https://doi.org.10.3126/batuk.v12i1.90018
THE BATUK : A Peer Reviewed Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies
Vol. 12, Issue No. 1, Jan 2026, Page: 39-55
ISSN 2392-4802 eISSN 2565-4934
Received: 2 Nov 2025 Revised: 14 Jan 2026 Accepted: 22 Jan 2026

Learning Specific Motivators Influencing Career Choices of Higher-Level Students in Nepal

Purushottam Ghimire[1]

Abstract

The selection of a career is a crucial developmental task that determines students' educational pathways, employability, and socio-economic prospects. This study examines the determinants of Nepalese higher secondary students' career decision-making on the foundation of Social Cognitive Career Theory, Human Capital Theory, and Holland's Typology. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, and 470 students from Grade 11, 12 and Bachelors 1st year students in Lalitpur District were surveyed. This information was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that subject interest, perceived ease of subject, financial returns, and future career opportunities have considerable impact on the decision of the students. Although personal interest is an important intrinsic motivator, extrinsic factors such as job security and financial benefits have more dominant influences, reflecting the socio-economic context of Nepal. The study highlights the pressing need for systematic career guidance, equitable access to resources, and education-to-labor market policy coordination to facilitate informed decision-making and strengthen human capital development.

Keywords: career choice, students, career determinants, human capital, Nepal

Introduction

The issue of making career decisions among adolescents is one of the most crucial developmental events potentially affecting consequences for the general well-being of a learner, performance of labor markets, and development of human capital for a specific country (Issa & Nwalo, 2008; Phifer, 2003). Within the constraint of limited formal support, culture and tradition, and economic inequality, career choice decision by higher secondary level students of Nepal and the like countries is a challenging issue (Bista et al., 2016; Koirala & Acharya, 2020). In trying to surmount these challenges, they often opt for job stability, family's expectations, together with status preference over their personal interests together with their inherent abilities (Khatiwada, 2014). The

[1] Lecturer, Nesfield International College, Lagankhel, Lalitpur, Nepal. Email: purughimire042@gmail.com https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0939-5813

consequences affect an individual learner's life as well as to the sustainable development goals regarding utilization of human capital for a specific country (World Bank, 2020).

Empirical evidence demonstrated that career self-efficacy is associated with the development of career goals among students who expressed higher career self-efficacy expectations about the outcomes of the selection decision (Karim et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023). However, the challenges posed by the scarcity of career guidance, pressure by the parents, and the lack of resources impair the ability of students to transform their aspirations to well-informed career decisions, like the ones described by Ahmed et al. (2017) and Bista et al. (2016). Potential income, financial security, and prestige, particularly in developing economies, hold enough thrust to impact students' career choices (Salami, 2007; Srivastava & Dhamija, 2022). Even though it may look financially lucrative to choose certain career streams, it is leading to chaos in terms of career satisfaction, as every aspiring employee cannot enter the market (Khatiwada, 2014; World Bank, 2018). Personal interest, family influences, gainful prospects, and prestige of occupation are equally crucial determinants to students' paths (Islam et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023). Other comparative studies conducted across Malaysia and India illustrate that students often place strong reliance on expectations regarding outcomes, testing requirements, family influences, access to information when choosing their occupation paths (Karim et al., 2024; Ray et al., 2020).

In contrast, Nepal presents a uniquely exceptional case with one of the highest youth emigration percentages whereby students often pursue other dreams such as education or jobs abroad for reasons more attributed to economic compulsions than genuine motives to pursue careers (Chapagain, 2021; Vu, 2020). The present Nepalese employment scenario, which is full of uncertainty, has led students to pursue their career choices based on financial gains and prestige, despite their interests in different areas (Adhikari, 2019).

Despite the growing international literature on career decision-making, empirical studies that systematically examine career choice determinants among Nepalese higher secondary level students remain limited. Existing research in Nepal has primarily focused on academic performance, psychosocial well-being, or isolated socio-demographic factors, with limited integration of established career theories such as SCCT and Human Capital Theory (Bista et al., 2016; Tamang & Khanal, 2023). Moreover, few studies have empirically tested the relationships between career choice determinants and actual career choice outcomes at the higher secondary level, a critical stage at which educational and occupational pathways become increasingly fixed. This

lack of theory-driven, context-specific empirical evidence constitutes a significant research gap.

