



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: A
ARTS & HUMANITIES - PSYCHOLOGY
Volume 23 Issue 2 Version 1.0 Year 2023
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Determinants of Students' Choice of Academic Programme at the Senior High School Level

By Dr. Felix Senyamator, Vida Naa Abagbana, Dr. Regina Mawusi Nugba, Angelina Adu
& Michael Adu Asabere

University of Cape Coast

Abstract- The purpose of this study was to examine the determinants of students' choice of program at the Senior High School (SHS) level in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region of Ghana. It was a quantitative study underpinned by the positivist paradigm. The descriptive survey design was employed for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 229 for the study. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze the data. The study found that students' general academic performance was the best predictor of students' choice of program followed by advice from colleagues or peers of students. The study, therefore, recommended that the Ghana Education Service (GES) and Management of SHSs, should work on equipping students with learning and research skills to enable them to enhance their self-efficacies and general academic performance.

Keywords: *determinants, program choice, senior high school, gomoa east.*

GJHSS-A Classification: *DDC Code: 379.1580973 LCC Code: LC3981*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2023. Dr. Felix Senyamator, Vida Naa Abagbana, Dr. Regina Mawusi Nugba, Angelina Adu & Michael Adu Asabere. This research/review article is distributed under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). You must give appropriate credit to authors and reference this article if parts of the article are reproduced in any manner. Applicable licensing terms are at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

Determinants of Students' Choice of Academic Programme at the Senior High School Level

Dr. Felix Senyamator ^α, Vida Naa Abagbana ^σ, Dr. Regina Mawusi Nugba ^ρ, Angelina Adu ^ω
& Michael Adu Asabere [¥]

Abstract- The purpose of this study was to examine the determinants of students' choice of program at the Senior High School (SHS) level in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region of Ghana. It was a quantitative study underpinned by the positivist paradigm. The descriptive survey design was employed for the study. A self-developed questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 229 for the study. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze the data. The study found that students' general academic performance was the best predictor of students' choice of program followed by advice from colleagues or peers of students. The study, therefore, recommended that the Ghana Education Service (GES) and Management of SHSs, should work on equipping students with learning and research skills to enable them to enhance their self-efficacies and general academic performance.

Keywords: *determinants, program choice, senior high school, gomoa east.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The choice of program students make when entering Senior High school (SHS) is very critical for their future achievements. The choice of career students aspire for and the choice of program they make when entering SHS is very crucial and related to each other. A poor choice of program directs all individual efforts and resources in the wrong direction, particularly when not aligned with expectations; would not only be frustrating but also draining of energy and waste of resources (Hagel & Shaw, 2010).

a) *Determinants of students' choice of academic program*

The specific academic programs students pursue are determined by several factors, some of which are beyond the students' control. The factors which impact the choice of academic program involve significant decisions which set the foundation for success or otherwise in life and career (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014). To some extent, the choice is significantly driven by some demographic

characteristics of the students involved (Kinzie, et al., 2004). A review of studies on determinants of academic program choice revealed that some prevalent elements across nations such as parental preference, mass media, the influence of peers, and cost associated with pursuing a particular program drive the choice of the programs (Baharun et al., 2011).

Similarly, Kankam and Onivehu (2000), Taylor and Buku (2006) found that intellectual ability, aptitudes, school, family, personality, self-esteem, values, interest, and environmental influences as determinants of students' choice of career. Mankoe (2007) also added the following list as factors that influence students' choice of career and related programs; interests, abilities and personalities, life and work satisfaction, and employment variables. Students' low interest, content knowledge, and negative self-concept of ability as well as perceived lack of the subject's relevance in line with anticipated careers are identified are also reputed as possible driving forces affecting students' decision to either enroll and stay in a particular program or not (Fullarton & Ainley, 2000; Merzyn, 2011). In advancing knowledge on the individual and personal factors that determine students' choice of program, some researchers revealed that students select their major academic programs that match their personality types and interest. (Worthington & Higgs, 2004; Asantewaa, 2020).

One wonders whether families of students play a role in students' crucial decision of program choice. Shumba and Naong (2012) revealed that the family was a significant determinant that predicted the career and academic program choices of secondary school students. Similarly, in a follow-up study, Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) examined the factors which affect the choice of program and career among students in two public sector universities in Lahore city, confirmed parental influence as the most significant factor in the choice of program and career aspirations of students. Research revelations on the phenomenon of determinants driving students' choice of program in other parts of the world are not quite different from those found in Ghana and Africa. In Hong Kong for instance, Law and Yuen (2011), Bardick, Berns, Magnusson and Witko (2004) revealed that students value the opinions of their parents, which implies that parents could inculcate an interest of certain programs in their children from childhood. Bardick,

Author α ρ: Department of Education and Psychology, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. e-mails: felix.senyamator@ucc.edu.gh, regina.nugba@ucc.edu.gh

Author σ: Buduburam D/A Model D Junior High School Kasoa. e-mail: vidanaah12@gmail.com

Author ω: Presbyterian University of Ghana. e-mail: gyankromaa@presbyuniversity.edu.gh

Author ¥: Department of Education and Psychology. e-mail: expensivebrain1@gmail.com

Berns, Magnusson and Witko (2004) also found that Canadian adolescents tend to appreciate their parents' opinions more than any other source for answers to an academic program and career-related issues. Many parents are in the position to influence their children's career development because they observe their children's development, know their interests and strengths, and have developed a trusting relationship with them (Geiger & Ogilby, 2000). In Singapore, it was revealed that parental involvement had a significant influence on the selection of nursing careers (Ching & Keith, 2011).

