

Paving the Way: Exploring Influential Factors that Shape Career Preferences among Students in Higher Education Institutions - Insights from Selected Arts and Science Colleges in Kerala

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to examine the elements that influence the career choices of university students. It is a selected study conducted across ten Kerala arts and science colleges ranked in the 2022 ranking of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). A sample of 375 students was selected from the selected higher education institutions. The results show that gender is significantly related to career choice. In addition, except for family factors like parents' education and family support, all other factors examined show weak, negative correlation with career choice. Family members' profession and parental pressure prove to have significant negative association with the career path choice of students. Among the financial factors examined, future job opportunities, knowledge of high-paying jobs, job security, salary increases and perks, and opportunities for promotion and growth show a significant association with students' career choices. All of the personality factors examined correlate significantly with the career choice of the students. Among social factors, with the exception of teacher advice, college career guidance services, and alumni/friend success stories, all other variables studied show a significant association with career choice. Investigating on the factors that impact the career decisions of students, the results show that parental pressure, support from family members, future career opportunities, personal interest, social recognition related to a career, campus placements, influence of social media, and graduate/friend success stories have a significant impact on the students' choice of career. Among these predictor variables, the variables that have the greatest influence on career choices are parental pressure, future job opportunities, personal interest and campus placement. The study recommends universities to have an active careers advice center with a team consisting of a full-time placement officer and a student advisor. Recommendations for conducting psychometric tests to assess skills and conducting parent awareness programs to avoid parental pressure on students' career choices are recommended.

Key Words: Career choice, career guidance, family factors, financial factors, personal factors, social factors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Deciding which career path to pursue is an important decision that can shape an individual's entire professional future. The impact of this decision can have lasting repercussions as it determines a person's potential income, type of work, and social standing, and ultimately can affect their personality, behavior, and overall outlook on life. Therefore, it is a crucial decision that should be carefully considered. Choosing the wrong profession can have a negative impact on an individual's future. In order to make the best career decision, one must conduct a thorough self-assessment to identify talents, skills, interests, aptitude, and tolerance. The right career choice of young people on a larger scale can contribute to the country's economic prosperity. Individuals who are unsuitable for their job turn out to be less productive and efficient, resulting in higher costs without adequate benefits and resulting in failure to meet the organization's goals. Given the complexity and importance of career choices, it is important to think about how career decisions are made. The study groups the factors that influence career choices into four categories: family, financial, personal and social factors. This grouping was created based on the research gaps identified through a review of related literature. The study examines the relationship and impact of these factors on the career choices of students at higher education institutions in Kerala.

1.1 Significance of the Study:

An individual's life can be greatly impacted over an extended period of time by the decisions they make when choosing a career. Choosing the wrong profession can change one's destiny and have negative consequences. Young people in every country face challenges when choosing a career, especially as the business environment is constantly changing (Adeola, 2014). Various global research studies have analyzed the elements that influence the decision-making process when choosing a career path. However, few studies have been conducted in Kerala, India, a 100% literate country, making it an ideal place to raise awareness among students and teachers of the factors that influence career choices. Gaining insight into the potential factors influencing the career choices of higher education students in Kerala is of paramount importance as this knowledge will provide valuable insights to the Ministry of Higher Education and the state's educational institutions, enabling them to be up-to-date on current career needs so as to make efforts to create employable youths who are fit for the rapidly changing job market. In addition, this study will support university students to make informed decisions about their career choices. Given these facts, the importance of the study cannot be understated.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the association between gender and sector of career choice. (Business, Government and Private sectors)
2. To investigate on the relationship and impact of family factors on career choice.
3. To investigate on the relationship and impact of financial factors on career choice decisions.
4. To investigate on the relationship and impact of personal factors on career choice.
5. To investigate on the relationship and impact of social factors on career choice.
6. To analyze which among these factors contribute most to variation in students' career path choice.

2. Literature review

Author	Year	Variables tested	Findings
Diana et.al	2022	IV - Demographic variables, environment and personal factors DV - Career choice	A weak positive relationship exists between the IVs and the career choice of students. Among the factors that influence career choice for students, the opportunity factors, such as awareness of high-paying jobs and part-time jobs, and personality factors, such as social skills, have been found to have a significant impact.
Omar et.al	2021	IV - Personality, parents or guardians, peer groups, career guidance counsellors, environment, opportunity, and economic considerations. DV - Career choice	The research has determined that only five variables hold a notable sway over the career choices of students, which are the student's personality, parents or guardians, career guidance counselors, peer groups, and environment. It is noteworthy that the study discovered that economic factors were not a crucial determinant in students' career choices. Moreover, the impact of peer groups on students' career choices was found to be negatively related.
Koçak, O. et.al	2021	IV-Family influence and academic satisfaction DV – Career choice	The findings reveal that decisions for selecting a career path can be positively affected by the support and influence of family, as well as the level of satisfaction a student experiences with their work and academic performance.

