



Issues and challenges influencing career choice among Senior High School students in Ghana: The case of the New Juaben Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of career information and its determinants on career choice among senior high school (SHS) students in the New Juaben Municipality of the Eastern Region, Ghana. The paper addresses the issue that most learners are not adequately exposed to career-related information, which affects their career choices and could, in turn, help address the life and socio-economic problems affecting Ghana. The study is framed within Bandura's Social Cognitive Career Theory, which posits that environmental, gender, and family background factors influence career choices. The study employs a qualitative research approach and involves 10 participants selected through purposive and convenience sampling from senior high schools in the New Juaben Municipality. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to gather data, focusing on two main questions, namely: What challenges do students face in career choice? How can the process of career choice be improved, and how can it be done among senior secondary school students? The data was analysed using a thematic approach. The study revealed that parents were the most influential determinants of students' career choices. Furthermore, the results revealed that students lacked career-related knowledge, hindering informed decision-making. Based on the findings, the study suggests increased student access to career guidance and counselling to support informed career choices, promote personal sustainability, and contribute to Ghana's development drive and global engagement.

Keywords: Career Counselling, Vocational Guidance, Social Cognitive Career Theory, The Systems Theory Framework of Career Development, Socio-Cultural Theory of Career Choice

INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, many Senior High Schools (SHSs) lack professionally trained counsellors.¹ Around 60% of school counsellors in Ghana's senior high schools (SHSs) lack formal training, leaving most students without professional, specialised counselling. Even though there is significant demand for these services, more than 85% of students refrain from using the often-insufficient counselling options

¹ Bertha Letsa and Abubakari Sadiq, "Challenges Facing Guidance and Counselling Coordinators in Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana," in *International Conference on Applied Science and Technology Conference Proceedings*, vol. 6, 2021.

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available due to concerns about confidentiality and the absence of qualified, well-trained counselling professionals.² These authors highlight systemic gaps in counselling services and offer insight into how policy and training can be improved. In addition, the absence of trained counsellors leaves students undecided about career paths, potentially leading to social vices such as crime and drug abuse.³

SHS students face difficulties in career decision-making.⁴ This author noted that career selection involves excitement, pressure, and uncertainty, compounded by a lack of self-awareness, family pressure, and limited exposure to career options. Workshops like World Joy's in 2017 revealed that many students are unaware of career guidance services, while a 2017 Ghana Education Service study found poor implementation of counselling in the Eastern Region. Motivated by these findings, this research investigates the impact of career information on career choice among SHS students in New Juaben Municipality.

Career choice making significantly assists in shaping individuals' prospects and personal aspirations, influenced by a complex interplay of personal, social, and institutional factors, including parental guidance and educational opportunities.⁵ Globally, young people face increasing uncertainty in career planning. According to the OECD's 2025 report *"The State of Global Teenage Career Preparation,"* nearly 40% of 15-year-olds lack clear career goals, and there are widespread mismatches between aspirations and the education required to achieve them across more than 80 countries. Limited exposure to career options and minimal participation in career development activities are key factors contributing to these findings.

In Ghana, youth unemployment is associated with poor career choices and a weak alignment between education and industry skills.⁶ Some young people lack the skills needed for jobs. Internationally, studies in Bangladesh found that students prefer government jobs due to stability and social influence, recommending trained counsellors for career coaching.⁷ In addition, certain scholars reiterate that strengthening career guidance and reflective decision-making among senior high school students is of the utmost importance.⁸

This paper uniquely focuses on Ghanaian SHS students, particularly in New Juaben Municipality, the Eastern Region's most populous district, and addresses high unemployment among school leavers.⁹ Ghana is rapidly evolving socio-economically, causing stress and disorganisation for individuals adapting to career changes, especially among the youth.

SHSs, which are expected to provide career counselling, often fail to do so, leaving students confused about job prospects. Ideally, career counselling would inform students about job types, qualifications, risks, and prospects, thereby reducing common negative workplace behaviours such as laziness and absenteeism in Ghana and beyond, thereby improving productivity. Many students enter careers that they regret, misaligned with their true interests.

This study is crucial, as career indecision can lead to low productivity, social issues, and hinder the national development agenda. It aims to examine factors that influence career choice and improve guidance programs to help SHS students make informed decisions. Despite the growing importance of career planning, many Senior High School students in Ghana lack access to structured guidance and

² C. Asiedu-Yirenkyi, "Incidence of Indisciplinary Behaviour among Students in Senior High Schools in Bantama Sub-Metropolitan Schools in the Kumasi District of Ghana," *European Journal of Education Studies*, 4, no. 28 (2019): 52-63.

³ Letsa and Sadiq, "Challenges Facing Guidance and Counselling Coordinators in Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana."

