Factors Determining Choice of Particular Stream at Secondary Level of Education

Mr. Saleem Yousuf Sofi
M.A (Education) Central University Of Kashmir (India.)

Abstract- The present study was designed to explore the factors determining choice of particular stream at secondary level of education. Through simple random sampling, a sample of 125 secondary school students, 81 males and 44 females for this study were selected. The total sample i.e. 125 individuals were further divided total 66 students who opted arts stream, Out of the total 25 commerce students, and 34 students have opted for science stream out of the sample of 125 students. Sample was selected from different secondary schools of Kashmir valley. Questionnaire survey method was used to collect data systematically. Logistic model were used as statistical tool for data analysis. Result of the study reveals that previous academic achievement of students, Father’s academic qualification, Ability and interest are the pertinent factor which influences student’s choice of selecting a particular stream at secondary level of education.

Key words: Secondary level of education, Choice of stream, Academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Education in its widest sense – formal and informal is important in that it enhances the quality of life of the individuals and the community as a whole. Secondary education is a stage of education where the students have to choose their future. Secondary education serves as bridge between primary and higher education. In the current scenario, education in general and Secondary education in particular have become complex. As a result of changing nature of secondary education lot of issues have become more pertinent in the present times. Out of many issues, one important issue is the decision regarding choice of particular stream at this level of education. Choice of the stream is often complex, multi-faceted decisions, and often boils down to a few key factors. Everyone has to make choices at different stages in their life. Some of the most crucial decision in an individual life is related to their education; in particular what combination of subjects they decide to take for secondary education.

Decision making phase is very crucial in an individual’s life since the whole career of the student depends on it. Student’s decision to choose a particular stream deploys critical and complex discourses. Students at secondary level of education do not select stream in a random way, choosing a particular stream at secondary level of education is the most crucial decision which determines the whole career and future of an individual. Ozga and Sukhnandan (1997:708) highlighted that choice of subject is a critical issue: “poor choice can lead to consumer dissatisfaction and impact negatively on motivation and academic success, affecting progression rates”. Other writers, for instance Yorke (1999), recommend that more attention should be paid to academic choice specifically where success relates to a student’s ambition in relation to their actual academic ability. Such attention is warranted, since poor decisions at the point of entry have been linked to high drop-out rates in future.

Through the process of family socialization, children are enabled to take over their parent’s cultural capital. The parents’ cultural capital, including their social and economic status, educational qualifications, knowledge of the education system and social capital, will determine the children’s socialization which in turn determines their destiny (Bourdieu 1990). Parents are more likely to influence students' decisions than guidance counsellors or teachers (Malgwi et al., 2005, p. 278).

While making the choice of subject’s students take into account academic considerations such as, value and execution, teacher, and workload, Students at secondary level are then greatly influenced by the potential for career opportunities and advancement; therefore, the more valuable a course is to a future career, the greater the likelihood a student will enroll in it (Ackerman & Gross, 2006, p. 75; Anderson, Lankshear, Timms, & Courtney, 2006, p. 1312; Malgwi, Howe, & Burnaby, 2005, p. 277).

The decision at this stage is the foundation stone for the whole future life. The decision at this stage prepares the young person’s for the world of work. This is the stage where the student finds himself on a road which has different ways which put the students in the dilemma. This is the stage of education where the students have to choose their academic plans and career. It is also highlighted in the literature that a child mis-educated is a child lost.
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Student’s decision to enter into secondary education and to choose suitable courses deploys critical and complex discourses. There is no single factor at work. There are always combinations of factors that influence the decision regarding choice of subjects or courses. Kerin, Harvey, & Crandall (1975).

Interest in a course topic or subject is often the driving force behind students' enrollment in classes (e.g. Anderson et al., 2006, p.1311; Curran & Rosen, 2006, p. 145; Malgwi et al., 2005, p. 278; Smith et al., 2006, p. 4). A student's perceived interest in a course is based on factors such as subject matter, topics, and major readings (Babad & Taybe, 2003, p. 391).

when considering core benefits, students are not buying degrees; they are buying the benefits that a degree can provide in terms of employment, status and lifestyle, among others (Cited in Cubillo, 2006,pp-104).

students whose parents are educated, they are having high aspiration for their children. Highly qualified fathers can adequately guide their children to the next step in succeeding in the college-educated workforce. Family involvement in the education of underserved students is restricted by limited resources, time, confidence, and language skills (A Shared Agenda, 2004).