Brenda et al.	2020	IV- Personality, parents, job opportunities, interest and peer group. DV- Career choice.	The findings of the study suggest that several factors play a significant role in predicting students' career choices, including their personality traits, parental influence, job opportunities, and interests. However, peer influence was found to have insignificant impact. Among the independent variables, the study found that interest had the strongest influence on students' career choices.
Oppusupaapaagyiri et.al	2020	IV- Parental characteristics DV- Career choice decisions	The findings reveal that the parents education level, occupation and income influence the students' careerchoice decisions
Linnea Claésson	2019	IV- Gender representation DV- Careers	The results indicate that gender gap isnarrower in public sector than private.Career opportunities in public sector are gender neutral.
Achim & Zulkpli (2019)		IV- Salary and benefits, work environment, job security DV- Career choice decisions.	The study proved that salary and benefits, work environment, and job security were significantly correlated with career decisions of students.
Sarah, Tarsilla & Paul	2019	IV- Mass media DV- Career choice	The research findings indicated that there exists a statistically significant positive correlation between mass media and the career paths opted for by students in public secondary schools.
Asma & Abeeda	2017	IV - parental education, profession and income DV - Careerchoice	Based on the results of this study, it was observed that the influence of parents on their children's career selection was the most critical factor. This was followed by the influence of peers, gender, print media, financial constraints, personal interest, and other contributing factors.
Fayad Wagdi et.al.	2017	IV - Family, self efficacy, economic considerations DV - Career choice decisions	The variables subjected to testing demonstrated a positive influence on the decision-making process of students regarding their career choices.
Oro Hellen	2017	IV - Gender, age, peer group, parental guidance DV - Career choice	The outcomes of the study demonstrate that gender exerted the most substantial influence on the selection of a career path, with age following closely behind. The influence of peer groups and parental guidance on the decision-making process of students was found to be moderate.
Jeofrey	2017	IV - Gender, location of school, family, career guidance in school, peers DV- Career choice	The research findings indicate that students' choice of careers was influenced by factors such as family members, career guidance provided in schools, the location of schools, and peers. However, gender was found to have a relatively lower level of influence.
Ogotu et.al	2017	IV - Peer pressure DV- career choice	The study concludes that peer pressure directly influenced students' career decisions.

Nalianya Remmy Simiyu	2015	IV- Gender issues DV - Career choice	The research findings indicate that gender-related concerns play a significant role in shaping the career selection process of students.
Tigma & Nkemanjen	2012	IV- Environmental factors DV- Career choice	The research study concluded that environmental factors, including peer groups, social environments, and religious groups have a substantial and positive association with the selection of a career path.
Macharia Thangei, Doris W	2011	IV- Gender differences DV- Career choice	The findings reveal that gender restrictions and restrictions placed on career developments had adverse effects on gender equality which had impact on career decisions.
Agarwala	2008	IV- cultural values ,collectivism and conventional career orientations DV- Career choice	Based on the study's results, it can be inferred that the career choices of Indian management students were primarily shaped by their individual skills, competencies, and abilities. Moreover, the findings suggest that fathers were the most influential figure in the decision-making process of students regarding their career paths.
Bandura et al.	2001	IV- Socio-Cognitive factors DV- Career choice	The study discovered that a person's perceived academic, social, and self-regulatory abilities had an impact on their career path. Additionally, their environment, skills, talents, and academic performance played a role in their career choice. The research concludes that homes, schools, and social environments can all have an impact on an individual's career decisions.
Baig, Let.al	2016	IV- job security, salary, prestige, personal interest, job satisfaction, work-life balance, etc. DV- students' career choices	The results of the research indicate that medical students tend to prioritize job security, salary, and prestige in their career decision-making process, whereas non-medical students tend to prioritize personal interest, job satisfaction, and work-life balance.
Khan et.al	2019	IV – Personality traits DV- Career choice	The findings reveal that personality traits were strongly related to specific career choices
Li, M., Li, Y., Li, J., & Li, X.	2019	Independent variable: Social support Dependent variable: Career decision-making self-efficacy	The results indicated a positive relationship between social support and career decision-making self-efficacy. Specifically, emotional support, informational support, and appraisal support were found to be positively related to career decision-making self-efficacy.

