

Variations in the career preferences of senior secondary students towards curricular programs in tertiary education

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Abstract

Career decision-making is a critical scenario among senior secondary students and their parents. This study determined their level of occupational along the courses on medical or health related; business, safety and social related; technical and technological related; engineering; and teacher education. The results revealed the "less preference" of students in courses for medical and health related; business, safety, and social related; technical and technological; engineering; and teacher education. Nevertheless, in teacher education careers the students pegged nearly a moderate preference level. The students were claimed similar regards to these clustered courses. However, the study is conclusive that the teaching profession and those dealing with computer courses are highly desirable tertiary careers in the area of study. Imperative of the tertiary schools is giving priority of offering teacher education related careers, and other courses that demands mathematical and critical review. The guidance services shall include the career information drive.

Keywords: Variation; Career Preferences; and Secondary Students

1. Introduction

Career is a lifetime choice. It requires an intelligent decision what a person would want to be based on his personal and environmental resources and demands. As (Taber 2012) stressed, decision-making rest upon what is available to a person, what he thinks about his background and what kind of results will it contribute to his future. Hence, this decision carries the many patterns of various interlocking factors linked to a sounder decision for future lifestyle. The study of Lipscomb (n.d. pointed out that the way a person is brought up, and the kind of society he lives with, greatly influence his career decision. The varied impacts of his encounters with human and natural phenomena are contributory matters for such a choice. He makes his decisions premised on the kind of effects he gets and relates them to what he would like to become in the future. Corollary to this view, Borchert (2002) advanced that the kind of career decision that the student made is the result of the interplay between and among the factors of the environment, opportunity, and personality.

2. Literature

For the secondary students, choosing a career is a complex matter. It takes the process that undergoes a thorough examination of the kind activities they like, the values they presently possess. It weighs the influences of their parents, peers, friends and other significant persons in their

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life. It also involves considerations of the financial capacity of the facility and the employability after graduation. In the study of Edwards and Quinter (2011), secondary students are facing this problem of matching their abilities and school performance of the career they prefer in the future. In many cases, the students tend to take a tertiary course that totally deviates from what they chose. Nevertheless, the availability of opportunities for advanced learning and experiences, and the opportunity to apply skills were found very significant to affect their career choices. The gender factor was not a remarkable issue in their choices. In addition, Fizer (2013) accounted for the influence of parents, coaches, religious figures and role models for a student, but the highest and most influential are the parents. On the other hand, Badri et al. (2016) advanced the pedagogies employed in helping the students learn different areas of knowledge did not have sufficient power to sway them into choosing the careers related to those taught.

In this present investigation, parents are conceptualized as a significant factor in the career decision-making process of the student due to their close contact with their children. They project the kind of image to their children in terms of rearing the entire family, which includes the problems and successes of the family. They serve as daily models of activities for the children to evaluate whether they like to follow or not. The experiences, they gave to their children during their early formation stage, are likely the springboards for the children to decide what course to enroll in college. If they do not like what their parents are doing, they may enroll in courses that offer more satisfying impact on their future. On the other hand, if they appreciate their work together with their parents they like to emulate the same and continue modeling their parents in the future.

Moreover, cognizant of these factors on career choices of the students, one of the most important elements is the availability of these careers in the nearby locality. The foregoing reviews have focused merely on the different factors and criteria of students in career decision-making, of which only takes place in the initial stage of decision-making. They do not explore the point where the students think of the availability of the chosen course within the confines of their limited resources. If ever these chosen careers are not available in the locality, students may go for another option that in a way waste in making tedious decisions. Studies on the influences of the above cited factors may have been set in the mind of educational leaders, yet a gap between the chosen careers and the availability in the tertiary schools remained unresolved. Thus, the nearby educational communities are challenged to problem in responding to the chosen careers is still not addressed nearby educational communities.

This problematic educational scenario may become intense where the tertiary school offers the careers outside the preferences of the students. Thus, this stage requires addressing the educational opportunity needs of the senior secondary students of the Surigao del Norte and Surigao City. The result will serve the basis for prioritizing the course offerings available in the tertiary schools in the area of study.

3. Methodology

The researcher adopted the following methods to address the descriptive and inferential designs of the investigation.

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3.1 Instrument

The only source of data in this study was the researcher-made instruments which contained the clustered course according to major professions or disciplines. A 5-point scale corresponding to each course was provided to determine the career preference. Every identified course belonging to each cluster was given the activities or job descriptions for the respondents to decide and express the extent of their preferences.

