

# Factors Influencing Career Choice Among College Students

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## Abstract

*Career choice is one of the most important decisions in an individual's life because it determines future employment opportunities, financial stability, social status, and personal satisfaction. In the modern educational environment, students are exposed to a wide range of career opportunities, making career decision-making more difficult and complex. The present study examines the major factors influencing career choices among college students. The research mainly focuses on four determinants: personal interest, family influence, social influence, and financial factors. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design. Primary data was collected from 143 respondents through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, and correlation analysis were used for data interpretation. The findings of the study reveal that personal interest significantly influences students' career decisions. However, financial factors emerged as the strongest determinant influencing career choice, especially among students belonging to lower and middle-income families. Family expectations and social influences such as peers, mentors, teachers, and social media also significantly shape students' career aspirations. The study concludes that career decisionmaking is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Educational institutions should establish effective career counselling and mentorship programs to help students make informed career decisions. Proper guidance and awareness regarding career opportunities can help students achieve professional success and personal satisfaction.*

*Keywords: Career Choice, College Students, Financial Factors, Family Influence, Personal Interest, Social Influence.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Career choice is one of the most significant decisions in a student's life because it influences future professional growth, financial stability, social identity, and personal fulfilment. The career selected by an individual determines not only employment opportunities but also overall quality of life and long-term satisfaction. According to Holland (1997), individuals generally prefer careers that align with their interests, personalities, and abilities. Students who select careers according to their passions and talents are more likely to experience professional success and job satisfaction.

Traditional professions such as medicine, engineering, law, and teaching are now accompanied by modern career opportunities in

digital marketing, entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, finance, content creation, and data science. Although these opportunities provide students with greater flexibility and career options, they also increase confusion and uncertainty during career decision-making. Students often face pressure from multiple sources while selecting careers.

Parents, peers, teachers, mentors, and society all influence students' career aspirations. In developing countries such as India, family expectations strongly affect career decisions because parents often encourage careers that provide financial stability, social prestige, and secure employment opportunities (Gupta C Srivastava, 2021).

Financial considerations are also major determinants of career choice. Students belonging to lower and middle-income families generally prioritize careers with high salaries and job security

rather than careers based on personal passion (Bashir et al., 2023). Rising unemployment and economic uncertainty further increase the importance of financially secure professions. Social factors such as social media, peer groups, mentors, and teachers also influence students' understanding of career success. Social media platforms expose students to successful professionals, entrepreneurial lifestyles, and emerging career opportunities, which shape their career aspirations (Al-Mamun et al., 2024).

Therefore, understanding the various factors influencing career choice is essential for helping students make informed and balanced career decisions. The present study attempts to examine the major determinants influencing career choice among college students.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the major factors influencing career choices among college students.
2. To examine the impact of personal interest and family influence on students' career decision-making.
3. To analyse the role of social and financial factors in shaping students' career aspirations.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Personal Interest and Career Choice**

According to Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice (1997), individuals prefer occupations that match their personalities and interests. Career satisfaction is higher when individuals choose careers according to their abilities and passions. Students who select careers aligned with their interests are more motivated and committed toward professional growth.

Hirschi and Valero (2022) found that students who choose careers according to intrinsic motivation and personal interest demonstrate greater career satisfaction and long-term commitment. Similarly, Patel and Mehta (2023) concluded that intrinsic motivation significantly influences career aspirations among management students. Super (1994) explained career development as a lifelong process influenced by self-concept, experiences, and social interactions.

His theory emphasizes that career choices evolve over time according to personal growth and environmental conditions.

### **2.2 Family Influence on Career Choice**

Family influence is one of the strongest determinants of career decision-making, especially in collectivist societies such as India. Parents often encourage students to choose careers that provide financial stability, social respect, and employment security.

Gupta and Srivastava (2021) observed that parental expectations strongly influence students' career choices in Indian society. Students frequently consider family opinions and expectations while making career decisions. Covered and Isaksen (2022) reported that family support positively affects students' confidence and career clarity. Students receiving emotional and motivational support from family members are more likely to make informed career decisions. Family income and educational background also influence career aspirations. Students from financially secure families may prioritize passion-based careers, whereas students from lower-income families often focus on financially stable professions.

### **2.3 Social Factors and Career Choice**

Social factors such as peers, mentors, teachers, role models, and media significantly influence students' career aspirations. Students are often inspired by successful individuals and peer achievements while selecting careers. Sudermann (2020) found that peers and professional role models play an important role in shaping career preferences among college students. Students generally compare their career choices with those of their friends and classmates. Al-Mamun et al. (2024) highlighted the growing influence of social media on career aspirations. Platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube expose students to modern professions, entrepreneurial success stories, and career opportunities across different industries. Teachers and mentors also help students gain career clarity and confidence through career guidance and counselling.

## **2.4 Financial Factors and Career Choice**

Financial considerations are among the strongest determinants influencing career decision-making among students. Students belonging to lower and middle-income families generally prioritize careers that provide stable income, job security, and financial growth opportunities.

Bashir et al. (2023) concluded that economic conditions significantly affect students' career preferences. High educational costs, unemployment, and economic uncertainty increase students' preference for financially secure professions.

Students often consider salary packages, return on educational investment, and employment opportunities before selecting careers. Financial responsibilities and family conditions also affect students' career decisions.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The present study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the factors influencing career choices among college students.

### **3.2 Sources of Data**

The study used both primary and secondary data.

#### **Primary Data**

Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed among students.

#### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data was collected from books, journals, research articles, and online academic sources.

### **3.3 Sampling Technique**

Convenience sampling method was used to collect responses from students belonging to different academic disciplines.

