

## Research Article

# The Interrelationships among Opportunity, Personality type and Environmental Factors in Preparatory High School Students Career Choice: A Multilevel Study

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the interrelationships among opportunity, personality type and environmental factors in preparatory school students career choice in the case of North Wollo Zone. The sample consists of 214 males and 206 females. A questionnaire designed on the basis of likert-type scale on the factors determining the choice of career based on environment, personality influence and opportunity of the students was administered. Their responses were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and T-test at p.05. No significant difference was found on the environmental factor (tcal at 05=0.8593, tcrit=1.960), However, the significant difference was found on the personality (tcal at p.05=0.0001; tcrit1.960) and the

significant difference of the opportunity the students see (tcal at p.05=0.000; tcrit1.960). The percentage on male and female was also carried out. 58.4% of male and 69.9% of female agreed that opportunity do affect career while 41.6% and 30.1% disagreed for both male & female respectively, 59.4% of male and 72.8 of female agreed that personality do affect career choice while 40.7% and 27.2% of both male and female disagreed, 64% of male and 67% of female agreed that environment do affect career choice but 36% and 33% of male& female does not agree. Conclusively, all the factors affect the students in determining their career.

**Keywords:** Opportunity, Personality Type, Environmental Factors, Student and Career Choice

### Introduction

The importance of career choice among senior and secondary high students cannot be over emphasized. Students at this level are mainly adolescents who are moving from this stage of development into adulthood. Pearson Education limited [1] defines an adolescent as a young person, usually between the ages of twelve and eighteen, who is developing into an adult. Encarta defines adolescent as, somebody in the period preceding adulthood: somebody who has reached puberty but not yet adult'. At this stage the individual is said to be going through the period of adolescence.

Giving young people the tools and knowledge to realistically plan for their futures is a primary goal of education. Career development is vitally important for today's youth, who are more than ever "motivated but directionless" [2]. Young people have high ambitions, expecting to be highly educated and have professional careers, yet research has found that many do not develop coherent plans for achieving their goals (Ibid.).

Various people choose jobs for various reasons. A lot of people look for jobs that will pay well since everyone needs money for the basics such as food, clothes, accommodation, education, recreation and others. For many men and women, work helps define their identity and their sense of self-worth [3]. They see themselves as people, who are responsible, who get things done and capable enough to be paid for the services they render. People take pride in the work they do. They also like the feeling that comes with doing their work well.

Ford and Lerner states that career development is the result of a dynamic interaction of person and context. Due to its contextual nature, career development is strongly affected by the historical, cultural, economic, and social context. Hence, there are no universal stages in vocational development. As a result career development shows large inter-individual differences in intra-individual change and there is considerable plasticity and variability in developmental patterns.

Many factors affect career choices of secondary and higher education students. The first factor in career choice, environment may influence the career students choose. For example, students who have lived on an island may choose a career dealing with the water, or they may choose to leave the island behind, never to have anything to do with water again. Maybe someone in the student's life has made a significant impact or impression, leading to a definite career choice. Parents' educational background may influence student views on whether or not to continue their education. Someone they saw on television may have influenced the student, or parents may have demanded that they assume a family business. These are various environmental factors that would lead a student to a chosen career [4].

Splaver [5] said "personality" plays an important role in the choosing of the right career. A student's personality must be a self-motivated type, as to investigate career possibilities from early on in their lives, and not the procrastinating type that waits until they are compelled to decide. Students must take seriously the role grades play in limiting opportunities in the future. Splaver recommended, "It is important for you to have a good

understanding of yourself, your personality, if you are to make intelligent career plans” [5].

Opportunity is the third factor that has shaped career choices for students. Opportunity may influence how students have perceived their future in terms of the reasonable probability of a future in particular career fields. Thout [3] explained that, the issue of poverty has played an important determining role in the opportunities available to all. The income level of high school families may determine what career a student chooses during a specific time in the student’s life; choices that will determine a large part of that student’s future. Some students will have to budget education according to their personal income. addressed those in desperate needs, “Where necessary, these persons Individuals described as living under the poverty level must be assisted through special training programs to overcome educational and social handicaps so that minimum job standards can be met”.