Source: Author compilation

2.1 Research gaps:

Although numerous studies have been conducted in the past to identify factors that influence student career choices, most of these studies have focused on only a few determinants. The researcher identified this gap through a thorough literature review and attempted to examine the impact of various factors, categorizing them into four distinct groups. Additionally, in

Kerala, an Indian state with a 100% literacy rate, there is a noticeable lack of research studies. The current study aims to fill these gaps by providing new insights into the factors influencing career choices in Kerala.

2.2 Research methodology:

The research design of the study is analytical and follows a cross-sectional approach. The sample consists of 375 students (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970) from a population of approximately 15,000 students and was selected using a practical sampling of ten top rated arts and science colleges in Kerala based on NIRF rating. (Source: <https://www.nirfindia.org/2022/CollegeRanking.html>). For the purpose of this study, a structured questionnaire consisting of 35 items was used to collect primary data. The items were divided into four subscales, namely family factors, financial factors, personal factors and social factors. Respondents rated these items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. Cronbach's alpha test was used to assess the internal consistency of the subscales. The study results are presented below.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No: of items
Family factors	0.70	6
Financial factors	0.83	6
Personal factors	0.73	5
Social factors	0.80	8

As a general guide, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or greater is considered an indicator of instrument reliability. In this study, the alpha values obtained confirm that the instrument used to collect the data is internally consistent and reliable. Secondary data was obtained from published research and other internet sources. Chi-square test, correlation and regression statistics tools are used for data analysis. SPSS version 21 is used for data analysis with the various tools.

2.3 Results and discussions:

Gender and career choice:

The response rate is 55%, consisting of responses from 205 students. The chi-square test of independence was used to determine whether gender was related to students' career choices. The relationship between the categorical variables gender and career choice sector (own company, government job, private sector job) was examined for correlations.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.515 ^a	2	0.001
Likelihood Ratio	13.054	2	0.001
N of Valid Cases	205		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.91.

Hypothesis testing:

H0: There is no association between gender and the career choice sector

H1: There is a significant association between gender and the career choice sector

Table 2 shows that none of the cells have an expected count less than 5 and the minimum expected count is 11.91, which satisfies the chi-square test assumption. A chi-square test was performed with 2 degrees of freedom at a 95% confidence interval and a 5% significance level, resulting in a test statistic of 13.515. The calculated test statistic (13.515) is greater than the critical value (5.991), resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis (H0). The asymptotic p-value (0.001) is lower than the alpha value (0.05), providing strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1) that there is a statistically significant association between gender and career choices made by the students. Therefore,

the analysis shows that there is a significant association between the gender of the students and their preferred professional field.

Table 3: Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.257	.001
	Cramer's V	.257	.001
N of Valid Cases		205	

The table of symmetrical measures shows that the contingency coefficient (r) is 0.257, which is between 0.25 and 0.5. From this it can be concluded that the students' career choice is significantly related to gender and shows a sufficient correlation. $\chi^2(2) = 13.515, p = .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .257$

The results support the findings of the Macharia & Doris (2011) study, which concluded that career choices are influenced by gender due to cultural, organizational, discriminatory practices and gender-based restrictions and negatively impact gender equality. The result of the study agrees with the findings of Simiyu (2015) that gender issues influence students' career choices. The results contradict the finding of Linnea Classon's (2019) study, which proved that the gender gap is narrower in the public sector and disproved the theoretical assumption that women in the public sector are doing well because of the more family-friendly jobs in the public sector.

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between the four independent variables (family factors, financial factors, personal factors, and social factors) and the dependent variable (career choice). The level of statistical significance (alpha) was set at 5% and a 95% confidence interval was used.

Hypothesis testing

H0: There is no significant relationship between family factors and career choice of students.

H2: There is a significant relationship between family factors and career choice of students.

H0: There is no significant relationship between financial factors and career choice of students.

H3: There is a significant relationship between financial factors and career choice of students.

H0: There is no significant relationship between personal factors and career choice of students.

H4: There is a significant relationship between personal factors and career choice of students.

H0: There is no significant relationship between social factors and career choice of students.

H5: There is a significant relationship between social factors and career choice of students.

The correlation of the variables investigated with career choice is summarized in the table below:

Table 4: Correlations

Variables	Pearson correlation (r)	Sig.(2 tailed)	Significance
FAMILY FACTORS AND CAREER CHOICE			
Family income	-.038	.590	
Success of family business	-.095	.174	
Parents education	.013	.853	
Parental pressure	-0.273	.000	sig.

