

Track Preference and Influences in the Choice of Track of Incoming Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the track preference, factors that affect the choice of track of incoming senior high school students and the extent to which these factors influence their track preference. Descriptive quantitative survey was used to gather data from 269 randomly selected Grade 10 students enrolled in the seven public secondary schools in Mandaon. Data were analyzed using frequency, ranking and weighted mean. Findings revealed that most of the students prefer Academic Track over other tracks. There were various factors in varying extent affecting the track preference of the students. Work opportunity, family income, aptitude, interest, school performance and facilities are highly influential factors, while parents and teachers are moderately influential and peers are slightly influential. Result imply that students' choice of track is directly influenced by both external and internal factors. Thus, it can be concluded that students would put much consideration on the availability of work in the future and family economic capability rather than considering their innate abilities and interest, thus giving them limited career options which may have adverse effect in the future. From these results, it is recommended that DepEd may consider the availability of teachers, facilities and the offering of all strands in the academic track to accommodate the needs of the students. It is also important to strengthen guidance and counseling program to assist students in making informed choices.

Keywords: influences, preference, track

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1. Introduction

Last 2013 the Philippines has begun a fundamental reform of its educational system with the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program. This was a comprehensive innovation of the country's basic education. According to former President Benigno Simeon Aquino, Jr., K to 12 is aimed at addressing the deficiency of the Philippine educational system particularly in the basic education; the elementary and secondary, in order to meet the international standard criteria which will give our students equal chance and recognition with the rest of the students all over the world. One notable change in the Philippine education. These changes are in structure, curriculum, and assessment. The most visible change, however, is the addition of two years in the secondary education and the division into junior and senior high school.

The first batch of Filipino students who went through Senior High School trooped to schools in 2016. During the first years of implementation of the new curriculum, some of the students and parents were still unaware of some details regarding the senior high school curriculum.

In the new K to 12 program, apart from the core curriculum, which has eight learning areas, SHS students must choose one track to master and base their choice on how they want to advance after completing grade 12. They may choose one from the four major tracks: Academic, Arts and Design, Sports, and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood.

Thus, students enrolled in grade 10 are in the contemplating process as to what track they will pursue in the SHS. The DepEd has set out Career Guidance Program (CGP) for incoming senior high students to guide them on their career path as per DepEd memorandum no. 41, s.2015. to assist and guide students in making their decisions. The then DepEd Secretary Bro. Armin Luistro said that Career Guidance Program assists Grade 10 students to make informed choices regarding their preferred SHS track for the students to be aware of the importance of choosing a track that suits their interest, while at the same time matches the available resources as well as job opportunities that await them.

Dupont & Gingras (1991), Gati & Saka (2001), Julien (1999), Super (1990) stressed that career exploration is important during adolescence as they begin to engage in self-exploration and explore potential career option. Taveira, et al. also said that the process of career exploration can be particularly stressful in adolescents' life. In reaction to this stress, adolescent may attempt to place the responsibility for making a career decision onto others and even delay or avoid making a choice, which could ultimately lead to a less than optimal decision, Gati & Saka (2001). Larson and Majors (1998) suggested that effective distress associated with career decision making among adolescents may be adaptive because it increases their motivation to seek help, thus decreasing the chances for uninformed decisions.

Track selection is one of the many important choices that incoming SHS students will make in determining their future plans. Their choice of track will impact them throughout their lives so it requires caution and serious considerations (Basavage 1996). Thus, planning for tomorrow itself is primarily the responsibilities of parents, teachers and school counselors. The kind of track the youths will pursue can affect their lives in many ways. It can reflect how much education one will have and determine the amount of money one will earn after graduation.

Studies also showed that there are considerable number of factors that greatly affect the students' career preference. However, the impact of the factors varies from one student to another.