In the wake of rapid growth in secondary schools and higher education participation and the increase in global market competition experienced by many employers, universities came under intense pressure to equip graduates with more than just the academic skills. Higher education has to constantly change and adjust to a wide variety of situations in a country, be it political, social, economic or cultural [6].

The challenging situation of today’s economy is no longer sufficient for new graduates to have only knowledge of an academic subject Wilson, 2011 but the repertoire of skills and attitudes [7]. Deciding on the skills and characteristics to be predictive of a graduate job success is a vital consideration for organizations A diverse range of generic attributes (knowledge, attitudes, abilities and skills) for work are highly crucial and special attention should be given for it during the training time [8].

In an environment where individuals are likely to transition between a variety of life, learning and work roles, they need to be empowered to design and manage their careers. In the face of increasing choices and challenges, some people lose their way or give up. Those that flourish are self-managing individuals who

know their strengths and their limitations have the confidence to follow their dreams and are willing to seek help from and to support the career journeys of others Adapted from ‘The high five of career development.

In relation to the above justification, social cognitive theory is ‘the theory that behavior, environment, and person/cognitive factors are important in understanding development. It is believed to be developed by Bandura in 1986. He postulates a triadic reciprocal causation that involves cognitive, behavior, and environmental factors. All the three operate interactively as determinants of one another.

Thus people do not simply react to environmental events; they create their own environments and do well to change them. Cognitive events determine which environmental events will be perceived and how they will be interpreted, organized, and acted on.

Either positive or negative feedback from behavior in turn, influences people’s thinking and the ways in which they act to change the environment. This is illustrated below as in Figure 1.

Adolescents observe themselves and note how well their skills, interests and values match the requirements of the situation. These observations have consequences for the type of work they might be good at. They are also related to what they are interested in and what they value. People attempt to understand the consequences of their actions and use this understanding in ways that change their environments to better meet their needs. The life of a typical high school learner is one full of uncertainty and turmoil, it is a time of increasing stress with influences of accountability from high stakes test taking to pressure from their peers. It is also a period of life changing transition that can wreak havoc on the learners’ abilities to make informed decisions for the welfare of themselves and others. High school learners are often looking for a place to belong. As a result, they rely heavily on their peer groups to learn what types of behaviors are rewarded with reactions they feel to be positive, often at the expense of reason and good judgments.

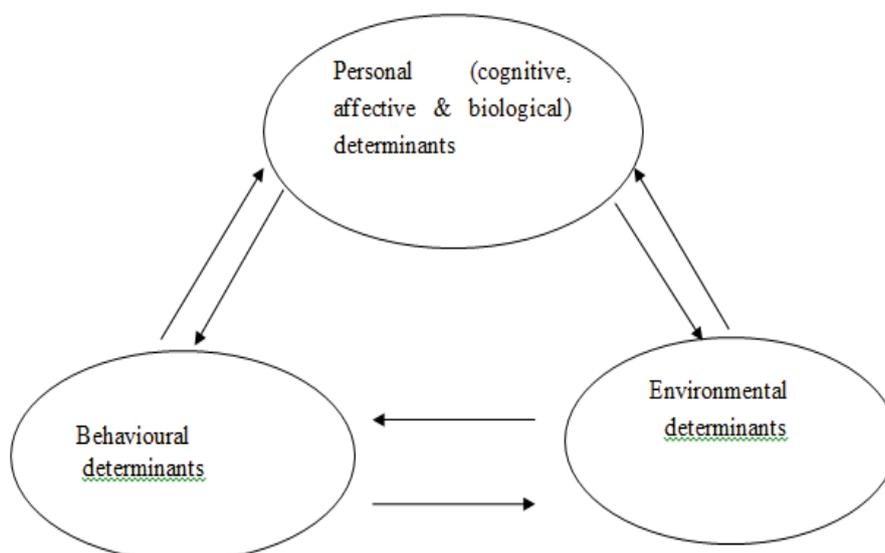


Figure 1: A Diagram Reciprocal Causation.