Within this context, this study aims to examine the effect of financial returns, interest in subject, future job opportunities and ease of subject on career choices among Nepalese higher secondary students. It is important to understand and explore this subject since students from a particular setting often face a tough problem since they lack career information and largely have to make decisions under various kinds of psychological, social, and economic pressure (Ramesh, 2024; Ray et al., 2020).

The study is grounded on the social cognitive career theory, which describes career decision-making processes through the ways by which an individual balances personal self-efficacy, the anticipated outcomes of a decision, and the surroundings offered by the environment (Lent et al., 1994). As the theory illustrates, career decision behavior incorporates inner psychological processes, including the opportunities provided by the broader surroundings. This theory is thus relevant to settings like Nepal that promote a culture of collectivism with limited resources available to students, like the ones described by Vu (2020).

The conceptualized determinants of the career choice are embedded in a number of theories; Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (1997), Social Cognitive Career Theory by Lent et al. (1994), Self-Efficacy Theory by Bandura (1997), and Human Capital Theory by Becker (1993). Interest in the subject is an intrinsic motivator of career choice and reflects the congruence-or lack thereof-between a student's personality and his or her academic environment. SCCT furthers the idea that self-efficacy and anticipated outcomes influence both academic interests and ultimate career choices.

Keeping in mind the uncertainty of the economy in recent years, it is safe to say that more and more students are trying to opt for subjects which appear more promising in terms of job security and chances for climbing the career ladder. This is particularly true in Nepal, emphasizing management, computer science, and health science due to their promise of more viable professions (Karki & Dahal, 2020). Ease of a particular subject also plays a part, reflecting the perception held by the student themselves on how easy a particular subject is, and how comfortable they are with its workload, etc. The foundation on which this perception rests is perceived self-efficacy theory, where a student makes choices on subjects that they themselves think are easy, especially where there is a perceived risk of not performing if pressure is put on them (Chow & Chapman, 2017). In Nepal, this perception can be held liable for a decline in the number of students undertaking science courses relative to management and humanities courses. Similarly,

financial outcomes constitute the determinants of the economic payoff of education. In accordance with the human capital theory, students see investment value for their education to improve their financial prospects when they graduate. The desire for financial betterment may particularly be strong for students from poor economic backgrounds in Nepal to better improve their lives (Shrestha & Shrestha, 2018).

Methods

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design with the objective of exploring what shapes the career choices of higher secondary students in Nepal. As the goal was to test how latent factors (interest in the subject, perceived ease of the subject, future job prospects, and financial outcomes), ultimately affect career decision, the study turned to Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for data analysis. PLS-SEM is well-suited for studies that focus on prediction and theory testing in complex models, non-normal data, and latent variables (Hair et al., 2017; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Early diagnostic checks flagged violations of key OLS assumptions, such as non-normality and heteroscedasticity, which further supported choosing PLS-SEM. The target population consisted of Grade 11 and Grade 12 students who were enrolled in government, private, and community-based schools and colleges in the Lalitpur District of Nepal. This segment falls at an important juncture in the educational journey, where decisions in subject and career choices are required, often under inadequate access to systematic career guidance. Lalitpur District was selected due to having a mixture of institutions and diverse student belonging to different socio-economic, cultural, and academic backgrounds.

A mixed sampling approach was used to balance considerations of representativeness with those of practicality. At the institutional level, stratified purposive sampling included a mix of government, private, and community institutions, guided by considerations of accessibility, geographic spread, and willingness to participate covering both urban and semi-urban areas. At the respondent level, convenience sampling was used. This combination is common in educational research when population lists are not available and there is a constraint on logistics (Etikan et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2021). A total of 470 students were targeted and surveyed which is adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, subgroup comparisons, model stability, and statistical power (Hair et al., 2014; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

The data were collected using a structured questionnaire, adapted from validated career-choice instruments used in South Asian and broader contexts (Islam et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023). Prior to hypothesis testing, the measurement model was first examined to assess its reliability and validity in terms of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability,

Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity with respect to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Subsequently, structural model was run to examine the path coefficients, R^2, f^2, and predictive relevance. To confirm the significance and robustness of the hypothesized relations, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was performed following established PLS-SEM guidelines (Hair et al., 2017).