Due to the above-mentioned circumstances, the researcher realized that there is a need to find out the factors that would affect the choice of tracks of incoming SHS student particularly in the Municipality of Mandaon so as to come up with a sound result that would help people in the academe as well as parents to play their role in guiding students to make informed decisions that will have a significant life-long effects.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to:

- a. Establish the profile of incoming senior high school students along age, gender and family income.
- b. Explore the track preferences of incoming senior high school students
- c. Identify the factors that affect incoming senior high school students' track preference and the extent these factors influence them.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study is deemed significant to the following:

a. Students- results of this study will provide the academe concrete data they can use to develop a more effective and comprehensive career guidance program that would cater the needs of the students to help them have a

deeper understanding of themselves in order for them to make informed career choices.

- b. Parents-through this study, parents will realize that they share responsibility as a strong influential factor in their children's career decision-making. They will also have increase awareness and understanding of their children's needs, aspirations, interest and abilities to help them come up with informed decisions and choices. This will make them realize that they are strong influential individuals in their children's career choice. Thus, if they are to influence or intervene with their children's career choice, they themselves should be aware of the current educational reforms and trends to give their children an assurance to acquire quality education that would enable them to obtain better job, better income, and brighter future.
- c. Teachers-this study will give information to the teachers as to the preferences of students such that they can focus on the skills needed by the students if ever the latter would pursue the career they have chosen. Since teachers are regarded as influential source of information in students' career choice, they should be willing to help students come up with best possible decision.
- d. School Administration-the result of this study will help the school administration in putting up an effective, integrated information and guidance system to guide students towards making the best possible track choice.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

The descriptive survey method was used in this study. A validated survey questionnaire checklist was the main tool in gathering data. Descriptive method was used because the study aimed to determine the most preferred track of incoming senior high school students, the influences that affects their choice as well as the extent to which these factors influenced them.

2.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The number of respondents of this study was identified through Slovin's formula. From 817 total number of Grade 10 students, 269 students were identified using the systematic random sampling. Data were collected through the survey checklist questionnaire administered to the sample population from every secondary schools in Mandaon. Respondents were asked to accomplish the questionnaire with the assistance of the researcher to ensure that instructions were clearly understood by the students.

2.2. Respondents

The identified respondents of the study were 269 randomly selected Grade 10 students in the seven secondary schools in Mandaon, SY 2015-2016 as shown in Table 1 below.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS	POPULATION	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
Bugtong NHS	61	7.47%	20
Cabitan NHS	188	23.01%	62
Cleofe A. Arce MHS	54	6.61%	18
Federico A. Estipona MHS	319	39.05%	105
Lantangan NHS	43	5.26%	14
San Pablo NHS	96	11.75%	32
Tumalaytay NHS	56	6.85%	18
Total		100.00%	269

Table	1.	The	Respondents
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2.3. Research Instrument

The study made use of the survey questionnaire checklist designed by the researcher and validated by a registered guidance counselor. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part of the survey was used to establish respondents' demographic information along age, gender, and family income.

The second part was used to determine the preferred track of incoming senior high school students. While the last part was used to identify the factors that affect their choice of track as well as the extent to which each factor influenced them.

2.4. Statistical Tool

The study utilized the Slovin's formula in identifying the number of respondents per school. Percentage was used to establish the profile of the students. In treating problems two and three ranking using frequency count method was utilized to determine the students' most preferred track. In determining the extent to which the factors influence the choice of track, the responses of the respondents were analyzed using the weighted mean of the Likert scale below:

5 – point Scale	Rating Scale	Adjectival Phrase
5	4.21 – 5.00	Extremely Influential
4	3.41 – 4.20	Highly Influential
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Influential
2	1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Influential
1	1.00 – 1.80	Not at all Influential

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Respondents' Profile along Sex, Age and Family Income

Profile along sex reveals that most of the incoming senior high school students are female which comprise 166 (61.71%) of the total number of respondents while there are only 103 (38.28%) male respondents as shown in Table 2a below.

Table 2a. Sex Profile			
Gender	Total	Percentage	
Male	103	38.29%	
Female	166	61.71%	
Total	269	100.00%	

In terms of age, it can be noted that 42.75% of the respondents are aged 16 years old, 23.05% is 17 years old, 21.93% is 15 years old, 10.04% is 18 years old and only 2.23% is 19 years old and above.