In other word, if students lack proper attention and guidance in selection of their career, they become easily influenced by factors such as peer group, family and environment at large for making selection of their career path. It is better to investigate the factors that affect the career choice of high school students. This current study aimed to assess the extent to which environment, personality type and opportunity affect the career choice of higher education preparatory school students in North Wollo Zone.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Searching for a job, career planning and deciding on what to choose play an important role in students career choices. Many students often are faced with uncertainty and stress as they make career choices. Many of them do not make adequate research on their own career nor do they receive adequate directions from their school guidance coordinators. Most of them are not aware of what goes into career choice. Many youth go into unsuitable careers due to ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers or as a result of the prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counseling. In Ethiopia the number of students is increasing from time to time which are currently becoming contributors for graduate unemployment in the country [9]. Though not investigated a large number of students remained unemployed. Thus, the responsibilities of secondary and higher preparatory schools seem to play an increased role in order to tighten the gap between the labor market and the graduate attributes. For schools to make their students competent in the labor market, they should make them possess the necessary skills for the world.

Higher Education Preparatory School Students should have the opportunity to explore all of the choices available in order to make a logical, educated plan when choosing a career. However, in Ethiopia, There is no clear process that students have used to make career choices. Most of high preparatory school students do not have realistic career choice because of the environmental, opportunity and their own perceived personality.

Are they aware of what goes into career choice? And what specific factors influence their choice and how do those factors influence them? This study therefore seeks to find out the extent to which, opportunity, personality, and environment factors influence the choice of career of Higher Education Preparatory school students in North Wollo Zone by posing the following questions:

- How does the environment affect career choice among higher preparatory school students?
- How significant were factors of opportunity in making career choices?
- How significant were factors of 'personality' Type in making career choices?
- Is there a significant gender difference in career choices of students?

## **Method**

### **Design**

In an attempt to investigate the interrelationships among opportunity, personality type and environmental factors in preparatory school students career choice in the case of North Wollo Zone, descriptive survey method was employed in this study. The research design was used the statistical information to see if dependant variables relating to environment, opportunity, and personality were significant factors influencing the career choices of higher education preparatory school students.

### **Sampling of the Study**

The population of the study was all of the higher education preparatory school students (grade 11 and 12) in North Wollo Zone. According to the information obtained from the North Wollo Education office, there are 14 government higher preparatory schools (grade 11 and 12). These schools are: Woldia preparatory school, Sanka general and preparatory secondary school, Mersa general and preparatory secondary school, Sirinka general and preparatory school, Kobo general and preparatory school, Muja Mariyam general and preparatory general and preparatory school, Kulmesk general and preparatory school, Kidus Lalibela preparatory school, Hamusiet Eyob and Zergawu general and preparatory school, Flakit general and preparatory school, Kon general and preparatory school, Robit general and preparatory school and Chet general and preparatory school. Seven schools out of 14 higher education preparatory schools were selected by using simple random sampling (lottery method) technique.

The respondents of this study are students who are attending in grade 11 and 12 and the sample of the study were consisted 10% of the target population in the seven preparatory schools. The subjects were sampled by using proportional allocation of simple random sampling technique (based on sex). Based on the random sampling technique, the sample consists of 214 males and 206 females from 7 representative sample of preparatory schools . Besides, seven Guidance and Counseling Coordinators and seven Administrators were selected from the seven schools. Purposive sampling sampling was employed to select the Guidance and Counseling Coordinators and the Administrators

### **Instruments**

The data were collected through questionnaire and interviews. By using these instruments both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and the analysis and interpretation were made based on the information collected. The detailed activities performed in administering the instruments of data collection are presented as follows:

Three separate sets of questionnaires (The five-point- Likert scaled) were used primary in English and then translated in to Amharic, which was used to collect information from student participants. The questionnaire was adapted from the environmental, opportunity and their own perceived personality Scale of Michael [10] modified into our research issues. The questionnaire consists of thirty (30) statements on the environment, influence of peer groups and parents and opportunity on the choice of career based on the likert-type

scale. The respondents were required to indicate their perception by ticking " or (strongly agree),"A"(agree),"U"(undecided),"SA"(strongly agree).

### Analysis

The quantitative data were coded and entered into SPSS-20 version and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency distribution and measures of central tendency /mean/, independent t-test. Whereas qualitative information's the data obtained using open-ended items; and interview were analyzed using tools such as thematic analysis and content analysis to answer the research questions [11].

