



Role of Self-esteem on Career Determination of Grade Twelve Students: A Narrative Inquiry

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Received: July 03, 2025

Revised & Accepted: August 23, 2025

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of self-esteem on career building. Recognizing the crucial nature of this life stage for career planning, the research investigates how a student's self-belief impacts their ability to choose a fulfilling career path. Through interview, the study gathers data from grade twelve students to assess their self-esteem and career aspirations. By analyzing this data, the research aims to identify key insights into the relationship between self-perception and career choices.

The research aims to understand how individual levels of self-esteem, encompassing feelings of self-worth, confidence, and personal capability, influence their career aspirations, decision-making, and perseverance in pursuing specific vocational paths. Preliminary findings suggest a significant correlation between robust self-esteem and clarity in career goals, proactive exploration of opportunities, and resilience in facing challenges associated with career planning. Conversely, students exhibiting lower self-esteem often reported feelings of uncertainty, susceptibility to external pressures, and a tendency to limit their career choices.

The findings explore that students with high self-esteem exhibit greater confidence and clarity in their career determination. Conversely, lower self-esteem might lead to indecisiveness or a tendency to limit career options. This research holds significant implications for policy makers, government organizations, adolescence education, school curriculum developers, educators and career counselors. By understanding the role of self-esteem, they can develop strategies to support students in building self-confidence and making well-informed career decisions for a successful future.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Career Determination, Adolescent Development, Educational Psychology, Academic Achievement



Introduction

Grade twelve represents a unique and pivotal moment in secondary level students. This situation is a threshold between the structured environment of childhood and adolescence, and the vast, open landscape of adulthood. This year is not only marked by academic pressures and the culmination of years of study, but also by the daunting task of choosing a career path. This critical decision sets the stage for a student's professional future, impacting their career. Navigating this complex crossroad requires careful consideration of various factors. Students must evaluate their academic strengths, interests, and skills. They must explore the ever-evolving job market, considering the availability of positions, growth potential, and personal fulfillment. However, amidst this external landscape lies an internal compass of a student's self-esteem.

This study explores the deep relationship between self-esteem and the career determination process among Grade Twelve students through the lens of a narrative inquiry. The theoretical framework for this research is largely grounded in John L. Holland's theory of vocational personalities and environments. According to this theory, an individual's career choice is an expression of their personality (Holland, 1997). Understanding this connection is critical for several reasons. Firstly, by examining how self-esteem influences career exploration and decision-making, we can identify potential roadblocks faced by students with low self-esteem. Secondly, this knowledge can build up self-esteem and empower students to make more informed and confident career choices.

Background of the study

I articulate my research agenda relating to my situation as a researcher as well as a participant. Similarly, I bring some anecdotes to visualize the scenario of student self-esteem in the research area by unpacking their views and experiences. Creating such a study background, I problematize the main issues of my research among girls' students and articulate why this problem is important in my inquiry. Similarly, I further raise questions to find the problem statement of study. Likewise, I discussed the rationale of the study and then delimitation is outlined within this chapter. The transition from high school to the professional world is a critical juncture for grade twelve students. Choosing a career path is a pivotal decision with significant implications for their future well-being and success (Sampson Jr. & Shariff, 2010). Self-esteem works as a key area of research.

On the path from secondary school to career seems linear on paper, the reality for grade twelve students is a complex web of self-discovery, exploration, and ultimately, decision-making. Understanding the factors that influence these choices is paramount, and research into the role of self-esteem on career determination in this age group holds immense significance for multiple reasons. Firstly, grade twelve represents a critical juncture where a student's academic and professional trajectory begins to take concrete shape. The decisions made at this stage have lasting repercussions, influencing not just their educational pursuits but also their future earning potential, job satisfaction, and overall sense of fulfillment. By delving into how self-esteem impacts these choices, researchers can equip career counselors and educators with a deeper



understanding of the internal forces shaping students' aspirations. This knowledge can then be translated into more effective guidance; ensuring students make informed decisions based on their strengths, interests, and a realistic assessment of their capabilities.