Some studies investigating the extent to which children are likely to choose programs that are associated with their parents' backgrounds or occupations have been conducted in the last few years (Van de Werfhorst et al., 2001; Dryler, 1998). Van de Werfhorst et al. (2003) explored the implications of social class, economic and cultural standing on the choice of program at Senior High and some higher educational institutions in Britain and found that these factors immensely affect students' choice of programs. At the same time, Payne (2003) has acknowledged that family background affects the tendency of obtaining good grades in school. Gostein (2000) similarly revealed that parents influence their children's programs and career choices in several ways including acting as role models. He further mentioned that sometimes this influence comes in the form of order for the children to enroll in particular programs. The first category of influence identified by Gostein (2000) was direct inheritance. With this, he meant that the adolescent is brought up based on the ideologies such as the family business which is the ward's inheritance. This indirectly compels the ward to choose a business program to groom himself or herself well to fit the status. However, such a program may not necessarily be related to the ward's inherent capabilities and interests as emphasized by the factor and trait theory. Another influence from parents is the inculcation of interest in their wards from infancy to pursue certain career paths which eventually inform academic program choices (Berzin, 2010).

In a similar vein, Elacqua, Gobierno, and Ibanez (2005) revealed that parents across school types rated academic reasons as the most important factor in their wards' program choice. Likewise, Schneider and Buckley (2002) studied the search patterns of parents of schools on an educational website and found that, on average, parents looked at programs that performed better academically (higher reading and mathematics scores) as their search progressed. In other words, parents eliminated programs in which students were found to have poor academic performance. Myburgh (2005) also buttressed the foregoing findings with the revelation that relatives, the social environment, and

governmental policies have a significant impact on individual students' academic program choices.

Gregory (1998) has opined that in some instances, parents' choices for their wards are either in the same status category or above theirs. For instance, a parent who is a physician would encourage the ward to opt for the same career or one of the comparable pedigrees. In the same way, a skilled worker may encourage the child to emulate him or urge him to aim for a higher-level managerial position and this will influence the program choice of the child. In this context, Holland's (1997) vocational theory's position is that parents must offer their children the right information necessary to make suitable program choices. This will enable them to make their own future decisions in life at every stage of life when there is a need to make a choice. This style is not practiced in the Gomoa East District since it seems parents and wards are not very well educated. Thus, parents rather motivate their wards to blindly copy and become like their supposed role models without recourse to the ward's inherent traits.

In relation to peers and friends, research has shown that students make their choices of programs in school because of influence from friends or peers, the mass media, and the cost associated with the program (Baharun et al., 2011; Pafili & Mylanakis, 2011). Ramirez and Dizon (2014) opined that some students erroneously believe that brilliant students offer the sciences and usually get influenced by this and choose those courses but only realized later that it was the wrong field for them. Given this, it is always important to let one's interest drive the choice of study rather than follow friends blindly.

In addition to the foregoing, Students' backgrounds and abilities are very critical in program choice. Their ability to understand the concepts in a particular subject area could have a great impact on their decision regarding which program they will enroll in and commit their efforts to learn (Mustapha & Long, 2010; Christie, Munro & Fisher, 2004). In other words, if a person's ability does not match up with a particular program, he or she would naturally go for an alternative one that would fit his/her level of understanding and abilities. Auyeung and Sands (2006), in a follow-up comparative study between Ghana and Australian high school students, revealed that the choice of business studies career was attributed to the driving force of general academic background, motivational factors such as good long-term earnings prospects, and the nature of teaching the program may impact on career choice for Ghanaian students. Some studies have shown that parents' educational background, profession, and success of family relatives in the business environments do have a significant influence on the choice of business studies as a field of study among university students (Uyar & Ali, 2011). Malgwi,



Howe and Bornaby (2005) were also of the view that high earning potential is not the only factor influencing career choice in business studies (accounting). They maintained that factors such as career advancement opportunity, prestige, social status, job security, and variety of choices are among the chief factors that have a significant influence on the career choice of accounting.

Maudline, Crain, and Mounce (2000) also discovered that the role of educators and the faculty was significant in the career and program choice of prospective accountants. The study identified lifestyle, financial security and motivation, nature of work, and work roles as indicators of career choice in accounting. To this end, Asuquo (2011), indicated that the interest of the individuals, peer influence, prestige as well as lucrative prospects often affect the decision on program choice in business studies. Kim and Markham (2002) in a similar vein, conducted a study on business majors at the tertiary level (accounting, finance, general business, management, marketing, management information system, and double major). They discovered that the top five reasons for choosing programs were: interest in a career, good job prospects of the course, a desire to run a business someday, and projected earnings in the related careers pertaining to the course. The last selected reasons for choosing a major course were the reputation of the major at the university, the perceived quality of instruction, the amount and type of promotional information, and the influence of friends. Kaur and Leen (2007) contributing to the discourse, established earlier that students' choices of major courses are influenced by factors such as gender, race, quantitative skills, interest in the subject, expected marketability, performance in major classes, the approachability and teaching reputation of faculty members. Meanwhile, Kusumwati et al. (2010) have found that the reputation of the institution involved is the most significant factor in a student's decision for further study and program to read in a particular school. In addition to all these external influences, the trait and factor theory highlighted the need to acknowledge the inherent traits of the person involved (student or pupils) for the right choice to be made (Taylor & Buku, 2006).

