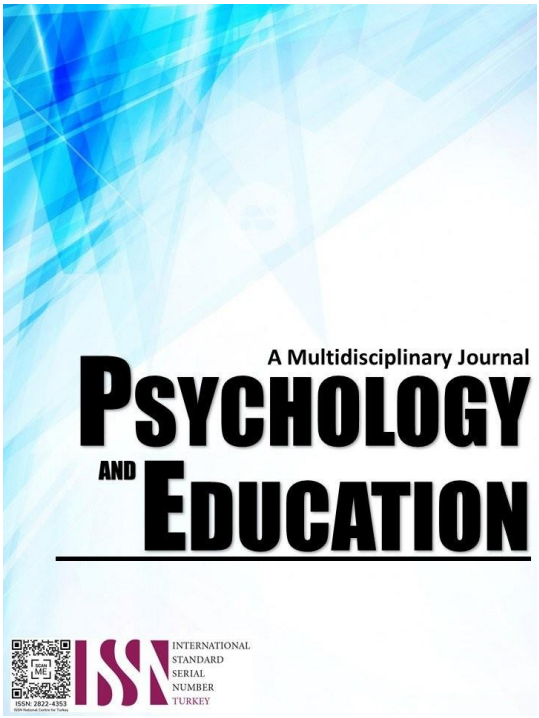
FACTORS INFLUENCING SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND STRAND PREFERENCE: A GUIDANCE INITIATIVE



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Research Article

Factors Influencing Senior High School Track and Strand Preference: A Guidance Initiative

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Abstract

Choosing the right senior high school track and strand is a crucial decision for Grade 10 students, as it significantly impacts their future academic and career paths. This study aimed to identify the factors influencing track and strand preferences among Grade 10 students in Pamplona Cluster III and to develop a career guidance program based on the findings. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 155 students through a self-designed questionnaire and analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage, frequency, weighted mean, and chi-square. The results indicate that most respondents are 14-15 years old, female, and from families with low monthly income. Students' preferences are primarily influenced by their career aspirations and interests, followed by self-efficacy beliefs related to academic performance and perceived outcome expectations such as family influence, peer influence, job opportunities, and school offerings. While students consider employability and track availability, their primary motivation is aligning their chosen track with their career goals. Notably, demographic factors such as age, sex, and household income do not significantly impact their preferences. Based on these findings, the study proposes "Project CAREER," a structured career guidance program designed to help students make informed decisions about their academic and career paths. The study recommends the adoption of this initiative in Pamplona Cluster III schools, as well as further research at the division level to enhance career guidance policies and support student decision-making.

Keywords: *senior high school, track and strand preference, career guidance, academic decision-making, student aspirations, pamplona cluster III*

Introduction

In the Philippines, senior high school is the students' gateway to college for without undergoing such, one can never enroll in any college course. Section 4 of Republic Act number 10533 otherwise known as the Basic Education Act of 2013 states that the enhanced basic education program encompasses at least one (1) year of kindergarten education, six (6) years of elementary education, and six (6) years of secondary education, in that sequence. Secondary education includes four (4) years of junior high school and two (2) years of senior high school education (Philippine Government Official Gazette, 2013). Within the K to 12 curriculum, every senior high school student can choose among three tracks: Academic, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood, and Sports and Arts, and among various strands and respective specializations under each strand.

Choosing a senior high school track and strand has never been easy. The decision that learners make will shape their future academic and professional paths, hence it is a choice that should not be made casually (Kilag, et al., 2023). Several factors can influence students' decision-making, such as their financial status, course availability, academic performance, peer influence, parental guidance, and career aspirations (Tagal, 2019; Tortor, et al. 2020).

Several studies have been conducted on this matter, however, these studies were conducted within the researchers' schools/districts/divisions only which limits the generalizability of the findings to other places in the country. This fuels the researcher to conduct this study within the schools in the district she is assigned to gain insights directly relevant to the local context. Furthermore, the researcher focuses on Grade 10 learners only for she believes that Grade 10 learners are already approaching the end of their junior high school journey, and it is high time for them to make firm decisions about the track and strand they would pursue as this will affect their future academic and professional careers.

The primary purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence the senior high school track and strand preference of Grade 10. Knowing these factors and their extent of influence would be a great avenue for the researcher to develop strategies and craft an appropriate program to support and guide the learners in making informed decisions in this crucial transition. It is on this premise that the researcher proposes a Career Guidance Program.

