

ASHESI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER PREFERENCE  
AMONGST PROSPECTIVE AND RECENT GRADUATES IN GHANA

BY

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Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with guidance on supervision of thesis laid down by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Companies are increasingly looking to employ the best talents to keep up in a rapidly changing business environment and to drive their strategies to achieve long-term growth. As a result of the high cost of recruiting from the mature and already existing labour pool to meet this need, many companies are reaching into the graduate employment market to recruit high potential fresh talent that can be groomed to occupy key positions. As the graduate employment market becomes more and more competitive each year, it has become important for employers to possess a good understanding of what goes into the decision-making of young talents when considering which employer to work for. To this end, this research sought to understand the factors that influence career preferences amongst this young talent pool. The focus was on prospective and recent university graduates.

Through the use of online surveys, the study sampled responses from 121 final year students and young workers who have graduated from universities within the last 3 years. The study also made use of secondary data from articles, journals, books and the internet with Donald Super's career model serving as the theoretical framework

From the findings, career preferences of the target group are influenced by a combination of different factors. This reiterates Donald Super's career model that self-concept changes over time and as such, career preferences are also likely to change from time to time depending on the stage of a person's life. Subsequently, the factors that were found to be very important

for most respondents were: potential for career growth, the suitability of a career for the individual's personality, talent and ability, the expected monetary compensations, passion and interest for the particular industry as well as the opportunity to be innovative and creative

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.0 Background**

Companies are becoming more selective in their recruitment processes and competing against each other to choose the best talent available on the labour market. Subsequently, companies are getting closer to their talent pool by going to universities and colleges to recruit final year students who have great potential to pursue careers after graduation (Hamel 2013). This new approach provides employers a number of benefits including reduction of the long-term cost of employing top talent (Hamel 2013).

As the graduate employment market becomes more and more competitive, it is imperative for employers to position themselves as the preferred employers and attract high potential prospective and recent graduates to choose a career with them. To do this, companies require a good understanding of what goes into the decision-making of young graduates when considering which employer to work for.

The purpose of this research is therefore study the career decision making of young labour force focusing on prospective graduates from Ghanaian universities and recent university graduates who have been in employment between 1 to 3 years as the target group. The goal is to understand the factors that influence the career preferences of the target group and measure the extent to which each of these factors affects the individual's career decision at any given time. The study will examine a



number of theories, but will focus largely on Donald Super's career model and how it reflects graduates' career preferences and decision making.

This research will be useful to companies and HR professionals interested in recruiting from this segment of the labour force by providing insights into the key things to consider when preparing recruitment campaigns to attracting and retaining young talent in their organizations. In addition, the study will serve as a useful guide for students who are yet to venture into fresh careers to think through their expectations of their careers and prospective employers and will add to existing literature in the field. It is hoped that findings that will be discussed at the end of this paper will help improve the recruitment process, especially for young graduates, and also guide companies in terms of providing motivation and career satisfaction for their young hires.

## **1.1 Problem Statement**

In their quest to have a stronger pull as employers and attract the highest quality of prospective employees, companies/firms put in place policies that would create the right environment to meet their target (Roberson Q, 2005). However, to be able to do so, these companies need to be aware of the factors that influence the career preference of the kind of employees they want. Several studies have already been done in the field to find out the factors that influence career preference amongst individuals.

Most of these studies have shown that an individual's personality and other environmental factors influence people's career preferences (Venable, 2011). However, most of these existing studies that have been carried out in the Ghanaian context and so are not a true reflection of the situation for Ghana considering the cultural, economic and social differences. It will therefore be useful to explore the subject from a Ghanaian perspective taking into consideration our unique setting.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

### **Main objective**

The main objective of this research is to find out the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana.

### **Sub objective**

To explore the various employment strategies Ghanaian organizations can adopt in order to attract potential and recent graduates.

## **1.3 Research questions**

The research question for this study is mainly born out of intellectual curiosity and the quest to know why a prospective or recent graduate will prefer one career path to the other as they venture into new careers.

- What are the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana?
- Do these factors change over time with experience for prospective and recent graduates?

These questions were answered through questionnaires and surveys, administered to recent and prospective graduates from universities in Ghana.

## **1.4 Significance of Study**

As the business environment gets more competitive, it is increasingly becoming more important for companies to adjust their strategies to remain competitive and achieve sustainable long term growth. In order to achieve this, companies will require a unique breed of leadership and talent that understands the companies' culture and has the right skills. However, finding such human resource is becoming more and more competitive and expensive as the available options are mature people with prior career experiences who are expensive to recruit. The alternative, which a few companies have already seen, is to recruit high potential prospective/recent graduates and groom them to fill in company leadership roles. Ghanaian companies such as Unilever, Nestle, Stanbic Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Barclays Bank and Vodafone among others are examples of companies that have active graduate recruitment/management trainee programs hire and train fresh graduates to take on leadership positions in the company.

There are a number of existing studies into what influences career preferences amongst individuals. Many studies have been conducted to find out the factors that influence career preference amongst individuals. One of such studies was carried out by Donald Super. Donald Super studied the human growth cycle and the conclusion drawn was that, at every development stage, people encountered different experiences and as such, their career preference was influenced by these experiences at different stages. Other theories suggest/propose personality and environment/background of an individual as factors that are likely to influence the career preference of individuals. However, this research seeks

to examine a broader spectrum of factors that are likely to influence the career preference of prospective and recent graduates in the *Ghanaian* context and provide insights into how companies can attract these young graduates.

The research will also serve as a resource for HR personnel as well as prospective employers as they make plans to recruit from the new generation labour market especially in Ghana.

### **1.5 Theoretical/conceptual framework**

There are a number of theories on the factors that influence career preferences amongst individuals. Holland's theory of careers explains that, career choices are an expression of personality hence one's personality has an influence on their career path. Roe's theory on occupational choice emphasizes the fact that, early childhood experiences affect a person's career preference as well as their relationship with their parents. Consequently, it is likely for individuals to choose a career that reflects the psychological environment of their upbringing. Donald Super's career model is based on the belief that self-concept changes over time and develops as a result of experience. As such, a person's career preference will keep on changing as they go through the different stages in life. He categorized these into 5 stages:

## **Stages of Life Likely to Influence Career Preference of Individuals**

### **Stage 1: Growth**

Age 0–14: Development of self-concept, attitudes, needs and general world of work

### **Stage 2: Exploration**

Age 15–24: “Trying out” through classes, work experience, hobbies, tentative choice and skill development dissonance

### **Stage 3: Establishment**

Age 25–44: Entry-level skill building and stabilization through work experience

### **Stage 4: Maintenance**

Age 45–64: Continual adjustment process to improve position

### **Stage 5: Decline**

Age 65+: Reduced output, prepare for retirement

*Figure 1.0: Donald Super’s career model (Super, 1980)*

The sample for this research are (prospective and recent graduates) between the ages of 18-30. As such, it is noted according to Donald Super’s career model that, the people within this age bracket are in the exploration and establishment stages of their lives. As such, they are prone to go through some life changes through exploration till they reach their desired lifestyle or are established in their careers. Based on this fact, Donald Super’s career model is the main theory shaping the basis of this research.

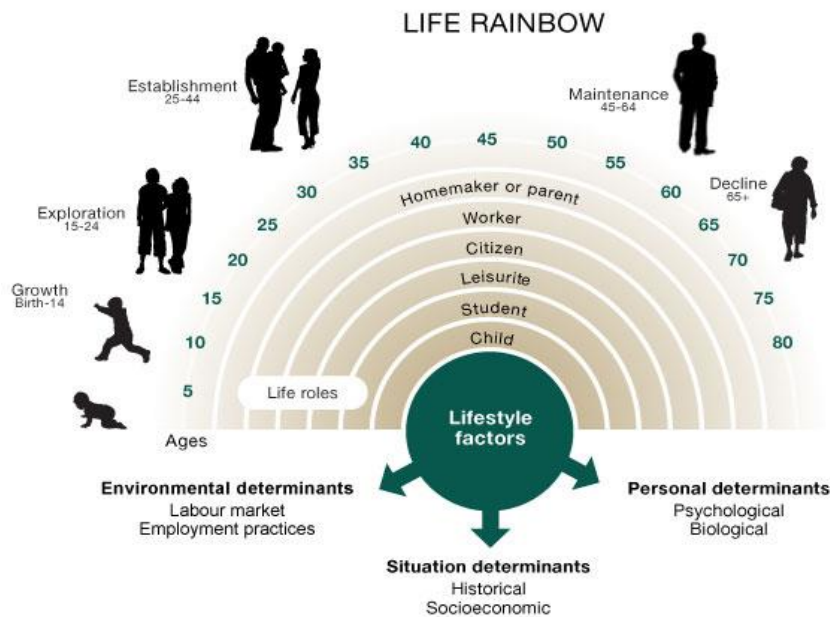


Figure 1.1: Donald Super's career model (Super, 1980)

## 1.6 Proposition

Based on Donald Super's Career Model, it is presumed that, personality of an individual, the environment in which they find themselves as they grow and monetary incentives influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana. However, there might be other factors which might be discovered by the end of the research.