For *validity*, few copies of the research instrument were administered to the professionals representing each clustered careers for content validity. Suggestions and comments were employed in the revision of the same. Five copies of the revised instrument were distributed to 10 senior secondary students to determine the clarity of the items to the targeted final respondents. The research device was found valid after having all the items were immediately answered without any clarification.

As to the *reliability*, the researcher prepared no less than thirty (30) copies of the same instrument and administered twice to the same set of 15 samples. Using the run-rerun reliability method, the ratings of the respondents in the first and second run were compared using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient. The coefficient of 0.872 was obtained to indicate that the research instrument was highly reliable for the study.

3.2. Respondents

A total of 1,020 students were used in the investigation. The stratified sampling was employed after using the Slovin formula, and the drawing of the sample from a population was done in random numbers with reference to the student list in every target class.

3.3 Data analysis

The mean, ordinal rank and Chi-square (X^2) test of independence were the statistical methods employed in the study. The mean was used to measure the extent of career preference while the ordinal rank was used to indicate the hierarchical order of preferences of the respondents. The chi-square test for independence was used to determine the presence or absence of significant difference in the preferences of the respondents among the clustered careers. The 5% error margin was used to test the hypothesis.

4. Result

The obtained data revealed the following information.

4.1. On medical and health related courses

The data on the extent of preferences of the respondents are shown in Table 1. As reflected in the Table, all of the identified courses were rated "less". The respondents marked the grand mean of 2.08 in these courses. However, the highest extent in this cluster was addressed to rural health services with the mean of 2.27 and the second in rank was the career on medical technology that got the mean of 2.20. There was a tie of ranks between the careers of doctor of medicine and nursing, both got the mean of 2.19 for the third and fourth ranks respectively.

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Table 1. Extent of student preferences in medical and health related careers

Rank	Career	Mean	Preference
1	Rural Health Services	2.27	Less
2	Medical Technology	2.20	Less
3.5	Doctor of Medicine	2.19	Less
3.5	Nursing	2.19	Less
5	Pharmacy	2.14	Less
6	Dentistry	2.02	Less
7.5	Midwifery	2.01	Less
7.5	Physical Therapy	2.01	Less
9	Veterinary Medicine	2.00	Less
10	Ophthalmology	1.94	Less
11	Optometry	1.92	Less
Grand Mean		2.08	Less

Preference Scale: *None at All* – 1.00 to 1.49, *Less* – 1.50 to 2.50, *Moderate* – 2.51 to 3.49, *High* – 3.50 to 4.50, and *Very High* – 4.51 to 5.00

The result indicates the less interest of the students to become health specialists and to render the services related to the medical treatment of people. They are less interested to work within the confines of an environment filled with people suffering physical and biological illnesses. They find it difficult to be dealing with sick individuals and rendering medical treatment for them. In reference to Lees et al. (2016), the cultural awareness and information can be improved through participation and immersion program. This suggests that information related to these medical and health related careers can only be improved when students are exposed to practical fields.

Apparent in the study is the idea that offering courses related to health services is not likely marketable in the area of study. It may become a waste of procuring and investing various educational resources for the offering of such course when the same are not attractive to the students in the locality. Thus, closer analysis of the data in these clustered careers may prove helpful for educational managers whether to offer or not in their schools. Deciding to offer any of these courses the next few years may place the tertiary school at risk.

4.2. On business, safety, and social related careers

The grand mean of 2.36, reflected in Table 2, secures the information that the students have “less” preference on these identified course. Specifically, the data provides that business management, criminology, accountancy and hotel and restaurant management belonged to the top 4 priorities of the students though they expressed “moderate” preference. The course on social works, mass communication, international relations, political science and psychology went to the lowest five of their options.

The finding suggests that the students less likely to work which activities give them the financial advantage in investing money for profit. To them, dealing activities involving financial matters are not attractive. They also lack high interests to serve protectors of the civilian authorities and law enforcers of the community. They do not want to indulge in saving the lives and properties of people at risks and improve their ways of life. Emphatic of the study is the fact that the respondents dislike the work involving stressful and life-struggling conditions where the source of support exudes from them. They find these careers very risky to properties and human lives.