Table 2b. Age Profile			
Age Level	Total	Percentage	
15 years old	59	21.93%	
16 years old	115	42.75%	
17 years old	62	23.05%	
18 years old	27	10.04%	
19 years old and above	6	2.23%	
Total	269	100.00%	

In terms of family income, most of them recorded to have monthly earnings of 5,000 below. This had the highest percentage of 66.91% or 180 out of 269 respondents. This was followed by 19.70% or 53 out of 269 families who earned a monthly income of 5,000 – 10,000, 18 or 6.69% reported to have a family income of 10,000 – 15,000, 12 or 4.46 earned 20,000 and above and only 6 or 2.23% of the respondents have 15,000 – 20,000 family income.

Family Income	Total	Percentage	
5, 000 below	180	66.91%	
5, 000 - 10, 000	53	19.70%	
10, 000 - 15, 000	18	6.69%	
15, 000 - 20, 000	6	2.23%	
20, 000 above	12	4.46%	
Total	269	100.00%	

Table 2c. Family Income Profile

3.2. Preferred Track of Incoming Senior High School Students

There are four major tracks in senior high school which students may choose from when they decide to continue their studies after completing their junior high school years. These are Academic Track, Technical-Vocational and Livelihood Track, Sports Track, and Arts and Design Track. Each track is further divided into different strands. For instance, if a student opts to take the Academic Track, he/she has to choose whether to take the General Academic Strand (GAS), Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) or Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. If a student would pursue the TVL track, he/she must also decide whether he/she will take Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Agri-Fishery Arts, or Information and Communications Technology. They may also from Sports Track and Arts and Design Track which are also divided into different strands.

From these four tracks, result as shown in Table 3 below indicated that Academic Track ranked first as the most preferred track with 205 recorded frequencies. This was followed by TVL Track with 46 responses, Sports Track with 11 responses while Arts and Design Track was the least preferred track with only 7 recorded responses.

Results indicate that most of the students would prefer to take Academic Track over other tracks when they enroll in senior high school.

Tracks	Rating	Rank
Academic Track	205	1
TVL Track	46	2
Sports Track	11	3
Arts and Design Track	7	4

Table 3. Preferred Tracks of Incoming Senior High School Students

3.2. Factors and the Extent of Influence to which these Factors Affect Incoming Senior High School Track Preference

Various studies on career decision making revealed that there are considerable number of factors that significantly affect students' career preference. These factors were also found to vary from student to another. In this study, numerous factors were noted to have influenced the track preference of incoming senior high school students. These factors include aptitude, interest, family income work opportunities, distance of home to school, parents' influence, school performance and facilities, parents, teachers' influence and peer influence. Knowing what factors influence one's choice of career is just but superficial. It is equally important to explore the extent to which these factors influence the students in choosing their career track in order to design a plan that would assist students in making informed decision making. Numerous researches on factors affecting career choice have been conducted and similar findings were noted that the extent of these factors vary from one person to another as dictated by intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Hewitt, 2010) Wei's (1994), Krumboltz (1979), Gottfredson (2002, 2005) Bandura (1977) and Abbot (2001).

In this study, the statement "I choose a track which I think will offer/provide a lot of work opportunities in the future" obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.10 interpreted as highly influential which means that students would choose a track according to perceive work availability. This was followed by "I choose a track which I think our family income can support" with a weighted mean of 3.98. This denotes that family income was found to be a highly influential factor in choosing a career track. Aptitude or one's natural was also noted as highly influential factor as evidenced in the statement "I would choose a track that suits my natural ability and potential" I with a weighted mean of 3.95. The statement "I would choose a track where I can perform the things/work I love the most" obtained a weighted mean of 3.51 interpreted as highly influential. This proposed that students would choose a track that would match their interest. Moreover, school performance and facilities was also found to be a highly influential factor in students' choice of track. With a weighted mean of 3.48, this indicate that students would consider the kind of school they would intend to enter when they go to senior high school. Moreover, parents' and teachers' influence appear to have a moderate influence on students as indicated in the responses of the students. "I would prefer a track my parents want me to take" had a weighted mean of 3.11 while "I would prefer a track which my teachers advised me to take" obtained a weighted mean of 3.61. From among the nine identified factors, peer influence comes up to have slight influence in students' choice of track with a weighted mean of only 2.41, interpreted as slightly influential.