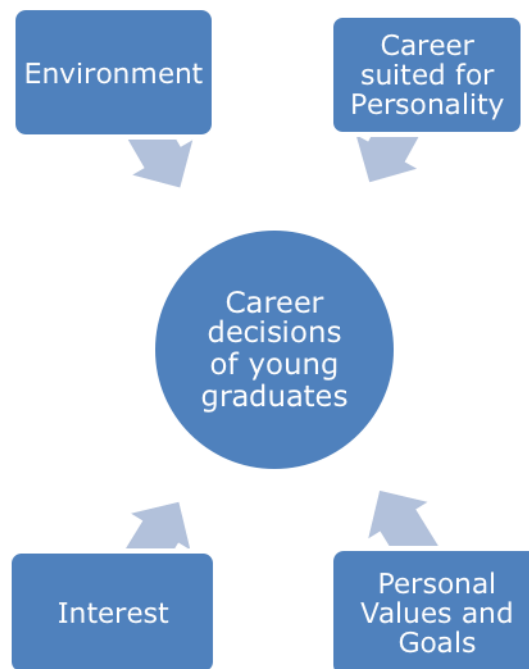
## 1.7 Variables Drawn from Supper's Model

After analyzing Donald Super's career model, the following variables were derived. At every developmental stage, these variables are likely to influence the career preference of prospective and recent graduates. As such, these will be used as foundation to establish the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates.

### **Key variables at exploratory stage:**

- Career suited for Personality
- Environment/background
- Interests
- Personal values and Goals

### **Variables pertaining to Exploratory Stage of Donald Super's Career Model**



*Figure 1.2: Cognitive Map Diagram; Drawn from Donald Super's career model (Super, 1980)*

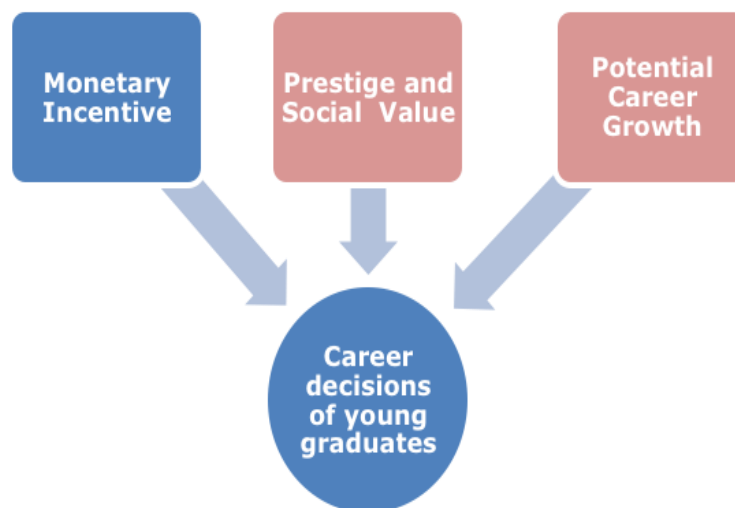
For instance, Donald Super's growth stage describes the fact that, self-concepts, attitudes, needs and general world of work are likely to change over time. Hence, the variables (personality, environment, interests, personal values and goals, prestige and social status) are likely variables to

affect a person's career preference and these variables are subject to change at every developmental stage.

**Key variables at establishment stage:**

- Potential career growth
- Monetary incentive
- Prestige and social status

**Variables pertaining to Establishment Stage of Donald Super's Career Model**



*Figure 1.3: Cognitive Map Diagram; Drawn from Donald Super's career model (Super, 1980)*

Also, Donald Super's establishment stage explains that, skill building and stabilization through work experience is likely to influence a person's career preference. As such, monetary incentives, potential career growth as well as prestige are variables likely to influence career preference.



## **1.8 Scope**

A graduate is a person who has successfully completed a course of study or training, especially a person who has been awarded an undergraduate or first academic degree. This study will consider persons who have completed the university within the last three years (2010-2013) as recent graduates. The research will mainly focus on recent graduates who find themselves working in different institutions in Ghana. The rationale for this is to get as many graduates from diverse universities in Ghana to share the factors that influenced their career preference considering the different backgrounds they are coming from. Recent graduates will also be able to easily relate to the research question concerning the factors that influenced their decisions when it came to job preference as they graduated not too long ago and might be even considering other career paths.

Also, prospective graduates in the graduating class are a preferred choice for study because, they are yet to venture into fresh career paths and will be considering which path suits them best. As such, their contribution to this work would give HR persons new ideas of planning recruitment packages for them.

## **1.9 Constraints**

Unfortunately some constraints such as time and availability of larger sample will not permit the research to be done on a large scale.

### **1.9.1 Outcomes**

- Results from this research will serve as an insight for HR professionals in the preparation of recruiting fresh graduates as they will be equipped with the factors that influence career preference and as such prepare attractive packages for them.
- Provide some guidance for students who are yet to venture into careers on important things to consider when making careers decisions.
- Information acquired will also add to existing literature in the Ghanaian context.

## Outline of dissertation

- **Chapter One** will introduce the reader to the study and its purpose and give an overview of the direction of the research.
- **Chapter Two** will be an in-depth analysis of already existing literature concerning the factors that influence individual career preference and inferences will be drawn afterwards.
- **Chapter Three** will outline the research design, sampling procedure and data collection methods to be used in the study. It will also provide information to show the validity and consistency of the study.
- **Chapter Four** will present the data obtained for the study in the form of graphs and charts.
- **Chapter Five** will present a thorough analysis of the data obtained from the study. The chapter will discuss the findings of the research and draw conclusions based on the findings.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

As the graduate labour market is changing, so are aspirations and expectations. Consequently, the number of students who graduate from the university increases each year (Pollard 2005). According to the Institute of Statistical and Economic Research (ISSER) of the University of Ghana, an estimated 250,000 graduates enter the labour market every year. As per the Ghana National Service Scheme Act of 1980 (Act 426), newly qualified graduates are required to undergo a mandatory national service for one year where they are posted to institutions both in the public and private sectors to work as part of their civic responsibility to the State. After national service, some graduates are retained to work at their respective institutions while others venture into other careers. This research therefore seeks to investigate the factors that influence these graduate preferences to one career as opposed to another.

As human resource is a very crucial aspect of any organization, it is very important for HR persons as well as managers recruiting to know the factors that influence graduates to prefer one career path to others so that, they make their organizations attractive enough for these graduates. These factors influencing career preference have been stressed in a lot of literature and as such; the chapter will discuss existing literature on the subject to inform and guide the research.

## **Career Preference**

The variables drawn from Donald Super's career model are factors that are likely to influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates. These variables are considered in this research because they are subjective to each individual and are likely to change at every development stage. However, these variables might overlap as they are not mutually exclusive of each other. The variables that will be considered are as follows; Potential of Career Growth, Field of Study, Perception, Salary and Monetary Incentives, Personality and Interest, Environmental Factors.

### **2.1 Potential Career Growth**

Work done by Dutta, Andrew; Punnose and Eldos M in 2010 highlight the fact that, graduates are attracted to careers that have long-term growth factors than short term benefits and salary. As such, it can be assumed that an organization which takes into consideration the development of an employee as well as their career progress in the long run is likely to attract most talents after their graduation (Dutta et al, 2010).

The similarity between Pollard, Dutta and Millers work (as cited) shows that, the <sup>1</sup>Y Generation (prospective and recent graduates) were mostly concerned about their career advancement. The trend continues to follow as opportunity for advancement, environment and challenging work, opportunities for promotion, future career progression and future earnings potential (Miller, 2013). These factors of influence could be linked to Donald Super's "stage 2"

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<sup>1</sup> Y Generation also known as the millennials generally refers to the generation of people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s.

career model which explains that, individuals within the age bracket 15-24 will be influenced by careers which allow them to explore through trying out, work experience and tentative skill development (Super, 1980)

## **2.2 Field of Study**

Most graduates are also perceived to be influenced to a particular career because of the courses they studied while in school. Research by Emma Pollard and Peter Bates in 2005 shows that, graduates who studied professional courses such as medicine and computer science are more likely to prefer a career in that field than graduates who studied the social sciences and the general arts. The study showed that, students who studied professional courses ended up with a career in that field. However, as much as this research might be true in the UK context, this might not be the case for Ghanaian graduates.

As the number of students who graduate keep increasing each year, so does competition for employment (Nyarko Otoo et al, 2009). As a result, most students do not have the luxury of venturing into careers they were trained for. This causes most students who studied professional courses branching out to careers with social sciences field and raises the case of choice dissonance. This is an unpleasant motivational state that occurs when an individual's behavior is inconsistent with one another. In other words, dissonance arises when an individual weights the net desirability of a chosen option to an unchosen one especially when that decision is important (Festinger, 1964). In the case of career preference, choice dissonance is

created as there is always a choice to make; the ideal career and the available career. In cases where the chosen option was initially undesirable, the case of dissonance is high.

However, decisional dissonance (regret) can change attitudes towards a particular choice in that, individuals are able to come to terms with their "undesirable choice" by weighing the advantages it has over their "Undesirable unchosen" option. When this happens, the choice that was made (that was initially undesirable) looks better than the unchosen option (the choice that was initially desired). This act by individuals who have to choose options they didn't find desirable initially is termed the "spreading effect" as after the dissonance and the attitude change occur, the two alternatives appear further apart (less similar) than before. In effect, those who did/do not get the opportunity to practice careers that they were trained for and desired practice "spreading" to be able to come to terms with their new choice.

### **2.3 Perception**

"Gaining insight into people's perceptions of basic career options and their related preferences, contributes to a better understanding of the emerging practical career landscape comprising both organizational and post-organizational careers at the same time" (Mayrhofer, Steyrer, Meyer & Strunk, 2005, pg. 473).