Self-esteem acts as a powerful internal compass, influencing the breadth and depth of a student's career exploration. Students with high self-esteem tend to be more open to considering a wider range of career paths. They possess a belief in their abilities and a willingness to venture outside their comfort zones, actively researching diverse fields and engaging in informational interviews. Conversely, students with lower self-esteem might restrict themselves to careers perceived as "easier" or more familiar. Fear of failure or a lack of confidence in their skills can lead them to disregard potentially fulfilling paths simply because they seem out of reach. Researching this dynamic can shed light on the self-limiting beliefs that can hinder exploration and ultimately lead to career dissatisfaction. By identifying these patterns, educators and counselors can develop targeted interventions that foster self-efficacy and encourage students to embrace a broader range of possibilities.

Statement of the Problem

Grade twelve students face a critical decision: choosing a career path that sets the foundation for their future. While numerous factors influence this decision, research suggests self-esteem plays a significant role. I align my view with the report of UNICEF (2016) that chronic self-esteem of school children. Low self-esteem leads to a risk of dropout and repetition in Nepalese schools. Thus, study of reasons behind student self-esteem is necessary which is in the shadows in Nepal.

Among many problems found at the secondary level, the key problem is student's low self-esteem, due to which many of the students are distracted from the main stream of education (Shute & Cooper, 2015). Because low self-esteem hampers the quality of education, students' personal development, image and reputation of the school, social value of school, and lay question mark in the education system of the country. Thus, the entire academic achievement evaluation system of the school and teaching-learning environment of these schools are affected.

Similarly, the Nepal government has adopted various educational programs and projects to increase the results as well as retained the students in the schools (Koirala, 2015). Though knowing about the causes, organizing different type of policies and program like, Education For All National Plan of Action (2001-2015), School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2016), School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023) by the government to retain the students and providing full authority to the management Committee, community school has not been able to retain the students.

Therefore, there is a need for qualitative research which addresses multiple realities. The study could help to determine the career of students.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to find the reasons behind student self-esteem among grade twelve students. The stories and experiences explain to students based on their self-esteem and how it



determines their career. The major purpose of the study is to understand the influence of self-esteem on career determination in grade twelve students.

Research Questions

1. How do the grade twelve students narrate the level of self-esteem in their career choice?
2. What strategies can help to enhance their self-esteem?

Rationale of the Study

The study explored the feelings of secondary level students' self-esteem to determine their career by narrating their stories. From their feelings and emotions, teachers, as well as parents, can identify the actual problems of students being low self-esteem. This study delves into the relationship between self-esteem and career determination. Choosing a career path is a pivotal decision for grade twelve students, impacting their future well-being and success (Sampson Jr. & Shariff, 2010).

Therefore, this study could be an eye-opener for parents and family members to address their children's problems. Through this study, schools, teachers, different government organizations, and non-government organizations could conduct an awareness program to minimize the problem of low self-esteem and promote academic performance.

Delimitation of Study

This research investigates the link between self-esteem and career determination in grade twelve students; it acknowledges certain limitations. Firstly, the study will focus on a specific geographic region to avoid generalizing findings to a broader, culturally diverse population. Finally, the study will likely employ a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a single point, rather than a longitudinal approach that tracks students over time. These delimitations are acknowledged to ensure transparency and pave the way for future research that explores the topic in broader contexts or with longitudinal designs.

Literature Review

Self-esteem, a person's overall positive self-regard, plays a significant role in shaping career exploration for grade twelve students. Studies suggest that students with high self-esteem tend to be more open to considering a wider range of career options.

Before starting my research, I had to know about the subject of my study. For this purpose, I have gone through different books, thesis, journals, and web sources to find the situation on absenteeism and its role in academic achievement in the world. Therefore, I decided to review some of the documents regarding self-esteem to develop my insight into the issue in question. Thus, in this chapter, I have reviewed different literature and presented them in sequence. Finally, I have tried to wrap up my chapter by presenting the research gap.