From these results, it is noteworthy to mention that work opportunity is the foremost factor students would consider in choosing for a career track. Work opportunity pertains to the perceived availability and chance of getting a job after graduation. This result can be attributed to the fact that most of the respondent belong to low income family with a monthly income of 5,000 pesos and below. This finding is similar to that of Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) where they mentioned that job opportunities, monetary and social rewards have important impacts on students' career decision making. Both employment opportunities and career prospects were important factors considered by young college students (Maringe, 2006). Other studies that support this claim include that of Malubay, et. al (2015) which mentioned that the primary factor considered by students are stable wages, and in demand jobs. Moreover, Uyar, et. al. (2011) also mentioned 12 factors affecting the decision of first year students in choosing a career where career opportunities was found to be very significant factor. Similarly, Malgwi, et. al. (2005), Yazici, et. al (2010) revealed that guaranteed employment and earnings are the most influential factors for college major choice. Okiror, et. al. (2015) also indicated that students' choices were based on their perceived career opportunities. This result, however, contradicts the findings of Ahmed, et. al. (2017) that future job opportunities had minor impact on students' career choice. From these findings, it can de deduced that incoming senior high school students would likely choose a track in relation to the likelihood of landing a job after graduation.

Family income was also identified as highly influential factor in students' choice of track. Education is regarded by many as an investment. It requires financial resources. Attending to school means one has to spend for books, transportation, tuition fees, board and lodging and other school fees. Thus, family income appears to be an issue when one chooses a career. Most likely, students would choose a track that their family can afford to support or they may end up finding themselves quitting at the middle of the year because they do not have enough resources to support their needs. The cost of education varies depending on the track course one has to take. For instance, it would be costlier to take medical course than an education course. Greenbank and Hepworth (2008) investigated the career decision making of students from working class and found out that socio economic background influences their career decision making. Kusumawati (2013) noted that students gave much consideration on the cost and affordability of the course by considering their socioeconomic factor before making a career choice. Thus, the lack of financial capability can have a negative impact in the educational choices of students. When they know their family has no financial capacity to support the track they want to pursue, they will likely to enroll in in a track they are not personally interested. Lack of financial resources can also result to limited career options.

Aptitude and interest both referring to students' personality were noted to be highly influential factors in the students' choice of track. This means that students' aptitude or natural ability and interest are significant predictors of possible track preference. This result conforms to that of Holland (2010) who stressed that individuals are attracted to a particular career that match their personalities. Splaver (1997) also said that "personality" plays an important role in choosing a right track. Students' mental abilities, special skills and interest are determining factors in choosing a track (Splaver, 1997). Thus, students should have a good understanding of themselves particularly their strengths and weaknesses for them to have intelligent career choice. Flore, et. al. (2010) emphasize that students developed career choice based on how they perceive themselves. Findings of this study was also supported by Maringe (2006) who found out that students chose a course based on their interest in the subject. Similar result was presented in the study of Malgwi, et. al. (2005) and Yazici &Yazici (2010) where they stressed that interest in the subject is one of the most influential factors in for a choosing a course in college. Thus, it is important that students should be provided with opportunity for self-assessment self-exploration for them to have a sound track choice. It is important that students shoud have a good understanding of themselves, their skills, ability and interest. Ahmed, et. al. (2007)

affirmed that enrolling in a course that matches one's interest has strong and positive impact on academic achievement.

School performance and facilities appeared to be a significant consideration for students in choosing a track. Relative to this result is the study conducted by Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, et. al. (2010) and O'Mahony, et. al (2008) which stated that students put much consideration to their entry in a university. Academic offerings, school reputation, educational facilities and other educational factor were factors that influence students' career choice (Ming, 2010). Moreover, Sabir, et.al. revealed that university reputation was the most important factor in choosing a course. Other studies that support this claim include Sidin, et. al. identified school facilities, procedures and policies and entry requirements are some of the significant factors influencing college choice. However, this result opposed to that of Uyar, et. al. (2011) where the reputation of the university and perceived quality of instruction were found to be the least selected reasons for choosing a career.

