students. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₅: There is a positive relationship between peer influence and career choice.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients along with mean and standard deviation has been computed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall’s Tau coefficients between dependent variable and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 125 observations. The dependent variable is CC (Career choice). The independent variables are FI (Family influence), FJO (Future job opportunities), PI (Personal interest), FO (Financial outcome), and PEI (Peer influence).

| Variables | Mean | S.D. | CC | FI | FJO | PI | FO | PEI |
|-----------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----|
| CC | 1.766 | 0.664 | 1 | | | | | |
| FI | 2.021 | 0.731 | 0.434** | 1 | | | | |
| FJO | 1.878 | 0.652 | 0.362** | 0.526** | 1 | | | |
| PI | 1.930 | 0.798 | 0.438** | 0.342** | 0.381** | 1 | | |
| FO | 2.058 | 0.834 | 0.325** | 0.354** | 0.334** | 0.317** | 1 | |
| PEI | 2.318 | 0.816 | 0.300** | 0.380** | 0.337** | 0.289** | 0.435** | 1 |

Note: The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows the Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients of dependent and independent variables. The study shows that family influence is positively correlated to career choice indicating that family support leads to better career choice decision. Likewise, future job opportunities are positively correlated to career choice. It indicates that better future job opportunities attract students to pursue career in interested field. Similarly, personal interest is positively correlated to career choice. It indicates that students who are personally interested in a particular field are more likely to excel in it. Further, financial outcome is also positively related to the career choice indicating that better financial outcome attracts individuals. Moreover, peer influence is positively correlated to career choice. It indicates that peer influence leads to encourage while choosing career.

Regression analysis

Having indicated the Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it shows the regression results of family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcome, and peer influence on career choice decision.

Table 2

Estimated regression result of family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcome, and peer influence on career choice decision

The results are based on 125 observations using linear regression model. The model is $CC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FI + \beta_2 FJO + \beta_3 PI + \beta_4 FO + \beta_5 PEI + e$ where the dependent variable is CC (Career choice). The independent variables are FI (Family

influence), FJO (Future job opportunities), PI (Personal interest), FO (Financial outcome), and PEI (Peer influence).

| Model | Intercept | Regression coefficients of | | | | | Adj. R _{bar} ² | SEE | F-value |
|-------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| | | FI | FJO | PI | FO | PEI | | | |
| 1 | 0.540 (4.125) ** | 0.607 (9.970) ** | | | | | 0.442 | 0.496 | 99.395 |
| 2 | 0.513 (3.718) ** | | 0.667 (9.619) ** | | | | 0.425 | 0.503 | 92.520 |
| 3 | 0.741 (6.155) ** | | | 0.532 (9.219) ** | | | 0.404 | 0.513 | 84.985 |
| 4 | 0.849 (6.440) ** | | | | 0.446 (7.506) ** | | 0.309 | 0.552 | 56.339 |
| 5 | 0.719 (5.128) ** | | | | | 0.421 (6.697) ** | 0.261 | 0.570 | 44.853 |
| 6 | 0.342 (2.530) ** | 0.369 (4.291) ** | 0.362 (3.751) ** | | | | 0.496 | 0.471 | 62.014 |
| 7 | 0.242 (1.873) | 0.319 (3.908) ** | 0.189 (1.896) | 0.271 (4.128) ** | | | 0.555 | 0.443 | 52.459 |
| 8 | 0.191 (1.458) | 0.280 (3.347) ** | 0.170 (1.706) | 0.238 (3.517) ** | 0.113 (1.861) | | 0.563 | 0.439 | 41.010 |
| 9 | 0.146 (1.061) | 0.263 (3.086) ** | 0.152 (1.505) | 0.235 (3.479) ** | 0.096 (1.530) | 0.066 (1.049) | 0.564 | 0.438 | 33.056 |

Notes:

- Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
- The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
- Career choice decision is dependent variable.

Table 2 show that the beta coefficients for family influence are positive with career choice decision. It indicates that family influence has a positive impact on career choice decision. This finding is consistent with the findings of Sarwar and Azmat (2013). Similarly, the beta coefficients for future job opportunities are positive with career choice decision. It indicates that future job opportunities have positive impact on career choice decision. This finding is consistent with the findings of Koech *et al.* (2016). Likewise, the beta coefficients for personal interest are positive with career choice decision. It indicates that personal interest has a positive impact on career choice decision. This finding is consistent with the findings of Syakurah *et al.* (2017). Further, the beta coefficients for financial outcomes are positive with career choice decision. It indicates that financial outcome has a positive impact on career choice of decision. This finding is consistent with the findings of Ahmed *et al.* (2017). In addition, the beta coefficients for peer influence are positive with career choice decision. It indicates that peer influence has a positive impact on career choice decision. This finding is similar to the findings of Oduh *et al.* (2020).

4. Summary and conclusion

Career choice is a complex decision for undergraduate students since it determines the kind of profession that a student intends to pursue in life. As students try to make career choices, they face problems of matching their career preferences with their abilities in academic performance. Choosing a career is an extremely important decision that impacts on individual's entire future. Career exploration is defined as the extent to which possible careers are researched and considered. Career options before committing to a career, increases future career success and satisfaction. Thus, variables that influence career exploration in adolescents should be identified and acknowledged.

This study attempts to examine the factors influencing career choice among

undergraduate students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu. The study is based on primary data of 125 respondents.

The major conclusion of the study is that family influence, future job opportunities, personal interest, financial outcomes, and peer influence have positive impact on career choice among undergraduate management students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu. The study also concludes that future job opportunity is the most significant factor followed by family influence and personal interest that influence career choice decision among undergraduate management students of Pokhara University in Kathmandu.

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