Research Questions

This study aimed to identify the factors influencing the Senior High School track and strand preference of the Grade 10 students around Pamplona Cluster III. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
    1.1. age;
    1.2. gender; and
    1.3. level of technological skills?
2. What are the factors influencing the senior high school track and strand preference in terms of:

2.1. Self-efficacy Beliefs
2.1.1. academic performance;
2.2. Outcome Expectations
2.2.1. familial influence;
2.2.2. peer influence;
2.2.3. perceived job opportunities;
2.2.4. track and strand offerings of nearby schools; and
2.3. Goals
2.3.1. career aspirations and interests?

3. To what extent do these factors influence senior high school students in choosing their preferred track and strand?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the extent of factors influencing their track and strand preference?
5. What program/project could be crafted to guide the students in choosing their senior high school track and strand?

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher used the descriptive-correlational method, which is designed to determine whether two or more variables are associated with each other. A descriptive method was employed to determine the profile of the respondents and the extent of influence of factors in their senior high school track and strand preference. On the other hand, the correlational method was used to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the extent of the factors that influence them in choosing their senior high school track and strand.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were the Grade 10 students who are enrolled in the academic year 2024-2025 in the six (6) high schools around Pamplona Cluster III. The researcher chose the respondents believing that they are already approaching the end of their junior high school journey, and it is high time for them to make firm decisions about the track and strand they would pursue as this will affect their future academic and professional careers.

Due to the timing of the data collection, the researcher only considered the students who are enrolled in the S.Y 2024-2025 when conducting the data collection process.

The researcher conducted the study on the schools below and accommodated all the Grade 10 learners enrolled.

Table 1. *Distribution of the Respondents (N=155)*

School	*Number of Grade 10 Learners (f)*	*Percentage (%)*
Calicanan HS	32	21
Adela Pera MHS	13	8
Inawasan PCHS	32	21
Isidoro Salma MHS	50	32
Samoyao HS	9	6
San Isidro HS	19	12
Total	155	100

Instrument

The researcher used a self-made survey questionnaire containing two parts: the first part is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and household monthly income; and the second part is the factors influencing their senior high school track and strand preference.

Procedure

The researcher prepared a letter request addressed to the school's division superintendent of the respondents, specifically Tanjay City Division, asking permission to conduct the study. When the approval of the researcher's request letter to the school's division superintendent was granted, the researcher furnished copies to all the school heads of the high schools in Pamplona Cluster III. After the approval from the school heads, the researcher started administering the questionnaires to the Grade 10 respondents. The researcher gathered the answered questionnaires and the data were tallied, recorded, calculated, and analyzed. Conclusions and recommendations were drawn afterward.

Data Analysis

Problem 1 employed the frequency distribution, percentage, and rank to determine the profile of the respondents. Frequency distribution is a representation that displays the number of observations within a given interval. The representation of a frequency distribution in

this study is tabular so it would be easier to understand. The percentage was computed by dividing the total number of responses to a specific question by the total number of respondents multiplied by 100, as shown in the formula. This represents the position or ranking of the response within the overall results.

Problems 2 and 3 employed the weighted mean and rank to determine the factors influencing the senior high school students in choosing their preferred track and strand, and the extent of their influence.

Problem 4 utilized the Chi-square to determine the significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the extent of factors influencing their track and strand preference.

Ethical Considerations

The study on the Factors Influencing Senior High School Track and Strand Preference: A Guidance Initiative encompasses various ethical considerations. These include ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, facilitating voluntary participation, minimizing harm, treating respondents fairly, avoiding coercion, promoting beneficence, respecting participants' rights, and upholding researcher integrity. These measures are implemented by the researcher to ensure the protection of participants, maintenance of research integrity, and adherence to ethical standards throughout the study process.

Results and Discussion

This section covers the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered for each of the given specific problems. The presentation of the findings, analyses, and interpretations of data followed the order of the problems covered in this study for purposes of identity and clarity.

Table 2.1. *Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Age (N=155)*

Age (In years)	*Frequency (f)*	*Percentage (%)*	*Rank*
14-15	124	80.00	1
16-17	25	16.13	2
18-19	6	3.87	3
Total	155	100.00	
$\bar{x}$= 14.98			

Table 2.1 illustrates the profile of the respondents in terms of age. The majority of the respondents, constituting 80%, are aged 14-15 years old, followed by 25% aged 16-17 years old. Additionally, only 3.87% or 6 students aged 18-19 years old.

