

# An Exploratory Study of the Factors that Influence the Career Choice among High School Students

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the factors influencing career choices among high school students in the National Capital Region Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida, utilizing a survey conducted on 51 students. It explores the significance of personal, social, and environmental factors in shaping students' career decisions, highlighting the role of parental influence, peer pressure, performance in school, personality, potential, purchasing power, and the impact of media. Additionally, it examines the correlation between career choices and the future labor market, emphasizing the importance of being future-oriented in a dynamically changing economy. The study reveals that students start considering their career options seriously by the 11th grade, guided by various intrinsic and extrinsic factors. It also discusses the pivotal role of career planning and counseling in helping students navigate their career paths effectively. The findings underscore the complex interplay of factors affecting career choices and the essential role of guidance from counselors, teachers, and parents in this process. Recommendations include enhancing career counseling services, involving parents in the counseling process, organizing career fairs, and providing internships to offer practical exposure to students.*

**Keywords:** Career choices, High school students, career counseling, Parental influence, Future labor market

## 1. Introduction

As the students enter high school and plan for their college education, the overwhelming question is the choice of career in future. The future beckons them to explore the various choices available to them. The famous poem by Robert Frost, 'The road not taken' highlights the dilemma of making a choice when various options seem to be equally lucrative. Career selection is one of the many important choices that students have to make in determining their future plans. The decision of career choice will have a long-term impact in their lives. "What are the factors that influence the choice of a particular career?" is an important question to explore.

According to Omeje (2007) Career refers to the wide range of activities that an individual can pursue in his/her life. It encompasses whole range of similar occupations, vocations, job positions, engaged by an individual from cradle to grave throughout his/her life.

Every student has a unique personality and carries the unique history of their past experiences, culture, environment, opportunity, etc. which determines their viewpoint of the world. The personal and social environment has an influence on the personality of the individual. The complex interplay of student's environment, personality, and opportunity, will determine the perception of the student which will impact the making of career choices. Michael (2002) noted that career choice is a process which allows for the multifarious exploration of vocational, academic, and sociological aspects to gratify personal, financial, social and educational goals.

Career selection is an important aspect of a student's life which has an influence on a number of decisions that he/she takes. Choice of a subject in high school, a university, a job profile, organisation depends on the career that the student wishes choose to pursue. In order to achieve their goals, students must know what they want. "Too many of us have

been taught to suppress what we want and instead concentrate on meeting other people's expectations. In doing this we end up spending most of our time marching to other people's drums" (Weiler, 1977, p. 57).

## 2. Most Common Factors that Influence the Career Choice among Students

The most common factors that influence the choice of career among the students can be classified as 7 P's as listed below:

- 1) **Parental Pressure:** Parents play an important role in make a choice of career for their children. Majority of the parents think that it is their right and duty to make a choice of career for their children. They consider the children as immature to make critical life decision.
- 2) **Peer Pressure:** Peer pressure is the easiest way of escaping from taking self-decision. Most of the students want to follow a popular choice to get to their destination. The trend of following friends is visible during the selection of a university/college.
- 3) **Performance:** Performance in the school exams is in fact the most unjustified basis of analyzing one's performance and aptitude. Performance in the exam is dependent on many factors and it should not be the deciding criteria for career choice.
- 4) **Potential:** Potential of a student can be a good criterion for choosing a career. Very few students are able to identify their true potential and hence are not able to choose their subject of study based on it. Placements:
- 5) **Personality:** Personality traits play an important role in our professional lives. Different careers are suitable for different people depending on their personality.
- 6) **Purchasing power (Affordability):** Money is also an essential criterion for most of the students. Affordability is the key resource to receive quality training, knowledge and opportunities.

### 3. Review of the Studies

Ryan and Deci (2000) reported that prestige associated with certain occupations, availability of jobs and remunerations motivate youth in their career decision-making. Study conducted by Heath (1984) identified that educational level, profession and income of parents as very important factors in the choice of career by youth. Kerka (2000) analysed that the main intrinsic factors influencing career choice decisions are individual's personality, interests, self-concept, attitudes and cultural identity. The extrinsic factors like social contacts, role models, availability and access to information, finances, globalization and education also play an important role in the choice of career. Howard and Walsh (2011) found that as the children get older, they are influenced by their developmental stages as well as the prevailing environmental circumstances. According to Wroblewski and Huston (1987) television and movies serve as a strong influence on the career decisions of youth.

