

## FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' CAREER CHOICES AT HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the factors influencing students' career choices in Gilgit's higher secondary schools, employing Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making. Using a quantitative approach, the research aimed to identify the impact of predetermined factors, including Gender, media, academic reasons, Family influence, Peer influence, Teacher influence, and Personal interest. While uncertainty surrounds the influence of gender, media, and academic reasons on career choices, the study reveals significant impacts of family, peer, and teacher influence. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study on factors influencing students' career choices at the higher secondary school level in district Gilgit, Gilgit-Baltistan utilized a quantitative strategy involving mean, percentage, and multiple regression analyses for predetermined and additional factors, alongside qualitative insights from closed-ended questions and in-depth interviews, with a sample of 330 students from 24 institutions; the research instrument, a modified career choice questionnaire, incorporated a 5-point Likert scale and an open-ended question, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dynamics shaping students' career decisions. The findings underscore the importance of collaborative efforts among parents, teachers, and students to enhance academic performance and foster a supportive family environment, shaping students' career trajectories."*

**Keywords:** Students, career, factor

### INTRODUCTION

"Education serves as our gateway to the future, for the future belongs to those who prepare for it today" (Malcolm, 2014). Choosing a career has become increasingly complex, influenced by various factors. Selecting the right profession poses a significant challenge for individuals. Making the correct career choice empowers individuals to contribute to the sustainability and success of an organization. Informed individuals who understand the factors impacting career choices are more likely to make appropriate decisions (Nyamwange, 2016).

Among the most pivotal decisions a student will make in shaping their future plans is choosing a career. This decision will have lasting implications for students, as they harbor aspirations for a fulfilling life and a successful future based on their career choices. Even the wealthiest entrepreneur would struggle to establish a successful career without obtaining an education (Block et al., 2018). Selecting a career is the most crucial and challenging decision in our modern times. The future success of an individual hinges on how they choose their field

of interest. Numerous factors play a significant role in influencing the career choices of both men and women. Students grapple with dilemmas when deciding on their career path, as they can't make this choice independently due to various external factors. These factors encompass economic considerations, social influences, personal interests, job prospects, parenting styles, teacher motivation, demographic variables, technological advancements, and students' academic performance. Parents have a 60% influence on their children's career choices, while teacher motivation accounts for 38.4% of the impact. Teachers, whether within the family or outside, exert direct and indirect influence based on their personality and motivation. Additionally, job availability significantly contributes to students' career choices, with 34% of students selecting careers based on regional job opportunities. Personal interest guides the career choice of 30.2% of students (Ngussa & Charles, 2019).

When students begin to choose their careers at the higher secondary level, they often lack certainty. Sometimes, driven by initial enthusiasm, they pick a career without considering their personality traits. Later on, they might have to either abandon that choice or persist with it due to a lack of alternatives, resulting in difficulties caused by an incorrect career selection (Querido, 2018).

According to Waust and Simic (2017), students' job preferences hold significant importance for various stakeholders such as university administrators, career counselors, higher education policymakers, and business HR managers. Meeting the professional preferences and aspirations of students results in more motivated and productive employees. The Hofstede model highlights substantial differences between Germans and Croatians concerning factors related to their socioeconomic environment and cultural variations. For German students, high income, trust, and secure job prospects are crucial, while Croatian students prioritize career opportunities, socially respected professions, and social values.

An individual's career choice can impact their standard of living, social standing, income, emotional well-being, and self-esteem. Therefore, making the right career choices reduces the financial investment in education and training. Moreover, an individual's life is significantly influenced by the

profession or career they choose (Nyamwange, 2016).

In American classrooms, there is a growing number of students migrating from Africa. School counselors play a unique role in helping these students prepare for college and careers. It's vital for school counselors to understand the interplay between cultural norms, family dynamics, potential, acculturation processes, and the marginalization of immigrant families in addressing the needs and concerns of these children. The major factors affecting the career decision-making of African immigrant students include family influence, cultural identity and values, role models, financial challenges, and individual factors (Wambu et al., 2017).