Family members' profession	-0.165	.018	sig.
Support of family members	.113	.105	
FINANCIAL FACTORS AND CAREER CHOICE			
Future Job opportunities	0.343	.000	sig.
Part- time job opportunities	.040	.566	
Knowledge of high paid jobs	0.289	.000	sig.
Job security	0.330	.000	sig.
Salary increments and perks	0.330	.000	sig.
Promotion and growth opportunities	0.347	.000	sig.
PERSONAL FACTORS AND CAREER CHOICE			
Match personality	0.192	0.006	sig.
Personal interest	0.390	.000	sig.
Emotions and fears	0.252	.000	sig.
Social skills	0.393	.000	sig.
Technical skills and individual abilities	0.363	.000	sig.
SOCIAL FACTORS AND CAREER CHOICE			
Social recognition	0.286	.000	sig.
Teacher advice	0.136	0.052	
Career guidance cell	0.135	0.053	
Campus placements	0.227	0.001	sig.
Social media	0.271	.000	sig.
Career of role model	0.241	0.001	sig.
Success stories of alumni/friends	0.073	0.297	
Peer group influence	0.159	0.023	sig.

According to the results presented in Table 4, there is a weak negative correlation between family factors such as family income (-.038), success of the family business (-.095), parental pressure (-0.273), and occupations of family members (-0.165) and student career choices. However, only parental pressure and family occupations have a statistically significant association with career choice, as shown by p-values of 0.000 and 0.018, respectively ($p < 0.05$). This means that when parental pressure is high and family members have careers that are not in line with the students' interests, the students are more likely to choose a different career path. The results lead to accepting the alternative hypothesis (H2) for these two factors. On the other hand, there is a weak positive correlation between parents' educational level, support from family members, and students' career choices ($r = .013, .113$), but this association is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), hence the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted for these factors.

The results are consistent with Oppusupaapaagyiri's (2020) study, which found that educational level, occupation and parental income influence students' career choices.

The results show a weak association between financial factors such as future job prospects, opportunities for part-time work, and knowledge of high-paying jobs, job security, salary increments and benefits, opportunities for advancement and growth, and student career choices. The r-values for these financial factors are 0.343, 0.040, 0.289, 0.330, 0.330, and 0.347, respectively. This means that an increase in these factors leads to an improvement in students' career choices. The correlation of financial factors was found to be statistically significant for all variables (p-values = 0.000) and is less than 0.05 $p < 0.05$ for all five factors, except for part-time employment opportunities (p-value = 0.566). Therefore, H3 is accepted for financial variables, except for part-time employment opportunities, for which H0 is accepted, proving that all five financial factors except part-time employment opportunities are significantly correlated with students' career choices. Finding a weak

correlation that is statistically significant for the remaining financial factors suggests that while these five factors are significantly related to student career choices, there are other important determinants as well.

The results align with the findings of Achim & Zulkipli (2019) which proved that salary and benefits, work environment, and job security were significantly correlated with career decisions of students.

According to the analysis, personal factors such as matching personality, personal interests, emotions and fears, social skills, technical skills and individual skills are positively related to students' career choices. The correlation coefficients (r-values) for these factors are 0.192, 0.390, 0.252, 0.393, and 0.363, respectively. Although the correlation is weak, it is statistically significant; This suggests that these personal factors influence career choices, but other important factors may also play a role. Therefore, hypothesis H4 is accepted.

The results align with Khan et.al (2019) which proved that personality traits were strongly related to specific career choices.

The analysis shows that there is a weak positive correlation between all social factors and students' career choices. Success stories from alumni/friends correlate only very weakly with career choice (r-value = 0.073). The R-values for the social factors such as social acceptance associated with a particular occupation, teacher guidance, career guidance services, campus placements, social media influence, career role model influence, and peer influence are 0.286, 0.136, 0.135, 0.227, 0.271, 0.241 and 0.159, respectively. Correlation is insignificant for social factors, namely; Teacher advice, career guidance cell services, and alumni/friend success stories ($p > 0.05$). The p-values are 0.052, 0.053, and 0.297, respectively. H0 is accepted for these variables. The rest of the social factors examined, namely; Social recognition associated with a particular job, campus placements, social media influence, role model careers, and peer influence show a significant correlation ($p < 0.05$). The p-values are 0.000, 0.001, 0.000, 0.001, and 0.023, respectively. H5 is accepted for these social factors.