Results

Demographic Information

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics according to field of study, type of institution, and present level of study. The trend indicates that the majority of respondents are studying Management 62.0%, while Science constitutes 32.3%. Other categories include Humanities 3.8%, Education 1.7%, and Law 0.2%, which pictures that management-oriented streams dominate in higher secondary and undergraduate levels. By institutional type, the majority of respondents are from private institutions at 73.1%, government institutions at 26.5%, and only 0.4% from community institutions. A total of 81.4% study at Grade 12 followed by 18.4% are in Bachelor's first year and 0.2% are in Grade 12.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Baseline Characteristics	N	Percent
Study Area		
Education	8	1.7
Humanities	18	3.8
Law	1	0.2
Management	290	62
Science	151	32.3
Institution Type		
Community	2	0.4
Government	124	26.5
Private	342	73.1
Current Study Level		
Grade 11	1	0.2
Grade 12	381	81.4
Bachelor 1st Year	86	18.4

Note. $N = 470$

Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 showed the availability of jobs in the pending future as the most notable aspect with an average score of 3.802, followed closely by interest level (M = 3.762) and financial gain (M = 3.750). This resonates well with social cognitive theory since outcome expectation and interest are posited as crucial influencers of career choice behavior, as noted by Lent et al. (2000). The same observation has been reported within the realm of developing countries where gainful employment influences career choices significantly (Islam et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023). Further, the simplicity of the topic emerges as having an average that's slightly below the rest (M = 3.452). Essentially, though students do consider the difficulty level that may be involved, this does not influence them quite as much as what the future holds, i.e., their potential labor force contributions, their salaries, or their driving forces. This supports earlier discussions on students engaging in more difficult fields if the benefits, or personal satisfaction, are good (Ray et al., 2020; Srivastava & Dhamija, 2022). On the other hand, the medians align quite well with the means across all variables. As regards the spread, the distribution across the full range, from the lowest score to the maximum, covers the full scale of 1–5, thus providing good spread in the data, suitable for further analysis (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2

Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Mean	Median	Observed min	Observed max	Standard deviation	kurtosis	Skewness
CC	3.709	3.772	1.992	5.000	0.564	0.115	-0.271
ES	3.452	3.484	1.000	5.000	0.615	0.359	-0.397
FO	3.750	3.812	1.000	5.000	0.657	0.617	-0.556
FJO	3.802	3.851	1.000	5.000	0.614	0.990	-0.536
IS	3.762	3.807	1.000	5.000	0.579	1.864	-0.653

Where, CS = Career Choice, ES = Ease of Subject, FO = Financial Outcomes, FJO = Future Job Opportunities, IS = Interest in Subject

The range of standard deviations lies between 0.564 and 0.657, signifying moderate variation from the averages. This implies an acceptable level of agreement among respondents, yet concerning the differences between individuals' perception of what influences their career choices. This level of variation is similar to what was found by

Siddiky and Haque (2024). In terms of distributional normality, the skewness of the values is negative but within the acceptable limit, ranging between -1 and +1, showing a slight left skew, which implies a slight clustering of the responses in terms of either approval or disapproval. It can thus be established that the results of the normality tests performed in this study meet the required conditions for the conduct of multivariate analysis, as suggested in the literature by Kline (2016) and Hair et al. (2019). In summary, these descriptive finding results provide preliminary evidence to support the importance of academic, financial, and work context factors in career choices, particularly in developing economies where employability and economic security of students are of great concern (Ramesh, 2024; Vu, 2020).

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 indicates that the interest in the subject (r = .626), perceived prospect in the future in terms of employment opportunities (r = .449), and ease in handling the subject (r = .442) are moderately related with the selection of a career path. This indicates that students' selection of their careers seems to be more influenced by interest in the subject, perceived prospects in the near future in terms of employment opportunities available in the labor market, and ease in handling the subject. This is in accordance with social cognitive career theory, which has supported the significance of interest in deciding students' choice of careers (Lent et al., 2000).