Conceptual/Thematic Review

This research delves into the interplay between self-esteem and career determination in grade twelve students. Self-esteem, encompassing grade 12 student's confidence, is a core concept. This study examines how self-esteem influences students' career exploration behaviors, decision-making processes, and ultimately, their chosen career paths.



In my view, Nepalese society places a strong emphasis on family expectations and societal norms. This can create pressure on students to choose traditional career paths, regardless of their personal aspirations. Research on self-esteem can help us understand how to navigate these pressures and empower students to advocate for their own career goals. Research can help us find a balance. We foster self-esteem while also equipping students with the skills employers seek. Perhaps career counseling that integrates self-discovery exercises with practical skill-building workshops could be a solution.

Empirical Review

My learning, I found that high self-esteem improves learning and low self-esteem lead to poor performance in life. In the case of Grade 12 students, (which I mentioned as participant), were excellent in her study although she was unable to determine her career. But I think that it is an exceptional case which is not the same for everyone.

I strongly agree with Bhattra (2017) academic performance helps to determine how well the students meet the standard set in educational institution. As we know that, School systems mostly define cognitive goals with the purpose of applying in multiple disciplines. Students who regularly attend school can be successful in their future professional life by acquiring work-related skills such as persistence, problem-solving and decision making skills to accomplish a goal (Sahin et al., 2016).

Therefore, identifying the elements which leads to sound school climate is essential to understand academic achievement.

In my opinion, through academic performance students can accomplish their personal goals as well as family and social goals. Better academic performance plays a crucial role in enhancing students' skills and depth of knowledge, in areas of learning. In addition, students' academic performance is constrained by growth, physical and social development. Hence, improvement of self-esteem is crucial for better career determination and performance.

Policies Review

In the context of Nepalese school, various programs and projects have been launched to retain the students. Free education up to secondary level, this policy also shows a commitment to the international policy of education. However, at grades eleven and twelve, there is no provision of free education, even though free education was included at the secondary level.

Thus, the above policy helps to enhance gender equality and promote retaining students in school.

However, as stated in the act and policy, its use seems very limited in most schools. Policies have considered the primary and secondary levels, but it has not included for grades eleven and twelve. In this connection, I as a researcher argue that policies and plans developed so far in education should also include acts for the higher-level students and the implementation should be improvised to increase student school participation. I found this research confirms a global link between self-esteem and career exploration and decision-making in grade twelve students; Nepal-specific studies are lacking.

Therefore, my main priority of this research is to explore the issue for Grade 12 students regarding self-esteem and the selection of their career.



Theoretical Review

The lack of theoretical knowledge has long plagued researchers around student self-esteem. I truly believe that just as the foundation supports a house, a theoretical framework is like a foundation for research study because it is “blueprint” or “guide” for the research (Grant & Osanloo, 2015). It guides the researcher to research in the right way to confirm the theory into practice (Khadka, 2017). Taking insight from the entire review of literature, I have developed the procedures and succeed in constructing understanding to explore the reasons behind student self-esteem and career determination in community school particularly at Grade 12. The theoretical framework for this research is largely grounded in John L. Holland's theory of vocational personalities and environments. According to this theory, an individual's career choice is an expression of their personality (Holland, 1997).

Identification of Research Gap

While research acknowledges the link between self-esteem and career development, there's a need for deeper exploration. Existing studies often lack nuance, focusing on broad associations. This report shows how self-esteem influences various career determination behaviors, considering cultural factors and utilizing a longitudinal approach. The research on interventions is limited, and this study can contribute by exploring interventions to boost self-esteem and support informed career exploration, ultimately aiming to understand how self-esteem and career determination impact long-term career success.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore and narrate the stories and experiences of students' stories and experiences on the reasons behind high or low self-esteem. I present philosophical positions relying on non-positivist research paradigms and further shape beliefs and actions of research with the paradigm of interpretive. The research approach is narrative studies and the process of conducting this research situating within these philosophical paradigms has been explored in this section.