People's perceptions are also likely to influence their decisions as individuals and subsequently, their preference towards a career path. Ahmed and Venkatesan suggest that if employers knew the expectations of university students concerning their organizational environment, they could better prepare these students with a more efficient organizational process which will make transition into the labor force much easier for them (Ahmed, Hasnain & Venkatesan, 2012). For instance, because prospective and recent graduates are likely to perceive certain careers as boring, mundane, low remuneration, gender biased and has a negative environment for career development and enhancement might look at other job prospects instead. One clear example is with the teaching field in Ghana. As the perception towards this career path is negative, most graduates do not like to venture out into this career, as they would not want to join to the number of teachers who complain about low remuneration, lack of incentives and no prospect of career growth (Bame, 2013). As such, it will be important for employers to know the various perceptions that prospective and recent graduates have of their organization and work at making it better if these perceptions are negative. On the other hand, if positive feedback is received, more work could be done by these organizations to make the organization more attractive to prospective and recent graduates. The research will therefore measure a prospective or recent graduate's perception towards career preference through questionnaires administered.



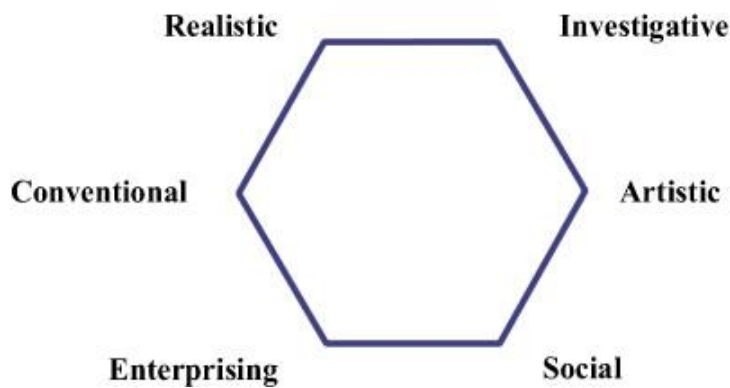
## **2.4 Salary and Monetary Incentives**

Salary and other monetary incentives have also been an important motivation for employees since the creation of the labor market, and this is a significant factor for prospective and recent graduates who seek employment too (Martin & Tulgan, 2001). Most graduates while assessing their career options will prefer a career that pays well relative to the others. Even though money is not the only incentive for staying at a job (Taylor, 2000), a fair compensations package is a basic condition for employee satisfaction. As such some prospective and recent graduates expect to receive both a competitive base salary, and monetary benefits such as health insurance or college tuition reimbursement. Herzberg in 1997 discussed salary as one of five hygiene factors, or dissatisfiers. This means that, employees as well as prospective employees expect to receive relatively good salaries. If this expectation is not met, these employees become dissatisfied and translate into poor/low productivity and shy away from the prospective career respectively. As a result, for organizations to attract prospective talents who are recently graduating, they must offer an appealing compensation package to attract and maintain them. This package could be a combination of different rewards and can include tangible rewards, such as pay – base salary, and benefits; health care, retirement savings, paid vacation, and rewards that are intangible such as learning and development, and a satisfying work environment (Gleeson, 2001; Jensen, McMullen & Stark, 2007).

## **2.5 Personality and Interest**

Career preference, from a cognitive-behavioral perspective continues to receive a great deal of attention in psycho-educational research. (Gati et al). Most research shows that there is a correlation between personality and interest when it comes to career preference. John Holland categorized personality types into 6 groups; Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (Holland, 1992). Each individual is categorized under each of these groups hence has different interests and different influence relating to differences in career preference. However, a person can have two traits which overlap. Individuals who are "realistic" have an interest in working with animals, tools, machines etc. These individuals are practical in nature and so, avoid social activities like teaching and public speaking. Those who fall under the Investigative trait reason quantitatively. As such, they would prefer careers that involve precision and problem solving. Artistic individuals are inclined to careers that involve expression of creativity. They are likely to become writers, musicians and will excel in the arts industry. Individuals who fall under the Social category are people persons. They are prone to careers that involve interactions with people. They would consider a career like teaching, nursing, counseling and public speaking. Enterprising people like to persuade, sell their ideas and lead. These people are ambitious and are likely to prefer careers like sales, politics and setting up businesses. Individuals who fall under Conventional category avoid ambiguous and unstructured activities. They like to work in a systematic fashion and value success in a business. They are able to follow plans easily. John Holland based on these 6 personality types developed a hexagonal model that shows

the relationship between the personality types and environments. This relationship of personality and environment are likely to influence the career preference of prospective and recent graduates.



*Figure 2.1 Holland's Hexagon (Holland, 1992)*

## **2.6 Environmental Factors**

The environment plays a significant role in the career preference of a prospective and recent graduate in diverse ways. The environment that is spoken about here is a factor that is used to nurture decisions in career preference. Research suggests that, parents often have an influence on their children's career preference. This means that, some parents might urge their children to peruse careers that are similar to theirs or careers that they aspired to have when they were younger (McQuerrey 2012). As such, some prospective and recent graduates have no alternative than to venture into the career paths their parents wish for them. This highlights Anne Roe's theory that early childhood experiences affect a person's career preference as well as their relationship with their parents. As such, while growing up, the idea of a certain career path is introduced to children which leads to a

psychological establishment of their career preference even before it is time to make that decision. This kind of claim by McQuerrey holds for certain families in Ghana. However, this cannot be generalized because as much as parents might have an influence on their children's career path, some children may still be able to push through and go contrary to what their parents wish.

Another environmental factor that can influence career preference of prospective and recent graduates will be culture. Culture of a person's regional area, locality, racial and ethical background is likely to impact the career decisions of an individual (Venable, 2011). This is because; culture often shapes our values, which can translate to career preference. However, the predominant characteristics of culture cannot be attributed to an individual, but some knowledge of the values and expectations of an individual's culture may help understand how their career preferences are made.

Social as well as economic conditions can also affect an individual's career preference. The events that occur in our lives may affect the choices available to us and even dictate our preferences to a certain extent (Venable, 2011). As such, changes in the economy might even affect the career preference of prospective and recent graduates.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

These variables that affect the career preference of prospective and recent graduates relate to Donald Super's stage 2 career model of exploration in the sense that, people within the age bracket of 15-26 explore various options of a prospective career through the activities they are engaged in as well as the experiences they encounter through these activities. For instance, a study done by Christopher Boyce and his colleagues suggest that, personality of an individual changes over time. It was established through a survey that, personality was the strongest predictor of satisfaction with life. As such, people's personalities shifted over a period of time depending on the changes that occurred in their lives as well as the experiences they went through. Participants for this research fall into the age bracket 15-26 and it is assumed that, according to Donald Super, these groups of people are exploring through classes, hobbies and work experience. As such, it is probable that their diverse environmental backgrounds as well as change in personality, interests and perceptions, coupled with their need to have a potential career growth and some financial security will influence their career preference. This research will therefore test this observation using Donald Super's theory as a foundation in the Ghanaian context to ascertain the factors that influence their career preferences. At the end of this research, it is expected that findings will prove the factors that influence the career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana.

The next chapter outline's the methodology that will be employed to investigate if findings from literature reviewed on the factors influencing career preference are relevant amongst recent and prospective graduates in Ghana.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the research design, instruments, data collection methods and the analysis techniques that were used to gather information from the sample.

### **3. 0. Operationalization**

**Career:** - *An occupation or profession, especially one requiring special training, followed as one's lifework.*

**Preference:** - *A greater liking for one alternative over another or others*

**Prospective graduate:** - *A prospective graduate is a person in their final year at any degree tertiary institution in Ghana.*

**Recent graduate:** - *For the purpose of this research, a recent graduate is a person who has completed their degree education in any tertiary institution in Ghana within the last three (3) years.*

**Development:** - *A progression from a simpler or lower to a more advanced, mature, or complex form or stage:*

**Experience:** - *Practical knowledge, skill, or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events or in a particular activity*

**Prestige and Social status:** - *high status or reputation achieved through success, influence, wealth.*

**Affiliation to career:** - *relationship or connection to any career*

**Potential career growth:** - *Progression in career*

### **3.1. Research Proposition**

This research explores the factors that influence the career preference of prospective and recent graduates in Ghana. The research is an inductive one as data collected was used to inform and advice prospective employers of the factor qualities and factors prospective and recent graduates look out for when considering new careers.

### **3.2. Research Sample and Data Source**

The sample for this research was students in their final year across universities in Ghana as well as recent graduates who graduated from these institutions within 3 years. The rationale for selecting these groups of people and different institutions was to get as many prospective and recent graduates to answer the questionnaire and be able to compare and find relationships between the different variables that were likely to affect their career preference. Also, students from different universities have been exposed to different environments, training and courses, which will likely influence their career preferences.

### **3.3. Research design**

The main aim of this research was to explore the factors that influence career preference. As such, respondents were asked to provide answers to simple questions through online surveys (web/email/social media). This approach helped the researcher *understand* career preference of prospective and recent graduates as well as to find a relationship between the variables



that influence their career preferences. Some open-ended questions were asked such as; what career do you aspire to pursue in future? What influences your decision? These open-ended questions encouraged respondents to expand on their responses.

Questionnaires were designed in a fashion that respondents could easily understand and needed no assistance in the process of answering. There was also high level of anonymity so that, respondents could easily answer the questionnaire without feeling they were letting out their private sentiments to the public.

The questionnaire was in 2 parts.

**Part A;** This section allowed respondents to select the factors that were likely to influence their ideal careers based on Donald Super's Career Model.

**Part B;** This is a collection of demographic data such as the age range and gender of the respondents.

Questionnaires were made available via an online platform for a number of reasons. , Most of the respondents are youthful and are daily exposed to the use of internet. Also, it is a cheaper, faster and more convenient way of getting information. Through this medium, a significant number of respondents were reached within a shorter period of time relative to the other data collections methods.