#### Correlation between career choice and Labour market relevance in future

The economy is dynamic in nature. As the economy has evolved from the primary to secondary and then to tertiary sector, accordingly the demands of skill and labour have also evolved. As the students, make their choice of careers it has to be future oriented. In 2018, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) collected first-of-its kind data to explore the change in the career aspirations of young people over the past 20 years and their relation to actual labour demand. Based on OCED data, jobs with a future have higher than average projected growth in future and a lower-than-average risk of automation. Significant decline and the risk of automation has been projected in the jobs of the past. The top five occupations included occupations such as doctors and lawyers. The analysis finds that majority of the students showed inclination in the people centred jobs such as occupational therapists and veterinarians. However, high level of interest is seen in occupations related to trades, manufacturing and production which are likely to decrease in demand and become technical.

FutureFit AI analysed data from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills to review the risk of automation on the jobs that young people might be doing as 30 years old. The most popular careers, according to young people, such as health professionals and social, cultural and legal professionals, were at lower risk of automation. It is pertinent to note that FutureFit AI analysis revealed that beyond the top five or ten jobs, most young people aspired for jobs that were at much higher risk of automation. 39% of the jobs cited by PISA participants, across OECD countries, were at the risk of being automated within the next 10 to 15 years. When students are making a career choice for the future it is pertinent that they should be aware of the change in the patterns of market and job opportunities.

#### Importance of Career Planning

A successful and fulfilling work life is dependent upon career planning. Career planning is of paramount importance for students as it provides them with a clear roadmap and

direction for their future. Here are several key reasons why career planning is crucial for students:

- 1) **Goal Setting:** Career planning helps students set specific goals and objectives for their professional lives. By envisioning their desired career path, students can identify the necessary steps and milestones required to achieve success
- 2) **Decision Making:** Career planning equips students with the knowledge and information necessary to make well-informed decisions. It helps students explore different career options, understand the requirements and expectations of various professions, and evaluate their own interests, strengths, and values.
- 3) **Skill Development:** Career planning highlights the skills and competencies required for different career paths. It encourages students to identify their existing skills and areas for improvement.
- 4) **Time Management:** Career planning teaches students the importance of effective time management. By setting long-term and short-term goals, students learn to prioritize their tasks and allocate time for academic studies, extracurricular activities, skill-building activities, and career exploration.
- 5) **Networking and Mentoring:** Career planning encourages students to build relationships and network with professionals in their desired fields. It helps students seek out mentors who can provide guidance and advice based on their own experiences.
- 6) **Confidence and Self-awareness:** Career planning allows students to gain a better understanding of themselves, their interests, values, and strengths. Self-awareness helps the individuals to reflect upon their needs and aspirations in a practical manner.
- 7) **Adaptability and Resilience:** Career planning teaches students to be adaptable and resilient in the face of challenges and changes in the job market. It encourages them to stay updated with industry trends, technological advancements, and evolving skill requirements.

#### Tools

Self-prepared online questionnaire titled; "Survey on Career Choice" was used for the study.

#### Sampling

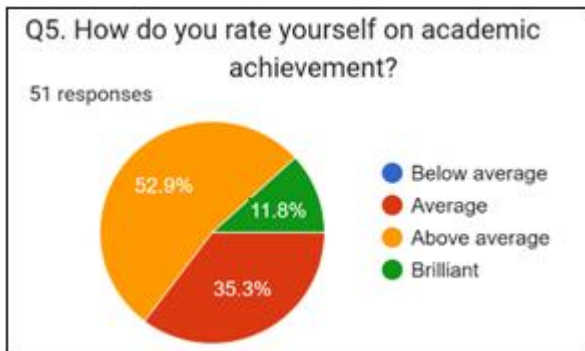
The present study was conducted on 51 high school students in the National Capital Region (Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida).