Difficulties in making career decisions are viewed as potential obstacles to making informed career choices. Career selection is a crucial element for an individual's successful future, influenced by professional goals, life aspirations, skills, failures, abilities, expectations, and personal preferences. It's important to recognize that experiencing difficulty in choosing a career path is not unusual but rather a common occurrence. Recent technological, sociological, and economic changes have created an increasingly complex job environment. Research has shown links between personality traits (Extraversion, Emotional instability, Conscientiousness, Openness, except Agreeableness) and emotional intelligence traits (Emotional self-regulation, Self-awareness, Empathy, Motivation, and social skills) and the difficulty of career selection. Furthermore, some personality traits (Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and openness) and emotional intelligence traits (Emotional self-regulation, Self-awareness, Motivation, Empathy, and social skills) have negative correlations, while others (Openness, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness) have positive correlations (Kirdok & Korkmaz, 2018).

Making career decisions based on intrinsic factors, such as genuine interest and opportunities for personal growth, tends to result in greater happiness and commitment compared to decisions based on external factors like pressure or family preferences for a specific location. Research findings indicate that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors positively correlate with future job satisfaction and commitment. However, extrinsic elements like pay

were found to be positively related to future intentions but negatively related to job satisfaction. This suggests that both inner and extrinsic considerations when initially choosing a job can influence subsequent satisfaction and commitment (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980).

The proportion of students pursuing psychiatry in medical schools is influenced by the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as the quality of psychiatric education. Extrinsic factors from the community and region did not show significant links to the ratio of students entering psychiatry. The proportion of foreign medical graduates in psychiatric residency had a slight inverse relationship with the ratio of students choosing psychiatry (Sierles et al., 2003).

Selecting a career is one of the most critical decisions a person makes in their life, with far-reaching consequences. A career significantly impacts an individual's income, personality, and life outlook. It represents a lifelong quest for personal achievement, encompassing various roles people undertake to sustain their livelihoods, whether they are students, employees, parents, retirees, or employers (Okwulehie, 2018).

Historically, research in newly emerging professions like librarianship has focused on technical aspects rather than curriculum development and career. Prior employment experiences in libraries influenced students' decisions to pursue Information Science and Master of Library programs. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drove students to engage in graduate studies in Information Science and Library disciplines. Students from the University of Copenhagen were particularly influenced by internal characteristics (Ho et al., 2018).

Parents, teachers, friends, peers, and demographic factors are known to play pivotal roles in students' career choices. Parenting styles, including authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful approaches, and demographic factors such as gender, school type, and parents' professions significantly influence an individual within a specific geographical location. Career choices are long-term goals that require careful consideration and awareness during the selection process. Early choices profoundly impact an individual's future. Those who choose a career aligned with their interests through mutual understanding with parents

and other influential members of society are less likely to face challenges in their future (Author, Year).

Many students encounter challenges when selecting a career, often grappling with multiple decisions throughout their lives as they seek the path to a brighter future (Fényes et al., 2019).

Research by Fizer (2013) indicates that students' career choices are influenced by various factors. Family influence plays a role for 22% of students, 21% choose based on personal interest, 20% are influenced by exemplary individuals in society, while school size and a farming background don't significantly affect career choices.

Students today face a range of problems, including poverty, governance issues, ignorance, mental health concerns, job scarcity, communication difficulties, and inadequate housing. Education is seen as the key to addressing these challenges effectively. To navigate these difficulties, students should consider their personality traits when selecting a career (Olamide, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this study, Krumboltz's social learning theory of career decision making (CDM) was used because it offers valuable insights into understanding students' career choices at the higher secondary school level. This theory was chosen due to its strong alignment with the factors influencing career decisions. It encompasses both cognitive and social elements that impact students' career choices. This theory acknowledges the role of students' interactions with the social environment, where they learn from various individuals and experiences, ultimately influencing their career choices. Furthermore, it assists students in gaining awareness of their career options by addressing cognitive aspects.

### **Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making**

John Krumboltz developed the Social Learning Theory for career choices in 1976, building upon Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and revising it in 1997. Krumboltz and his colleagues (1976) proposed that individuals' career choices, whether in education or occupation, and the factors influencing those choices are of great importance. According to Krumboltz (1976), there are four primary dimensions

within his theory that influence individuals' educational and occupational careers. Dimensions are: Genetic endowment pertains to inherent qualities such as physical attributes, race, intelligence, talents, gender, and individual characteristics that are present from birth. These qualities, often referred to as innate abilities, are part of an individual's natural makeup.

Environmental conditions and events encompass various factors that individuals cannot control, including environmental, social, cultural, political, and technological influences. These factors, which are not inherent, also comprise elements such as job opportunities, expectations of outcomes, job characteristics, available training prospects, policy frameworks, employment rewards, technological advancements, family resources, and educational experiences in both work and educational settings.