### **3.4 Sample Size**

The study included responses from 143 students.

## **3.5 Data Collection Tool**

A structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale was used for data collection.

The questionnaire included statements related to:

- Personal Interest
- Family Influence
- Social Influence
- Financial Factors

## **3.6 Statistical Tools Used**

The collected data was analysed using:

- Descriptive Statistics
- Percentage Analysis
- Correlation Analysis
- Mean and Standard Deviation

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Analysis of Personal Interest**

The findings revealed that personal interest strongly influences career decisions among students. Most respondents agreed that they prefer careers aligned with their talents, skills, and passions. Students believed that career satisfaction and personal growth are important while selecting careers.

Many respondents stated that choosing careers according to personal interest increases confidence, motivation, and long-term satisfaction. The findings support Hirschi and Valero (2022), who concluded that intrinsic motivation positively influences career satisfaction and commitment.

### **4.2 Analysis of Family Influence**

Family influence emerged as a major determinant of career choice. Many students stated that parental expectations and family discussions significantly affect their career decisions. Students often preferred careers that provide financial stability and social prestige due to family pressure.

Some respondents reported that their parents encouraged professions such as medicine, engineering, management, and government services because these careers are considered secure and respected in society. However, several students also stated that their families supported independent career decisions and encouraged them to follow their interests and abilities. These findings are

consistent with Gupta and Srivastava (2021), who emphasized the role of parental influence in career decision-making.

### **4.3 Analysis of Social Factors**

The study found that peers, mentors, teachers, and social media moderately influence students' career aspirations. Students reported that social media exposes them to modern professions, successful personalities, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Peer discussions and career achievements also affect students' understanding of successful careers. Many respondents agreed that guidance from mentors and teachers helps them gain career clarity and confidence. These findings support the research conducted by Al-Mamun et al. (2024), which highlighted the growing role of social media and mentorship in shaping career aspirations

### **4.4 Analysis of Financial Factors**

Financial considerations emerged as the strongest factor influencing career choice among students. Most respondents preferred careers that provide stable income, financial growth, and employment security. Students belonging to lower-income families showed stronger preference for financially secure careers because of economic responsibilities and family conditions.

Educational expenses and unemployment also significantly affected career decision-making. Many students believed that financially secure careers provide better opportunities for future stability and social mobility. These findings support Bashir et al. (2023), who concluded that financial stability significantly affects career decision-making among university students.

## **5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

1. Personal interest significantly influences students' career choices.
2. Family expectations strongly affect career decision-making.
3. Social factors moderately influence students' career aspirations.
4. Financial factors emerged as the strongest determinant of career choice.

5. Students from lower-income families prioritize job security and stable income.
6. Social media significantly shapes students' understanding of career success.
7. Career counselling positively affects students' career clarity and confidence.

## **6. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Career Counselling Programs**

Educational institutions should establish professional career counselling centres to guide students in making informed career decisions.

### **6.2 Awareness Regarding Emerging Careers**

Colleges should organize seminars and workshops to increase awareness regarding modern and emerging career opportunities.

### **6.3 Family Support**

Parents should encourage students to choose careers according to their interests and abilities rather than imposing societal expectations.

### **6.4 Mentorship Programs**

Educational institutions should introduce mentorship programs to help students gain career clarity and confidence.

### **6.5 Financial Assistance**

Government institutions should provide scholarships and financial support to economically weaker students.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

Career choice is one of the most important decisions in an individual's life because it directly affects future professional growth, financial stability, social identity, and personal satisfaction. In today's competitive and rapidly changing environment, students are exposed to numerous career opportunities, which makes the process of career decision-making more challenging and complex.

The present study aimed to examine the major factors influencing career choices among college students, with particular focus on personal interest, family influence, social influence, and financial factors. The findings of the study reveal that career decision-making is influenced by both internal and

external factors. Personal interest was found to play an important role in helping students select careers according to their abilities, passions, and long-term goals. Students who choose careers based on their interests are more likely to experience job satisfaction, motivation, and professional success. This finding supports Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice (1997), which explains that individuals perform better in careers that match their personalities and interests.

Family influence also emerged as a significant determinant of career choice. In Indian society, parents and family members strongly influence students' career decisions because they often prioritize social prestige, job security, and financial stability. Many students reported that parental expectations and family discussions affect their career preferences. While some families encourage independent decision-making, others place pressure on students to choose socially respected professions such as medicine, engineering, management, and government services.

Social factors such as peers, mentors, teachers, and social media were also found to influence students' career aspirations. Social media platforms expose students to different professions, successful personalities, and emerging career opportunities, which shape their understanding of career success. Guidance from mentors and teachers also helps students gain career clarity and confidence.

Among all the variables studied, financial factors emerged as the strongest determinant influencing career choice. Most students preferred careers that provide stable income, financial growth, and job security. Students belonging to lower and middle-income families showed greater preference for financially secure careers because of economic responsibilities and uncertainty in the job market. Rising educational expenses and unemployment further increase the importance of financial considerations in career decision-making.

The study concludes that career choice is not based solely on personal preference but is influenced by multiple social, economic, familial, and psychological factors. Therefore, educational institutions should establish effective career counselling and mentorship programs to help students make informed career decisions. Parents should also support students in selecting careers

according to their interests and abilities rather than imposing societal expectations.

Furthermore, policymakers and educational institutions should organize workshops, career guidance sessions, and awareness programs regarding emerging career opportunities. Financial support and scholarships should also be provided to economically weaker students to reduce financial barriers in career development. Overall, the study highlights the importance of balanced and informed career decision-making among students. Proper guidance, family support, self-awareness, and financial planning can help students choose careers that ensure both professional success and personal satisfaction.

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