Table 3

Correlation Analysis

Variables	CC	ES	FO	FJO	IS
CC	1				
ES	.442	1			
FO	.155	.163	1		
FJO	.449	.323	.441	1	
IS	.626	.465	.211	.477	1

Conversely, financial outcomes correlate less with career selection (r = .155), as do other explanation variables. Financial returns obviously play an essential part, though they appear to play a smaller part than factors like motivation and opportunity. The moderate inter-correlations existing between independent variables do not exceed critical degrees, attesting that there will be no multicollinearity problems and, hence, that independent variables can serve as predictors in the impending multivariate research. Overall, the correlation results lend support to the proposed relationships via these findings, which

form the foundation on which to progress towards more sophisticated inferential and modeling methods.

Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity (AVE)

Table 4 presents the results of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity for the study constructs. Cronbach's alpha values range from .673 to .792, indicating acceptable reliability for most constructs, as values above .70 are generally recommended, while slightly lower values are acceptable in exploratory research (Hair et al., 2019). Composite reliability estimates (ρc) further confirm measurement reliability, with all constructs exceeding the recommended threshold of .70, ranging from .761 (Future Job Opportunities) to .857 (Interest in Subject), supporting strong internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4

Internal Consistency, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Items	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CC	.717	.723	.814	.568
ES	.787	.740	.788	.541
FO	.780	.792	.845	.523
FJO	.673	.755	.761	.412
IS	.792	.798	.857	.546

Convergent validity, assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), is satisfactory for Career Choice (.568), Ease of Subject (.541), Financial Outcomes (.523), and Interest in Subject (.546), all exceeding the minimum criterion of .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, Future Job Opportunities records a lower AVE of .412, suggesting limited variance explanation by its indicators. Nevertheless, given its adequate composite reliability (ρc = .761), the construct remains acceptable for early-stage or theory-building research (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2019). Overall, the results indicate that the measurement model demonstrates adequate reliability and acceptable convergent validity, with scope for further refinement of the Future Job Opportunities construct in future studies.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in a measurement model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In this study, discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as recommended for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019;

Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 5, all HTMT values range from .212 to .809, remaining below the conservative threshold of .85, thereby indicating satisfactory discriminant validity across all construct pairs (Kline, 2011). The highest HTMT value occurs between Career Choice and Interest in Subject (.809), suggesting a theoretically expected association while remaining within acceptable limits, as personal interest is a recognized driver of career decision-making (Lent et al., 1994).

Table 5

HTMT (Heterotrait- Monotrait Ratio)

Items	ES	FO	FJO	IS
ES	.56			
FO	.212	.27		
FJO	.543	.451	.647	
IS	.809	.587	.271	.536

Further support is provided by the Fornell–Larcker criterion in Table 6, where the square root of AVE for each construct (.642–.739) exceeds its corresponding inter-construct correlations. This confirms that each construct explains more variance in its own indicators than in those of other constructs, satisfying the discriminant validity requirement (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 6

Fornell- Larcker Criterion

Items	CC	ES	FO	FJO	IS
CC	**.684**				
ES	.442	**.664**			
FO	.155	.163	**.723**		
FJO	.449	.323	.441	**.642**	
IS	.626	.465	.211	.477	**.739**

Collectively, these results demonstrate that the measurement model exhibits adequate discriminant validity, ensuring unbiased estimation and reliable interpretation of subsequent structural relationships (Hair et al., 2019).

Collinearity Assessment

To make sure that predictor constructs do not show excessive intercorrelations that could skew structural path estimates, collinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) (Hair et al., 2019). According to Table 7, multicollinearity is not a concern because all VIF values fall between 1.243 and 1.555, which are significantly below the conservative threshold of 3.3 (Hair et al., 2011). These findings support the stability and interpretability of the structural model by confirming that Career Choice is significantly explained by Ease of Subject, Financial Outcomes, Future Job Opportunities, and Interest in Subject (Gefen et al., 2000).