Instrumental and associative learning experiences involve the process of acquiring knowledge and behaviors from the surrounding environment, typically through observation and learning from the actions of others within the community, neighborhood, and similar contexts.

The task approach involves an individual's understanding of how to approach a specific task and gaining experience and skills through interactions among environmental conditions, genetic endowments, and learning experiences. These acquired skills encompass work habits, decision-making abilities, problem-solving skills, and behavioral aptitudes. These behavioral skills include self-observation and forming generalizations about one's interests, abilities, values, and the world at large.

This study comprises seven independent variables: gender, media influence, academic reasons, family, peers, teachers, and students' personal interest. The dependent variable in this research is the career choices made by individuals. All these independent variables are components of four major dimensions: genetic endowment, environmental conditions and events, instrumental and associative learning experiences, and task approach. The task approach skill is essentially an amalgamation of the other three dimensions. Individuals gather experiences and skills from their societal interactions and then engage in self-observation. Based on this self-assessment, they develop their interests.

Individuals assess their skills through cognitive processes, drawing upon what they have learned, observed, and experienced from their environment. They connect these observed skills to their surroundings and determine their capabilities. Consequently, they engage in activities where they can excel, driven by the skills they have acquired. As they continue to learn and develop these skills, they also shape their interests and work habits (Walsh and Osipow, 2014).

Mtemeri (2017) underscores that the social learning theory places a strong emphasis on cognition, involving knowing and thinking, as well as action in the form of behaviors. Individuals acquire learning experiences from their social interactions, and these experiences significantly influence the career choices of students.

## METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was used for data collection, involving the use of mean, percentage, and multiple regression to assess predetermined and additional factors impacting students' career decisions.. Data was gathered through closed-ended questions.

The study encompassed all higher secondary school students, both public and private (boys, girls, and mixed), in Gilgit district, totaling 2,185 students across 25 higher secondary schools.

The sample consisted of 330 higher secondary school students from 24 institutions, comprising six public and eighteen private schools in the Gilgit district, Gilgit-Baltistan. Among them, 160 were first-year students, and 170 were second-year students, including 188 boys and 142 girls. Notably, one higher secondary school (Global Higher Secondary School) was excluded as its students were used for pilot testing.

To assess and explore the factors influencing students' career choices at the higher secondary school level, the researcher utilized a modified career choice questionnaire developed by Kazi (2017). This instrument consisted of two parts. The first part included 38 closed-ended questions with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," to collect quantitative data. These questions evaluated the impact of seven factors (Gender, Media, Academic Reasons, Family, Teachers, Peers, and Personal Interest) on students' career choices. The second part featured an open-

ended question, aimed at exploring additional factors influencing career choices at this level. The instrument had seven constructs, each with its own set of statements. For instance, the Gender influence construct included four statements, while the Media influence construct contained five statements, and so on.

This study was conducted to determine the factors affecting students' career choices at higher secondary school level in district Gilgit, Gilgit-Baltistan. A mixed method approach was used for data collection. Mean and percentage were used to find out the predetermined factors and explore other factors affecting students' career choices and multiple regression was used to measure the affect of predetermined factors affecting students' career choices at higher secondary school level, and adopted convergent research design because researcher collected and analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, where the data was collected through closed ended questions and in-depth interviews and analyzed statistically by using mean, percentage and multiple regression.

All public and private higher secondary school (boys/girls/mixed) students of district Gilgit were the population of the study. There are 2185 students in 25 higher secondary schools in district Gilgit.

**Sample size**

A sample of 330 students from higher secondary schools in the Gilgit district, Gilgit-Baltistan, was

**Results**

*The effect of gender on students' career choice*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
GA1	56(17.0%)	83(25.2%)	9(2.7%)	107(32.4%)	75(22.7%)	3.18
GA2	98(29.7%)	140(42.4%)	25(7.6%)	46(13.9)	21(6.4%)	2.24
GA3	83(25.2%)	169(51.2%)	25(7.2%)	29(8.8%)	24(7.3%)	2.21
GA4	34(10.3%)	121(36.7%)	35(10.6%)	91(27.6%)	49(14.8%)	3.00
Overall mean						2.7

The findings reveal the mean value of all statements and the overall mean score for the construct. In the case of gender influence (GA), the overall mean score was 2.7, indicating that the participants exhibited indecision regarding the impact of gender