The findings above show that most of the grade 10 students in Pamplona Cluster 3 have the ideal age for Grade 10 students in the Philippine Educational System.

The results conform to the studies of Kilag et al. (2023) and Fulgarinas et al. (2023) where it was found that the most frequent age group in their studies was 15 years old. Royo and Lamela (2021) also noted that 42.75% of their respondents are aged 16 years old, 23.05% are 17 years old, 21.93% are 15 years old, 10.04% are 18 years old and only 2.23% are 19 years old, and above. Moreover, it was also found in the study of Bation and Sabaldana (2018) that 61% of their Grade 10 respondents were 16 years old which is the ideal age for grade 10.

Table 2.2. *Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Sex (N=155)*

Sex	*Frequency (f)*	*Percentage (%)*	*Rank*
Male	66	42.58	2
Female	89	57.42	1
Total	155	100.00	

Table 2.2 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of sex. It can be seen that 57.42% of the respondents are females while 42.58% of the respondents are males.

The findings above show that majority of the enrolled Grade 10 students in Pamplona Cluster III are females. It was also found in the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum (WEF) that 71.3% of women are enrolled in the secondary education and 40.4% in college, compared to only 60.2% and 40.2% respectively, among men. Hence, there are more Filipino women enrolled in high school and college compared to men (Cruz, 2019).

This agrees to the study of Kilag et. al (2023) which found out that majority of their respondents were female (63%). Moreover, the study of Royo and Lamela (2021) also found that most of the incoming senior high school students are female which comprise 166 (61.71%) of the total number of respondents while there are only 103 (38.28%) male respondents.

Table 2.3. *Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Household Monthly Income (N=155)*

Household Monthly Income	*Frequency (f)*	*Percentage (%)*	*Rank*
Poor	110	70.97	1
Low Income	32	20.65	2

Lower Middle Income	11	7.10	3
Middle Income	1	0.64	4.5
Upper Middle Income	1	0.64	4.5
Total	155	100.00	

The profile of the respondents in terms of household monthly income is shown in Table 2.3. The Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS) served as the basis for the monthly income range per household.

The gathered data reveals that 70.97% of the respondents have poor income which amount to less than ₱ 9,520 and 20.65% have low income ranging between ₱9,520 to ₱19,040. Additionally, only 0.64% belonged to middle income (between ₱38,080 to ₱66,640) and another 0.64% belong to upper middle income (between ₱66,640 to ₱114,240).

This shows that most of the respondents come from families with limited financial means. For these students, everyday resources could be limited and this could play a big role in their educational choices. With less abundant resources, students would surely want to land in a job right after completing senior high school. Most likely, they would choose tracks and strands that are job-oriented or more practical rather than the ones that align with their personal interests.

This is parallel to the study of Kilag et al. (2023), where their findings also showed that respondents who came from families with a monthly income of 5,000 and below were the most numerous (46%), while those who came from families with a monthly income of 20,000 and above were the least frequent (11%). Kilag also added that this finding suggests that Filipino students are influenced by their families' financial situation when choosing their career paths. Economic stability is a critical consideration for individuals, as it affects their ability to pursue education and training opportunities necessary for career advancement. Similarly, the study of Royo and Lamela (2021) found that most of their respondents are recorded to have monthly earnings of 5,000 below. This had the highest percentage of 66.91% or 180 out of 269 respondents.

Table 3.1. *Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference in Terms of Self-Efficacy Beliefs (Academic Performance) (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*
1. My current academic performance influences my choice of SHS track and strand.	3.46	Agree	2
2. I am more likely to choose a SHS track and strand where I excel academically.	3.52	Agree	1
3. The difficulty level of subjects in specific SHS tracks and strands affects my decision-making process.	3.15	Neutral	5
4. My perception of my academic abilities influences my confidence in pursuing certain SHS tracks and strands.	3.38	Neutral	4
5. I consider my past educational performance as an indicator of success in my chosen SHS track and strand.	3.45	Agree	3
Average Weighted Mean	3.39	Neutral	

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree | 3.41 – 4.20 Agree | 2.61 – 3.40 Undecided | 1.81 – 2.60 Disagree | 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree

Table 3.1 discloses the factors influencing senior high school track and strand preference in terms of self-efficacy beliefs as illustrated through academic performance. As shown, this factor has the average weighted mean of 3.39 verbally interpreted as neutral. This means that this factor has a moderate influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference.