⁴ Joy Olive Boye, "Peer Influence, Family Influence, Academic Difficulties and Gender Differences as Agents of Career Indecisiveness of Senior High School Students in Ghana," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 8, no.3(2024):690-702.

⁵ Bernard Adinkrah and Charles Ayarkwah, "A Study on Factors Influencing the Career Choices of Students in Senior High Schools in Ghana: The Case of SHS Students in the Abuakwa South Municipality," *Journal of Education and Learning Technology*, May 29, 2020, 29-38, <https://doi.org/10.38159/jelt.2020054>.

⁶ Ebenezer Gyan Yirenkyi et al., "Education, Skills, and Duration of Unemployment in Ghana," *Cogent Economics & Finance* 11, no. 2 (October 9, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2023.2258680>.

⁷ Golam Rabbani Sarker, "Job Preference and Factors Influencing Job Choice among Public University Students: A Cross-Sectional Study at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur.," *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews* 3, no. 11 (2022): 2185-93.

⁸ Adinkrah and Ayarkwah, "A Study on Factors Influencing the Career Choices of Students in Senior High Schools in Ghana: The Case of SHS Students in the Abuakwa South Municipality."

⁹ Ghana Statistical Service, "A Report on Unemployment in Ghana," 2024, <https://www.ghana.gov.gh/mdas/0b6fbb9acc/>.

professional counselling, leading to uninformed career choices that compromise their personal development and limit their contributions to national progress.

LITERATURE STUDY

Factors such as parents, sex, educational attainment, peer group, career awareness, and geographical location influence career choice, which, in turn, present various challenges towards the establishment of sustained high school guidance structures in Ghanaian schools. The findings showed varying degrees of relationships between these variables regarding the individual's knowledge of career choices and career decision-making, and educational attainment. Educational attainment was an influential factor in career choice among employees in Chad, with 37 per cent reportedly having at least a secondary education.¹⁰ Parental influence on career choice ranked second among 14 variables in a study of three groups comprising Asian, Black, and White South African high school students.¹¹ In a study of parental influence on the choice of a secretarial career among male and female students in Edo State, Nigeria, a correlation was found between parental influence and career choice.¹²

Furthermore, sex is also found to be an influencing factor on career choice. In a study, it was discovered that there had been minimal change in the image of the construction industry; roughly one-third of both male and female college students had a negative perception of the industry, seeing it as 'not suitable for women': "women and girls perceive that men in the construction sector could show hostility toward them and believe they would be stepping into 'a man's world."¹³ In contrast, a study of career choice among students in Kenya found no significant gender effect.¹⁴ Additionally, career awareness is a strong factor in career choice-making. This is because career-aware employees selected jobs they were committed to.¹⁵ In another study, it was found that numerous young people who entered most professions did so out of ignorance. This meant that career awareness could have led some of them to choose other professions rather than the ones they chose.¹⁶ A study conducted in Nigeria found that 61.56 per cent of respondents were unaware of what library and information science entails as a career. They reported that students' ignorance of library and information science was responsible for their low preference and choice [3.18%].¹⁷ It can therefore be inferred from these studies that there is a strong relationship between individuals' career awareness and their career decision-making. Furthermore, the peer group was found to be the main factor that influenced career choice in urban agriculture education.¹⁸ The result is supported by Owoyele and Toyobo's survey in Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria, in which peer group was found to be the most potent factor and predictor of senior secondary school students' choice of school subjects for their career.¹⁹ Students' personality traits and gender roles affect geographic choice-making in Ghana, especially in the Ashanti and Northern Regions. Exposure to urban and rural locations influences their career choices. Geographical location was one of the strongest factors that influenced career choice

¹⁰ F. Fluitman, "Informal Education: Strategies for Skill Acquisition in West Africa.," 2004.

¹¹ Jean Elizabeth Myburgh, "An Empirical Analysis of Career Choice Factors That Influence First-Year Accounting Students at the University of Pretoria: A Cross-Racial Study," *Meditari: Research Journal of the School of Accounting Sciences* 13, no.2(2005):35–48.

¹² Victor I Igbinedion, "Perception of Factors That Influence Students' Vocational Choice of Secretarial Studies in Tertiary Institutions in Edo State of Nigeria," *European Journal of Educational Studies* 3, no. 2 (2011): 325–37.

¹³ Pat Turrell et al., "A Gender for Change: The Future for Women in Surveying," in *Proceedings of the FIG XXII International Congress, Washington, DC, USA, 2002*, 19–26.

¹⁴ Kochung Edwards and Migunde Quinter, "Factors Influencing Students Career Choices among Secondary School Students in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya," *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 81–87.

¹⁵ R. Zaman, "Impact of Career Choice on Job Performance' ()" (unpublished, 2009).