As presented in the data, both parents and teachers have moderate influence in the track choice of students. Various researches reveal that parents and teachers influence are important factors considered by students in choosing a career. These studies include Middleton & Loughead (1993) and Sebald (1989) whey they identified that parents are strong influential factor in children's career decision making. In addition, Shumba and Naong (2012) cited that family is considered an important factor in determining career preference. Also, students agreed that parents influence is significant in choosing a career (Khoo, et. al., 2015). Another study that support these findings is that of Dagang and de Mesa (2017) who cited that typical Filipino families' concept of respect for elders and financial dependence on parents contribute to strong influence of parents on children's decision. Similarly, students are influenced by the careers that their parents' favor (Hewitt, 2010). There are instances that children may choose a career that their parents want them to take just to please them (Taylor, et. al, 2004). Other researches also suggest that adolescents are influenced by their parents' aspirations and expectations. In contrast, Olaosebikan and Olosakin (2014) cited that parental influence has no significant effect on adolescents' choice of track. However, most of the researches underscore that parents' influence is significant to most of the adolescent although extent may vary form one person to another. Since parental support and encouragement are important factors in children's education, parents should be extra careful in exerting their influence over their children as it may affect their career decision making.

Result on the inclusion peers as factor in choosing a track was noted to be slightly influential. Students would approach other people such as friends and peers to help them in their career exploration, Julien (1998) and Taveira, et.al. During this period of decision making, students seek certain individuals such as friends because of their availability rather than because they believe that these individuals can help them in their career exploration (Taveira, et. al, 1998). The study of Esters and Bowen (2004) indicated that parents and friends have significant influence on career decision making, however, interest and career opportunity were perceived to be more significant factors.

Table 5. Factors that Affect Incoming Senior High School Students' Track Preference
and the Extent to Which These Factors Influence Them.

Influences	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Rating
I would choose a track where I can perform the things/work I love the most.	3.51	Highly Influential
I would choose a track that suits my natural ability and potential	3.95	Highly Influential
I would prefer a track which I that most of my friends, classmates and school mates choose.	2.41	Slightly Influential
I would choose a track which I think our family income can support.	3.98	Highly Influential
I would choose a track which I think will offer/provide a lot of work opportunities in the future.	4.10	Highly Influential
I would choose a track my parents want me to take.	3.11	Moderately Influential
I would choose a track which my teachers advised me to take.	2.61	Moderately Influential
I would consider the performance and facilities of the school where I intend to enroll.	3.48	Highly Influential

The data gathered and presented implied that incoming senior high school students put much consideration on work opportunities, family income, aptitude, interest and school performance and facilities in their choice of track. Although parents and teachers have moderate influence, their effect on students' decision making cannot be undermined. Despite the fact that students are surrounded by friends and peers, it is surprising that these group of people have slight influence in the career choice of students.

Conclusion

Based from the findings of the study, it can be concluded that most of the Grade 10 students regardless of age, gender and family income would prefer to take academic track over other tracks when they enroll the senior high school. It can also be deduced that there are several factors affecting the choice of track of incoming senior high school students. However, the extent to which these factors influence them vary. Results also implied that economic factors such as work opportunity and family income significantly influence the track preference of the students. Thus, it can be concluded that students would out much consideration on the availability of work in the future as well as the kind of track which their family can support rather than considering their innate abilities and interest. Consequently, this will have an adverse effect in the future since interest and passion are predictors of work productivity and job satisfaction. Students consider parents and teachers as important individuals in career decision making, while peers do not significantly contribute their career choice.

Recommendations

Based on the results and upon analyzing the data gathered from this study, the following recommendations were drawn:

- 1. Schools may consider the number of teachers and facilities accommodate number of students who would flock to academic track.
- 2. Schools may consider offering other strands under the academic track to give students the option that would suit their aptitude and interest.
- 3. Students may be provided with opportunity for self-assessment and career exploration to help them make informed choices.
- 4. Effective and comprehensive guidance program involving teachers, parents and students to should be made available to orient them on the important roles they play in helping students come up with sound career decision making.

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