The results agree with Li, M., et.al. (2019) who point to a positive association between social support and self-efficacy in making career decisions.

Regression analysis is a statistical tool used to assess whether the independent variables can predict the dependent variable. A multiple linear regression analysis is used to determine which of the familial factors contributes most to the variation in career choice.

Table 5: Model Summary & ANOVA

Model Summary				ANOVA		
Family factors	R	R Square	Durbin-Watson	df	F statistic	Sig.
Predictors: Support of family members, success of family business, parents' education background, parental pressure, family income, family members' profession. DV : Career choice	0.332	0.11	2.120	6	4.08	.001 ^b
Financial factors						
Predictors: Job opportunities linked to a career, part time job opportunities, knowledge of high paid jobs, job security, salary increments and perks, promotion and growth DV : Career choice	0.425	0.181	2.136	6	7.288	.000 ^b
Personal factors						
Predictors: Technical skills & individual abilities, emotions and fears, match personality, personal interest, social skills of the individual DV : Career choice	0.470	0.221	2.183	5	11.307	.000 ^b

Social factors						
Predictors: Peer group influence, teacher advice, social recognition of profession, social media, career guidance cell of college, career role model, success stories of alumni and friends, campus placements. DV : Career choice	0.417	0.174	2.252	8	5.164	.000 ^b

Table 6: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
i IV- Family factors DV - career choice	(Constant)	4.670	0.262		17.846	0.000			
	Family income	0.002	0.062	0.002	0.031	0.975	0.770	1.298	
	Success of family business	-0.036	0.057	-0.047	-0.637	0.525	0.824	1.214	
	Parents education background	0.095	0.060	0.128	1.592	0.113	0.690	1.448	
	Parental pressure	-0.267	0.081	-0.276	-3.310	0.001	0.645	1.549	Significant
	Family members' profession	-0.067	0.079	-0.076	-0.851	0.396	0.562	1.780	
	Support of family members	0.112	0.054	0.140	2.053	0.041	0.963	1.038	Significant
ii IV- Financial factors DV - career choice	(Constant)	2.676	0.333		8.040	0.000			
	Job opportunities	0.182	0.087	0.176	2.090	0.038	0.581	1.722	Significant
	Part time job opportunities	-0.080	0.060	-0.092	-1.331	0.185	0.867	1.154	
	Knowledge of high paid jobs	0.047	0.089	0.048	0.525	0.600	0.500	2.002	
	Job security	0.072	0.089	0.077	0.802	0.424	0.444	2.254	
	Salary increments and perks	0.112	0.102	0.113	1.101	0.272	0.395	2.532	
	Promotion and growth opportunities	0.144	0.105	0.137	1.368	0.173	0.413	2.421	
iii IV- Personal factors DV- Career choice	(Constant)	2.078	0.350		5.930	0.000			
	Match personality	0.004	0.068	0.004	0.053	0.958	0.812	1.232	
	Personal interest	0.236	0.082	0.222	2.860	0.005	0.649	1.541	Significant
	Emotions and fears	0.105	0.054	0.126	1.922	0.056	0.908	1.101	
	Social skills	0.201	0.112	0.182	1.796	0.074	0.381	2.623	
	Technical skills & individual abilities	0.092	0.109	0.084	0.841	0.401	0.389	2.570	
iv IV- Social	(Constant)	2.774	0.355		7.818	0.000			
	Social recognition	0.214	0.080	0.201	2.666	0.008	0.739	1.353	Significant

factors DV- Career choice	Teacher advice	0.036	0.071	0.038	0.508	0.612	0.761	1.314	
	Career guidance cell	-0.104	0.093	-0.108	-1.113	0.267	0.447	2.235	
	Campus Placements	0.204	0.096	0.222	2.128	0.035	0.387	2.584	Significant
	Social media	0.201	0.070	0.213	2.896	0.004	0.781	1.280	Significant
	Career of role model	0.079	0.081	0.084	0.972	0.332	0.562	1.779	
	Success stories of alumni & friends	-0.193	0.081	-0.218	-2.372	0.019	0.498	2.010	Significant
	Peer-group influence	0.078	0.069	0.088	1.124	0.262	0.694	1.440	

I. Family factors and career choice

Hypothesis test:

H0: There is no significant influence of family factors on the students' career choice.

H6: There is a significant influence of family factors on students' career choices.