Investigating further the results, it is found that the statement "I am more likely to choose a SHS track and strand where I excel academically" has a weighted mean of 3.52 which is verbally interpreted as agree. This is followed by the statement "My current academic performance influences my choice of SHS track and strand" which has a weighted mean of 3.46, also verbally interpreted as agree. Lastly, the statement "I consider my past educational performance as an indicator of success in my chosen SHS track and strand" has a weighted mean of 3.45, and is also verbally interpreted as agree.

These imply that though academic performance may not be a decisive factor in the senior high school track and strand preference for most of the respondents, results generally show that most of them feel more inclined to choose tracks where they excel academically, looking less intently into the level of difficulty of the subjects offered within tracks. This could mean that students might be more focused on aligning their academic strengths rather than avoiding challenging subjects.

Similarly, the study of Fulgarinas et al. (2023) found that in terms of academic performance, the respondents got an average mean of 2.86 and an average standard deviation of 0.797, which is verbally interpreted as agree, which means that the respondents moderately preferred to pursue a strand in line with their academic performance. Moreover, student's career aspirations and academic performance often intersect, as academic success can sometimes guide students toward their ideal career paths (Careers, 2020).

Table 3.2.1. *Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference in Terms of Familial Influence (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*
1. My family's opinions strongly influence my choice of SHS track and strand.	3.26	Neutral	3
2. I intend to pursue a career similar to that of my mother/father.	3.09	Neutral	5

3. I discuss my SHS track and strand preferences with my family before making a decision.	3.64	Agree	1
4. My family's expectations play a significant role in shaping my SHS track and strand preferences.	3.17	Neutral	4
5. I believe that my family's influence on my SHS track and strand choice is positive.	3.35	Neutral	2
Average Weighted Mean	3.30	Neutral	

Table 3.2.1 illustrates the factors influencing senior high school track and strand preference in terms of familial influence. The data reveals that familial influence has an average weighted mean of 3.30, which can be verbally interpreted as neutral. This means that this factor has a moderate influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference.

Furthermore, only the statement "I discuss my SHS track and strand preferences with my family before making a decision" has a weighted mean of 3.64 verbally interpreted as agree.

The data above shows that while the family's guidance in making decisions as to what track and strand to pursue is valued, students still retain personal agency in shaping their educational paths. They do not simply follow a career similar to that of their mother/father.

The findings above are consistent with the study of Kilag et al. (2023) which shows that family influence was found to be neutral, indicating that Filipino students do not necessarily rely on their families to guide their career choices.

Table 3.2.2. *Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference in Terms of Peer Influence (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*
1. I believe that peer influence is an important factor in making informed SHS track and strand decisions.	3.24	Neutral	3
2. I expect recognition from my friends if I opt for the same track and strand as them.	3.10	Neutral	4.5
3. I discuss SHS track and strand options with my peers to gather opinions before making decisions.	3.28	Neutral	1
4. My friends' preferences significantly impact my preferences for the SHS track and strands.	3.10	Neutral	4.5
5. The potential for shared experiences with friends in the same SHS track and strand influences my choice.	3.25	Neutral	2
Average Weighted Mean	3.19	Neutral	

The factors influencing senior high school track and strand preferences in terms of peer influence are disclosed in Table 3.2.2. The findings show that peer influence has an average weighted mean of 3.19 verbally interpreted as neutral. This means that this factor has a moderate influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference.

Delving deeper into the results, it can be seen that there are consistent neutral responses across all indicators. Furthermore, the statement "I discuss SHS track and strand options with my peers to gather opinions before making decisions" has the highest weighted mean of 3.28 verbally interpreted as neutral.

Similar to other factors, peer influence also has a moderate influence on the track and strand preference of the respondents. Moreover, data also shows that even though most students discuss track and strand options with their peers, their final decisions do not heavily rely on them. Here, the inputs of their peers could only be used as a way to explore many options and hear different perspectives, rather than the determining factor in their career choice.

The findings above are consistent with the results of the study of Kilag et al. (2023) which found that peer influence emerged as a neutral factor, indicating that Filipino students are not significantly influenced by their peers' career choices. Moreover, the study of Hassan and Ghalayini (2020) as cited by Kilag et al. (2023) also highlighted the positive and negative effects of peer influence on career decision-making.