### 4. Methodology

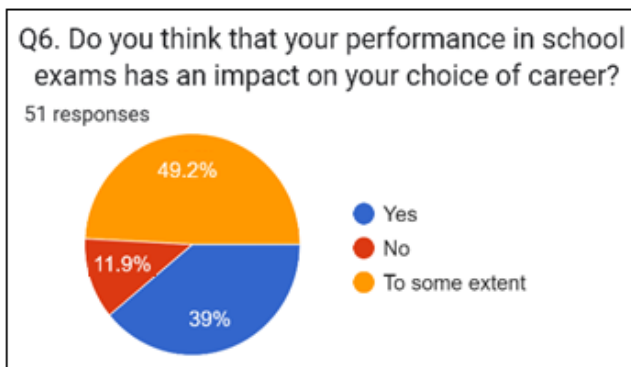
The researcher used the online survey method for data collection. The survey on career choices was conducted among the high school students of Delhi-NCR. Q1-Q4 collected the data about gender, class and age. 51 respondents participated in the survey. 27 respondents were female and 24 respondents were male. Majority of the respondents were in the age group of 15 and 16 years. 18 respondents were of the age group 15-16 and 16-17 each. 14 respondents were of the age group 17-18 and 1 respondent was of the age group 14-15.

## 5. Results

The analysis of data shows that in class 9 and 10 the students are not much conscious of their career choice. In class 10, 30 out of 51 (58%) students started thinking about their career choice and in class 12, 16 out of 51 respondents; about 31 percent students started thinking about their career choice. It can be inferred that majority of the students start thinking about their career as they reach class 11.



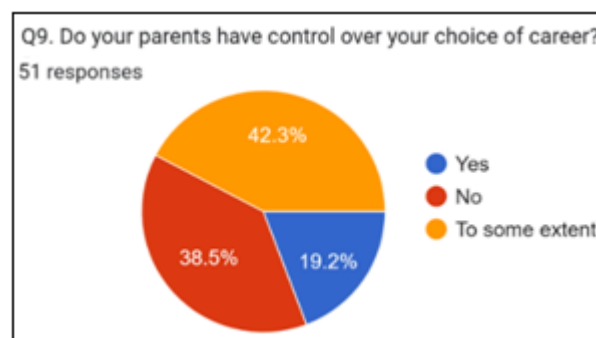
In response to the Q5. on how do they rate themselves on academics, it was found that about 52 percent rated themselves above average, 35% rated themselves as average and about 11.8% rated themselves as brilliant. It can be inferred that majority of the students take a critical view of their academic standing and are not over assuming their academic level.



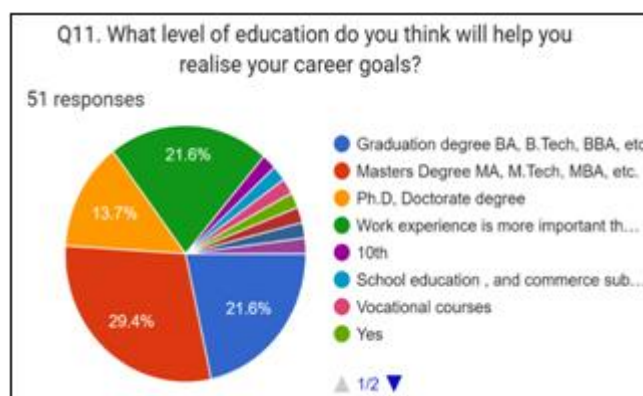
In response to Q 6. on the impact of performance in the school exams on the choice of career, 39% students responded that the school performance in academics has an impact on their choice of career, 49.2 % shared that to some extent it influenced their choice of career. Overall, it can be said that majority of the students felt that their performance in school exams influenced their career choice.



In response to Q8. On who has been the greatest influence on the choice of career goals, 43.1 % students responded that their parents have an influence on their career goals and 45.1% responded that media influenced their choice of career goals.