Philosophical Foundation

Philosophical assumptions and worldview regarding truth, reality, knowledge, and value must accomplish any research work which gives insight of my assumption, belief, and assumption in relation to reality. Regarding interpretive narrative inquiry as a research approach, I believe my methodological basis comes under the humanistic model of social research. Thus, this specifies and explains the building blocks of study- what is the nature of reality (ontology), similarly, what is the relationship between the researcher and being research (epistemology), and what is the nature of values (axiology) (Creswell, 2014). In my research, these philosophical considerations are crucial to blend ideas with a worldview that supports me to carry out my research.

My Research Paradigm

My research is based on an Interpretive paradigm which insight the research subject critically. In study, I explored the narratives of four students' adversities and resilience, and understanding of phenomenon and making meaning of narratives using those perspectives. I



strongly agree with Cohen et al., (2018) that the interpretive paradigm focuses on dealings that are only noteworthy to us when we ascertain the intentions of participants to share their experiences and stories

The interpretive paradigm helps me to connect different stories of participants about their reasons for high and low self-esteem and its role in academic performance. I explored the knowledge in depth interview or open-ended questions with participants' experiences and behaviors, and they narrated it in the form of stories. As the stories may vary from one student to another, it means this study is concerned with the life of students from their real-life experiences.

Therefore, I collected the experiences and stories from participants and interpreted them for making it meaningful for narrative interpreters' paradigm with various approaches.

Qualitative Research Approach

This study experiences and stories of the reasons of students' self-esteem by interacting with them and constructing their meaning of situations. The qualitative approach allows identifying issues from the perception of the research participants along with interpretation that they give to behavior, event, or object.

Discussion and Meaning making from stories

My research methodology is based on the narrative inquiry because it is the process where there is interactive storytelling and restoring as the research moves.

Using narrative inquiry as a method in my research design, I explore and then narrate the stories of my participants and reflect on their experiences. The story is then shaped normatively so that it can meet the rubrics of research.

Sarita, management student of class 12 living in Chitwan, as comedian she is the life of the party. She excels in social interactions and possesses natural leadership ability. She dreams of becoming a renowned travel blogger, showcasing the beauty of Nepal to the world. However, Sarita's family emphasizes a secure, stable career path. They doubt the viability of her "unrealistic" dream, causing her self-esteem to falter regarding his chosen career. Sarita struggles to take her passion seriously, questioning her ability to turn it into a successful profession.

Suvarna, a science student in the 12th class who is an artistic soul from Nawalpur, finds solace in painting. He dreams of attending art school and becoming a professional artist. Despite his natural talent and artistic expression, Suvarna lacks confidence in his artistic abilities. He compares himself to established artists and doubts his own skills. This low self-esteem hinders her from actively pursuing his artistic passion, leaving him unsure of how to translate his talent into a viable career choice.

Study Sites and Participants Selection

The site of my research study is in the private and public school of Chitwan district, based on particularly twelve graders. Among those students' low self-esteem were found more on female than male. As I have been teaching community schools, I have faced the same problem. Even at my schooling age too I had seen the same situation.



In this qualitative inquiry, the purpose is not generalized to a population, but to develop in-depth exploration of central phenomenon of reasons of high and low self-esteem in school. Similarly, it is not possible to use a large population in narrative inquiry includes in-depth study of each participant. So, I have selected four participants for my study.

For participant's selection, I have not delimited in terms of gender and caste. However, I only interviewed Grade 12 students because I wanted to know how they narrate their stories and experiences on reasons of being high and low self-esteem.

Strategies of Story Collection in the Field

In this research, I adopted the in-depth interviews to collect information that can enable a rich source of understanding of how absentees narrate their stories and experiences on reasons of absence. For this, I adopted different tools such as interview guideline, field notes, audio, video and online portal.