¹⁶ Samuel O. Salami, "Influence of Culture, Family and Individual Differences on Choice of Gender-dominated Occupations among Female Students in Tertiary Institutions," *Women in Management Review* 22, no. 8 (November 13, 2007): 650–65, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420710836326>.

¹⁷ Abdulwahab O Issa and K I N Nwalo, "Factors Affecting the Career Choice of Undergraduates in Nigerian Library and Information Science Schools.," *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science* 18, no. 1 (2008).

¹⁸ Levon T. Esters and Blannie E. Bowen, "Factors Influencing Career Choice Of Urban Agricultural Education Students," *Journal of Agricultural Education* 46, no. 2 (June 30, 2005): 24–35, <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2005.02024>.

¹⁹ J W Owoyele and O M Toyobo, "Parental Will, Peer Pressure, Academic Ability and School Subjects Selection by Students in Senior Secondary Schools," *The Social Sciences* 3, no. 8 (2008): 583–86.

among Tanzanian high school students,²⁰ whereas in Kenya, high school students' contacts and experiences in their urban and rural locations influenced their career choices.²¹

Noting the above-mentioned factors influencing career choice, it follows that these issues, in turn, pose numerous challenges that bedevil counselling practices in Ghanaian high schools. Most SHSs do not have professionally trained counsellors.²² Guidance services such as appraisal, counselling, consultation, information, follow-up, and placement services are rarely offered in schools. It was also found that career and vocational counselling, one of the three core areas of counselling, was not well implemented. According to these scholars, vocational and career programmes are relatively ineffective and poorly organised to support students in their decision-making about job and career selection after school. Most SHS students appear to lack sufficient information about career and vocational counselling activities.^{23,24} This could be partly due to the shortage of trained counsellors in the various SHSs. Unfortunately, relevant stakeholders, such as the Ghana Education Service, since 2002, when the last Anamuah-Mensah education review committee was established, thereby leaving the problem unresolved. As a nation, Ghana continues to experience a huge negative work attitude, high unemployment, and many other work-related problems, some of which could seem to be traceable to a lack of sufficient knowledge and orientation on career and vocational counselling right from SHS or even before reaching SHS. Similarly, many young people in Ghana, after making their career choices, later realise, for one reason or another, that they have chosen the wrong career or vocation. Unemployment status has a negative and significant impact on the career development of graduates.²⁵ Also, there are categories of students who keep wavering between career choices, wanting to change their academic programme options while at school.

Some of them who eventually get into careers later realise that they had not made the right choice. This is because, for one reason or another, they must have realised that their career experiences have not met their career expectations. Again, many young men and women in Ghana sometimes voluntarily abandon their careers, move from one job to another, or are sacked for corruption, embezzlement, poor work attitude, or other job-related reasons. Depending on what they want in life, some young men and women would pursue what they think would give them satisfaction. Sometimes frustration may set in, and this compels some of these young workers to eventually get into such ways of life as drug peddling and drug trafficking, prostitution, swindling, armed robbery, 'sakawa' and other sophisticated means of improprieties, among others, that assume both national and international dimensions.²⁶ People lose their lives, sound health, peace of mind, loved ones, properties, among other things, all because of their desire for quick money (Sakawa). Sakawa, as a phenomenon, constitutes not only a threat to the security of many nations but also has huge implications for other sectors of society.²⁷ Some of the young men and women who choose to remain in their jobs do so half-heartedly. At the same time, job-related improprieties such as embezzlement, lateness, and other inappropriate attitudes toward work are evident. The result is poor productivity of our young men and women in Ghana.²⁸ The nation has a lot to lose in terms of manpower and national development. Recognising that employment is a fundamental tool in the economic, psychological, and social growth of a person, a family, a community, and a nation at large, the individual

²⁰ E.A. Mugonzibwa et al., "Factors Influencing Career Choice among High School Students in Tanzania," *Journal of Dental Education* 64, no. 6 (June 2000): 423–29, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.0022-0337.2000.64.6.tb03361.x>.

²¹ Bathsheba K. Osoro, Norman E. Amundson, and William A. Borgen, "Career Decision-Making of High School Students in Kenya," *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling* 22, no. 4 (December 2000): 289–300, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005661001209>.

²² Ministry of Education, *Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana (Anamuah-Mensah Report)* (Accra: Ministry of Education, 2002).

²³ Ministry of Education, *Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana (Anamuah-Mensah Report)*.

²⁴ Ministry of Education, *Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana*.

²⁵ Obodai Emmanuel and Smile Dzisi, "The Effect of Graduate Unemployment on Career Development in Ghana," *African Journal of Commercial Studies* 5, no. 4 (2024): 203–16.

²⁶ Eat Your Career, "How to Make Wise Career Choices," 2010. <https://eatyourcareer.com/2010/08/how-make-wise-career-choices/>.