Table 3.2.3 illustrates factors influencing senior high school track and strand preference in terms of perceived job opportunities. The data reveal that perceived job opportunities have an average weighted mean of 3.38 verbally interpreted as neutral. This shows that this factor has a moderate influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference.

Analyzing the data more closely, it is found that the statement "I consider the long-term employability of the skills acquired in my chosen SHS track and strand" has a weighted mean of 3.48 verbally interpreted as agree. Also, the statement "When making decisions, I consider the potential job opportunities associated with each SHS track and strand" has a weighted mean of 3.46 verbally interpreted as agree.

Table 3.2.3. *Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference in Terms of Perceived Job Opportunities (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*
1. When making decisions, I consider the potential job opportunities associated with	3.46	Agree	2

each SHS track and strand.			
2. My decision on SHS track and strand preferences is influenced by the perceived job market demand.	3.16	Neutral	5
3. I believe that certain SHS tracks/strands offer better career prospects than others.	3.40	Neutral	3
4. The expected salary in careers related to my SHS track and strand influences my decision.	3.38	Neutral	4
5. I consider the long-term employability of the skills acquired in my chosen SHS track and strand.	3.48	Agree	1
Average Weighted Mean	3.38	Neutral	

The results show that like the other factors considered in this study, job opportunities are not the most dominant factor that influences the students' choice of senior high school track and strand. However, the relatively high means for considering the long-term employability of the skills acquired in the chosen track and strand and the potential job opportunities suggests that students still consider the necessity of future employability in their choices. On the other hand, the lower mean about perceived job market demand shows that students are less influenced by specific job market trends. Instead of solely responding to current job market demands, students' decisions may be guided more by other emerging factors.

This corresponds to the study of Kilag et al. (2023) which found that job opportunities emerged as an agreeable factor in career decision-making among Filipino students. This finding suggests that Filipino students prioritize job security and financial stability when choosing their career paths. Similarly, the study of Carrico et al. (2019) as cited by Kilag et al. (2023) also highlights the importance of salary expectations and employment stability in career decision-making. Furthermore, the study of Royo and Lamela (2021) found that work opportunity, which pertains to the perceived availability and chance of getting a job after graduation, is the foremost factor students would consider in choosing a career track.

Table 3.2.4. *Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference in Terms of Track and Strand Offerings of Nearby Schools (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*
1. The availability of specialized programs in certain tracks and strands at nearby schools influences my choice.	3.45	Agree	2
2. The reputation of schools based on their track and strand offerings affects my confidence in selecting a specific SHS track.	3.43	Agree	3
3. I consider the variety of track and strand options in nearby schools when making my SHS choices.	3.32	Neutral	4
4. The available track and strand offerings in schools near me significantly impact my SHS track and strand preference.	3.30	Neutral	5
5. I actively seek information about the different SHS tracks/strands available in schools nearby to make an informed decision.	3.48	Agree	1
Average Weighted Mean	3.40	Neutral	

Table 3.2.4 illustrates factors influencing senior high school track and strand preference in terms of track and strand offerings of nearby schools. The data reveal that track and strand offerings of nearby schools have an average weighted mean of 3.40 verbally interpreted as neutral. This shows that this factor has a moderate influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference.

Exploring the results in greater depth, the statement "I actively seek information about the different SHS tracks/strands available in schools nearby to make an informed decision" has a weighted mean of 3.48 verbally interpreted as agree. This is followed by the statement "The availability of specialized programs in certain tracks and strands at nearby schools influences my choice" which has a weighted mean of 3.45, also verbally interpreted as agree. Furthermore, the statement "The reputation of schools based on their track and strand offerings affects my confidence in selecting a specific SHS track" has a weighted mean of 3.43 which is also verbally interpreted as agree.

Though track and strand offerings of nearby schools may not be a decisive factor in the senior high school track and strand preference for most of the respondents, results generally show that most of them still take local options into account. This is evident from their active approach to gathering information, valuing specialized programs, and considering the school's reputation when deciding.

This finding aligns with a study by Royo and Lamela (2021) which found that the availability of facilities and specific track offerings in nearby schools significantly influences students' track preferences. Moreover, Acton et al. (2024) found that schools' resources, including available tracks and local enrollment trends, are key factors impacting students' choices. The study also highlighted that limited facilities can restrict the variety of tracks offered, thus influencing students' options to align with what is feasible and accessible in their immediate vicinity, especially in rural areas.