**Table**

*To determine the effect of media on students' career choice*

chosen for this study. This sample represented 24 higher secondary schools, including six public and eighteen private institutions. The selection included 160 first-year students and 170 second-year students, with 188 being male and 142 female. It's important to note that one higher secondary school, specifically the Global Higher Secondary School, was excluded from the sample as its students were used in a pilot test.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher employed a career choice questionnaire adapted from Kazi (2017) to investigate the factors influencing students' career decisions at the higher secondary school level. This questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part included 38 closed-ended questions, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for quantitative data. These questions aimed to assess the impact of seven factors (Gender, Media, Academic Reasons, Family, Teachers, Peers, and Personal Interest) on students' career choices. The questionnaire comprised seven constructs, each containing a set of statements. For example, the Gender influence construct included four statements, while Media influence had five, Academic Reasons had four, Family influence contained seven, Peer influence had eight, Teacher influence included six, and Personal Interest comprised four statements.

on the career choices of higher secondary school students.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
MA1	48(14.5%)	105(31.8%)	20(6.1%)	107(32.4%)	50(15.2%)	3.0182
MA2	48(14.5%)	141(42.7%)	33(10.0%)	73(22.1%)	34(10.3%)	2.7151
MA3	49(14.8%)	141(42.7%)	33(10.0%)	73(22.1%)	34(10.3%)	2.7030
MA4	55(16.7%)	133(40.3%)	29(8.8%)	70(21.2%)	43(13.0%)	2.7164
MA5	58(17.6%)	147(44.5%)	23(7.0%)	71(21.6%)	31(9.4%)	2.6061
Overall Mean						2.8

The table displayed an overall mean score of 2.8 for media influence (MA), indicating that most students

appeared uncertain about the impact of media on their career choices

**Table 4.11 (c)**

*To determine the effect of academic reasons on students' career choices*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
AR1	66(20.0%)	110(33.3%)	22(6.7%)	77(23.3%)	55(16.7%)	2.83
AR2	27(8.2%)	68(20.6%)	35(10.6%)	146(44.2%)	54(16.4%)	3.4
AR3	31(9.4%)	76(23.0%)	30(9.1%)	131(39.7%)	62(18.8%)	3.35
AR4	30(9.1%)	77(23.3%)	36(10.9%)	110(33.3%)	77(23.3%)	3.38
Overall Mean						3.2

The table displayed an overall mean score of 3.2 for academic reasons, indicating that students appeared

uncertain about the impact of academic reasons on their career choices.

**Table**

*To determine the effect of family on students' career choices*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
FA1	41(21.4%)	91(27.6%)	18(5.5%)	96(29.1%)	84(25.5%)	3.2758
FA2	49(14.8%)	57(17.3%)	17(5.2%)	146(44.2%)	61(18.5%)	3.34
FA3	64(19.4%)	73(22.1%)	20(6.1%)	135(40.9%)	38(11.5%)	3.03
FA4	47(14.2%)	75(22.7%)	20(6.1%)	145(43.9%)	43(13.0%)	3.1879
FA5	29(8.8%)	53(16.1%)	24(7.3%)	169(51.2%)	55(16.7%)	3.5091
FA6	34(10.3%)	38(11.5%)	22(6.7%)	155(47.0%)	81(24.5%)	3.6394
FA7	29(8.8%)	36(10.9%)	27(8.2%)	155(47.0%)	83(25.2%)	3.6879
Overall Mean						3.4

The table presented the mean values of individual items and the overall mean score for the construct. The overall mean score for family influence (FA)

was 3.4, indicating that the career choices of students were indeed influenced by their families (Sozen and Guven, 2019).

**Table 4.11 (e)**

*To assess the effect of peers on students' career choices*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
PA1	70(21.2%)	89(27.0%)	24(7.3%)	88(26.7%)	59(17.9%)	2.93
PA2	51(15.5%)	101(30.6%)	27(8.2%)	108(32.7%)	43(13.0%)	2.97

PA3	28(8.5%)	72(21.8%)	39(11.8%)	140(42.4%)	51(15.5%)	3.3455
PA4	35(10.6%)	47(14.2%)	35(10.6%)	178(53.9%)	49(14.8%)	3.5667
PA5	24(7.3%)	45(13.6%)	25(7.6%)	184(55.8%)	52(15.8%)	3.5901
PA6	22(6.7%)	44(13.3%)	21(6.4%)	175(53.0%)	68(20.6%)	3.6758
PA7	18(5.5%)	36(10.9%)	11(3.3%)	176(53.3%)	89(27.0%)	3.8545
PA8	27(8.2%)	48(14.5%)	21(6.4%)	154(46.7%)	80(24.2%)	3.4624
Overall Mean						3.4

The table indicated an overall mean score of 3.4 for the influence of peers, with the majority of respondents concurring that peers play a significant

role in shaping the career choices of higher secondary school students.