²⁷ Enoch Kwame Tham-Agyekum, Martin Obeng, and Isaac Boamah, "Spirit World and Wealth Creation: Theological Reflections on Pastoral Care for Sakawa Victims at the Patmos Prayer and Retreat Center, Ghana," *Journal of Advocacy, Research and Education* 10, no. 2 (August 5, 2023): 80–92, <https://doi.org/10.13187/jare.2023.2.68>.

²⁸ Ghana News Agency, "Change Attitude to Work-Psychologist Urges Ghanaians", November 14, 2003. Ghana Statistical Service A Report on Unemployment in Ghana . , " 2024.

must make an informed career choice.

The authors argue that the appropriate occupational skills youth should acquire for productivity and national growth should be an outcome of the right career decision, made possible through career guidance and counselling. It is to be pointed out that, aside from all the reasons that justify the need to conduct this research, as a professional teacher and a counsellor, the inability of SHS school leavers to select the right job, enter it and progress in it after school is a source of worry and concern to us. This situation could occur due to a lack of effective guidance and support for SHS students in school regarding career decision-making, which could expose them to social vices and reduce productivity. This study contends that SHS students would be exposed to career and vocational selection, as factors such as traits, the environment, educational qualifications, family influence, and many others come into play.

Noting the above issues and challenges influencing career choice among Senior High School Students (SHSS), the research questions that guide this paper are:

1. What are the key issues and challenges that senior high school students face in career choice?
2. How can career choice be improved among senior high school students?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was based on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994, is rooted in Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. It stressed the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals in shaping career interests, choices, and performance. By analysing the relationships between cognitive and interpersonal elements, as well as between self-directed and externally imposed effects, social cognitive career theory seeks to understand how career development occurs.²⁹ SCCT builds upon and complements several foundational career development theories, including Krumboltz's Learning Theory of Career Development, which highlights the influence of learning experiences and environmental factors; Super's Developmental Theory, which focuses on career maturity across the lifespan; Parsons' Trait and Factor Theory, which emphasises person-environment fit; and Dawis and Lofquist's Person-Environment Fit Theory, which explores the alignment between individual traits and occupational environments. Together, these theories provide a detailed framework for understanding how individuals navigate career decisions within personal and contextual constraints. SCCT also talks about the influence of social, personal, cultural, and environmental factors, such as gender, family background, education, and learning experiences, on career awareness and choices. The major points of the theory highlight how individuals develop interests, make choices, and achieve success through the interaction of personal beliefs, behaviour, and the environment.

There is a relationship between social learning, self-efficacy, and self-regulated learning in educational settings. The SCCT includes self-efficacy, a dynamic set of self-beliefs linked to performance domains and activities, and outcome expectations, which are what individuals expect to happen as a result of the actions they take or the outcomes or consequences of their performance in an activity.³⁰ The theory concludes that career development should be about how people believe, expect, and act within their unique environments.

This theory is relevant to the study because it aids in understanding how people make career decisions. It also explains how and why students develop career interests, make decisions, and pursue goals, especially during their formative stages. Career decisions in life could be based on people's beliefs, expectations, and all they intend to achieve in the future. The conceptual framework developed for the study applies to Ghanaian students because it focuses on variables such as study program, age, career awareness, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations. The conceptual framework developed for this study is contextualised by the work of Boye, Omotosho and Fia, which highlights how factors such as study

²⁹ Robert W Lent, Steven D Brown, and Gail Hackett, "Toward a Unifying Social Cognitive Theory of Career and Academic Interest, Choice, and Performance," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 45, no. 1 (1994): 79–122; Cuong Nguyen and An Duong, "Employee Retention: Do Training and Development, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance Matter," in *The 4th International Conference on Business Ho Chi Minh City Open University, HCMC, Vietnam*, 2021, 349–59.

³⁰ Joseph Zajda, "Social Learning, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Regulated Learning in the Classroom," 2024, 117–28, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-61613-6_8.

programme, age, career awareness, self-efficacy, and limited access to career information and counselling contribute to career indecision among Senior High School students in Ghana.³¹

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, as the phenomenon is deeply rooted in the lived experiences of students and social contexts. Qualitative research was another method used. It is an enquiry process of understanding in which the investigator develops a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports on informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.³² The qualitative research was considered most suitable for the researcher because the researcher was investigating a particular area of concern for senior high school/technical students (career choice-making). The results obtained helped the researchers propose strategies to support and guide students in making informed decisions about their preferred future careers.

The sample consisted of final-year students from Oyoko Methodist Senior High School in the New Juaben Municipality. Final-year students were selected because they had spent three years at the school, which placed them well-positioned to reflect on their access to career information and how it influenced their career decision-making. Ten students (five boys and five girls) were purposively and conveniently sampled for the qualitative phase of the study. The sampling ensured representation across academic programs and maintained gender balance.