### **3.3.1 Sampling procedure**

Purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method was used because; only prospective and recent graduates from universities were

considered for this research. A link with the questionnaire was sent to the researcher's Facebook and Twitter pages as well as to the researcher's email contacts. This link was snowballed as respondents were asked to forward the link to their friends/contacts, and considering the target/sample who spend most of their time online, the researcher expected to get more people to respond to the survey. A total number of 190 people filled the survey sent out via the internet link 24<sup>th</sup> February and 15<sup>th</sup> March. However, only 121 prospective and recent graduates were selected after screening. The screening was based on selecting potential graduates from tertiary institutions that have been in existence for 5 years and above, and recent graduates that have completed their education within the last 3 years. Considering the short period of time available to do the research, a period of 2 weeks was allocated to collect data after which the link was supposed to be blocked which meant no one could answer the questionnaire. However, after 2 weeks the desired number of respondents were not gotten as such, the link was opened up again for a week. After this period, data received was analyzed so that, the research was completed within the given period of time allocated for it.

### **3.4. Data collection procedures**

Online surveys was used because it's relatively cheaper, convenient and a faster way of getting information from a group of people. Online survey tools such as Google Forms was used to collect data. This allowed the researcher to easily send questionnaire using an online interface through a link where respondents answered the questionnaire online. After the

questionnaires were filled, a notification was sent to the researcher who then viewed the results in a folder created and then proceeded with analysis of the responses. An online survey was also preferred as a data collection tool for this research because it gave the researcher the chance to screen out unqualified respondents. For instance, the first question was; please indicate which group you belong to;

- 1) Final year degree seeking student in a University in Ghana?
- 2) Graduate from a University in Ghana?
- 3) None of the above.

Depending on which option was chosen, the respondents were led on to another question. However, picking the 3 option logged a person out as it meant they were not eligible to answer the question. Shortened web addresses were sent to social media websites such as Facebook, and Twitter where respondents could follow the link leading to the questionnaire<sup>2</sup>. The researcher also sent shortened web addresses to email contacts who followed the link and filled the questionnaire. All these measures were put in place to get as many respondents to fill the questionnaire as much as possible.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

Responses from questionnaires were coded into quantitative data and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data was quantified because quantitative analytical approaches allow the reporting of summary results in numerical terms to be given with a specified

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<sup>2</sup> Link to questionnaire "[bitly.com/1g3sUWs](https://bitly.com/1g3sUWs)".

degree of confidence. SPSS was used as a tool for this because, relative to MS Excel, SPSS is able to contain a lot of variables and makes it easier for the researcher to understand relationships between variables. Also, SPSS offers a range of methods, graphs and charts and is designed to make certain that the output is kept separate from data itself as it stores all results in a separate file that is different from the data.

All data collected through online survey was screened to get only qualified respondents. For instance, only tertiary institutions that have been in existence for 5 years and above were considered for this research. This is because recent graduates qualified for this research are supposed to have completed school within the last 3 years. After such screening, data was analyzed properly to establish a correlation between certain variables and the kind of factors that influenced the career preference amongst the target group. For instance, the availability or non-availability of a career guidance services in these institutions might influence target groups differently. The analysis also found out certain demographic patterns that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana.

### **3.6 Reliability and Validity**

This research is reliable because of the research design used. The main aim of this research is to explore the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates. Qualitative data was collected through online surveys using some open-ended questions which encouraged people to expand on their responses and open up new topic areas that were not initially considered. Also qualitative data helped explore and understand the factors that were likely to influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates.

Online survey was the most appropriate for this research as the sample/target population is the youth who practically spend their active hours online as such it was easier to get sample to answer questionnaire online. Some similar questions employed was asked in different forms to ensure that, respondents gave consistent response to ensure the accuracy of this research. For instance, respondents were asked to state some factors that influence their career preference in one question and another question was posed where respondents were asked to rate the factors that were likely to influence their career preference using a likert scale. This technique employed helped the researcher identify response that leaned toward social responsibility as some answers given were not consistent, suggesting respondents were not giving accurate answers for.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings**

### **4.0 Analysis and Findings**

Data for this study was obtained from a sample of 121 prospective and recent graduates from universities in Ghana (80 prospective graduates, 41 recent graduates). A link with the questionnaire was sent to the researcher's Facebook and Twitter pages as well as to the researchers email contacts. This link was snowballed as respondents were asked to forward the link to their friends/contacts and considering the target/sample who spend most of their time online.

The data obtained from the respondents was to answer the research question and also achieve the main objective of the research.

#### **4.01 Main objective**

The main objective of this research was to find out the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana

#### **4.02 Research questions**

- What are the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana?
- Do these factors change over time experience for prospective and recent graduates?

#### **4.1 Demographics Data for Respondents**

There was a total of 121 valid response for the survey. 80 of the respondents were prospective graduates making up 66 percent of respondents while there were 41 recent graduates making 34 percent.

Respondents from the various institutions are shown in Fig. 4.2 and 4.3 for prospective and recent graduates respectively.

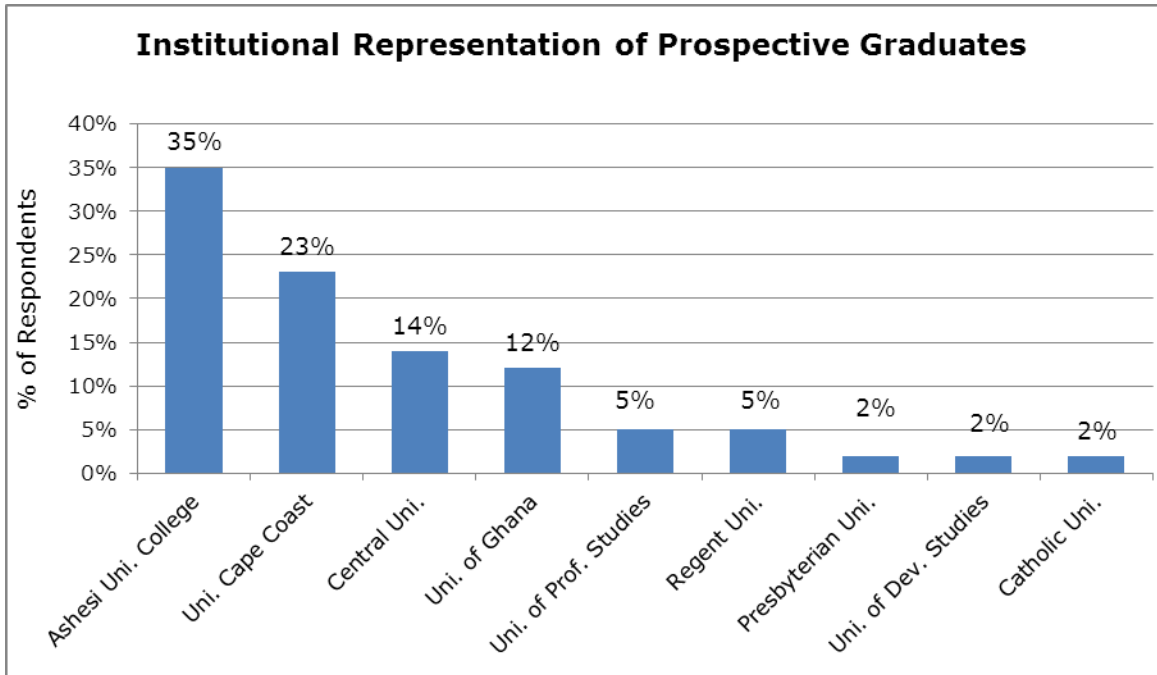
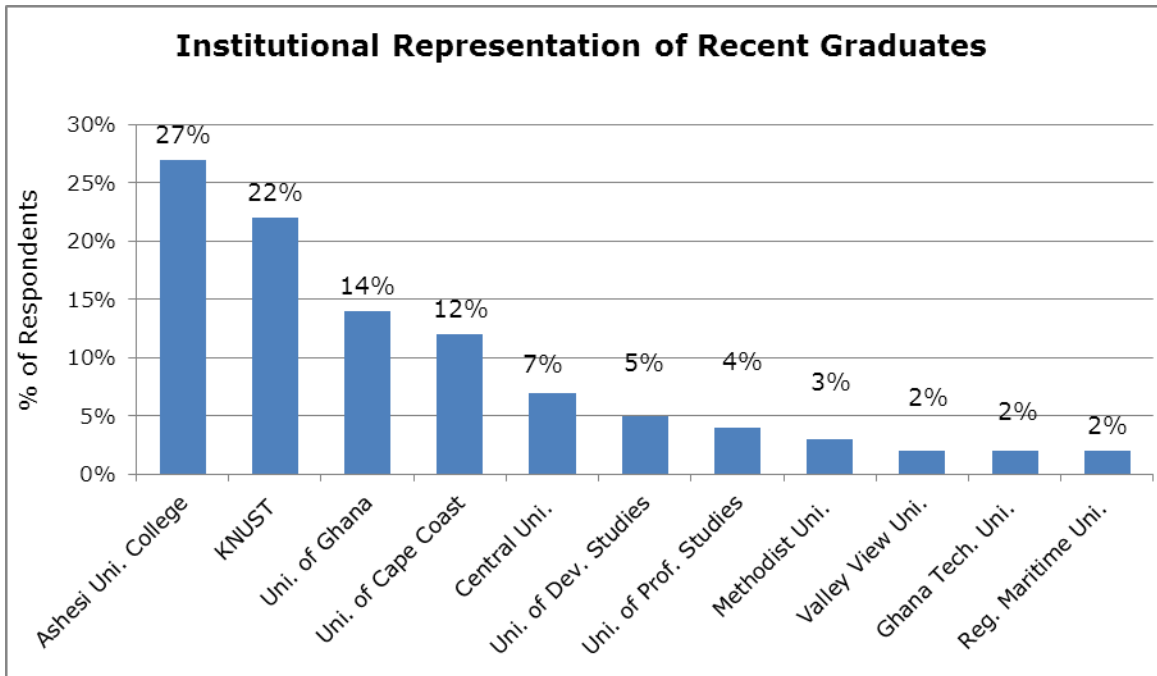