Table 3.2.5. *Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference in Terms of Outcome Expectations (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*

1. Familial influence	3.30	Neutral	3
2. Peer influence	3.19	Neutral	4
3. Perceived job opportunities	3.38	Neutral	2
4. Track and strand offerings of nearby schools	3.40	Neutral	1
Overall Weighted Mean	3.32	Neutral	

Table 3.2.5 shows the factors influencing the senior high school track and strand preference in terms of outcome expectations as illustrated through familial influence, peer influence, perceived job opportunities, and track and strand offerings of nearby schools.

The data reveal that outcome expectations have an overall weighted mean of 3.32 verbally interpreted as neutral. This means that the indicators of outcome expectations have a moderate influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference. It is important to note that the factor track and strand offerings of nearby schools has the highest weighted mean of 3.40 verbally interpreted as neutral while peer influence has the lowest weighted mean of 3.19 verbally interpreted as neutral.

The results suggest that though outcome expectations are not the most dominant influencer, they still have significance in students' preferences. Among these, the offerings of nearby schools appear to have the most influence, despite being rated as neutral, indicating that students still consider proximity when making choices. In contrast, peer influence has the least impact, mirroring that while friends may provide input, students still prioritize other factors more strongly in their decision-making. Generally, this shows that students do not conform to a single factor only to overwhelmingly dictate their track and strand preferences.

These results are parallel to the results of the study of Moneva and Malbas (2019) which identified that family and employability are not significant in influencing the grade 10 students in choosing a track in senior high school which means that these factors do not affect the decisions of the students.

Table 3.3. *Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference in Terms of Goals (Career Aspirations and Interests) (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*
1. My desired career path heavily influences my choice of SHS track and strand.	3.50	Agree	4
2. I am genuinely interested in the subjects associated with my chosen SHS track and strand.	3.59	Agree	2
3. The potential for personal fulfillment in my chosen SHS track and strand is a crucial factor in my decision-making.	3.54	Agree	3
4. My passion for specific subjects plays a crucial role in my SHS track and strand preferences.	3.39	Neutral	5
5. I believe that aligning my SHS track and strand with my career interests will lead to future success.	3.82	Agree	1
Average Weighted Mean	3.57	Agree	

Table 3.3 illustrates factors influencing senior high school track and strand preference in terms of goals as illustrated through career aspirations and interests. As shown, this factor has an average weighted mean of 3.57 verbally interpreted as agree. This means that this factor has a significant influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference.

Examining the results more thoroughly, the statement" I believe that aligning my SHS track and strand with my career interests will lead to future success" has a weighted mean of 3.82 verbally interpreted as agree. This is followed by the statement "I am genuinely interested in the subjects associated with my chosen SHS track and strand" which has a weighted mean of 3.59, also verbally interpreted as agree. Moreover, the statement "The potential for personal fulfillment in my chosen SHS track and strand is a crucial factor in my decision-making" has a weighted mean of 3.54, also verbally interpreted as agree. Lastly, the statement "My desired career path heavily influences my choice of SHS track and strand" has a weighted mean of 3.50, also verbally interpreted as agree.

Among the factors presented, goals related to career aspirations and interests, show the highest results. This suggests that the respondents are highly motivated by the idea of aligning their senior high school track and strand with their career goals. Additionally, students seem to prioritize tracks and strands that they believe will lead to successful future careers, while also valuing a personal interest in their subjects and the potential for personal fulfillment in their educational choices.

This is in line with the results of the study by Malaguial et al. (2022) which showed that the personal interest factor had the highest level of influence among the factors. Moreover, Royo and Lamela (2021) also found that aptitude and interest both referring to students' personality were noted to be highly influential factors in the students' choice of track. This means that students' aptitude or natural ability and interest are significant predictors of possible track preference.

Table 3.4. *Extent of Factors Influencing the Senior High School Track and Strand Preference (N=155)*

Indicators	*Weighted Mean*	*Verbal Description*	*Rank*
1. Self-efficacy beliefs	3.39	Neutral	2
2. Outcome expectations	3.32	Neutral	3

3. Goals	3.57	Agree	1
Overall Weighted Mean	3.43	Agree	

Table 3.4 illustrates the extent of factors influencing the senior high school track and strand preference.