### Results

The responses on the respondents were analyzed, using frequency, percent, mean, standard deviation & t-test responses on the likert –type scale was scored thus Strongly

Agree(5),Agree(4),Undecided(3), Strongly Disagree (2), Disagree(1). The results are presented in the following Table 1.

From the Table 1, the on the aggregate, 64% of the male students agreed that the environment do affect the choice of career among preparatory school students while only 36% of the male students disagreed with the statement. Also, 67% of the female preparatory school students agreed that the environment plays an important role in career choice among preparatory school students while 33% of the female students disagreed.

From the Table 2 on the aggregate, 58.4% of the male students agreed that opportunity do affect the choice of career among preparatory school students while only 41.6% of the male students disagreed with the statement. Also, 69.9% of the female preparatory school students agreed that opportunity plays an important role in career choice among preparatory school students while 30.1% of the female students disagreed.

**Table 1: Percentage of Responses of Male and Female Students on the Effect of Environment in Making Career Choice among Preparatory School Students.**

S/N	Statement	Male				Female			
		A	%	D	%	A	%	D	%
1.	My parents had/ will have great influence in my career choice.	20	9.3	15	8.9	16	7.8	7	3.4
2.	Teachers are/ have been the greatest influence in my career choice	8	3.7	7	4.2	22	10.7	14	6.8
3.	Secondary school students can be influenced by their peers in making career choice	19	8.9	6	3.6	16	7.8	4	2
4.	Counselors are/ have been the greatest influence in my career choice	12	5.6	15	8.9	5	2.4	8	3.9
5.	Deviant behaviour of preparatory school students in career choice are influenced by the peer groups	10	4.7	5	3	6	2.9	2	1
6.	Money has been an issue in choosing a career	16	7.5	4	2.4	25	12.1	5	2.4
7.	Moving with students in tertiary institutions do affect preparatory school students career choice	15	7	5	3	17	8.2	8	3.9
8.	Living in a low socio economic environment can affect the choice of career among preparatory school students	18	8.4	5	3	15	7.3	5	2.4
9.	My parents, educators, someone else chose my preparatory school subjects	10	4.7	5	3	10	4.9	10	4.8
10.	Governmental policies do affect choice of career among preparatory school students	9	4.2	10	6	6	2.9	5	2.4

**Table 2: Percentage of Responses of Male and Female Students on the Effect Opportunity On Career Choice Among Preparatory School Students.**

S/N	Statement	Male				Female			
		A	%	D	%	A	%	D	%
1.	My grades will determine my career choice	13	6.1	3	1.5	15	7.3	5	2.4
2.	Socio economic status of student always affect the student's choice of career	16	7.5	8	3.7	16	7.8	5	2.4
3.	I have access to employment in a family business	13	6.1	14	6.6	11	5.3	8	3.9
4.	I plan to work in a job for a while, then attend a school or get a training	15	7	10	4.6	6	2.9	6	2.9
5.	I will have to work for the money needed to attend any training after preparatory school	14	6.5	11	5.3	8	3.9	6	2.9
6.	I am fully aware of what technical colleges have to offer	15	7	5	2.3	21	10.2	7	3.4
7.	I will consider working after preparatory school rather than make a career choice	12	5.6	10	4.6	7	3.4	9	4.4
8.	I have on one to motivate me in making a career choice	8	3.7	16	7.5	18	8.7	4	2
9.	Opportunities and privileges do affect career choice	11	5.1	5	2.3	22	10.7	6	2.9
10.	Educational status of parents can affect career choice	8	3.7	7	3.3	20	9.7	6	2.9

From the Table 3 on the aggregate, 59.4% of the male students agreed that personality do affect the choice of career among preparatory school students while only 40.7% of the male students disagreed with the statement. Also, the majority of (72.8%) of the female preparatory school students agreed that personality plays an important role in career choice among preparatory school students while 27.2% of the female students disagreed.

Also from the Table 4 it could be deduced that the calculated value of t (0.1773) is lower than the critical value (0.8593), therefore there is a no significant difference in the perceptions of the students based on the environment among preparatory school students in deter hereby accepted.