Figure 4.2

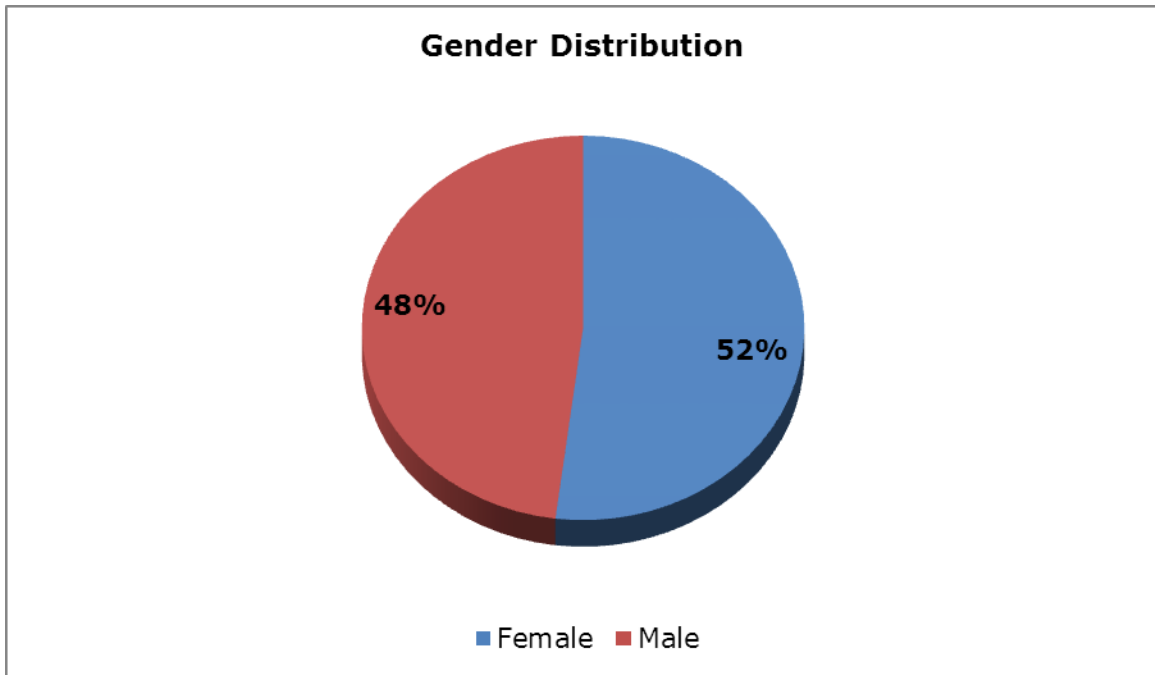


**Figure 4.3**

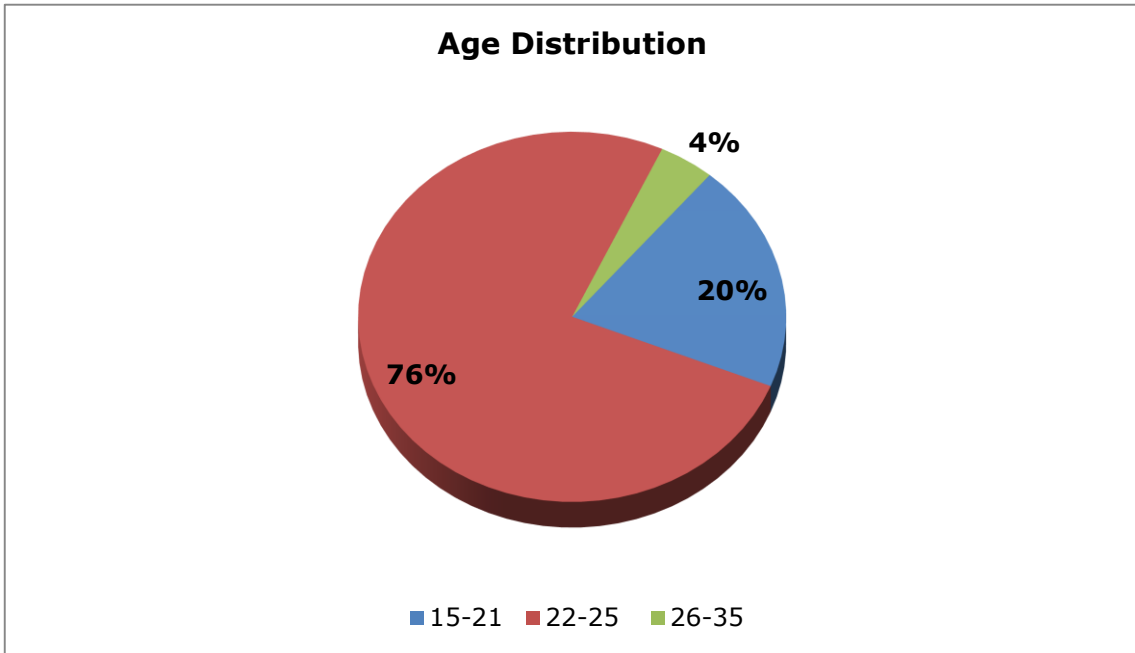


## Gender and Age Distribution of Respondents

Fig 4.4 and 4.5 show the gender and age distribution of respondents respectively.