Table 5 shows that the overall correlation between family factors and career choice is 0.332. The Durbin-Watson statistic gives a value of 2.120, indicating no autocorrelation problems. The R-squared value of 0.11 implies that familial factors (including family income, family business success, parents' educational level, parental pressures, family members' profession and family members' support) can only predict the dependent variable (career choice) by 11%, where 89% remain unexplained. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are other important variables that are not considered in this study which are significant in explaining the variation in students' career decisions.

The purpose of analysis of variance (ANOVA) is to determine whether the regression model represents the relationship between the independent variables (family factors) and the dependent variable (career choices) well. Based on the ANOVA results, it is concluded that the regression model is a good description of the data. The F statistic in the ANOVA determines whether the overall regression model fits the data well. The results show that family factors are a statistically significant predictor of career choice, as evidenced by $F(6,198) = 4.080$ and a p-value of 0.001, which is below the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the regression model fits the data reasonably. The ANOVA table also confirms that the correlation coefficient of 0.332 is statistically significant, indicating that the model is significant.

The Beta standardized coefficients that determine the contribution of each of the six family factors to the variation in career choice are shown in Table 6. The standardized coefficients allow for the comparison of predictor variables regardless of sign. According to the results of the investigation, parental pressure has the greatest coefficient and contributes the most to profession choice variation (Parental pressure = -0.276; $p = 0.001$). The other four family characteristics, however, are insignificant predictors of job choice, namely family income (= 0.002; $p = 0.975$), family business performance (= -0.047; $p = 0.525$), parents' educational background (= 0.128; $p = 0.113$), and family members' profession (= -0.076; $p = 0.396$). This suggests that once parental pressure and family members' support are incorporated in the model, these factors are no longer meaningful. As a result, H0 is acceptable for these factors. Furthermore, none of the VIF values for the predictor variables are greater than 5, indicating that the regression model does not have a multicollinearity problem. According to the findings, parental pressure has a large detrimental impact on students' career path decisions, whereas family support has a significant favorable impact. Thus, H3 is accepted, demonstrating that parental pressure and family members' support are important elements influencing students' profession choice options. The following is the regression equation:

$$Y = a + bx_1 + cx_2 + dx_3 + \epsilon$$

The model equation is:

$Y = 4.670 + -0.267(x1) + 0.112(x2)$ (where $x1$ denotes parental pressure and $x2$ support of family members).

The study contradicts the findings of Oppusupaapaagyiri et al. (2020), who found that parents' education level, income and occupation influence students' career choices. The study findings are consistent with the findings of Koçak, O. et al. (2021), who stated that family influence and support, students' work, and academic satisfaction are all positively related to the career path and happiness.

II. Financial factors and career choice

Hypothesis test:

H0: There is no significant influence of financial factors on students' career choice.

H7: Financial factors have a significant impact on students' career choices.

Table 5 displays that the overall correlation between financial factors and career choice is 0.425. The Durbin Watson statistic indicates a value of 2.136, indicating no concerns of autocorrelation. The R square value of 0.181 suggests that the variables of future job opportunities, opportunities for part-time jobs, knowledge of high-paid jobs, job security, salary increments and perks, and promotion and growth opportunities can predict career choices by 18.1%, thus leaving 81.9% unexplained, showing the presence of extraneous variables which are not covered in the study that significantly contribute to the variation in career choices.

The F statistic of $(6, 198) = 7.288$ and p value of $(.000) < .05$ in the ANOVA table suggest that the financial components are statistically significant in predicting the career choice path, indicating that the regression model is an accurate match for the data. The ANOVA table shows that the overall correlation value of 0.425 is significant, indicating that the model is significant.

The beta-standardized coefficients used to rank the six financial factors based on their importance to explaining variances in career choice decisions. The findings show that job opportunities contribute the most to the variation in career choice decisions ($= 0.176$; $p = 0.038$). Part-time job opportunities ($= -0.092$; $p = 0.185$), knowledge of high-paying jobs ($= 0.048$; $p = 0.600$), job security ($= 0.077$; $p = 0.424$), salary increments and perks ($= -0.113$; $p = 0.272$), and promotion and growth opportunities ($= 0.137$; $p = 0.173$) are insignificant predictors of career choice. The research demonstrates that the VIF values for all financial elements are not larger than 5, indicating that there is no multicollinearity concern to investigate in the regression model. Furthermore, job opportunities have a substantial favorable impact on students' career route decisions. As a result, H7 is accepted, demonstrating that job possibilities have a major influence on students' profession choice options. H0 is acceptable for the remaining five financial considerations.

The model equation, based on the analysis, is:

$Y = 2.676 + 0.182(x1)$, where $x1$ represents job opportunities.