**Table 4.11(f)**

*To investigate the effect of teachers on students' career choices*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
TA1	43(13.0%)	88(26.7%)	11(3.3%)	11(3.3%)	114(34.5%)	74(22.4%)
TA2	20(6.1%)	44(13.3%)	20(6.1%)	166(50.3%)	80(24.2%)	3.7333
TA3	35(10.6%)	77(23.3%)	23(7.0%)	137(41.5%)	58(17.6%)	3.3212
TA4	43(13.0%)	85(25.8%)	25(7.6%)	122(37.0%)	55(16.7%)	3.1848
TA5	58(17.6%)	74(22.4%)	34(10.3%)	103(31.2%)	61(18.5%)	3.1061
TA6	38(11.5%)	50(15.2%)	21(6.4%)	132(40.0%)	89(27.0%)	3.5576
Overall Mean						3.4

The table presented an overall mean score of 3.4 for the influence of teachers. The results indicate that a

majority of respondents agreed that teachers have an impact on career choices.

**Table 4.11 (g)**

*To determine the effect of personal interest on students' career choices*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
PI1	13(3.9%)	16(4.8%)	21(6.4%)	168(50.9%)	112(33.9%)	4.0606
PI2	12(3.6%)	15(4.5%)	17(5.2%)	168(50.9%)	118(35.8%)	4.1061
PI3	7(2.1%)	18(5.5%)	15(4.5%)	141(42.7%)	149(45.2%)	4.2333
PI4	52(15.8%)	92(27.9%)	17(5.2%)	96(29.1%)	73(22.1%)	3.1394
Overall mean						4.0

The table displayed an overall mean value of 4.0 for personal interest, signifying that the majority of respondents were in agreement that the career choices of higher secondary school students are influenced by their personal interests. Notably, personal interest emerged as the most influential factor among the predetermined factors.

**Table 4.12**

*Factors affecting the career choices of secondary school students*

Career choices factors	Chi Square	P value
Gender	61.1	.02
Media	72.8	.12
Academic Reason	59.7	.11
Family	114.9	.008
Peer	102.06	.24
Teacher	70.5	.42
Personal Interest	61.8	.04

In Table 4.12, it is evident that gender and personal interest are the primary factors influencing students' career choices at the secondary school level. In contrast, other factors like media, academic reasons, family, teachers, and peers were determined to be non-significant in terms of their influence.

**Table 4.12 (a)**

*To find out the gender based effect on students' career choices*

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Boys	2.8	188	1.09675
Girls	2.6	142	1.08632
Total	2.7	330	1.09629

The table above illustrates the influence of students' gender on their career choices. Among the respondents, 2.8% of boys concurred that their career decisions were influenced by their gender, while an equal percentage of girls (2.8%) agreed that their choice was shaped by their gender.

**Table 4.12 (b)**

S.No	Factor	Mean	R.Square	B Coefficient	T	Sig
1	Gender	2.7	.019	-.043	-1.437	.154
2	Media	2.8	.003	-.013	-.560	.577
3	Academic Reason	3.2	.015	.038	1.266	.208
4	Family	3.4	.054	.039	2.486	.014
5	Peer	3.4	.001	-.004	-.285	.776
6	Teacher	3.4	.003	-.012	-.599	.550
7	Personal Interest	4.0	.023	-.055	-1.77	.118

The preceding table provides information regarding the impact of various factors on career choices.

For the influence of gender on career choices, the R-square value was found to be 0.019, with a negative B value (-0.043), suggesting an inverse effect. However, this influence was not statistically significant, as indicated by a t-value of -1.437 and a p-value of 0.154.

Similarly, in the case of media's effect on career choices, the R-square value was 0.003, and the B value was negative (-0.013), also indicating an inverse effect. However, this influence was not statistically significant, with a t-value of -0.560 and a p-value of 0.577.

In contrast, the influence of academic reasons on career choices showed a significant positive effect, with an R-square value of 0.015 and a positive B value (0.038). This was statistically significant, as reflected by a t-value of 1.266, albeit with a p-value of 0.208.