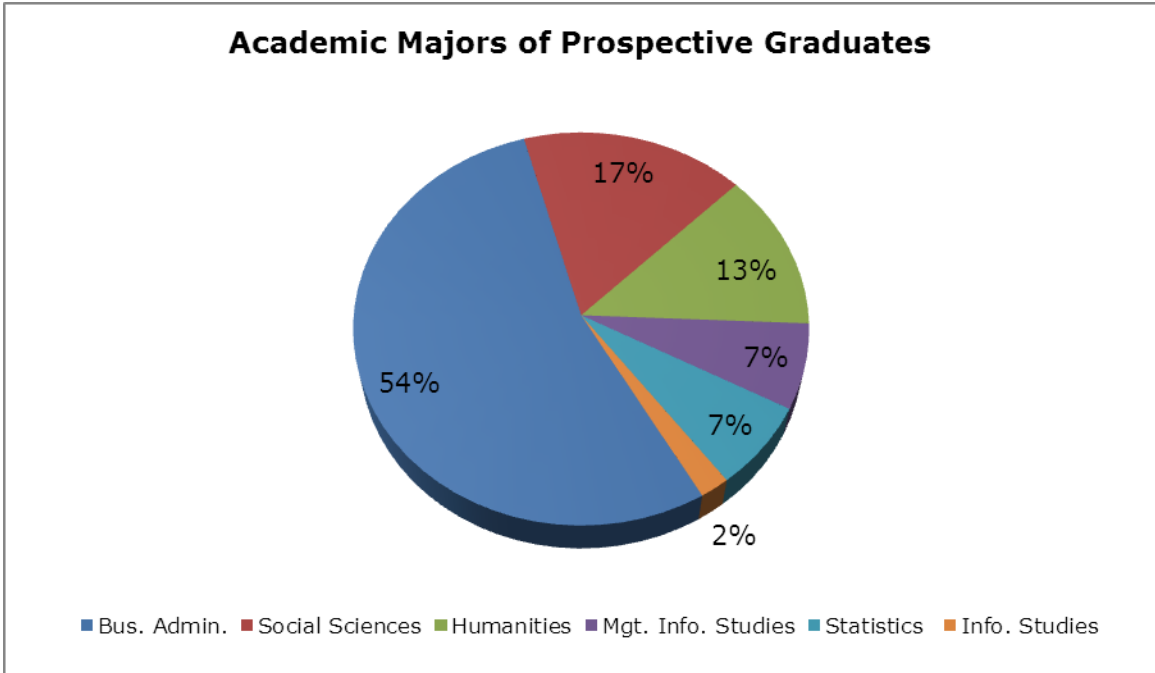


**Figure 4.4**



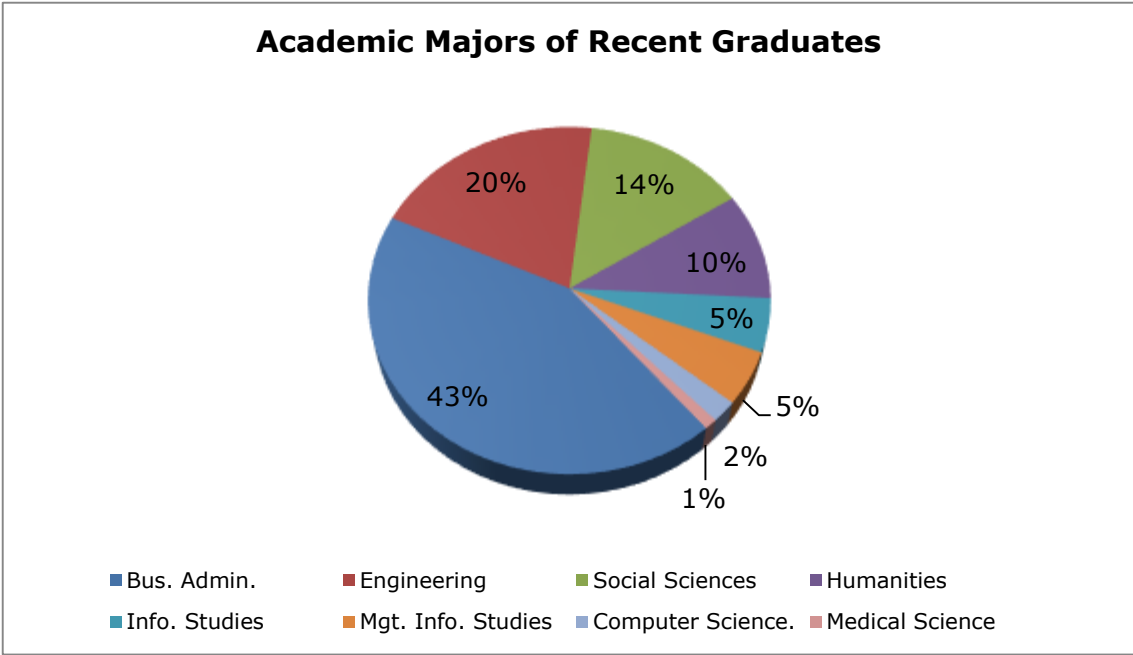
**Figure 4.5**

Considering the type of courses studied by the sampled population, it was observed that, Majority of respondents studied business administration while the minority of respondents studied information studies. The graph in fig 4.6 depicts this.



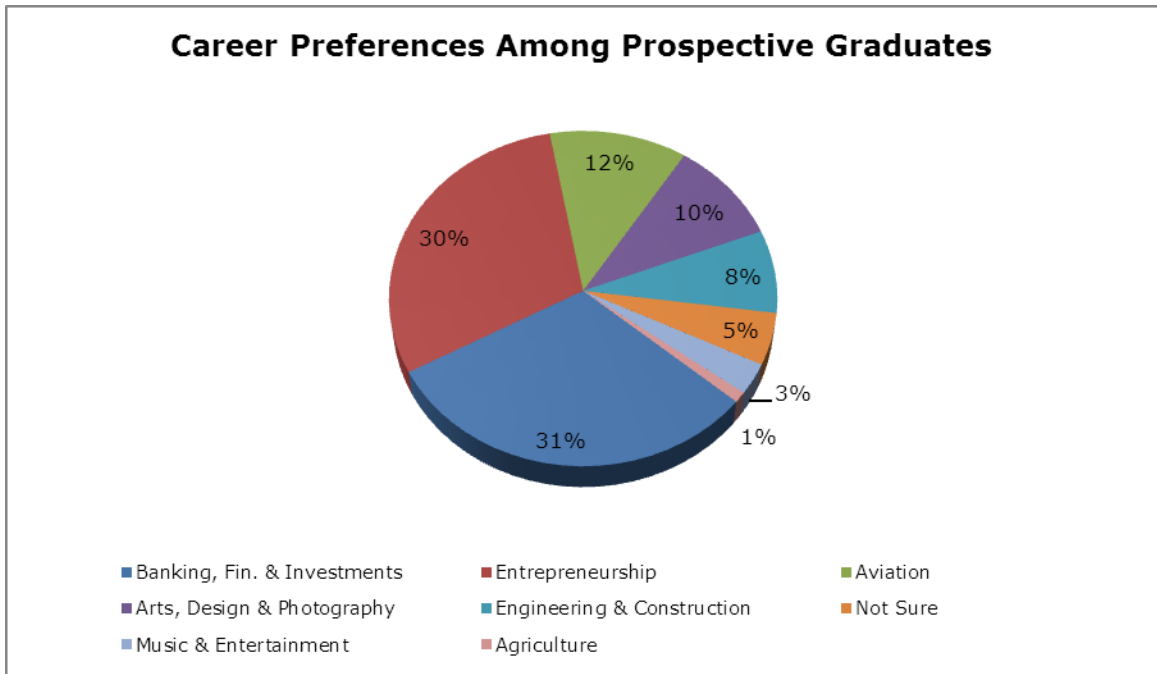
**Figure 4.6**

Also, majority of recent graduates studied business administration while minority of them studied medical science. The graph in fig. 4.7 shows the rest of the distribution.



**Figure 4.7**

Based on the question asked "Which industry do you wish to work in after graduation?" It was observed that, 31 percent of prospective graduates wanted to work in the Banking/ Finance while 1 percent wanted to work in the Agricultural sector. Fig. 4.8. gives a visual description of the career preference of prospective graduates.

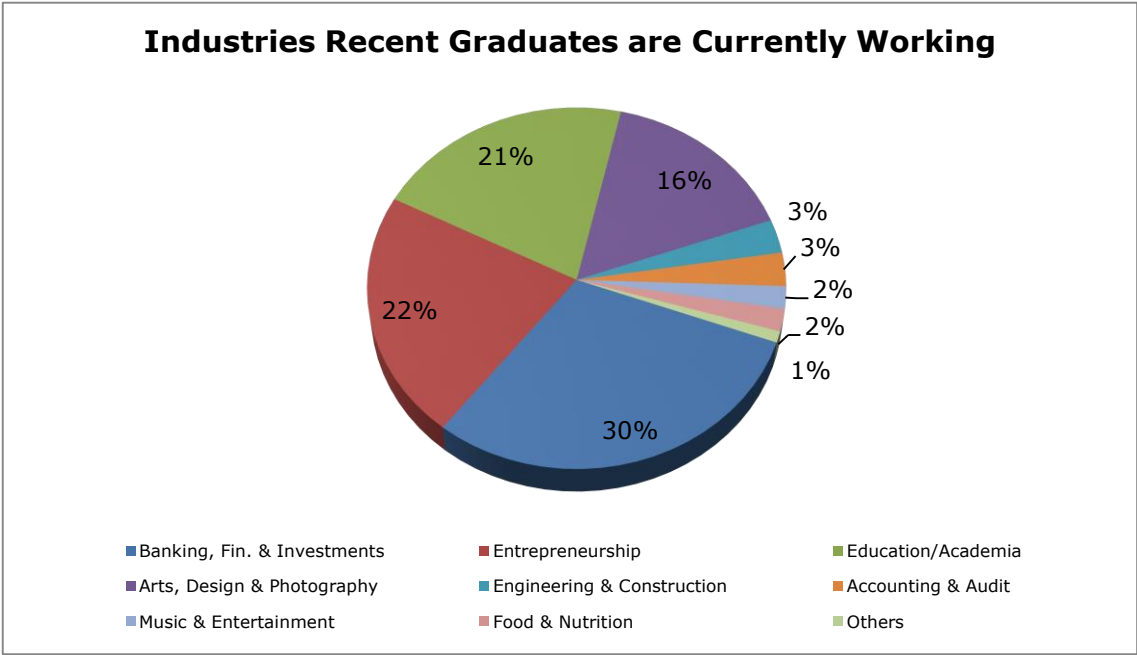


**Figure 4.8**

When asked what their motivation was for wanting to work in the chosen industry after graduation, respondents answered as follows: for instance, people who wanted to be entrepreneurs preferred that because they hated working under people and so, would love to have their own business rather than working for someone. Others also said they wanted to help humanity by improving the standard of living of people all over the world. Some also wanted to help reduce the high unemployment rate in Ghana as such, they thought they could do this better by owning their own businesses and employ others. Those who wanted to venture into Banking/ Finance were interested in that industry because in their opinion, it brought about better remuneration than the other industries and also because some of them enjoyed their internships at financial institutions. Some of the

respondents also said aside from the fact that their interest laid with that industry, they were motivated to work there because it is a growing industry in Ghana and looks very promising. Respondents who want to work in the Design /Photography industry and Music/Entertainment are passionate about the arts especially in Africa and would love to also help spread the African culture to other parts of the world. It was also noticed that although parents and monetary incentives motivated prospective graduates to show an interest in the selected industries, passion and interest for the particular industry as well as ability to be innovative and creative as well as potential career growth were the highest motivations that drove people's preference.