These findings contradict the conclusions of Diana et al. (2022), who determined that opportunity factors such as awareness of high-paying professions and opportunities for part-time work have a substantial impact on students' career decisions. The findings are consistent with those of Fayad Wagdi et al. (2017), who discovered that, aside from family, self-efficacy and economic concerns had a substantial influence on students' profession choices.

III. Personal factors and career choice

Hypothesis test:

H0: There is no significant influence of personal factors on students' career choice.

H8: Personal factors have a significant impact on students' career choices.

The analysis shows that the overall correlation between personal factors and students' career choices is 0.470, with an R-squared value of 0.221. This suggests that personal factors can predict 22.1% of differences in career choices, leaving 77.9% unexplained, suggesting that there are other important variables besides personal factors that play a crucial role in the explanation of the differences in the students' career choices.

The F-ratio indicates that the overall regression model fits the data well. The table shows that the independent variables, namely personal factors, significantly predict the dependent variable, career choice. The F-value (5,198) = 11.307, $p(0.000) < 0.05$ confirms that the regression model fits well and is statistically significant.

The table shows the personality factors that contribute most to variation in career choices. The beta-standardized coefficients rank the personality factors based on their contribution to explaining the different career choices made by students. Results suggest that personal interest ($\beta=0.222$; $p=0.005$) is the most important predictor of career choice, while the other four personality factors; match personality ($\beta=0.004$; $p=0.958$), emotions and fears ($\beta=0.126$; $p=0.056$), social skills ($\beta=0.182$; $p=0.074$), technical skills and individual skills ($\beta=-0.084$; $p=0.401$) are insignificant predictors. The analysis shows that personal interest has a significantly positive influence on students' career choices and the hypothesis (H8) for this factor is accepted. For the other four personality factors, the hypothesis (H0) is accepted. The model equation is as follows:

$Y = 2.078 + 0.236(x_1)$, where x_1 represents personal interest.

The results of this study agree with the research by Brenda et al. (2020), which suggests that interest has the greatest impact on students' career preferences. However, in contrast to the research of Agarwala (2008), which identified skills, competences and abilities as the most important determinants of career choices of Indian management students, this study came to different conclusions. In addition, the results differ from the recent study by Diana et al. (2022), suggesting that social skills are the most influential personality factors affecting student career choices.

IV. Social factors and Career Choice

Hypothesis test:

H0: There is no significant influence of social factors on students' career choices.

H9: There is a significant influence of social factors on students' career choices

The analysis reveals an overall correlation of 0.417 between social factors and students' career decisions. The Durbin-Watson statistic has a value of 2.252, indicating that there is no autocorrelation problem. The R-squared value (0.174) indicates that the social factors, including social recognition associated with a particular occupation, teacher advice, career counseling cell services, campus placements, social media influence, influence of job role models, and peer influence and success stories of alumni/friends predict careers only 17.4% stated, 82.6% remained unexplained. This suggests that there are other external variables that are important in explaining the different career choices of students and were not considered in this study.

The relationship between the independent variables (social factors) and the dependent variable (career choice) is adequately described by the model developed from the results presented in the ANOVA results provided above. The F-statistic in ANOVA tests whether the overall regression model fits the data well. According to the table, the independent variables significantly predict the dependent variable, with an F-value of (8,196) = 5.164 and a p-value of (0.000) which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the regression model fits the data well. This implies that the overall correlation of 0.417 is significant and the model is considered significant.

From the table of coefficients (Table 6), four of the eight social factors examined, namely social recognition, campus placements, influence on social media, and alumni/friend success stories, have a significant impact on career choice decisions (with p-values of 0.008, 0.035, 0.004, and 0.019, respectively). Beta-standardized coefficient measures indicate that campus placements have the greatest impact on variation in career choices (with $\beta=0.222$ and $p=0.035$). On the other hand, the remaining four factors, namely, teacher advice ($\beta=0.038$ and $p=0.612$), career guidance cell ($\beta=-0.108$ and $p=0.267$), professional role models ($\beta=0.084$ and $p=0.332$), and peer influence group ($\beta=0.088$ and $p=0.262$) are insignificant predictors of career choice. Therefore, hypothesis H9 is accepted for the social factors social recognition, campus placement, social media influence, and alumni/friend success stories, indicating that these factors have a significant impact on career choice. The model equation derived from this analysis is as follows:

$Y = 2.774 + 0.214 (X1) + 0.204 (X2) + 0.201 (X3) + - 0.193 (X4)$, (where X1 represents social recognition of profession, X2 – campus placements, X3- social media influence and X4- success stories of alumni and friends.)