Table 7

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Items	VIF
Ease of Subject - Career Choice	1.298
Financial Outcomes - Career Choice	1.243
Future Job Opportunities - Career Choice	1.555
Interest in Subject - Career Choice	1.505

Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Effect size (f^2)

Table 8

Effect size (f^2) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Variables	f-square
Ease of Subject - Career Choice	.041
Financial Outcomes - Career Choice	.005
Future Job Opportunities - Career Choice	.045
Interest in Subject - Career Choice	.257
R-square = .546, R-square adjusted = .541	

The explanatory power of the model and the contribution of each predictor variable to Career Choice is displayed in Table 8. The model shows moderate to strong explanatory power by way of the amount of variance explained (R-squared = .546; Adjusted R-squared = .541), with approximately 54.6% of the variance in Career Choice explained by the predictor variables; this result meets the moderate to high explanatory power required in behavioral science (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2019). The close relationship

between R^2 and adjusted R^2 supports the stability of the model and indicates that the model is not over-fitted.

The effect sizes (f^2) showed that there are significant gaps among the predictors in their relative importance to Career Choice. Interest in Subject has a large effect on Career Choice ($f^2 = .257$) and is a key factor in the decision process to select a career, according to the Social Cognitive Career Theory perspective (Lent et al., 1994). Whereas Ease of Subject ($f^2 = .041$), Future Job Opportunities ($f^2 = .045$), and Financial Outcomes ($f^2 = .005$) have small and negligible effects on the outcome of Career Choice. Overall, the major reason for the shaping of students' career decisions in their early careers appears to be their intrinsic motivation, rather than the utilitarian and financial aspects of career choices, which are in line with previously published research in education and motivation (Hair et al., 2019).

Model Fit Assessment

The results of the PLS-SEM analysis are presented in Table 9. The SRMR score of .079 for both the saturated and estimated models fits into the acceptable range (SRMR ≤ .08) according to the criterion proposed by Hair et al. (2019). Since both models had identical values of d_ULS (1.120) and d_G (.458) it can be inferred that the models are stable and there are no apparent signs of serious model mis-specification (Henseler et al., 2015). Therefore, the results provide a strong indication that the hypothesized structural model adequately reflects the empirical findings, providing valid support for the interpretation of the proposed relationships.

Table 9

Model Fit Assessment

Measures	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	.079	.079
d_ULS	1.120	1.120
d_G	.458	.458

Test of Hypothesis

The bootstrapping results from hypothesis testing on the PLS-SEM Model are shown in Table 10. Bootstrapping is a non-parametric resampling method which, as advocated for theory-driven behavioural research, elucidated that the structural paths could be evaluated for significance and robustness (Hair et al., 2019). The results show that

Interest in Subject (β = 0.451; t=7.648; p<.001) has the largest positive influence on Career Choice; thus, demonstrating the importance of determining career choices based on self-motivating factors, such as Intrinsic Motivation, which is a premise of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994). Additionally, Future Job Opportunities (β = 0.181; t = 3.960; p < .001) and Ease of Subject (β = 0.158; t = 4.054; p < .001) demonstrated positive influence as stated by Hair et al. (2019).

Table 10

Hypothesis Testing Results

Variables	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	t-statistics	P values
Ease of Subject - Career Choice	0.158	0.159	0.039	4.054	.000
Financial Outcomes - Career Choice	-0.049	-0.033	0.033	1.480	.139
Future Job Opportunities - Career Choice	0.181	0.178	0.046	3.960	.000
Interest in Subject - Career Choice	0.451	0.454	0.059	7.648	.000

Conversely, Financial Outcomes demonstrate a weak and statistically non-significant relationship with Career Choice (β = −0.049; t = 1.480; p = .139). As a result, money is not a major factor influencing Career Choice in this sample. This finding supports previous research that shows individuals choose their careers based on their Interest in the Subject and Future Job Opportunities at an early stage in their education rather than just based on Immediate Financial Returns (Lent et al., 1994).