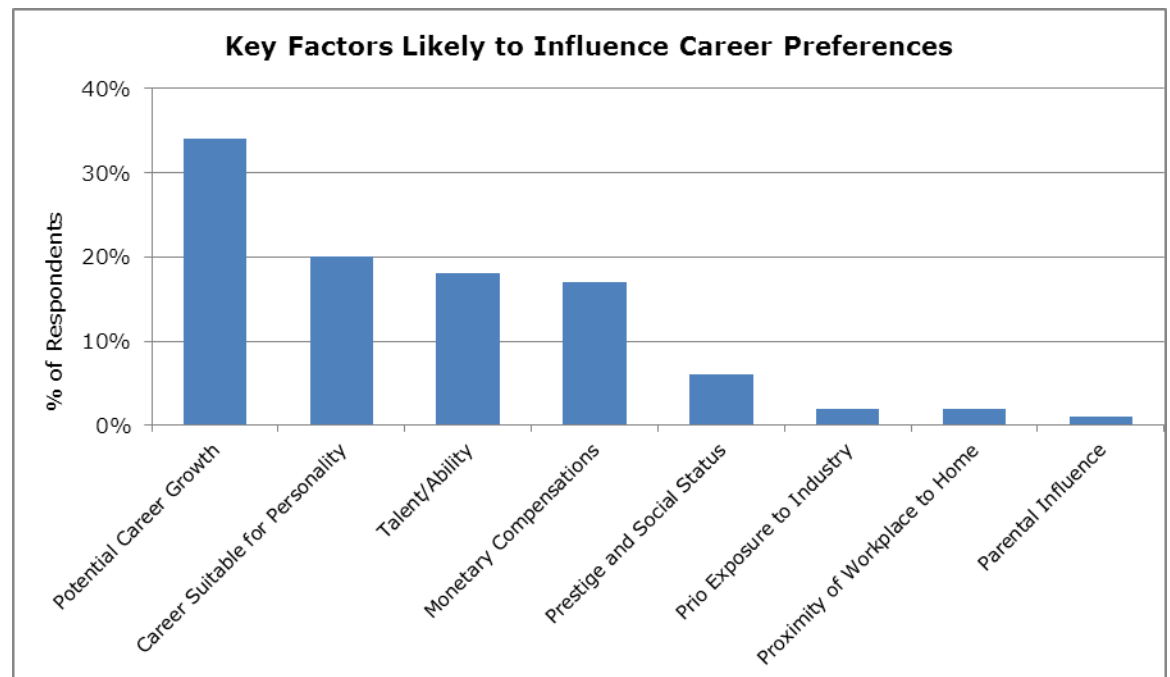
Based on the question asked "What industry are you currently working in?" 30 percent of recent graduates indicated working in the Banking/ Finance sector. The graph in Fig. 4.9. depicts the sectors recent graduates are currently working in.



**Figure 4.9**

It was also noticed that, various factors motivated these recent graduates when selecting the kind of industry to work in. For instance, those who worked in Education/Academia did so because they had a passion to help children unearth their full potential and make an impact while touching lives and helping their communities. Also, those who worked in Engineering/Construction did so because, they like the idea of creation and engineering makes that possible. Others also choose to be in this industry because they perceived it as challenging thus using their creativity to explore avenues to solve those problems. Moreover, career growth pattern in this industry was very promising. Generally, it was observed that, passion for the particular industry as well as potential of career growth motivated recent graduates to work in the chosen industry.

After respondents were asked to provide the factors that influenced their career preferences, they were further asked to select on a Likert scale from 1-5 where 1 represented least important and 5 most important the factors that were likely to influence their career preference. The results are as shown in Fig. 4.10



**Figure 4.10**

It was evident that, the factors that influence individual respondents were quite different. However, at the end of the survey, it is realized that, the majority of respondents (34 percent) communicated that, potential career growth in a particular career or industry motivates them to prefer a career on that route. This affirms Pollard, Dutta and Miller's work which also highlighted the fact that, the Y Generation (prospective and recent graduates) were mostly concerned about their career advancement.



Considering potential growth as the highest factor that influences career preference amongst both prospective and recent graduates.

The Chi Square which is a statistical test usually used to compare experiential data with expected data to a specific hypothesis was adopted as the main tool to analyze response from the survey. The subsidiary of this test which is the Pearson asymptotic significance value which is used to tell the significance of the relationship between variables was also employed. As such any value that was more than 0.05 meant that the relationship that existed between variables under consideration was not significant.

As shown in fig 4.11 below, most males were by influenced by potential growth than their female counterparts. However, there is no strong correlation between a person's gender and their preference for a job that ensures potential career growth as the Pearson asymptotic significance is 0.160 which is greater than 0.05.

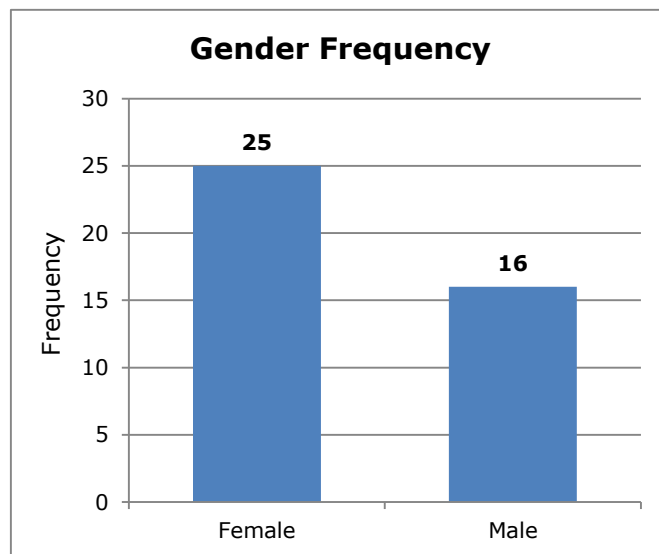


Figure 4.11

The next factor likely to influence career preference was career suitable for personality with a statistic significance of 0.046 indicating that, there is a strong relationship between a person's career and their personality. This also means that, it is highly probable that, when the survey is repeated, this factor will be chosen again. The next factor as shown in fig 4.9.0 was a person's talent/ability.

In 1997, Frederick Herzberg discussed salary as one of five hygiene factors, or dissatisfiers for employees. This means that, when salary is adequate/reasonable in a job, it pacifies the employees and do not make them dissatisfied. As such, employees as well as prospective employees expect to receive relatively good salaries to. Response from the survey shows this to be true as according to fig 4.9.0, monetary compensations is picked as the fourth highest factor for prospective and recent graduates when considering a career path. Although this might not be the highest factor likely to influence the career preference of most prospective and recent graduates, it is one of the factors one will consider. Going contrary to the popular Ghanaian fact that parents had strong influence on the career preference of their children, response from respondents showed this fact to be inaccurate as only 1 percent of the respondents thought their parents influence the career paths they ventured into.

It was asked if respondents have changed their minds about their job preference over the past 5 years and it was observed that, 52 percent of the total responded 'yes' to this while 46 percent responded 'no'. 2 percent of the

respondent did not have any strong career preferences over the past 5 years. Considering their age groups, it is noticed that, majority of respondents who answered that their job preference has changed over the last 5 years were between the ages of 15-25. Findings from this survey shows a strong relationship between the age of respondents and the Stability of Job preference as the asymptotic significance is 0.004. This observation can be related to Donald Super's career model which is based on the belief that self-concept changes over time and develops as a result of experience causing a person's career preference to keep changing as they go through the different stages in life. As a result, respondents who answered yes are seen to be in the exploratory stage according to Donald Super's model as people at this stage explore careers through classes, work experience, hobbies, tentative choice and skill development dissonance causing their preference to change over time.

Another interesting finding was respondents' stability of career preference and the availability of a career guidance department available in their universities. Career guidance seeks to help students decide on jobs/course and to broader development of career management skills (Orndorff, 2001). As a result, people who go through career guidance are seen to be people who may have a clear direction as to what career path and jobs they want to venture into. However, response from the survey tells a different story. For instance, the schools represented had a career guidance department. However, it is observed that, there is no strong correlation between respondents having a career guidance department in their

universities and their stability of a career preference. The significance value of variables (availability of career guidance department and the stability of career preference) amongst respondents is 0.294. This shows that, the relationship between these variables is not significant and that there is a possibility of randomness with the results. As such, the fact that career guidance services might be available in an institution does not guarantee that students will have stable factors that influence their career service as according to Donald Super's model, people within the age bracket of 15-25 explore through tentative skills, classes and general life experiences as such, will have different factors influencing their career preference.

Another observation made was that, most of the respondents wanted to pursue a career that was in line with what they studied in school. For instance, majority of prospective graduates who responded studying Business Administration wanted to pursue a career in Banking/ Finance/Investment while those studying Engineering Science wanted to pursue a career in Engineering/Construction. After graduation however, it does not appear that graduates are able to successfully follow a career path that is in line with courses studied in school. In comparison with responses from recent graduates, it is observed that most graduates who studied Business Administration found jobs in the Arts, Design &Photography; Fashion & Beauty; or became Entrepreneurs. On the other hand, graduates who studied computer science found jobs job in the Banking, Finance & Investment or became Entrepreneurs. Graduates are perceived to be influenced to choose a particular career as a result of the courses they

studied while in school, according to research done by Emma Pollard and Peter Bates. This is not necessarily true in the case of Ghana, as the results of this study indicate that graduates do not always get to follow a career path in line with the courses studied in school. This is however in agreement with a study done by Nyarko Otoo which shows that, as the number of students who graduate keep increasing each year, so does competition for employment (Nyarko Otoo et al, 2009). As a result, most graduates do not have the luxury of venturing into careers they were trained for.

When respondents were asked if they would consider a job that was not in line with their career aspirations, 67.8 percent responded 'yes' and '30.6' percent responded no. The rest of the respondents who were not sure represented 1.7 percent as seen in Fig. 4.9.3 below.

**Career aspirations**

		Freque ncy	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	82	43.2	67.8	67.8
	No	37	19.5	30.6	98.3
	N/a	2	1.1	1.7	100.0
	Total	121	63.7	100.0	

Fig. 4.9.3

When asked to give reasons for considering a job that was not in line with their career aspirations, respondents who answered 'yes' gave reasons such as wanting to try something new as well as exploring their capabilities. Others also said they would consider a job that is not in line with their career aspirations if it has more incentives relative to what they prefer and also if it guaranteed them potential growth. This goes to show that, the generation Y (prospective and recent graduates) are constantly looking forward to different avenues to express their passion and creativity while making ends meet through exploration.

#### **4.2 Comparing findings to literature**

Referring to the proposition for this research that is based on Donald Super's Career Model, it was presumed that, personality of an individual, the environment in which they find themselves as they grow and monetary incentives influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana. However, results from the survey suggests that, there are other factors that are more likely to influence the career preference of prospective and recent graduates in Ghana.

