



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: EXPLORING CAREER DECISIONS AMONG NEUST LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

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Abstract—This study explored the factors influencing the career decision-making of Grade 12 students at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) Laboratory High School. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, the researchers surveyed 104 Grade 12 students from STEM and ABM strands to assess how personal interests, peer influence, institutional considerations, and future job opportunities shape career choices. Findings revealed that personal interest, passion, and internal motivation are the most influential factors, while peer influence and institutional considerations also contribute significantly. Results highlight the importance of structured career guidance programs that integrate self-awareness, family background, and pragmatic job considerations. The study concludes that effective career support systems can empower students to make informed, sustainable, and meaningful decisions

Keywords— *career decision, high school student, institutional consideration, peer influence, personal interest*

I. INTRODUCTION

The process of making career decisions is a pivotal milestone in the lives of senior high school students, as it significantly shapes their future and influences both personal and professional development. Selecting a career path that aligns with one's interests, abilities, and values is vital to achieving long-term success and satisfaction. However, despite its importance, many Filipino students face difficulties in making informed and purposeful career decisions due to various structural and personal challenges.

A study by the Philippine Business for Education (PBE, 2018) revealed that a substantial number of senior high school students in the Philippines lack proper information and guidance regarding career paths. The study reported that only 30% of students had a clear idea of their desired career, while the majority expressed uncertainty or had only vague notions about their future. Similarly, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2017) highlighted that the absence of structured career guidance programs in schools, combined with limited access to relevant labor market information, often leads to suboptimal decision-making among students.

Cortez (2017) further emphasized that Filipino students struggle with career decisions due to limited exposure to career options, a lack of self-awareness, and insufficient development of career-related skills. These limitations contribute to students making uninformed choices, which may

result in job dissatisfaction, frequent career shifts, or prolonged periods of unemployment.

Recognizing these issues, the Department of Education (DepEd) instituted the Career Guidance Program (CGP), aligned with Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. This initiative aims to assist students in making informed career choices through the dissemination of relevant information, hands-on exposure to various career options, and the development of decision-making and career planning skills.

Numerous studies identify a range of factors that influence students' career decision-making. According to Harris-Bowlsbey (2019), individual interests, values, and aptitudes are foundational elements in shaping a student's career path. Guan et al. (2021) and Chen and Wang (2017) also noted that decision-making abilities, peer influence, institutional characteristics, and job market outlooks are key determinants in how students navigate their career options.

For instance, students are more likely to pursue college majors that align with their personal interests. A student passionate about science may be inclined to choose a STEM-related field. Peers also play a crucial role; students often turn to friends for support and advice, and peer opinions can either encourage or discourage specific career directions (Chen & Wang, 2017).

Furthermore, the reputation and offerings of an academic institution—such as the availability of specific programs or its geographical location—can heavily influence students' decisions. Equally significant are future job opportunities; students frequently evaluate potential careers based on labor market demands and income potential (Guan et al., 2021).

In light of these influences, this study aims to examine the key factors affecting the career decision-making process of Grade 12 students at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology Laboratory High School. Understanding these factors will provide valuable insights for educators, guidance counselors, and parents in crafting effective career support systems. Ultimately, equipping students with the tools and resources to make informed choices can lead to more meaningful educational and professional outcomes.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study entitled “Beyond the Classroom: Exploring Career Decisions Among NEUST Laboratory High School Seniors” adopted a quantitative descriptive correlational



research design. This approach was selected to determine the factors influencing students' career decisions and to examine the relationship between these factors and the students' demographic profiles.

The research was conducted at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) Laboratory High School, involving 104 Grade 12 students from the STEM and ABM strands. These students were selected using simple random sampling, representing approximately 74% of the total Grade 12 student population.

To gather data, the researchers utilized a self-administered survey questionnaire, which was adapted and validated by academic experts. The questionnaire was divided into five parts: (1) respondents' profile (age, parental education, occupation, and family income); and four factors influencing career decision—

(2) decision-making and interest, (3) peer influence, (4) institutional considerations, and (5) future job opportunities. All responses were rated using a 5-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree).

Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent expert validation and necessary revisions. The approved questionnaires were distributed to the selected students for completion.

For data analysis, the study used frequency, percentage, and weighted mean to describe the demographic characteristics and responses on the influencing factors. To determine the relationship between student profiles and career decision factors, the chi-square test was employed. Results were organized into tables for clarity and interpretation, leading to conclusions and recommendations relevant to student career guidance and decision-making..