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, I understand every researcher should consider ethical issues during their research for constructing their research in a better way. In this study, I have strictly followed ethical principles of ASCA and ACA ethical code of School Counseling. I followed all the ethical rules that are necessary to be done before starting my research work.

Being a narrative inquirer, I clearly assured my research participants that my study is purely academic, and there will be no other purpose besides this in carrying out this research study. Here, I honestly disclosed my research participants about my research objectives and asked them for the appropriate information, i.e. their stories.

Data Analysis, Interpretation, Result and Discussion

I have followed narrative inquiry as a methodology to explore the stories and experiences of grade 12 students and used the lens of interpretive paradigm. I have listened to the stories and experiences of my four participants based on consideration of ontological, epistemological and axiological beliefs. I accepted a particular view of experience of telling them regarding the phenomenon under study. I followed the beliefs of three dimensions of narrative inquiry of temporality, sociality and spatiality to maintain quality standard in my study continuing the scenario sketch in Chapter III as a Methodology.

Here, I have covered the activities, answers and experiences of four participants: I came up with my interest in this research topic of "Role of Self-Esteem on Career Determination of Grade Twelve Students". For the meaning making of the information of research questions: "How do students of Grade 12 narrate their stories and experiences on self-esteem and their career determination?"

To get the answer to my research questions, I dropped down deeply to explore the reason for students' self-esteem and career determination. As far as telling the stories and experiences, I tried to dwell on individual's complexities. I used the term individual complexities to refer to the notion of how disempowering situations push them into a ditch. However, what I am trying to explore here is the reasons for high or low self-esteem and difficulties of career determination due to disempowering situation and participant's living journey.



Summary of the data analysis:

The Research found, students with high self-esteem are likely to demonstrate greater clarity and confidence when choosing a career path. Self-esteem might influence career exploration and decision-making processes. Cultural factors and socio-economic backgrounds may interact with self-esteem in shaping career aspirations in Nepal.

Conclusion/Summary of Findings

In the above chapter, I explored first theme related to individual complexities because of disempowering situation of my research participants which led to self-esteem and their career determination. Because of early limited opportunities, poor economic condition of the family members, behaviour and attitudes of their parents towards their children, socio-cultural aspects and traditional mind set of family member's students; they could not decide their career after grade 12.

In this chapter, I am trying to explore that due to responsibilities towards family, students were suffering from various adversities. I have taken interview with four different participants as indicated in my methodology to acquire their experiences and stories which are created by their family responsibilities.

Summary

The above chapter explain the Role of Self-Esteem on Career Determination of Grade Twelve Students. The research questions and guiding questions support to get the fact situation of grade 12 students. I have taken interview with four different participants to explore the self-esteem and career determination. The meaning making helped me to shape my inferences about their difficulties because of their mountain of family responsibilities. Because of lack of motivation, poor economic condition of the family members, behaviour and attitudes of the parents towards their children, socio-cultural aspects and traditional mind set of the family members; they could not determine their career.

Thus, for all the participants, school environment and family are the strength of self-esteem and career determination. This study provides the guiding information for parents, administrators, educators as well as school counsellors.

Implications of the research

The implication of the role of self-esteem in career determination for grade twelve students is likely point towards a positive correlation. This means that students with higher self-esteem tend to make more confident and successful career choices.

By understanding the link between self-esteem and career determination, educators, curriculum developers, policy makers, adolescence psychologists and counselors can better equip grade twelve students to make informed and fulfilling career choices.

The implications of this research extend in Nepal and beyond Nepal. Study link between self-esteem and career determination which inform interventions across cultures, empowering young adults globally to make informed and confident choices that shape their future success and happiness. School and career counselors can design programs that help students build self-



esteem and self-confidence. This could involve workshops on identifying strengths, overcoming self-doubt, and developing a positive self-image.

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