It was observed that, majority of respondents are influence by potential career growth in a particular career or industry. This affirms Pollard, Dutta and Millers work which also highlighted the fact that, the

Y Generation (prospective and recent graduates) were mostly concerned about their career advancement. Followed by a career which was suitable for personality as well as their talent/ability. Unlike what was expected from the survey and literature, personality of an individual, the environment in which they find themselves as they grow, parental influence and monetary incentives were the least factors that influenced career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana although some respondents took these factors into consideration when selecting a job for their career path.

It was also observed that, the age of an individual influenced their career preference as respondents between the ages of 15-25 did not have a stable career preference. Based on this observation, it can be concluded that, as self-concept changes over time and develops as a result of experience, people's career preference will keep changing as they go through the different stages in life as depicted by Donald Super's career model.

Also, most of the prospective graduates wanted to pursue a career that was in line with what they studied in school. However, relating response given by recent graduates, it was noticed that, most graduates after school are not able to pursue a career that was in line with the courses they were trained for. For instance, recent graduates, who studied Business Administration found a job in the Arts/Design

industry, Fashion/Beauty industry, or became Entrepreneurs while graduates who studied computer science found a job in the Banking/ Finance/Investment industry or became Entrepreneurs. There could be a correlation between this and the fact that, there are not enough jobs available relative to the number of people who graduate from school each year as depicted by Nyarko Otoo et al, that number of students who graduate keep increasing each year, so does competition for employment (Nyarko Otoo et al, 2009) as such, there is saturation in the job market. When this happens, most graduates do not have the luxury of venturing into careers they were trained for.

#### **4.3 Fulfilment of Research Objective and Answers to Research Questions**

The main objective and question of this research was to find out the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana. After conducting research and analyzing data, it was observed that, majority of respondents are influence by potential career growth in a particular career or industry, and followed by a career which was suitable for personality as well as their talent/ability.

The question was also asked if these factors changed over time with experience for prospective and recent graduates and it was also observed that, the age of an individual influenced their career preference as respondents between the ages of 15-25 did not have a



stable factor that influenced their career preference. Based on this observation, it can be concluded that, as self-concept changes over time and develops as a result of experience, a person's career preference will keep changing as they go through the different stages in life as Donald Super's career model illustrates.

## **Chapter 5: Limitations, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Limitations**

Although there was a system to wean out unqualified respondents from answering the questionnaire, it is not 100 percent certain that, respondents who answered the questionnaire qualified to answer as the researcher was not around when respondents filled the questionnaire online to ensure that, they were truly in their final year or were recent graduates.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

Participants for this research were from different universities thus different backgrounds. The aim of this was to find out the factors that influenced their career preference and to find out if their different backgrounds influenced their career preference. From the survey, it is observed that, the environment a person came from had no direct influence on the factors that influenced their career preference. However the age of an individual influenced their career preference as respondents between the ages of 15-25 did not have a stable factor that influenced their career preference.

It is thus concluded that, factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates vary from individual to individual.

However, the trend realized from this research as the highest factors that influence career preference follows:

- Potential career growth
- Career suitable for personality
- Talent/ability
- Monetary compensations
- Passion and interest for the particular industry
- Ability to be innovative and creative.

As such, employers must consider and employ these factors in their organizations to attract the current generation of employees.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

It is recommended that, companies and HR professionals interested in recruiting fresh graduates take into consideration the factors that influence their career preference as provided in this research (the trend follow as opportunity for advancement, environment and challenging work, Communicating opportunities for promotion, future career progression and future earnings potential (Miller, 2013)) to attract and retain young talent as they prepare recruitment campaigns for students at universities.

Additionally, it is recommended that companies in their quest to employ the best talents available on the employment market; indulge students during internships while they are still in school and national

service immediately after graduation so that, they are more exposed to the work environment and explore their capabilities and interest as the youth at this stage go through changing self-concept which develops as a result of experience (Super, 1980).

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## Appendix A

### Sample Questionnaire for Prospective and Recent Graduates

This questionnaire is to help in obtaining information for a study on the factors that influence career preference amongst prospective and recent graduates in Ghana. Any information given here is confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you for your participation.

#### Part A – Employment Decisions for Prospective Graduates

*For the purpose of this research, a prospective graduate is anyone who is in their final year of perusing an undergraduate degree program.*

#### Please tick the likely option

1) Are you a final year degree seeking student in any tertiary institution in Ghana?

Yes

No

#### Please tick the likely option

2) Which institution are you enrolled in?

- a) Ashesi University College
- b) University of Ghana
- c) University of Science and Technology
- d) University of Cape Coast
- e) University of Development Studies
- f) Central University
- g) Methodist University
- h) Catholic University College of Ghana
- i) Presbyterian University College
- j) Ghana Baptist University College
- k) University of professional Studies
- l) Regent University
- m) Accra Polytechnic
- n) Ghana Technology University College

- o) University of Education Winneba
- p) All Nations University
- q) University of Mines and Technology
- r) Regional Maritime University
- s) Valley View University
- t) Wisconsin International University College
- u) Zenith University College
- Other

Please state other .....

**Please tick the likely option**

3) Does your institution have a career service department?

Yes

No

4) What is your Major

.....  
 .....  
 .....

5) Please tick the likely career path you wish to pursue after graduation

- |  |   |                                     |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy/Audit         | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Architect  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts/Design /Photography  | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobiles        | <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banking/ Finance          | <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Resources    | <input type="checkbox"/> Child care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications/PR         | <input type="checkbox"/> Consulting         | <input type="checkbox"/> Education  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering/Construction  | <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurship   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fashion    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food and Nutrition        | <input type="checkbox"/> Government         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Travel/leisure      | <input type="checkbox"/> HR/Recruitment     | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT/Computing              | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services     | <input type="checkbox"/> cosmetics  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Media/ Advertising        | <input type="checkbox"/> Military/Security  | <input type="checkbox"/> Music      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property/Real Estate      | <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing/Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Work            | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail/Trading     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sales      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports/Fitness/Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport  |

Other.....



6) What is your motivation?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

7) Please rate the following variables likely to influence your career preference on a scale of 1 -5: 1being least important, and 5 being most important to you by ticking like this ✓

<b>Influential variable</b>	<b>1 – least important</b>	<b>2 – somewhat important</b>	<b>3 – important</b>	<b>4 – very important</b>	<b>5 – most important</b>
Career suitable for Personality					
Monetary influence					
Proximity of jobsite to home					
Prestige and Social Status					
Affiliation to career					
Talent					
Parental influence					
Potential career growth					
Relationship between subordinates and top management					

- Other

Please state other .....

**Please tick the likely option**

8) Has your job preference been stable over the past decade?

- Yes
- No

**Please tick the likely option**

9) Would you consider choosing a job that is not in line with your career aspirations?

- Yes
- No

10) If you answered **yes** to question 9, please state at least three factors that will attract you to prefer a job that is not in line with your career aspirations.

- a).....
- b).....
- c).....

**Please tick the likely option**

**Part B – Demographics**

11. Age: 15 – 21  22 – 25  26 and above

12. Sex: Male  Female

**Appendix B**

**Section A– Employment Decisions for Recent Graduates**

*For the purpose of this research, a recent graduate is a person who has successfully completed his/her under graduate degree program within the last 3 years.*

**Please tick the likely option**

1) Were you a degree seeking student in any tertiary institution in Ghana?

Yes

No

**Please tick the likely option**

2) Which institution were you enrolled in?

- a) Ashesi University College
- b) University of Ghana
- c) University of Science and Technology
- d) University of Cape Coast
- e) University of Development Studies
- f) Central University
- g) Methodist University
- h) Catholic University College of Ghana
- i) Presbyterian University College
- j) Ghana Baptist University College
- k) University of professional Studies
- l) Regent University
- m) Accra Polytechnic
- n) Ghana Technology University College
- o) University of Education Winneba
- p) All Nations University
- q) University of Mines and Technology
- r) Regional Maritime University
- s) Valley View University
- t) Wisconsin International University College
- u) Zenith University College

Please state other .....

**Please tick the likely option**

3) Did your institution have a career service department?

Yes

No

**Please tick the likely option**

4) When did you graduate?

1-3 years ago

4 years and above

5) What was your Major

.....  
.....  
.....

6) Which industry did you do your national service?

.....  
.....  
.....

7) What was your motivation for working in the chosen industry?

.....  
.....  
.....

8) Please rate the following variables likely to influence your career preference on a scale of 1 -5: 1being least important, and 5 being most important to you by ticking like this ✓

<b>Influential variable</b>	<b>1 – least important</b>	<b>2 – somewhat important</b>	<b>3 – important</b>	<b>4 – very important</b>	<b>5 – most important</b>
Career suitable for Personality					
Monetary influence					
Proximity of jobsite to home					
Prestige and Social Status					
Affiliation to career					
Talent					
Parental influence					
Potential career growth					
Relationship between subordinates and top management					

Please state other .....

**Please tick the likely option**

9) Has your career preference been stable over the past decade?

- Yes
- No

**Please tick the likely option**

10) Did you consider choosing a career path that was not in line with your career aspirations?

- Yes
- No

11) If you answered **yes** to question 9, please state at least three factors that attracted you to prefer a career that was not in line with your career aspirations.

- a).....
- b).....
- c).....

**Please tick the likely option**

**Part B – Demographics**

12) Age: 15 – 21  22 – 25  26 -35  36 and above

13) Sex: Male  Female