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The majority of the participants were female and 18 years old. Most respondents came from families with a monthly income of ₱25,001 or more. A significant number had parents who had completed college education. Mothers were generally employed in non-government jobs, while fathers were primarily engaged in the business industry.

B. Factors that Influence the Career Decision

TABLE 1. LEVEL OF STUDENT'S DECISION MAKING AND INTEREST

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I consider my likes on choosing a course.	4.14	Strongly Agree
2. I look at my ability such as my knowledge and skills.	4.07	Agree
3. I choose a course based on what I feel about it.	4.06	Agree
4. I decide based on my preferences and family background.	3.91	Agree
5. I prefer things based on what I like the most.	4.36	Strongly Agree
6. I expect my potential in looking for a career.	4.08	Agree
7. I am focused based on my interest.	4.14	Strongly Agree
8. It is my passion that helps me to pursue the course or career to take.	4.12	Strongly Agree
9. I rely on my abilities.	3.90	Agree
10. I depend based on self-testing.	3.73	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	4.05	Strongly Agree

Legend: Strongly Agree (4.09 – 5.00); Agree (3.26 – 4.08); Moderately Agree (2.51 – 3.25); Disagree (1.76 – 2.50); Strongly Disagree (1.00 – 1.75) N=104

The overall weighted mean of 4.05 (Strongly Agree) indicates that decision-making and interest play a strong role in students' career choices.

TABLE 2. LEVEL OF STUDENT'S PEER INFLUENCE

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. My peers influence me to choose what course or career to take.	3.29	Agree
2. My peers encourage me to achieve my goals.	3.96	Agree
3. My peer's advice on what course to take.	3.87	Agree
4. My peer's discussion leads me to what I should plan to choose.	3.36	Agree
5. I prefer to my peer group in selecting a course.	2.73	Moderately Agree
Overall Weighted Mean	3.44	Agree

Legend: Strongly Agree (4.09 – 5.00); Agree (3.26 – 4.08); Moderately Agree (2.51 – 3.25); Disagree (1.76 – 2.50); Strongly Disagree (1.00 – 1.75) N=104

Peer influence obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.44 (Agree), suggesting that peers contribute meaningfully to students' decisions

TABLE 3. LEVEL OF STUDENT'S CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I consider the distance and travel from house to school.	3.63	Agree
2. I believe the stories of my acquaintances about the school.	3.62	Agree
3. I consider the affordability of the tuition fee of the academic institutions	3.86	Agree
4. I rely on a scholarship grant.	3.23	Moderately Agree
5. I find forward to fulfilling the job demands after studies, graduation or completion	4.06	Agree

Institutional considerations recorded an overall weighted mean of 3.68 (Agree), showing that affordability, accessibility, and program offerings are important

C. Discussion

The findings indicate that gender and age are crucial demographic factors shaping career decision-making. De la Peña (2021) noted that males often display more decisiveness than females in choosing careers, while 18 years old is considered a critical age for such decisions.

Family income also played an influential role. Abalos et al. (2024) found that higher income levels are correlated with broader access to career options, and this aligns with the current study's finding that many respondents came from higher-income families. Parents' educational attainment further contributed to career choices, as students whose parents' finished college were more likely to receive meaningful guidance.

Decision-making based on personal interest and passion emerged as the strongest factor influencing choices (overall mean = 4.05). This agrees with Guan et al. (2021), who emphasized that intrinsic motivation strongly correlates with long-term career satisfaction. Similarly, Harris-Bowlsbey (2019) stressed that aligning values and interests with career paths promotes persistence.

Meanwhile, peer influence was also significant (overall mean = 3.44). This resonates with Shumba and Naong (2022) and Alavi et al. (2021), who asserted that peers provide both emotional and informational support during career planning.

Finally, institutional considerations (overall mean = 3.68) highlighted students' practical concerns such as tuition affordability, scholarship availability, and school accessibility. Malik et al. (2023) stressed that these pragmatic considerations, alongside personal interests, allow students to make sustainable decisions.

Overall, the results reveal a dynamic interplay between personal interests, socio-economic background, peer support, and institutional opportunities in shaping students' career choices.



IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the career decision-making of Grade 12 NEUST Laboratory High School students is influenced by a combination of intrinsic motivation, peer support, institutional considerations, and family background. Personal interest and passion emerged as the most significant factors, highlighting the need for career guidance programs that help students explore self-awareness while considering practical realities. Educators and policymakers should strengthen structured career support initiatives to ensure informed, sustainable, and meaningful student career choices

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