The Municipality was selected due to its large Senior High School (SHS) student population. The study targeted students from various programs, that is, General Arts, Science, Business, Home Economics, and Visual Arts, to explore their access to career information and how they make career decisions. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This method aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of students' career-choice decisions in the New Juaben Municipality. Ethical considerations included obtaining participants' consent and ensuring voluntary participation, free of coercion. Approval was obtained from the Municipal Directorate of Education before starting data collection.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis to classify and interpret ideas emerging from the qualitative data. Data from the interview were coded, and codes were grouped into thematic categories based on emerging concepts.³³ Representative quotes from student participants were included to support the findings. To ensure the questionnaire's validity and credibility, a pilot study was conducted at a nearby Senior High School with similar characteristics, such as the programme of study. The recordings gathered during the interview were also played back to participants to confirm the precision of their responses. As part of the member verification process, interview recordings were played back to participants to verify the accuracy of their responses and to provide an opportunity for clarifications or amendments, where applicable.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Theme 1: Challenges with career selection

Limited access to career information was a factor that strongly influenced the choice of business careers. From face-to-face interviews with students, it has been observed that access to career information was insufficient. The student participants confirmed that there was virtually no access to information about career opportunities at the school. Stronger career guidance systems, personalised support, and informed career decisions on related subject interests are very influential in career selection.³⁴ These scholars further argue that families and teachers should guide learners in accessing information on career selection.

³¹ J. O. Boye et al., "Self-Knowledge, Lack of Career Information and Lack of Career Counselling as Reasons for Career Indecision among Senior High School Students in Ghana," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 29, no. 5 (2024): 33–40.

³² J.W. Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. (Thousand Oaks, : CA: Sage, 1998).

³³ Muhammad Naeem et al., "A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 22 (2023): 16094069231205789.

³⁴ Maliza Delima Kamarul Zaman, Muhammad Hafiz Aziz, and Muhamad Khalil Omar, "Factors Influencing Career Choice Among Final Semester Undergraduate Students of a Business Management Faculty in A Malaysian Public University," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 10, no.2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v10-i2/9830>.

The influence of limited information on business and management skill career selection is captured in the following verbatim expression:

Indeed, it is my wish to be part of the business world; to be successful, but assessing information on it is my biggest priority in attaining that. So, for me, the sky is my ultimate limit, so I can have the skill to do the work. Again, I have heard at least something about business, and I know what is there. Business and commerce control the world today (Female Participant).

From the above response, it is discernible that access to career information is crucial but scarce for the student participants. Access to career information can help expand awareness of available career options. The quality of the information one can access can go a long way toward exposing one to a wide range of career options.³⁵ Through career information, the individual could develop critical thinking skills and set realistic goals for himself, both of which are aimed at sound career selection. Quality career information can also equip individuals with specialised knowledge and transferable skills aligned with the job market, making career choices more strategic and sustainable. Career information can lead to better employment opportunities, higher salaries/wages, and more job security. Access to quality career information is critical for high school students to make informed decisions and possibly avoid underemployment.³⁶ Indeed, career information enhances career decision-making by equipping students with the tools, exposure, and confidence needed to make informed career choices.³⁷

Theme 2: Low Self-Knowledge of career

The theme, "students' knowledge in business and management skill careers and career choice," also came out strongly. The responses showed that, in general, the student participants had insufficient knowledge of careers, especially regarding their career choices. Some wished they could change careers, while others regretted their choices and wished for changes in academic programme options. For example, a male participant remarked:

If I can entirely change to do something instead that will not demand so much talking to convince people to patronise services, I'll rather be ok with that. " I can now see that it is not only your ability to speak good English at the SHS level, but you also need to be very intelligent, fluent, and bold to stand before people of different and high academic status (Male Participant).

Apart from low self-knowledge of career, another student participant regretted making that career decision, attributing it to the wrong choice of programme option.

I have now seen that having the aim to get a higher degree comparable to a PhD is not the issue. My interest is in politics; however, I see that no university trains people purely for politics. Right now, I don't know what exactly to focus on and concentrate on, hopefully after SHS. As it is now, I must think carefully about myself rather than thinking of going into politics (Female Participant).

Another male participant remarked:

Initially, I had the intention of becoming a judge in a law court. I have never been briefed by anyone, for instance, that I needed to study law up to university level and later enrol in a professional law school. I was rather misled by a colleague to study

³⁵ Boye et al., "Self-Knowledge, Lack of Career Information and Lack of Career Counselling as Reasons for Career Indecision among Senior High School Students in Ghana."

³⁶ Ebini Francis Asamaowei, Edwinah Amah, and Waribugo Sylva, "Career Growth: A Review of Literature and Implications for the Civil Service in a Developing Country," *IJAR International Journal of Economics and Business Management* 9, no. 1 (September 1, 2023): 37–47, <https://doi.org/10.56201/ijebm.v9.no1.2023.pg37.47>.