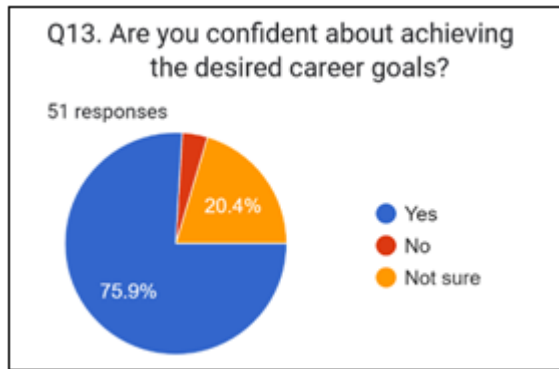


In response to Q9. Whether their parents have control over their choice of career, 19.2% responded positively, 38.5 % students responded negatively and 42.3 % students responded that to some extent their parents had a control over their choice of career. In response to Q10. Whether they are likely to follow the career path of their parents, 48.2% replied negatively, 34.6% were not sure and 19.2% responded that they are likely to follow the career path of their parents.



In response to Q11. 29.4 % students responded that Master's degree was required to realise their career goals. 21.6% believe that work experience is more important and 21.6 % believe that school education lays down the foundation of their future career. While 13.7% believe that Ph.D degree would be required to achieve their career goals.





In response to Q13. About whether they are confident of achieving their desired career goals 75.9% responded that they were confident while the rest were either not confident or unsure about it.

78.1% students responded that they received counselling in school regarding career choice while 21.9% said that they did not receive career counselling. 62.5% expressed that the need for career counselling to achieve their career goals while 37.5 % responded negatively.

## 6. Analysis of the result

Analysis of the result of the survey conducted on the high school students reveals that majority of the students become conscious of their future career from class 11 onwards. They start exploring the various career options for their future. It can be inferred that majority of the students take a critical view of their academic standing and are not over assuming their academic level. Overall, it can be said that majority of the students felt that their performance in school exams influenced their career choice. It implies that performance in school academics has an impact on their self-esteem.

In response to Q8. 43.1 % students responded that their parents have an influence on their career goals and 45.1% responded that media influenced their choice of career goals, friends and counsellor influence is at 6%. It is generally expected that friends would have influence on career choices but in the present times the media has greater influence than that of friends and counsellor.

The survey reveals that parents and media have a considerable influence on their career goals. And parents have control over their choice of career to some extent although they may or may not likely follow the career path of their parents. It shows that the parents influence the future career choice of their children in a very objective manner without any pressure to follow their careers.

Majority responded that they were confident of achieving their goals while the rest were either not confident or unsure about achieving their career goals. Majority of the students 78% received counselling in school regarding career. In response to Q15. 62.5% replied that they need career counselling to achieve their career goals while 37.5 % responded negatively. This response seems contradictory to the earlier responses, in fact it highlights the contradictions and the dilemma of the students.

Although this study may not be representative of high school students in general, the results support the growing body of evidence that school counselors can play an important role in facilitating the students to make a choice of their careers. Since, parents also play an important role in student's choice of career school counsellors should involve parents as much as possible.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of the study support the hypothesis, "A complex interplay of different aspects collectively shape the career choices of high school students." This study supports the conclusion that there are various factors that influence and shape the career choices of the students. The school environment, academic performance, guidance of teachers, counsellors and parents play an important role in the shaping career choices of the students. Students begin actively planning for careers while in high school and there is much career exploration during their senior year. Some of the recommendations are listed below:

- Career counselling and guidance services should be provided to the students in a planned manner.
- Parents should also be involved in the guidance and counselling services.
- Career fairs and exposure visits can be organised for the students.
- The school curriculum should focus on 360-degree assessment of the students so that they have a good self-esteem and understanding about themselves.
- Summer internships can give good exposure to the students.

## 8. Limitation of the Study

- 1) The study is limited by a sample size of 51 students. It can be extended on a larger sample.
- 2) The study is limited to Delhi NCR. It can be conducted in various cities as well as rural areas.
- 3) The study can include more factors that impact the choice of careers like peers, access to resources, etc.

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