It has been observed that the socio-economic background of students also contributes significantly to their choice of programs of study at the SHS level since the fees paid for some programs are higher than that of other programs (Kusumwati et al., 2010). In light of the foregoing, Abubakar (2017) earlier revealed that the socioeconomic standing or income of students' families constitutes an essential aspect of what program a student would pursue. In the same vein, society views some programs as expensive. For example, a parent who is not economically sound will make it known to the ward why he or she should not choose Science-related programs such as elective Science and Home

Economics. These subjects are practical-oriented and demand the purchase of several materials and apparatus. If parents of such wards are not economically sound, they will not be able to provide the needed financial assistance and support for the wards to pursue such courses. On socio-economic standing, an associated factor is the distance from one's home to the preferred institution hosting the program. Gibbons and Vignoles (2009) revealed that students originating from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibited a lower attendance rate at high-quality institutions. Despite this, Holland's (1997) vocational theory cautions that there is a need for the person involved to possess enormous self-knowledge, self-awareness, and information required for choice or decision-making. In a modest form, however, this pathway is two-dimensional, consisting of monetary and non-monetary traits. A typical example of monetary characteristics is the direct costs associated with a particular program (i.e. tuition and books) and the revenue stream envisaged as a result of choosing a particular programme. On the other hand, social influences, tradition, and the aesthetic content of the program constitute the non-monetary aspect (Addadey, 2020).

Furthermore, high or low salaries associated with some occupations also determine what program students will choose to pursue (Taylor & Buku, 2006). These variations in salaries influence students to opt for particular programs instead of others (Hagel & Shaw, 2010). Odia (2014) earlier revealed that in Nigeria, job prospects, gender, and environmental factors significantly influence students' choice of Social Studies program, whilst socioeconomic standing, teacher-related, and parental factors did not influence students' choice of Social Studies.

Furthermore, Demi, Coleman-Jensen and Synder (2010) have found that other determinants of the choice of programs comprise tuition and financial assistance policies concerning the program. Generally, high economic standing poses positive effects on students' choice of career as students and their parents usually tend to take into consideration the associated cost of education before pursuing a particular program of study. More often than not, higher levels of parental economic standing are strongly aligned with post-secondary school attainment (Demi, Coleman-Jensen & Synder, 2010). Although these are external influences, the Trait-And-Factor theory stresses the need to acknowledge one's inherent traits amid all these externalities (Parson, 1909). The theory believes that it is only when the internal traits are in congruence with environmental factors that someone can progress. It would thus be proper if pupils in the Gomoa East District have ample exposure to such information to guide them in determining their choice of academic programs at the SHS.

The choice of an academic program is also influenced by factors such as gender, socio-economic status, better academic performance, parents' occupation and education level, and parental expectations (Adragna, 2009; Berzin, 2010; Domenico & Jones, 2006). These factors influence the norms against which adolescents compare themselves and the context within which goals are pursued. Several studies show that students all over the world are usually faced with a dilemma in making a career choice decision in their lives (Bandura et al. 2001; Cherian 1991; Issa & Nwalo 2008; Macgregor 2007; McMahan & Watson, 2005; Watson et al. 2010). In most cases, the choice of careers, subjects, and courses of study and the subsequent career paths to follow are a nightmare for prospective Senior High students (Issa & Nwalo, 2008).

Several studies have been conducted in places with differences in social settings and geographical location. For instance, a study among Optometry students by Kobia-Acquah, Owusu, Akuffo, Koomson and Pascal (2020) found that females were twice more likely to practice optometry and pursue an interest in pediatric optometry than males. A similar study in Sultanate of Oman by Al-Bahrani, Allawati, Shindi and Bakkar (2020) also revealed that females have higher scores on career aspiration than males. Similarly, in Hong Kong, Tsui, Lee, Hui, Chun and Chan (2019) also established that the academic and career aspirations of adolescents and their destinations are shaped by parental influences and outcomes of public examination results.

Shumba and Naong (2012) also found that the ability of the learner and teachers were significant factors that influence the career choice and aspirations of students in South Africa. Willcoxson and Wynder (2010) are of the view that predetermined career plans are good predictors of higher school achievement because they help students demonstrate greater interest in their coursework. Adeokun and Opoko (2015) also affirm that students with greater clarity about why they choose their course and whether the chosen course has a direct pathway to their preferred career have better outcomes in terms of academic performance.

On institutional link determinants of program choice, Quansah, Ankoma-Sey and Dankyi (2020) explored the factors influencing SHS female students' selection of STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) related programs in tertiary institutions in Ghana. It was discovered that school-linked indicators like elective mathematics status, course of study, and interest in science and mathematics, affected the choice of STEM-related programs by female students. Home-related factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, parents' educational level) and personal factors (e.g., locus of control, career indecision, self-confidence) also played a significant role

in the choice of STEM-related programs by female SHS students.