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Dealing with business transactions places the individual manager, including the personnel, into financial and security risks. The economic and financial regulations and peace security measures may cause such risks. Du Toit and Cuba (2017) remarked that based on the return on average assets, the profit efficiency of the financing corporation changes over in periods, and the type of ownership does not significantly relate to any business performance. In this study, the contention of the said author supports that with possible changes in the economic and business-related policies and regulations will likely result to financial risk. On the other hand, issues on politics and governance may contribute to social and economic risks. As political leaders change at any certain term, governance will also change on account of new laws and policies enforced. With the many political ideologies taking place at any point in time among leaders, conflicts in the priorities of governmental program priorities are likely to exist and thus peace culture suffers.

Table 2. Extent of student preferences in business, safety, and social related careers

Rank	Career	Mean	Preference
1	Business Management	2.63	Moderate
2	Criminology	2.57	Moderate
3	Accountancy	2.56	Moderate
4	Hotel and Restaurant Management	2.54	Moderate
5.5	Police Force	2.49	Less
5.5	Military Force	2.49	Less
7	Custom Administration	2.43	Less
8	Secretarial/Office Management	2.39	Less
9	Banking and Finance	2.36	Less
10	Law	2.29	Less
11.5	Economics	2.25	Less
11.5	Social Works	2.25	Less
13	Mass Communication	2.23	Less
14	International Relations	2.14	Less
15	Political Science	2.13	Less
16	Psychology	2.03	Less
Grand Mean		2.36	Less

Preference Scale: *None at All* – 1.00 to 1.49, *Less* – 1.50 to 2.50, *Moderate* – 2.51 to 3.49, *High* – 3.50 to 4.50, and *Very High* – 4.51 to 5.00

Although peace is of universal interest among cultures, yet there is no globally accepted best political strategy to achieve it. The claim for a stable democratic ground takes the lead towards the fundamentals of domestic and international peace culture. Hence, the realm of the issue towards peace is not on democratization but creating the path for a stable democracy, and that creating a long-term peace largely depends on the internalization of democratic tenets the norms and values among people across states or nations (Tremly, Nikolenyi & Otmar, 2003). Given the data in the study, the responses of the students elicit information of their negative views on existing conflicting state of political agenda, economics, and the practices that define democratization in Philippine context. As a consequence, they manifest their desire to evade from any of these clustered careers.

4.3. On technical and technological careers

The highest preference, although only “moderate”, was on computer technology, from which the food technology followed. The fishery, automotive, garment, cosmetology courses landed to the lowest preference. Of the 18 identified courses, only 1 came out to have “moderate” extent

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of preference. The rests were all given “less” preference. An arrived grand mean of 2.26 marked the less preference in this cluster. Table 3 unleashes the data.

Table 3. Extent of student preferences in technical and technological careers

Rank	Career	Mean	Preference
1	Computer Technology	2.62	Moderate
2	Foods Technology	2.45	Less
3	Refrigeration and Air-conditioning	2.37	Less
4	Electronics Technology	2.36	Less
5	Drafting	2.33	Less
6	Marine and Transportation	2.32	Less
7.5	Agricultural Technology	2.30	Less
7.5	Forestry	2.30	Less
9	Civil Technology	2.28	Less
10	Mechanical Technology	2.24	Less
11	Architecture	2.19	Less
12	Instrumentation Technology	2.18	Less
13	Welding and Fabrication	2.15	Less
14	Electrical Technology	2.14	Less
15	Fishery Technology	2.13	Less
16	Garments Technology	2.12	Less
17	Automotive Mechanics	2.10	Less
18	Cosmetology	2.06	Less
Grand Mean		2.26	Less

Preference Scale: *None at All* – 1.00 to 1.49, *Less* – 1.50 to 2.50, *Moderate* – 2.51 to 3.49, *High* – 3.50 to 4.50, and *Very High* – 4.51 to 5.00

The result implies that the students find the work in these clustered courses less attractive. They avoid tinkering some parts of the machines and gadgets. They lack the interest to see more of them able to operate and repair various equipment and facilities in the industry. They dislike a job that allows them to improve or develop new products and project performances. Implied further in the study is the thought that the secondary students are not still convinced to Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) related programs on blue-collared jobs. They like to maintain themselves well-groomed while at work. To these students, they see these courses inviting to some discomforts as they may see themselves uncomfortable working in the possible noisy and messy environment, and to certain extent handling dirty tools and materials. Implied further from the data that these courses are also very risky as it involves heavy equipment and tools one employed to the chosen careers. Notwithstanding, the critical analysis of some measurement for the learning outcomes of the course. However, courses that are descriptive of the computer utilization is found worth offering in every tertiary institution.