The impact of family on career choices was also significant, with an R-square value of 0.054 and a

positive B value (0.039). This positive effect was statistically significant, with a t-value of 2.486 and a p-value of 0.014.

On the other hand, peer influence on career choices showed a non-significant inverse effect, with an R-square value of 0.001 and a negative B value (-0.004). The statistical analysis revealed a t-value of -0.285 and a p-value of 0.776.

Similarly, teachers' influence on career choices exhibited a non-significant inverse effect, with an R-square value of 0.003 and a negative B value (-0.012). This was not statistically significant, as indicated by a t-value of -0.599 and a p-value of 0.550.

Finally, the impact of personal interest on career choices yielded an R-square value of 0.023, with a negative B value (-0.055), signifying an inverse effect. However, this influence was not statistically significant, with a t-value of -1.577 and a p-value of 0.118.



## DISCUSSION

The study aimed to identify and explore factors influencing students' career choices at the higher secondary school level in the Gilgit district of Gilgit-Baltistan. SPSS version 20 was used for analysis, employing mean scores, percentages, chi-square, and multiple regression. Krumboltz's social learning theory of career choice (1975, 1979) was utilized. The study's primary objectives were to determine the impact of predetermined factors, including gender, media, academic reasons, peers, family, teachers, and personal interest, on students' career choices at this level. The analysis revealed that students' career choices were significantly influenced by their personal interests, consistent with previous research.

Super's self-concept theory also underscores the role of psychological factors, such as interests, needs, abilities, and specific aptitudes, in career development. The study found that family influence was not a major factor in career choices, possibly due to the lack of awareness among parents regarding career options. Furthermore, teachers were not found to be significant influencing factors at the secondary level, mainly because there is a lack of career guidance provided by teachers. The study recommended implementing effective strategies, such as career counselor guidance, parental-teacher collaboration, workshops, and seminars, to help students make well-informed career choices.

The analysis showed that the mean scores for gender, media, and academic reasons were 2.7, 2.8, and 3.2, respectively, indicating that students were uncertain about the influence of these factors on their career choices. However, gender was found to be the most influential factor, with cultural and social norms playing a significant role in shaping students' career decisions. It was noted that media had a considerable impact on students' career choices, with 78% of respondents indicating its influence.

Other factors, such as academic reasons, family, peers, teachers, and personal interest, were deemed significant influences on students' career choices, with mean scores of 3.5. These factors were highlighted as playing crucial roles in career decisions. Personal interest was identified as a primary factor in career choice, as students make

selections based on their interests and experiences acquired from their environment.

The study emphasized the importance of considering multiple factors when exploring career choices, with personal interest being a dominant influencer. It recommended strategies to enhance career guidance and awareness, ensuring that students can make well-informed career decisions based on their knowledge, interests, and aptitudes. Various research studies corroborated the significance of factors like parents, peers, media, academic performance, and personal interest in influencing students' career choices. Family, teachers, and cultural norms were also recognized as influential factors in career decisions. Ultimately, personal interest was acknowledged as a dominant factor in determining career choices.

In summary, this study illuminates the complex factors influencing students' career choices. These insights benefit educators, parents, and students, fostering a deeper understanding of the pivotal forces that shape career decisions. This newfound awareness aids students in navigating the challenges of career selection and making informed choices. Students are uncertain about the impact of media, academics, and gender on their career choices. Conversely, family, teachers, and peers significantly influence students' career decisions, with personal interest standing out as the dominant factor. Gender differences surface primarily in perceptions related to family influence, while other factors show more consistent perceptions across genders. Additionally, the study explores other factors affecting career choices, including economics, religion, job prospects, and social status. This comprehensive understanding empowers students as they chart their future career paths.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To support students in their professional development, the government could employ career advisors. These resources would help students identify their interests and talents and make well-informed career decisions.

Schools should consider offering access to career counselors to facilitate effective career planning for their students.

Schools can foster collaboration among parents, teachers, educators, and school administrators to provide robust support for students in making career decisions.

### Limitation of the Study

The current study focused solely on higher secondary schools, both public and private, within Gilgit district to investigate the impact of factors like gender, media, academic reasons, family, peers, teachers, and personal interest on students' career choices. Some private schools had irregular class schedules, requiring the researcher to visit them in person for data collection, and a delay of eight days occurred due to the closure of three schools during a local strike. Additionally, in public schools, where many students faced difficulties comprehending the questionnaires, the researcher read the questionnaires aloud with translations.

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