Agbo et al. (2015) hold the view that career aspiration is the professional path one wishes to follow and maintain; it is a lifelong process that requires accurate perceptions of ability, strength, potential, and achievement. The role of parents can neither be overemphasized nor underestimated in pupils' choices, especially in the area of choosing a program for Senior High School education since they have a portion to sign on the form of the choice of program (GES, 2019). Therefore, Sarkodie, Asare and Asare (2020) recommended that parents should always take time to discuss academic issues with their wards rather than imposing their opinions on them.

This is achieved through the play materials they offer to the children, the encouragement or discouragement of interests, the activities they motivate their wards to partake in, and the experiences they offer in the family (Gostein, 2000; Tucci, 2005). For example, a medical doctor encourages the ward to read science at the Senior High level. In the U.S. for instance, an estimated 44 percent of physicians' sons prefer to read medicine whilst 28 percent of lawyers' wards choose law (Yao, 1999). Again, role model constitutes another type of parental control. Gostein (2003) has reported that this situation works well when the ward identifies closely with the parent. Mortimer (2005) also reported having realized a validation for this when he reported that a combination of prestigious paternal role models together with a close father-son or mother-daughter interaction facilitated a very efficient parental transfer of career values and influence on children's choices. Such children adhere to their parents' choices in order not to offend them (Gostein, 2000).

b) Conceptual Framework

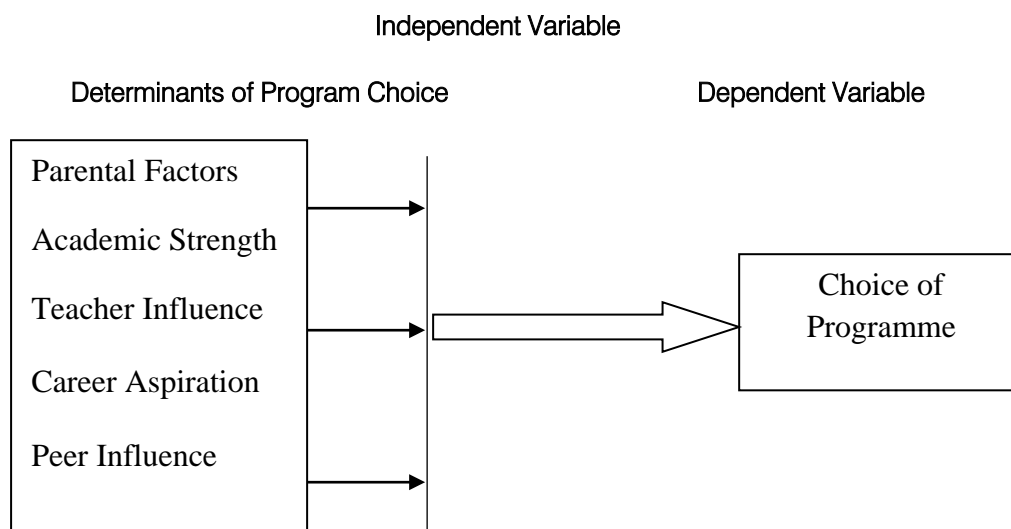


Figure 1: Determinants of students' choice of program at the Senior High School.

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 depicts the determinants of students' choice of program at the Senior High School. Academic strength, parental factors, career aspiration, peers, and teacher influence are the independent or predictor variables whilst the choice of program (General Arts, Business, General Science, and Home Economics) is the dependent variable.

Webster's International Dictionary (1998) defines choice as the voluntary act of selecting or separating from two or more things that which is preferred; and the determination of the mind in preferring one thing to another. The definition incorporates two components: First is the availability of alternatives, which presents an objective reality, and the second one, is the act of preference, which involves a subjective process. If a reference to career choice is made, the availability of career choices and the dynamics of choosing a career should be examined. Hence, in order for career choice to take place, there should be alternative career routes available and there

should be an individual preference between these career options. A choice is a decision that most human beings make at some time in their lives; it is a decision that should be given careful consideration since it can affect the rest of a person's life and determines one's future career (Som, 2016).

The educational system in Ghana has three main transitional stages. It includes the basic level (Primary and Junior High Education). The second stage is a 3-year Senior High School Education, and the final stage is a 3 or 4-year tertiary education which comprises several different programs and courses offered in Universities, Technical Universities, Colleges of Education, and other tertiary institutions. Final-year students in Junior High Schools are required to select their preferred academic programs for SHSs. These programs determine to a large extent, which courses he/she can pursue at the University or other higher institutions of learning as well as where one's future career destination will be. Table 1 shows the programs offered at the SHS and their prospective careers.

Table 1: The table shows the programs offered and their prospective Careers

Program	Prospective Careers
General Art	Nursing, Teaching, Accountant, Communicator Editor
Business	Accountants, Financial Analysts, Bank Managers, Cashiers Business Advisors, Investment Managers, Auditors, Teachers
General Science	Doctor, Nurse, Teacher, Physician, Lab Technician
Visual Arts	Artist, Graphic Designer, Painter, Print Making, Film Making
Home Economics	Nutritionists, Caterers, Managers of Restaurants, Dietician and so on.