As shown in the table, goals have the highest weighted mean of 3.57 verbally interpreted as agree, followed by self-efficacy beliefs with the weighted mean of 3.39 verbally interpreted as neutral, and then outcome expectations with the weighted mean of 3.32 verbally interpreted as neutral. The data show that among the three indicators, goals as illustrated through career aspirations and interests has the most influence on the students' senior high school track and strand preference.

The data indicates that while students may consider their self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations, these factors may not be as decisive as their goals particularly those career aspirations and interests as these strongly influence the respondents in their senior high school track and strand preference.

These results are parallel to the study of Tsui et al. (2019) which observed that students' career goals and personal interests are decisive in track selection, even when other factors like self-efficacy or outcome expectations are present. These interests, combined with academic performance, often lead students to choose paths that align with their strengths and long-term goals. This confirms that career aspirations remain one of the strongest influences in academic track decision-making. Moreover, Studies show that while self-efficacy is important, family support and the specific career goals tied to familial influence often have a stronger impact on career decision-making (Ye, 2021).

Additionally, the study of Morales et al. (2023) revealed that learners were greatly influenced by their interests, influenced by job opportunities, and somewhat influenced by their parents and peers. Badilla and Disoso (2023) also noted that personal interest and employability are the factors that most influence them in choosing a strand in senior high school.

Table 4. *Relationship Between the Profile of the Respondents and The Extent of Factors Influencing Their Track and Strand Preference (N=155)*

Profile of the respondents paired to extent of factors influencing their track and strand preference	*X2 Computed Value*	*X2 Tabular Value*	*df*	*Level of significance*	*Decision Rule*	*Remarks*
Age	8.744	15.507	8	0.05	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Sex	2.478	9.488	4	0.05	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Household Monthly Income	12.459	21.026	12	0.05	Not Significant	Accept Ho

It is illustrated in table 4 the relationship between the profile of the respondents and the extent of factors influencing their track and strand preference. The findings show that the computed chi square values of age (8.744), sex (2.478), and monthly household income (12.459) are lower than the tabular values 15.507 (age), 9.488 (sex), and 21.026 (monthly household income), hence, the null hypothesis is accepted indicating that there is no significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the extent of factors influencing their track and strand preference.

The findings above tell that there is no strong evidence that age, sex, and monthly household income significantly influence the factors that influence the respondents' choice of senior high school track and strand. Regardless of the presented demographic elements, factors such as self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals are likely more influential in their track and strand preference.

This result is supported by the study of Jiang et al. (2024) which found that while gender might slightly shape interest areas, self-efficacy and perceived career outcomes are consistently stronger predictors of specific career interests, even in STEM fields where gender gaps are historically notable. Such findings indicate that, across different contexts, students' personal beliefs and anticipated outcomes more reliably guide their educational and career choices than demographic profiles alone.

Conclusions

It is concluded that the respondents are predominantly 14-15 years old, female and coming from families with poor monthly income based on the Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS).

Incoming senior high school students are more likely to choose a senior high school track and strand where they excel academically, since they are influenced by their current academic performance. They also consider their past educational performance as an indicator of success in their chosen track and strand. Despite being influenced by their academic performance, they also discuss their preferences with their family before making decisions.

Moreover, they also consider the long-term employability of the skills acquired in their chosen track and strand as well as the potential job opportunities associated with each track and strand. They actively seek information about the different tracks/strands available in schools nearby to make an informed decision. The reputation of schools based on their track and strand offerings also affects their confidence in selecting a specific senior high school track and strand. They believe that aligning their track and strand with their career interests will lead to future success as their desired career path heavily influences their choice of senior high school track and strand. They are also genuinely interested in the subjects associated with their chosen track and strand. Furthermore, the potential for personal

fulfillment in their chosen track and strand is a crucial factor in their decision-making.

Notably, the factors prompting their senior high school track and strand preferences are not influenced by their profile variables such as age, sex and household monthly income.

With the results and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:

Schools around Pamplona Cluster III, by the approval of the Cluster Head and Schools Division Superintendent, should utilize Project CAREER, the career guidance program presented in this study. Project CAREER is a career guidance program tailored to help grade 10 students in choosing their senior high school track and strand.

The Curriculum Implementation Department of SDO Tanjay City should also conduct a division-wide research on the factors influencing senior high school track and strand preference, and consider adapting the career guidance program presented in this study.

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