³⁷ Nafisa Ayuka, "Dynamic Analysis of Educational Attainment, Career Choice and Unemployment in Kenya." *Dynamic Analysis of Educational Attainment, Career Choice and Unemployment in Kenya*, (2020).

political science. Now, I am stuck and in a state of confusion; there is little I can do now. (Male Participant)

These results suggest that students had low self-knowledge about the careers they chose. This lack of career knowledge/information contributes to students making wrong career choices. This is a challenge because the respondents are High School Students who are yet to embark on professional careers.

Career awareness, created through career information, is crucial for decision-making about career choice.³⁸ Letsa and Sadiq opined that many students lacked access to career guidance during their time at school, attributing this gap to the demanding, heavy teaching schedules faced by school counsellors.³⁹ These challenges often hinder counsellors from organising dedicated career programmes, thereby limiting students' exposure to essential career development support. Consequently, students experience career indecision and anxiety, resulting in a mismatch between education and career, where students pursue academic programmes that do not align with their interests and demands in the labour market, sometimes leading to frustration and all forms of anxiety. Lack of career awareness, stemming from low self-knowledge, can also lead to overreliance on external influences, such as parents, peers, and others, in career decision-making.⁴⁰

Theme 3: Scientific Skill Career Choice and Parental Influence

Parental factors strongly influence students' choices, especially regarding their career-related scientific skills. A thorough examination of the findings, with respect to the influencing factors, indicates that the socio-cultural dimension, as theorised by the Socio-Cultural Theory, was significant.⁴¹ The influence of parents was a strong social and cultural variable. These influences, as theorised in the STF, view parental influence as a dominant factor in shaping the career choices of Senior High School students in the Pru West district of Ghana.

The influence of parents is captured in the following words by a female participant:

When I was growing up as a young person, I had a relative who worked in a very large health facility. Anytime he came to my parents, he would bring some drugs for us for free, and I knew he was bringing them from the hospital. When I grew up, I also wanted to help our house with drugs one day. As I grew older, I saw that he was popular all over the community. When I was about to go to SHS, I asked my mum about that relative. She said he was a pharmacist, so I can also be a pharmacist if I study science. My father said the same. I didn't want to disappoint them, since they promised to support me in studying science, no matter how much it would cost them and how many years it would take me to complete it.

Another parental factor was responsible for the respondents' career choices. Another female participant buttresses the above:

My dad and mum became separated, and it is my mum who took care of us. She looked after my sister, who became a trained nurse. My mum is happy because my sister studied science and became a professional nurse. My mum said I should also do science and be in one of the science-related jobs. She told me, 'No study of science, no school.' So, I have no choice, though my heart and brain are for creative arts, especially singing, dance, and drama. And when I said I wanted to become a dietician, which will make me work in the hospital, prescribing the right type of food to patients, she became happy.

³⁸ Askar Azhenov et al., "Career Decision-Making Readiness among Students' in the System of Higher Education: Career Course Intervention," *Frontiers in Education* 8 (August 8, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1097993>.

³⁹ Letsa and Sadiq, "Challenges Facing Guidance and Counselling Coordinators in Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana."

⁴⁰ Boye et al. "Self-knowledge, lack of career information and lack of career counselling as reasons for career indecision among senior high school students in Ghana".

⁴¹ Anita M Mitchell, "A Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making.," 1974.

Parents serve as role models and decision-makers for young children, especially during adolescence. Their influence can strongly shape how students approach career decisions. Recent studies in Ghana suggest that parental influence is highly significant and remains one of the most consistent predictors of students' career counselling, including career direction. This buttresses the call for parents to be included in students' career guidance arrangements, as argued by OppusuPaapaAgyiri.⁴² The participant's account reveals how parental expectations can negatively shape career decisions, as the mother's insistence on pursuing a science-related profession despite the student's passion and interest in creative arts leads to a sense of obligation and limited autonomy. The ultimatum, "No study of science, no school," demonstrates how rigid parental influence can suppress individual interests, forcing students to compromise by selecting careers that align with parental approval rather than their personal aspirations.