These choices have many implications for success in life and in the same vein pupils too are

confronted with choice-making regarding specific programs to read at the Senior High School level.

There is a centralized application system in which admission to Senior High School is premised and referred to as the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) application to Senior High School (Ajayi, 2011).

With this, gaining admission into SHS for a program is solely based on students' ranking of their preferred programs of interest together with their performance at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which is a nationally administered examination meant to select qualified candidates into SHS. This implies that program choice is determined by students' performance in BECE. For example, if a student decides to do science at a particular Senior High School and does not attain the required grade point, she/he would not be permitted unless she decides to do a different program. Since the program of choice influences the choice of school, more often than not, pupils' choice of program emerges from the outcome of discussions between students and significant people in their lives such as parents, teachers, or friends. This choice goes in line with the position of Holland's Vocational theory because it acknowledges the need for counselors to educate parents on the need to study and identify the personality type of their wards to guide them to make better course choices that suit their personalities.

c) *Problem Statement*

It is evident that many students make wrong choices in relation to their program of study at the secondary school level because of ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents, and teachers, or tags attached to certain programs without adequate knowledge (Salami, 1999). The SHS students including those in the Gomoa East district are challenged with several of these life issues of making choices in their education as well as their everyday endeavors.

Students find themselves in a dilemma as to what kind of program will commensurate with their future career aspirations, and some end up selecting programs that do not match their backgrounds or academic strengths (Takyi 2011). Research on students' choice of programme was done by different scholars and nearly all agreed that students' selection of programmes is affected by their career aspirations, careful planning, and influence from parents, teachers, peers, and siblings (Adinkrah & Ayarkwa 2020; Takyi 2011; Mankoe 2007; Baharun et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2006). The researchers further revealed that students' selection of programmes was driven by the outcome of public examination results, students' personalities, and environmental factors.

Unfortunately, it appears that there is no available scientific study on this phenomenon the Gomoa East District to assess the determinants of

students' choice of program at the SHS level. The current study was designed to fill this research gap.

d) *Research Question*

What are the determinants that best predict first-year students' choice of program at the Senior High School level in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region?

e) *Methodology*

i. *Design, Population and Sample*

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. This design enabled us to gather data in a way that provided information on the determinants of students' choice of program. The target population for this study comprised all Senior High School (SHS) students in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region. The district has four SHSs, two public schools, and two private schools, totaling 2,006 first-year senior high school students in the district made up of 1,024 females and 982 males. The accessible population comprised all 1,144 first-year public senior high school students in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region comprising 629 females and 515 males.

A sample of 229 f was drawn from 1,144 students using Kumar's (2019) criteria for sample selection which posits that 20–50 percent of the population is suitable for a descriptive study.

Respondents for each school were calculated using the mathematical formula; Number of first-year students in a particular school divided by the accessible population of first-year students, multiplied by the sample size.

For example;

Number of first-year students at Fetterman SHS = 453

Total number of accessible populations = 1,144

Selected sample size = 229

$453/1,144 \times 229 = 91$.

Therefore, the sample size for Fettehman SHS was 91 first-year students. The sample for the males-female strata for Fettehman SHS was calculated and presented in Table 2 using the formula;

$$\frac{\text{Accessible population}}{M/F} = \frac{\text{Sample size for Fetterman}}{X}$$

Where M/F stand for accessible males or females.

$$\text{For example; } \frac{1,144}{515} \times \frac{91}{X} = 41$$

This was replicated in selecting samples for the Ahmadiya SHS too.

Table 2: Distribution of Samples Across SHSs in Gomoa East District

School	Accessible population	Sample	Boys	Girls
1. Ahmadiya SHS	691	138	62	76
2. Fettehman SHS	453	91	41	50
Total	1,144	229	103	126

Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Based on prepared sampling frames from each school, the systematic sampling approach was used to select the sample size of 229.

f) Data Collection Instrument

The main data collection instrument was a self-constructed questionnaire on the Students' Choice of Academic Program (SCAP). The instrument had two sections (A and B). the A section focused on determinants of students' choice of program and section B dealt with students' choice of academic programs. the items in the instrument were measured on a four-point unilinear Likert scale ranging from 1-4. (1-Strongly Disagree (SD), 2-Disagree (D), 3-Agree (A) and 4-Strongly Agree (SA).

g) Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity of the study, the questionnaire it was given to questionnaire item construction experts and some senior lecturers in Measurement and Evaluation at the Department of Education and Psychology for their expert assessment. With this, both face and content validity were ensured. Regarding reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested at the Odorgonno SHS in the Ga South District in Accra. This school was used because it is also a public senior high school and had similar administrative structures, offers the same programs, and had similar physical and emotional characteristics as those of the selected SHSs

for the main study. A reliability test was carried out on the pre-tested questionnaire and a reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained.

h) Ethical Considerations

The consent of all the respondents was sought before their involvement in the study. To ensure informed consent and participation in the study processes, the participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study. They were given a written consent form to read and freely decide to participate in the study by signing. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly adhered to throughout the data collection process. For this reason, their names were not required on the questionnaire so that no traces could be made of them with respect to their responses.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question: What are the determinants that best predict first-year students' choice of program at the Senior High School level in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region?