The results of the study contradict the findings of Ogutu, Joel & Odera, Peter & Maragia, Samuel. (2017) and A. Kaur (2020) show that peer pressure directly influences students' career choices, so that as peer pressure increases, so does career decision-making among students in the same direction. As for the other social factors examined in this study, historical studies are scarce, and hence study considering these variables addresses the research gaps.

3. Findings of the study:

1. The study reveals that the students' choice of career is significantly related to gender. (Asymptotic p-value (0.001) < alpha value 0.05.)
2. There is a weak positive insignificant relationship between familial factors such as parental educational background and family support and career choices. However, there is a weak negative significant association between parental pressure and family members' occupations and career choices (p=0.000 and 0.018, respectively, p<0.05). Family income and family business success have a weak negative, insignificant association with career choice.
3. All six financial factors examined have a weakly positive association with career choice, with the exception of part-time work, which is insignificant. The correlation is significant for future job opportunities (p=0.000), knowledge of high-paying jobs (p=0.000), job security (p=0.000), salary increments and perks (p=0.000), and promotion and growth opportunities (p= 0.000).
4. All five personality factors examined have a weak positive significant association with career choice, with p < 0.05 (i.e. personality match p = 0.006), personal interest (p = 0.000), emotions and fears (p = 0.000), social skills (p= 0.000), technical and individual skills (p= 0.000).
5. Five social factors examined, including social recognition associated with a job, campus placements, social media, career of role models and peer influence have a weakly positively significant association with job choice (p<0.05), while the remaining three factors studied, including teacher advice, career counseling cell services, and alumni/friend success stories, are weakly insignificant.
6. Among the family factors examined, parental pressure and support from family members have a significant impact on career choice (p=0.001 and 0.041, respectively). Of the financial factors, only future job opportunities have a significant impact on career choice (p=0.038). Personal interest is the only personality factor that has a significant impact on career choice (p=0.005). Among the social factors examined, social recognition related to a particular job, campus placements, social media influence and alumni/friend success stories have a significant impact on career choice (p=0.008, 0.035, and 0.004 and 0.019) respectively.
7. Parental pressure, job opportunities, personal interests and campus placements are the most important predictor variables that contribute most to the variation in students' career choices. ($\beta = -0.276, 0.176, 0.222, \text{ and } 0.222$, respectively).

3.1 Conclusion:

In summary, the study comes to the conclusion that gender is significantly related to career choice and that parental pressure has a negative effect on career decisions. Support from family members was found to have a significant positive impact on career choice, along with factors such as future job opportunities, personal interest, social recognition, campus placements, influence on social media and alumni/friend success stories. The parental pressure shows a significant negative impact. The most important predictors for career choices are parental pressure, future career opportunities, personal interests and campus placements. The study suggests that families and institutions can do more to support

students in making informed career decisions, such as providing guidance and information about new careers and opportunities.

3.2 Recommendations:

- The results show that the career guidance cell has no influence on the students' career choices. When students lack knowledge about the new career trends, they are forced to follow existing traditional preferences when choosing a career. In this context, higher education institutions can work towards setting up active career guidance and counseling cells in colleges to guide students to make informed decisions.
- Utilizing the services of a team of placement officer and counselor in the Career Guidance and Counseling Cell can help in providing the necessary guidance and information to students in shaping their future careers. The team keeps abreast of employment trends and opportunities to ensure quality student guidance.
- Conducting psychometric assessment tests for graduate and senior year postgraduates can help counselors provide career guidance that will help students identify the right career profiles that aligns with their skills and make informed decisions taking into account labor market demand.
- The campus placements can be improvised by raising the institution's profile and emphasizing its strengths in order to attract employers to the institution. Highlighting past placement results, projecting the alumni who hold prominent positions in reputable companies, making use of the services of faculties with industry backgrounds, etc. can help improve college placement services.
- The study proves that parental pressure has a significant negative impact on students' career choices. Conducting awareness programs for parents at the facility would help them realize the importance of supporting their children in discovering and choosing a career that sync with their interests and skills.

Recommendations for future research:

The study recommends that future research should conduct longitudinal studies to examine additional variables not considered in this study. In addition, the study suggests that future research should cover larger samples across multiple universities, as this study was limited to a select group of higher education institutions based on NIRF rating. Furthermore, future research should focus on both quantitative and qualitative measures to have a more comprehensive analysis of the topic.

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