Theme 4: Issues and Challenges with Enhancing Career Choice

There are several challenges career selections among students in Ghana and worldwide. This includes the lack of career information of students. Many students have limited access to career information; as a result, they find it difficult to choose a career.⁴³ There is also the problem of low self-knowledge among students, who, as a result, do not understand their strengths, interests, and personality traits, which are very important in career decision-making. Family and peer influence also significantly affect students' career choices.⁴⁴ Parents sometimes heavily influence career selections. This situation sometimes led students to avoid pursuing careers aligned with their aspirations. There is also a weak career guidance infrastructure, coupled with a lack of professionally trained counsellors in our various schools who should guide career selection. Various scholars opined on the latter and articulated that many senior high schools in Ghana do not employ career counsellors in career decision-making.⁴⁵ Poor academic performance also leads to career indecision by students.⁴⁶ Students may feel compelled to select careers based on grades rather than their passions, attitudes, and interests.⁴⁷

Sub-Theme: Enhancing Career Choice among Senior High School Students

In today's fast-evolving educational and employment landscape, the ability of senior high school students to make informed, bold career decisions while in school is critical. Career selection is not just a choice but a dynamic process influenced by individual aspirations, information availability, and socio-cultural beliefs.⁴⁸ Many students who have limited information about career paths and inadequate guidance during school struggle to select a career.⁴⁹ On the question of how career programs can be embedded in the school curriculum, a male participant said:

⁴² OppusuPaapaAgyiri, Felix, and Asaah Junior Stephen Kwabena (2020). "Parental characteristics and career choice decision among senior high school students in the Kwahu-East district." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)* Vol 25, no. 5 (2020): 49-65. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2505084965>.

⁴³ Boye et al. "Peer Influence, Family Influence, Academic Difficulties and Gender Differences as Agents of Career Indecisiveness of Senior High School Students in Ghana".

⁴⁴ Mine Aydemir Dev and Nuran Bayram Arlı, "The Role of Personality Traits and Decision-Making Styles in Career Decision-Making Difficulties," *Behavioral Sciences* 15, no. 2 (February 1, 2025): 159, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15020159>.

⁴⁵ Boye et al. "Self-knowledge, lack of career information and lack of career counselling as reasons for career indecision among senior high school students in Ghana".

⁴⁶ Joy Olive Boye and Eric Nyarko-Sampson, "Prevalent Factors of Career Uncertainties among Ghanaian Senior High School Students," *Journal of Educational Management* 13, no. 1 (December 1, 2023): 54–65, <https://doi.org/10.47963/jem.v13i.1129>.

⁴⁷ Liridona Jemini-Gashi and Erëblir Kadriu, "Exploring the Career Decision-Making Process During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Opportunities and Challenges for Young People," *Sage Open* 12, no. 1 (January 10, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221078856>; Joana Soares, Catarina Carvalho, and Ana Daniela Silva, "A Systematic Review on Career Interventions for University Students: Framework, Effectiveness, and Outcomes," *Australian Journal of Career Development* 31, no. 2 (July 7, 2022): 81–92, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10384162221100460>; Nishath Anjum et al., "Do Intrinsic Rewards Matter on Motivation?," *SEISENSE Journal of Management* 4, no. 1 (January 19, 2021): 47–58, <https://doi.org/10.33215/sjom.v4i1.534>; Nargiza Sharapova et al., "Efficacy of School-Based Career Guidance Interventions: A Review of Recent Research," *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research* 10, no. 2 (March 29, 2023): 215–22, <https://doi.org/10.20448/jeelr.v10i2.4554>.

⁴⁸ Hui Xu, "Career Decision-Making in an Uncertain World: A Dual-Process Framework," *Current Psychology* 42, no. 5 (February 21, 2023): 3978–90, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01746-z>.

⁴⁹ Boye et al. "Self-knowledge, lack of career information and lack of career counselling as reasons for career indecision among senior high school students in Ghana."

Subjects we learn can be integrated with counselling activities so that, simultaneously, we can be exposed to counselling-related information (Female Participant).

On this same issue, another female respondent said:

Students should be exposed to internship programs, where they can visit workplaces such as factories with local business organisations to give them firsthand exposure to jobs and other careers that exist.

On the question of whether field trips, as a way of knowing the existence of careers, could be explored, the following responses emerged:

Students should be taken to workplaces to broaden their understanding of the existence of careers, qualifications to enter, and remuneration attached. (Male Participant)

On this same issue, a male participant remarked:

Taking us to work environments so that we get familiarised with what goes on at workplaces could be of great assistance to us. It would guide us in job selections into the future.

On the role of the counsellor in enhancing career programs in schools, another female participant remarked as follows:

Counsellors should offer one-on-one sessions to help students discover their paths that align with their interests and strengths in job selections.