From the above Table 5 calculated value of t (i.e 4.1721)

is higher than the critical value (1.960). Therefore, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of male and female students based on the opportunity in determining their choice of career. The Null's hypothesis is rejected. By implication, it means that the students largely agreed that opportunity is one of the factors considered to affect career choice among secondary school students.

From the Table 6 the results indicate higher mean score recorded on perceptions of female students ( $X=15.00$ ) than that of male students ( $X=12.70$ ), the t-value (4.6390) is higher than the critical t-value at p.05 (i.e 1.960). Thus, "there is no significant difference in the perception of influential factors on personality determining the choice of career among secondary school "is rejected.

**Table 3: Percentage of Responses of Male and Female Students on the Effect of Personality on Career Choice among Preparatory School Students.**

S/N	Statement	Male				Female			
		A	%	D	%	A	%	D	%
1.	I have definitely make a career choice	21	9.8	11	5.1	24	11.6	7	3.4
2.	I have no career plans at present	12	5.7	8	3.7	7	3.4	7	3.4
3.	I did/ have done career choice on my own	10	4.7	9	4.2	25	12.1	4	2
4.	I made the decision choosing my secondary school subjects	12	5.6	10	4.7	20	9.7	5	2.4
5.	I will choose my career choice based on my interest in a particular occupation	11	5.1	10	4.7	12	5.8	7	3.4
6.	My parent's occupation career	12	5.7	7	3.3	7	3.4	5	2.4
7.	Thinking about career choice now is a waste of time	15	7	8	3.7	12	5.8	2	1
8.	My academic ability will determine my career choice	9	4.2	8	3.7	11	5.4	7	3.4
9.	Once I have my National Exam results, then I can make a decision on my career	13	6	9	4.2	16	7.8	6	2.9
10.	Teacher's characteristics do affect in choosing a career	12	5.6	7	3.3	16	7.8	6	2.9

**Table 4: T- test on the Effect of Environment on Choice of Career among Preparatory School Students.**

Sex	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Calculated T- value	Critical at t- value P.05	Remark
Male	214	13.7	4.45	0.1773	0.8593	Accept Ho
Female	206	13.8	6.89			

**Table 5: T- Test on the Influence of Opportunity on Career Choice among Preparatory School Students.**

Sex	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Calculated T- value	Critical at t- value P.05	Remark
Male	214	12.50	2.80	4.1721	1.960	Reject Ho
Female	206	14.40	6.020			

**Table 6: T- Test on Perception of the Influence of Personality in Determining Career Choice among Preparatory School Students.**

Sex	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Calculated T- value	Critical at t- value P.05	Remark
Male	214	12.70	3.330	4.6390	1.960	Reject Ho
Female	206	15.00	6.410			

## Discussion

The results show that the influence of people in the closer circle of friends, family, and academia did not particularly sway influence, or lead students when it came to the career choice process. Individual questions did not show any significance by themselves. No single survey question in the environment section was particularly important to the students. Particular questions that there are factors that piquing students see students as important in the career choice process and this is similar to other previous researches carried out in the past. Ohiwerei, in their research work, discovered that parents, as one of the environmental factors, generally wish their children to achieve where they have failed and stated that there is need for parents, teachers, government and the students to take career choice very seriously as this will determine whatever the child will become in future.

Nine descriptive or “descriptor” statements-like scale that rating represented opportunity. These statements dealt with questions such as money, availability of schooling in the area, awareness of the technical school system, awareness of four year academic college, the option to work for a while before attending any training and the option of working in a family business. These responses were grouped together into a composite score and treated higher than those in the environment section. There was a definite shift of students agreeing that opportunity had affected their career choice. It shows that students whose parents have advanced education see that as a determining factor; just as students who see their parents as under average, in education, having a limiting factor. The response shows that students concerned with financial responsibility might already be working in order to acquire the needs they feel important. The needs may include saving for an educational future. There no significant difference between the results of this project work compared with the past research work conducted. The study conducted by Michael lends credence to this finding. He discovered that students chose career without considering the factors that influenced career choice such as the issue of poverty, family income level and issue of marriage. Change has become a constant force for both at work and in life outside of work. However, change often brings opportunities, flexibility, versatility and adaptability during transitional times, which can be the keys to career- building success.