This research question sought to examine the determinants that best predicted first-year students' choice of program at the SHS level in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression and presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression of the Determinants that best Predict First-Year Students' Choice of Programme

Variables	Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Tolerance	Statistics VIF
Constant	5.575	.471		11.841	< .001	.759	1.318
Teacher Advice	.009	.090	.007	.096	.924	.898	1.114
Future Prospect	.003	.079	.003	.037	.971	.917	1.090
Parents Selection	.001	.089	.001	.015	.988	.757	1.320
Colleagues Advice	.216	.132	.124	1.637	.103	.918	1.090
Career Aspiration	.006	.086	.005	.068	.946	.900	1.111
Academic Performance	.199	.072	.192	2.768	.006*	.759	1.318
R			.206				
R Square (R ²)			.042				
Adjusted R Square			.016				

Source: Fieldwork (2021) $F = 1.632$; $df = (6, 222)$; $(N = 229)$; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor
Dependent Variable: Students' choice of Programme

* $p < .05$

The tolerance values in Table 3 were not less than 10 which is within an acceptable threshold (Pallant, 2016). Also, the VIF results met the acceptable standard which requires that VIF values must be less than 10. For this reason, there is no problem with multicollinearity since both the tolerance and variance inflation factor results met the acceptable cut-off points. Therefore, a multiple linear regression model was run to examine the determinants that best predict first-year students' choice of program.

The results from Table 3 show that teachers' advice ($\beta = .009, p = .924$), future prospects ($\beta = .003, p = .971$), parents' selection of program ($\beta = .001, p = .988$), colleagues' advice ($\beta = .216, p = .103$) and career aspiration of students ($\beta = .006, p = .946$) have no statistically significant influence on their choice of program ($p > .05$). This result means that teachers' advice, future prospect, parents' selection of program, colleagues' advice and career aspiration are not best predictors of first-year students' choice of program. Conversely, Table 3 shows that there is a statistically significant positive effect of first-year students' academic performance on their choice of program ($\beta = .199, p < .05$), $F(6, 222) = 1.632, p < .05$, with an R^2 of .042).

III. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The research question sought to examine the determinants that best predicted first-year students' choice of program at the SHS level in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region. The results result mean that teachers' advice, future prospect, parents' selection of program, colleagues' advice, and career aspiration are not best predictors of first-year students' choice of program. The results suggest that first-year students' academic performance is the determinant that best predicts their choice of program. Also, it means that first-year students' academic performance positively influences their choice of program.

The findings of the study contradicted previous research on the fact that students' selection of academic programmes is determined by students' career aspirations, careful planning, and influence from parents, teachers, peers, and siblings (Adinkrah & Ayarkwa, 2020; Baharun, 2011; Takyi, 2011; Hagel & Shaw, 2008; Mankoe, 2007; Taylor et al., 2006). The study's finding implies that students' academic strength, academic success, or performance encourages them to know the required programme to choose at the SHS. For instance, when a student performs well, he/she is inspired to look at the programme that will be suitable for him or her based on his/her future and career aspirations.

The results of the study imply that advice from teachers, the future prospect of a program, parents' selection of program, colleagues' influence, and career

aspiration are not determinants that predict students' choice of program. On the other hand, the result of the study revealed that students' general academic performance influences or best predicts students' choice of program.

a) Conclusions

The findings of the study revealed that the determinant that best predicts students' choice of program at the SHS level in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region was students' general academic performance followed by advice from peers of students. This revelation contradicts other findings as indicated earlier which reported that career aspiration, teacher, and parental factors as the best determinants of students' choice of program at the SHS level. The study, therefore, concludes that parents and management of SHSs should work hard on equipping teachers with all the necessary educational logistics that they need to teach well, and build students' self-efficacy in order to enhance their general academic strength and performance.

b) Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Educational guidance and counselling programs be regularly organized for students at Junior High Schools (JHSs) to enable them to make informed choices regarding the choice of their academic programs of study at the SHS level.
2. Ghana Education Service (GES) and Management of SHSs, should work on supplying students with learning and research skills to enable them to improve their general academic performance.

REFERENCES RÉFÉRENCES REFERENCIAS

1. Abubakar, M. (2017). Factors that influence the selection of educational programmes. *Journal of Adult Education*, 7(3), 115-127.
2. Addadey, J. A. (2020). *Challenges in choosing senior high school programmes: Perspectives of teachers/counsellors and pupils in the La Nkwantanang-Madina Municipality, Ghana*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Coast.
3. Adeokun, C. O., & Opoko, A. P. (2015). Exploring the Link between motivation for course-choice and retention in the architectural profession: Students' perspectives. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(6), 191-201.
4. Adinkrah, E., & Ayarkwa, J. (2020). Career aspirations of students in tertiary institutions. *Journal of Educational Research*, 5(3), 56-62.
5. Adragna, D. (2009). Influences on career choice during adolescence. *Psi chi journal of Undergraduate Research*, 14(1), 23-34.