Enhancing career selection means equipping students with the right tools to access accurate, detailed career information, along with relevant guidance from teachers and counsellors. Career selection among senior high school students is a multifaceted approach. To enhance career selection among senior high school students, an embedded career counselling program should be incorporated in the school curriculum to guide both male and female students by trained professionals. With these, various career assessment tools could be made available to students to identify their strengths and interests. To achieve this, career days, fairs, and mentorship programs should be organised regularly for the students. To improve access to career information for students, digital opportunities should be created to enable them to explore career options, job market trends, and educational pathways to inform decision-making. Also, it is necessary to promote self-awareness and the acquisition of decision-making skills among learners. By this, students can evaluate their values, goals, and abilities in relation to career choices. To engage stakeholders in enhancing career selection, parents, teachers, and community leaders should be involved.⁵⁰

DISCUSSION

This discussion was guided by two key research questions, namely: *What are the key issues and challenges that senior high school students face in career choice? And, how can career choice be enhanced among senior high school students?*

One major factor identified in the study was parental influence. Students' career choices were significantly shaped by their parents' professions, socio-economic status, family traditions, and parental advice or guidance. This finding aligns with reputable scholars who argue that parental influence is a

⁵⁰ Prince Awini Apambilla et al., "Exploring the Key Determinants of Career Choice among Senior High School Students in the Pru West District, Ghana," *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research* 6, no. 2 (January 1, 2024): 276–85, <https://doi.org/10.33545/26649845.2024.v6.i2d.154>; Xuejun Liu, Xiongjie Mei, and Guojun Ji, "'Walking with Dreams': The Categories of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy and Its Influence on Learning Engagement of Senior High School Students," *Behavioral Sciences* 14, no. 12 (December 8, 2024): 1174, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14121174>.

strong antecedent in shaping students' career paths. When parents are actively involved in their children's career planning, their opinions, whether intentional or implied, can heavily impact students' decisions.⁵¹

Parental influence plays a dual role in shaping students' career choices, with both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, active parental participation can offer emotional support, informed guidance, and access to resources that enhance student career planning. Parents' own experiences, coupled with family traditions, may also raise students' hopes of pursuing meaningful and stable career paths. The study also highlighted the negative aspects of parental influence. Overbearing expectations, pressure to follow specific professions, and socio-economic constraints can curtail students' autonomy and thereby suppress their genuine interests. In some cases, implicit parental preferences, such as prioritising business-related fields over science, can lead students to compromise their aspirations to secure parental approval. These findings affirm that while parental guidance can be beneficial, it must be balanced with respect for students' passions, potential, and interests.

Another critical challenge identified was students' lack of access to accurate and comprehensive career information. Career information includes knowledge of available occupations, required qualifications, job prospects, work environments, necessary skills, and potential challenges. Without such information, students may select study programs that do not align with viable or fulfilling career paths, leading to future job dissatisfaction or unemployment. Career awareness not only guides students toward informed decisions but also helps them anticipate and prepare for future employment demands. Informed students are more likely to align their educational pursuits with available career opportunities, thus improving long-term outcomes.⁵²

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that a nationwide initiative titled "*Be Mindful of Your Child's Future Career*" be launched by the Guidance and Counselling units of all senior high and technical schools in Ghana. This program would equip parents and guardians with basic knowledge and skills to guide their children to make informed career choices. Additionally, structured career guidance and counselling should be formally introduced to students to help them develop a clear understanding and interest in potential career paths. The government of Ghana is also urged to prioritise guidance and counselling by ensuring that it is adequately funded in the national budget, as emphasised by the Anamuah-Mensah Committee.

School leadership, particularly heads of senior high schools, must actively support counselling programmes by allocating sufficient financial and logistical resources. Counsellors must be equipped with tools and training to provide impactful services across all levels. To strengthen these efforts, schools are encouraged to establish well-staffed counselling units led by trained professionals, integrate career planning into the curriculum, and organise regular workshops and seminars for parents. Furthermore, leveraging technology to expose students to a wide array of career options will enhance their decision-making and readiness for the world of work.

CONCLUSION

The study was premised on the idea that Senior high/Technical school students in Ghana make poor career choices, which can lead to negative consequences such as undesirable work attitudes, job attrition, low productivity, and other unacceptable behaviours. These issues pose significant challenges to national development and can tarnish the reputation of the country. The findings revealed that several factors influence students' career choices. Counsellors can take advantage of these findings to improve career guidance services, tailoring their approaches to address the most influential factors shaping students' career decisions. Notably, the study uncovered students' limited access to career information due to insufficient or no exposure to career programmes whilst in school. Consequently, students' career

⁵¹ V. O. Adikwu and L. I. Ereka, "Influence of Parental Factors on Career Choice among Senior Secondary School Students in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria," *Integrity Journal of Education and Training* 6, no. 4 (August 30, 2022): 85–90, <https://doi.org/10.31248/IJET2022.148>.

⁵² Shiena Mae L., Magpulong et al., "Factors That Influenced the Course Preferences of Senior High Students: Basis for Career Guidance," *Global Scientific Journal* 11, no. 11 (2023): 528–65.

choices were driven by the variables identified and influenced by parents and other factors, rather than informed by career knowledge. This lack of knowledge often leads to poor program selection in schools. Addressing this gap through comprehensive career education initiatives can empower students to make informed career decisions. It is recommended that career counselling programmes be integrated into the school curriculum so that students have a strong exposure to career development. Parents should also be involved in the decision-making of their children about career choices.

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