4.4. On engineering careers

Reflected in Table 4, the 2 top engineering courses were on the computer and civil that obtained the “moderate” extent. The courses that belonged to the top 5 were the mechanical, industrial, nautical and agricultural. The lowest career were the geodetic and aeronautics. The grand mean of 2.33 suggests the less preference of the students on theses clustered courses.

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Table 4. Extent of student preferences in engineering careers

Rank	Career	Mean	Preference
1	Computer Engineering	2.69	Moderate
2	Civil Engineering	2.60	Moderate
3	Mechanical Engineering	2.43	Less
4	Industrial Engineering	2.38	Less
5.5	Nautical Engineering	2.37	Less
5.5	Agricultural Engineering	2.37	Less
7	Electrical Engineering	2.36	Less
8	Marine Engineering	2.35	Less
9	Chemical Engineering	2.29	Less
10	Electronics Engineering	2.28	Less
11	Mining Engineering	2.24	Less
12	Instrumentation Engineering	2.15	Less
13	Geodetic Engineering	2.09	Less
14	Aeronautics Engineering	2.08	Less
Grand Mean		2.33	Less

Preference Scale: *None at All* – 1.00 to 1.49, *Less* – 1.50 to 2.50, *Moderate* – 2.51 to 3.49, *High* – 3.50 to 4.50, and *Very High* – 4.51 to 5.00

The study disclosed the average interests of the students to become innovators and change agents in business and industry. They like a job that allows them to discover new methods and processes for producing new machines and products for humanity. They, however, lack the high interest to become inventors in the field of technology and explore some challenges in sciences across disciplines. As these courses requires the mathematical and analytical skills of the students, they are likely not inclined to selecting courses which demands critical thinking. In addition, a deeper analysis of the data suggests that the students are not risk takers. They like to be in the job where they work demands lesser in physical strength or efforts and are distant from hazardous environment. They do not like to explore working in the environment where they are surrounded with some chemicals and direct exposure to electrical hazards. For them, exploring the world through working in deep waters or at the areal heights is as if putting their lives to extreme risk.

With these findings, the tertiary schools have to take extra care in offering courses that deals with the navigable waters as well as those that require working in deeper grounds. They have to have a deeper examination of offering courses that may put risk of electrocution and chemical burns. Offering farming related courses in the locality is also less attractive to the millennial generations. For them, taking careers related to agriculture is as if continuing the works available in their environment and just a perpetration of the sources of income their parents and the common residents in the locality engaged into.

4.5. On teacher education course

Of the 24 listed specializations, only 11 captured the “moderate” extent of preference, as disclosed in Table 5. These include language related courses, computer, foods, general and social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, physics, and agriculture. The courses, that placed towards the lowest rank were the fishery, welding, garments, statistics and cosmetology, The grand mean of 2.46 supports the “less” preference in education courses for the students.

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The findings unfold the sufficient interest of the students to be prime deliverers of knowledge in various fields of learning. They like to be the leading agents in developing and improving the lives of people through a responsive and high level of quality education for children. They are interested to become models for the growing children and explore new things available for advanced learning in various courses. They find the better investment of their services in the young learners, as professional deliverers of knowledge, for the holistic development and growth of the millennial generation.

On specific terms, the students like to see themselves soon being surrounded with young learners wanting for knowledge and skills on languages, and those dealing with computers and home related activities. They are also inclined to work with young generations who have the interest in exploring the world of natural sciences. The view is furthered when Faikhamta, Ketsing, Tanak, and Chamrat (2018) considered this profession as key driver of reforms in science education, where it takes the challenge of “providing sufficient teacher preparation in respect to pedagogical content knowledge and reflective and research-based activities”. For those students who desired to become language teachers, the study suggests of their becoming linguist amidst multilingual nature of Filipinos. This view is advanced in study of Ziegler (2013) where it emphasized that being continually confronted with issues of “multilingual education and diversity on various and exceedingly heterogeneous levels with regard to plurilingual’ realities, stakeholders and key decision-makers have developed visions of the situation of language teacher education and its structures”.