6. Agbo, B., Ojobor, I., & Ezinwa, C. (2015). Issues in development communication. Enugu: John Jacobs Classic Publishers Limited.
7. Aghamehi, K. (1998). Motives and career choices of Iranian dental students. *Medical Principles and Practice*, 11(1), 135-147.
8. Agrey, L., & Lampadan, N. (2014). Determinant factors contributing to student choice in selecting a university. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 3(2), 391-404.
9. Ajayi, K. F. (2011). *School choice and educational mobility: Lessons from secondary school applications in Ghana*. Boston University, Department of Economics, Institute for Economic Development.
10. Al-Bahrani, M., Al-Lawati, S., Abu Shindi, Y., Bakkar, B., & Alsiyabi, K. (2019). Differential item functioning of the career aspiration scale within Arab context. *International Journal of Psychology and Counseling*, 11(6), 59-65.
11. Asantewaa, G. A. (2020). *Career choice determinants among senior high school students in the Sunyani west district in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Coast).
12. Asuquo, A. I. (2011). Factors that influence accounting as career choice of Nigerian university students in the 21st century. *The Certified National Accountant*, 6(1) 34-38.
13. Ayeung, P., & Sands, J. (2006) factors influencing accounting students' career choice: a cross-cultural validation study. *Accounting Education*, 6(1), 13-23.
14. Baharun, R., Awang, Z., & Padlee, S. F. (2011). International students' choice criteria for selection of higher learning in Malaysian private universities. *African journal of Business management*, 5(12), 4704-4714.
15. Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-efficacy beliefs as shapers of children's aspirations and career trajectories. *Child development*, 72(1), 187-206.
16. Bardick, A. D., Berns, K. B., Magnusson, K. C., & Witko, D. (2004). Junior high school planning: What students want. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 38(2), 104-117.
17. Berzin, S. C. (2010). Educational aspirations among low-income youths: Examining multiple conceptual models. *Children & Schools*, 32(2), 112-124.
18. Cherian, V. I. (1991). Parental aspirations and academic achievement of Xhosa children. *Psychological Reports*, 68, 547-553.
19. Ching, L. G., & Keith, Y. N. N. (2011). The mediating effects of peer and parental encouragement on students' choice of a nursing education. *Journal of Applied Business and Management*, 2(1), 1-10.
20. Christie, H., Munro, M., & Fisher, T. (2004). Leaving university early: Exploring the differences between continuing and non-continuing students. *Studies in Higher education*, 29(5), 617-636.
21. Demi, M. A., Coleman-Jensen, A., & Snyder, A. R. (2010). The Rural Context and Post-Secondary School Enrollment: An Ecological Systems Approach. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 25.
22. Domenico, D. M., & Jones, K. H. (2006). Career aspirations of women in the 20th century. *Journal of career and technical education*, 22(2), 87-94.
23. Dryler, H. (1998). Parental role models, gender and educational choice. *British journal of sociology*, 1(1), 375-398.
24. Elacqua, G., Gobierno, E., & Ibanez, U. (2005). School choice in Chile: An analysis of parental preferences and search behavior. *National centre for the study of privatization in education*, 2, 1-35.
25. Fullarton, S. & Ainley, J. (2000). Subject choice by students in year 12 in Australian secondary schools. Camberwell, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.
26. Gibbons, N., & Vignoles, K. (2009). Choices that people make in life. *Journal of Career Decisions*, 8(2), 36-45.
27. Gostein, T. (2000). Person-organization fit, job choice decisions, and organisational. New York, NY: Joseph Rowntree Foundation Policy Press.
28. Gostein, T. (2003). *Attitudes to flexible working and family life*. New York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation Policy Press.
29. Greenberg, J., & Baron, R.A. (2008). Behaviours in organizations: Understanding and managing the human side of work. India, Oklahoma State University.
30. Gregory, N. (1998). *The work of the counsellor*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.
31. Hagel, P., & Shaw, R. N. (2010). How important is study mode in student university choice?. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 64(2), 161-182.
32. Holland, J. L. (1997). *Making vocational choices* (3rd ed.). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.
33. Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
34. Issa, A. O., & Nwalo, K. I. N. (2008). Influence of age, gender, subject background and predisposing factors on the admission choice of undergraduate in Nigerian library schools.
35. Kankam, G., & Onivehu, A. (2000). Principles and practice of guidance and counselling. *Accra: K "N" AB Ltd*.
36. Kaur, M., & Leen, E. Y. (2007). Factors influencing undergraduates' choice of business major. India: INTI International University College.