Findings

The proposed measurement model has been shown to have reasonable reliability and validity based on the data collected in this research project and therefore validates the constructs that were identified as part of this study. The reliability and internal consistency values (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability) of the constructs demonstrated exceed the minimum threshold of .70 as recommended in the literature, while most Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of the constructs approach or exceed the.50 threshold and indicate that each construct has adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity of the constructs has also been verified in this research project based on both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios, indicating that the constructs are empirically different and measure different theoretical constructs

(Henseler et al., 2015). As indicated by the results of the structural model, interest in the subject area has the most substantial and statistically significant effect on the choice of career (β=0.451, $p < .001$), providing strong evidence for the significant impact that intrinsic motivational factors (i.e. Interest in the Subject Area) plays in students' decision-making processes with regard to their careers. This is supported by expectancy-value theory as well as previous empirical research that has demonstrated that an individual's interest in a particular area plays a critical role in their academic and professional choices (Eccles & Wigfield 2002; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Future work opportunities (β=0.181, $p <.001$) and perceived ease of the subject area (β=0.158, $p <.001$) also have statistically significant positive impacts on a student's choice of career, demonstrating that an individuals' perception of their current job market and the feasibility of completing a subject has an effect on their choice of career, as indicated by Rational Choice and Planned Behavior Theory (Ajzen, 1991).

While financial outcomes had a statistically insignificant, negative association with career choice (β = -0.049, $p > .05$), they were less influential on the decision-making process for students in the short term than long-term interests and perceived opportunities. This finding is consistent with prior research suggesting that students tend to prioritize non-financial factors over the immediate monetary benefits of their chosen occupation when making career choices (Ng et al., 2017). Further, the model accounted for roughly 54.6% of the variance in career choice ($R^2 = .546$), providing moderate support for the strength of the predictors utilized in this research (Hair et al., 2019).

Discussion

From these results, it appears that intrinsic interests and perceptions about future careers have a greater impact on students' career decisions than current monetary compensation. The power of interest in a subject suggests a key role for intrinsic motivation in choosing a career, supporting social cognitive theory that emphasizes interest and self-efficacy as key determinants of behaviour related to careers (Lent et al., 1994). This finding has been replicated by motivation theories, which suggest that people will more often choose careers that align with their interests and skills, leading to greater job satisfaction and persistence (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Holland, 1997). Lastly, the large influence of future job opportunities indicates that students are aware of future labour market expectations and long-term employability concerns when determining their career choices. This finding supports the theory of planned behaviour, which posits that anticipated outcomes affect intentions and subsequent behaviours (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, the positive relationship between ease of subject indicates that when students view a subject as academically feasible, there is less uncertainty and therefore greater

confidence in making career-related decisions, consistent with self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997). While financial results do not appear to significantly affect students' career motivation, there appears to be a greater emphasis placed on career sustainability and individual satisfaction beyond just making money in a short period of time (Ng et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). A number of limitations exist with this research. First, the cross-sectional nature of the research design precludes any causal inference among variables. Second, as participants were asked to self-report their data, there exists the potential for common source bias to occur despite the use of adequate measures of reliability and validity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Third, the sample consisted predominantly of management science students attending private colleges/universities restricting the ability to generalize these results to other majors or areas of academia. Other potential research avenues include longitudinal evaluation, incorporating a wider range of majors/disciplines, and the addition of other potential influences such as parental encouragement, societal expectations, and institutional support factors.

This study concludes that creating an environment that fosters a student's academic and career interest is critical. Future research incorporating a broader sample of students from different disciplines and institutions would enhance the conclusions drawn from this study. Understanding additional factors influencing a student's decision, including social, contextual, and community resources, may add further insight into a student's decision-making process regarding career choice.

References

Adhikari, R. (2019). Career choice and employability issues among Nepalese youth. *Journal of Education and Research, 9*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.3126/jer.v9i1.28736

Adhikari, R., & Shrestha, S. (2018). Career guidance and counseling practices in Nepalese schools: Issues and challenges. *Journal of Education and Research, 8*(2), 45–60.

Ahmed, K., Sharif, N., & Ahmad, N. (2017). Factors influencing students' career choices: Empirical evidence from Pakistan. *Journal of South Asian Studies, 5*(3), 146–153. https://doi.org/10.33687/jsas.005.03.1263

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.

Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

Bista, M. B., Sharma, S., & Adhikari, D. (2016). Secondary education in Nepal: Issues and challenges. *Tribhuvan University Journal, 30*(1), 1–14.

Bista, M. B., Sharma, S., & Rijal, P. (2016). Psychosocial problems among adolescents in Nepalese schools. *Journal of Institute of Medicine, 38*(3), 20–27.