The last area to be addressed was reflected the attitudes “personality” that might be indicative of certain attitudes discussed in the literature review. These four personality descriptive statement dealt with grades, doing career research on their own, being willing to work in a job traditionally held by the opposite sex and being the type of student who would choose his or her own secondary school subjects. From the responses, it shows that students who thought about career early on in life are higher than those who also waited until a decision was required.

Law and Engineering instead of those that match their personality type. Previous researches also confirmed that many students are still ignorant of not only subject combinations that lead to their career, but also the type of personality that fits their career, probably, this was why almost all the students took prestigious careers that are mismatch for their personality types. Analysis of the composite scores of environment, opportunity

and personality shows that students believed personality affects their career choice the most. The researcher thought that providing a place in the survey for personal input would give some insight into the extent to which these secondary school students were addressing careers. While the answers in themselves do not convey any statistical results, one can see that environment, opportunity and personality will interact if these careers are to be realized.

## Conclusion

It has been observed that while students aim at such prestigious occupations when still in secondary school, it has not been possible for many to achieve their aims for one reason or the other. Such reasons often include among others; poor academic performance, poor choice of subjects for the school certificate examination, lack of financial support to pursue their education which makes it impossible for such boys and girls to get their required training that would qualify them for the jobs of their choice. Also lack of sufficient information about different jobs, the course of study as well as other activities are among such reasons students are thus unable to judge whether they would like all that their choices actually entails. Many people are then left with no definite career satisfaction. One can therefore conclude that while students do not feel environmental factors are important, they did not show outright disregard for them. There is some interest, just not significant interest. I believe that students do listen to the people around them; and that those people are going to have similar, not significant ideas.

The students may unknowingly define their thinking based on the ideas and suggestions of the people in their support group. Students show their awareness of the economic issues and some solutions or answers by the way they responded to these questions. Since the career process is ever evolving, it is important for students to learn what their opportunities are, capitalize on them, and then move on. When it comes to predictive costs versus benefits of education, this is where students can make a mistake either overestimating or underestimating their economic situations. Students should not confine themselves to just one opportunity, nor should they stop trying if the possible opportunity dries up. If opportunity is not present they have to make their own opportunities or move on. The students choosing personality as their most significant career choice factor, and then, definitely making a career choice because they did career choice on their own lend credence to what the literature is saying all along. Students must know themselves and make their own career choice decision based on that self- confidence in their decision making process.

## Recommendations

In the light of the findings made in this study, it is recommended that students can live within a host of environmental factors and survive rather well. If government and the educational system in particular are going to impact our secondary school students, there are areas other than environment that students feel are more important. There are many opportunities for educational facilities, industry, and community to capitalize in cases where students find themselves intellectually qualified for a certain area but economically short of money needed to complete the training. The literature suggests mentoring and role modeling as

positive forces. Schools and businesses could partner to provide real life scenario and problem- solving situations from which students could benefit, both from practice and experience. Government could use schools and businesses to incubate new ideas and new technology. Students could provide ready- made labour to work as researchers, while learning in the process. The idea is to trade their youthful energy and time for experience and making a success from otherwise unprofitable ventures. Students need to see education; not in terms of economic roadblocks, rather experiential opportunities.

Students and instructors should always be aware of the potential for integrating academic as well as life experiences into their portfolios. One of the primary reasons why people go to school is to become productive members of the society. They can always apply Mathematics, English as well as Computer to a career. When they find a roadblock in a particular area of interest, students should analyze or isolate what it is in particular they do not like. If they need help, getting a different prospective from someone they trust may help them move on. They need to ask many questions from parents, instructors, business people and counselors.

Parents, instructors, business people, counselors, must not follow the urge to preach. Since the student is searching for pros and cons, it is the pros and cons that should be provided when asked for advice. As explained in the literature, it would be wrong to pretend to know what is best for the student.

Career choice must be brought into a clearer focus, starting with the students in primary school and continue beyond. Students seem to make secondary school a watershed for making big decision. Career choice is an ever - evolving process. Career choice is a process that includes experimentation, trial and error, decision- making and eventual judgment. Students must be made aware of this process; it has yet to be perfected.

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