37. Kazi, A. S., & Akhlaq, A. (2017). Factors affecting students' career choice. *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, 2, 187-196.
38. Kerr, B. A., & Colangelo, K. D. (2015). The development of gender identity, gender roles, and gender relations in gifted students. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 93(2), 183-191.
39. Kim, D. & Markham, F. S. (2002). Why students pursue the business degree: A comparison of business majors across universities. *The Journal of Education for Business*, 78(1), 28-32.
40. Kinzie, J., Palmer, M., Hayek, J., Hossler, D., Jacob, S. A., & Cummings, H. (2004). *Fifty years of college choice: Social, political and institutional influences on the decision-making process*. Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation for Education.
41. Kobia-Acquah, E., Owusu, E., Akuffo, K. O., Koomson, N. Y., & Pascal, T. M. (2020). Career aspirations and factors influencing career choices of optometry students in Ghana. *PloS one*, 15(5), e0233862.
42. Kusumwati, M., Kazia, B., & Kujuzu, L. (2010). Career aspirations of higher education students. *International Journal of Research*, 5(4), 92-108.
43. Kumar, K. (2019). *Research methodology*. <https://pubhtml5.com/tucx/tczx/basic/201-250>.
44. Law, P., & Yuen, D. (2011). A multilevel study of students' motivations of studying accounting. *Career Development International*, 54(1), 50-64.
45. Macgregor, K. (2007). *South Africa: Student dropout rates alarming in SA Universities*. South Africa Press, Pretoria.
46. Malgwi, C. A., Howe, M. A., & Burnaby, P. A. (2005). Influences on student's choice of college major. *Journal of Education for Business*, 80(5), 275-285.
47. Mankoe, J. O. (2007). *Educational administration and management in Ghana*. Kumasi: Payless Publication.
48. Merzyn, J. (2011). Determinants of career aspirations of vocational students. *Journal of Education and Research*, 4(2), 43-52.
49. McMahan, M., & Watson, M. (2005). Occupational information: What children want to know? *Journal of Career Development*, 31, 239-249.
50. Mortimer, A. (2005). *Managerial lives in transition: Advancing age and changing times*. NY: Guilford.
51. Mustapha, R., & Long, N. L. (2010). *Career decision process among women in technical fields*. Paper presented at the 1st International Conference on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, 10-11 November, in Bandung.
52. Mustapha, R., & Long, T. N. (2010). Collaborative strategic reading with university EFL learners. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 41(1), 67-94.
53. Myburgh, J. (2005). An empirical analysis of career choice factors that influence first year accounting students at the University of Pretoria: A cross racial study. *Meditarian Accounting Research*, 13 (2), 35-48.
54. Odia, A. A. (2014). A Study of factors influencing students' enrolment in social studies education at the Post-Secondary School Level in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education*, 3(2), 116-124.
55. Pafili, E., & Mylonakis, J. (2011). Occupation structure and career choice vs education development and training level: A presentation of theoretical approaches. *International Education Studies*, 4(4), 22-27.
56. Payne, J. (2003). *Choice at the end of compulsory schooling: A research review*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.
57. Quansah, F., Ankoma-Sey, V. R., & Dankyi, L. A. (2020). Determinants of female students' choice of STEM programmes in tertiary education: Evidence from senior high schools in Ghana. *American Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(1), 50-61.
58. Ramirez, Y. P., & Dizon, N. C. (2014). Assessment of interest as subjective personal data of engineering freshmen towards their enrolled degree program. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 3(1), 195-207.
59. Sarkodie, N. A., Asare, A., & Asare, D. (2020). Factors influencing students' choice of tertiary education. *ADRRJ Journal (Multidisciplinary)*, 28(5), 58-92.
60. Shumba, A., & Naong, M. (2012) Factors influencing students' career choice and aspirations in South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 33(2), 169-178.
61. Som, M. (2016). Future career expectation: A study of students' perception. *Journal of Business*, 2(4), 94-106.
62. Takyi, M. (2011). *Nurture experiences and career aspirations of junior high school students in Berekum Municipality*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
63. Taylor, A. I., & Buku, D. K. (2006). Basics in guidance and counselling. *Ghana, Accra: Yamens Press Ltd*.
64. Tsui, K. T., Lee, C. K. J., Hui, K. F. S., Chun, W. S. D., & Chan, N. C. K. (2019). Academic and career aspiration and destinations: A Hong Kong perspective on adolescent transition. *Education research international*, 2019.
65. Tucci, L. (2005). *Integrative life planning: Critical tasks for career development and changing life patterns*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
66. Uyar, A., & Ali, H. G. (2011). Factors affecting students' career choice in accounting: The case of Turkish University. *American Journal of Business Education*, 4(1), 29-38.

67. Van de Werfhorst, H. G. (2001). *Field of study and social inequality: Four types of educational resources in the process of stratification in the Netherlands*. Nijmegen, the Netherlands: ICS Dissertation.
68. Van de Werfhorst, H. G., Sullivan, A., & Cheung, S. Y. (2003). Social class, ability and choice of subject in secondary and tertiary education in Britain. *British Educational Research Journal*, 2(9), 41-62.
69. Watson, M., & McMahon, M. (2005). Children's career development: A research review from a learning perspective. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 67(2), 119-132.
70. Watson, M., McMahon, M., Foxcroft, C., & Els, C. (2010). Occupational aspirations of low socio-economic Black South African children. *Journal of Career Development*, 37(4), 717-734.
71. Webster's International Dictionary. (1998). Encyclopaedia of dictionaries.
72. Willcoxson, L. & Wynder, M. (2010). The relationship between choice of major and career, experience of university and attrition. *Australian Journal of Education*, 54(2), 175-189.
73. Worthington, A., Higgs, H., (2004). Factors explaining the choice of an economics major. The role of student characteristics, personality and perceptions of the profession. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 31(5/6), 593-613.
74. Yao, A. (1999). Insight form the students' choice of programme. *Cogent Career Education*, 2(1), 221-229.