Table 5. Extent of student preferences in teacher education careers

Rank	Career	Mean	Preference
1	Filipino	2.99	Moderate
2	Computer	2.78	Moderate
3	Foods	2.71	Moderate
4	English	2.63	Moderate
5	General Science	2.57	Moderate
6	Social Science	2.55	Moderate
7.5	Biology	2.54	Moderate
7.5	Chemistry	2.54	Moderate
9.5	Mathematics	2.53	Moderate
9.5	Physics	2.53	Moderate
11	Agriculture	2.50	Moderate
12	Industrial Arts	2.45	Less
13	Drafting	2.40	Less
14	Electronics	2.39	Less
15	Automotive	2.37	Less
16	Mechanical	2.36	Less
17.5	Electrical	2.33	Less
17.5	Refrigeration and Air-conditioning	2.33	Less
19	Civil	2.30	Less
20	Fishery	2.27	Less
21	Garments	2.25	Less
22	Welding and Fabrication	2.24	Less
23	Statistics	2.20	Less
24	Cosmetology	2.16	Less
Grand Mean		2.46	Less

Preference Scale: *None at All* – 1.00 to 1.49, *Less* – 1.50 to 2.50, *Moderate* – 2.51 to 3.49, *High* – 3.50 to 4.50, and *Very High* – 4.51 to 5.00

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On these bases, the tertiary schools have the great opportunity to offer teacher education courses in various disciplines that permeates the desires of the students to engage into the various the various activities on teaching-learning process.

4.6. On summary

The holistic picture on the career preferences of the senior secondary students are revealed in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary data on extent of student career preferences

Rank	Career	Mean	Preference
5	medical and health related careers	2.08	Less
2	business, safety, and social related careers	2.36	Less
4	technical and technological careers	2.26	Less
3	engineering careers	2.33	Less
1	teacher education careers	2.46	Less
Grand Mean		2.30	Less

Preference Scale: *None at All* – 1.00 to 1.49, *Less* – 1.50 to 2.50, *Moderate* – 2.51 to 3.49, *High* – 3.50 to 4.50, and *Very High* – 4.51 to 5.00

Chi-square values: $X^2 = 0.035$ $df = 4$ $X^2_{.05} = 9.49$

The data unleashed information that of the 5 clustered careers, the respondents proved their highest on the teacher education careers with the mean of 2.46, ranked 1; and ranked second were on business, safety, and social related careers that marked the mean of 2.36. Although these clustered careers were all labeled with less preference, the lowest went to the medical and health related careers that scored a mean of 2.08, ranked 5. In sum, the preference of the respondents on these clustered careers was “less” as marked by the grand mean of 2.30. Nevertheless, the data implied the priority courses to be offered in the tertiary schools will be on teacher education while on the medical or health related courses will be the least. This further implied that the senior secondary students find their better employment after graduation in teacher education, thus, they evade from becoming contributors of unemployment.

Unemployment and underemployment are generally hinged with the unintelligent career decision-making that makes the college graduates misfit in the needed workforce of various employment markets. Their career preferences of secondary students are remarkably related to their academic achievements and the availability of work opportunities after graduation. In consideration of the occupation of their fathers, they much choose professional and scientific related courses but least in agricultural fields (Pascual, 2014). The findings of the author in the reference tend to be strengthened with the inclusion of the availability of the courses within the reach of the students in the locality. The respondent in this study gave high preference and vet to enroll in teacher education, on account that it is offered in all Higher Education Institutions in the province of Surigao del Norte.

4.7. Hypothesis test

The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the preferences of the students among the 5 clustered careers was tested using the chi-square for independence. The computed Chi-square of 0.035 proves that there was no significant difference in the career preferences of students. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted as it did not reach or exceed the required

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critical value of 9.49 at 5% error margin and 4 degrees of freedom. Thus, the respondents expressed no remarkable variations in their career preferences. This further suggests that these identified courses in each clustered career may be offered at the same time, although their highest preference was set on Teacher Education programs. The incoming college freshmen of the Surigao del Norte province and Surigao City have their highest preference in the teaching profession, and also those dealing with computers. Moreover, the career preferences of the secondary students are likely similar to all the 5 clustered careers.

The tertiary institutions in the school divisions of Surigao City, Surigao del Norte, and Siargao are encouraged to prioritize offering the courses leading to teacher education with specializations in language sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, computer sciences, technical, and technological careers. School administrators are also urged to facilitate the procurement of the needed materials and equipment for smooth operation of the programs. In addition, the guidance offices are heartened to design annual program on disseminating career information every year to senior secondary students to help the latter make intelligent-career decision making.

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