Chapagain, R. (2021). Sampling strategies in educational research: Practices and challenges in Nepal. *Educational Research Quarterly, 44*(3), 55–72.

Chow, A., & Chapman, D. W. (2017). Factors influencing students' choice of academic subjects: Evidence from developing countries. *International Journal of Educational Development, 55*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.03.001

Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53*, 109–132. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135153

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5*(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104

Gefen, D., Straub, D. W., & Boudreau, M.-C. (2000). Structural equation modeling and regression: Guidelines for research practice. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, *4*, 1–77. https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.00407

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2014). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage Publications.

Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *43*(1), 115–135. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8

Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices: A theory of vocational personalities and work environments* (3rd ed.). Psychological Assessment Resources.

Islam, M. A., Rahman, M., & Nibir, M. R. (2021). Factors influencing career choice among business students in developing countries. *Journal of Education and Work, 34*(3), 289–304. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2021.1910048

Issa, A. O., & Nwalo, K. I. N. (2008). Factors affecting the career choice of undergraduates in Nigerian library and information science schools. *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science, 18*(1), 23–31.

Karim, R., Rahman, M. M., & Miah, M. A. (2024). Outcome expectations and career choice: Evidence from Malaysian students. *Heliyon, 10*(11), e31808. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31808

Karki, B., & Dahal, M. (2020). Employability perceptions and subject choice among Nepalese higher secondary students. *Economic Journal of Nepal, 43*(1–2), 65–82.

Khatiwada, Y. R. (2014). *Youth unemployment and underemployment in Nepal*. ILO Country Office for Nepal.

Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

Koirala, A., & Acharya, S. (2020). Career guidance practices in Nepalese schools: Issues and challenges. *Tribhuvan University Journal, 34*(2), 45–59. https://doi.org/10.3126/tuj.v34i2.33679

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 45*(1), 79–122. https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2000). Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 47*(1), 36–49. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.47.1.36

Ng, E. S. W., Lyons, S. T., & Schweitzer, L. (2017). Millennials as digital natives: Myths and realities. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 10*(3), 429–435. https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2017.43

Nguyen, T. T., Pham, H. T., & Tran, L. T. (2023). Determinants of career choice among economics students in Vietnam. *Education + Training, 65*(4), 569–586. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-09-2022-0356

Nguyen, T. T., Pham, H. T., & Tran, L. T. (2023). Modeling students' career choice intentions using structural equation modeling. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 77*, 101222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2023.101222

Phifer, J. (2003). Career decision making: Models and implications. *Journal of Career Development, 30*(2), 83–98. https://doi.org/10.1177/089484530303000201

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(5), 879–903. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Ramesh, K. (2024). Socioeconomic background and career self-efficacy among Nepalese students. *International Journal of Educational Development, 102*, 102858. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102858

Ray, S., Singh, A., & Mishra, P. (2020). Family influence and career decision-making among Indian students. *Journal of Education and Work, 33*(2), 129–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2020.1737817

Salami, S. O. (2007). Influence of culture, family, and individual differences on career choice. *Journal of Career Development, 34*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845307309284

Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Hair, J. F. (2021). Partial least squares structural equation modeling. In C. Homburg et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of market research* (pp. 587–632). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-05542-8_15-2

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (7th ed.). Wiley.

Siddiky, M. R., & Haque, M. N. (2024). School background and career aspiration: Evidence from South Asia. *Asian Education and Development Studies, 13*(1), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-05-2023-0102

Srivastava, S., & Dhamija, P. (2022). Socio-demographic determinants of career choice in developing economies. *Journal of Education and Work, 35*(6), 650–665. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2022.2066984

Tamang, S., & Khanal, P. (2023). Parental pressure and career aspirations of rural students in Nepal. *Journal of Educational Research and Policy, 5*(1), 22–34.

Tomlinson, M. (2017). Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate employability. *Education + Training, 59*(4), 338–352. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-05-2016-0090

Vu, T. T. (2020). Perceived employability and career decision-making among youth in developing countries. *International Journal of Educational Research, 102*, 101579. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101579

World Bank. (2018). *World development report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise*. World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1

World Bank. (2020). *Nepal development update: Investing in people*. World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/34515