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
Choosing the right course is a big decision and it is important to get it right, as it can impact your future success. Student’s decision to enter into secondary education and to choose suitable courses deploys critical and complex discourses. There is no single factor at work. There are always combinations of factors that influence the decision regarding choice of subjects or courses. The present study is timely and of immediate policy relevance. Secondary education level is the most important stage for a child it is the stage where the child is at the cross road. The findings of the study especially related to the factors considered by the students in selection of particular stream at secondary level of education can be utilized in strengthening the policy stands. Another important rationale of the study is that the information from this study might give parents a more accurate depiction of their students’ choice and behaviors. This information might facilitate communication and understanding between students and their parents. Another important rationale for doing research on this topic is that knowledge about this topic will prove very much beneficial for a good guidance giver and counselor. The optimistic approach of the study tends to provide input to the body of knowledge to understand the factors which influence students’ choice of particular stream at secondary level of education. The present study will help and provide information to institutional leaders and policy makers about the most effective approaches for how decision of students regarding subject choice are determined and what factors influence them

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
Factors determining choice of particular stream at secondary level of education

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
1. To find out the factors determining choice of particular stream of secondary school students at secondary level of education.
2. To find out that to what extent academic achievement, ability and interest of students does influence the choice of particular stream of students at secondary level of education.
3. To find out to what extent Father’s academic qualification does influence the choice of particular stream of students at secondary level of education.

METHODOLOGY
In the present study descriptive survey method was employed to investigate the factors determining selection of particular stream at secondary level of education.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE
Through simple random sampling a sample of one hundred and twenty five individuals were taken from Kashmir valley,125 secondary level students, 81 males and 44 females for this study. The total sample i.e. 125 individuals were further divided total 66 students who opted arts stream, Out of the total 25 commerce students, and 34 students have opted for science stream out of the sample of 125 students. The age range was from 13-15years having at least proper comprehension and understanding of English language. The demographic variables used were age, education, occupation, & gender.

INSTRUMENTS
The present study was done by the use of well self-constructed questionnaire contains different sections; each section contains some questions, administered on the students of secondary school students. The questionnaire contained the items which focused on understanding the factors influencing the decision regarding choice of particular stream at secondary level of education. The list of attributes was developed through an extensive literature review. The questionnaire contains 10 parts dealing with various aspects of student’s life. Part 1 deals with student’s personal
information, part 2 of the questionnaire deals with the information about their parent’s education and family income occupation, part 3 of the questionnaire deals with the information about factors influencing student’s choice about particular stream.

TOOLS OF THE STUDY
The following statistical techniques were employed for analyzing and interpretation of data

1. Logistic model were used by the researcher for the analysis of results.
2. Simple regression is used to examine the relationship between one dependent and one independent variable.
3. After performing an analysis, the regression statistics can be used to predict the dependent variable when the independent variable is known.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 4.1: Factors influencing students’ selection of particular course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment prospect</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in particular course</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation by parents peers and teachers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to complete the course</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High income</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of the course in the society</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No other option available</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 shows that future employment prospect has been considered by 26.4 percent while taking a decision about the particular course. Interest in particular course has been taken into account by 14.4 percent of students while choosing a particular course. Recommendation by parents and peers has reckoned by 10.4 percent students. Ability to complete the course has been considered by 9.6 percent students while selecting a particular course. High income has been posited by 14.4 percent students. Reputation of the course has been accounted by 3.2 percent students while selecting a particular course. 21.6 percent of the students have selected the particular course because no other option was available in front of the students.

From the percentage responses of the students it reveals that employment prospect is the most influential factor considered by students while selecting a particular course and dominated over interest.

Interaction between factors influencing selection of particular course across different streams of education has been made in order to analyse weather different factors are influencing the selection of particular course across stream.

Table 4.2: Factors influencing students’ selection of particular course across streams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Employment prospect</th>
<th>Interest in particular course</th>
<th>Recommendation by parents peers and teacher</th>
<th>Ability to complete the course</th>
<th>High income</th>
<th>Reputation of the course in the society</th>
<th>No other option available</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>22.7(15)</td>
<td>12.1(8)</td>
<td>6.0(4)</td>
<td>6.0 (4)</td>
<td>10.6(7)</td>
<td>1.5 (1)</td>
<td>40.9(27)</td>
<td>100 (66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>36 (9)</td>
<td>24(6)</td>
<td>16(4)</td>
<td>8 (2)</td>
<td>12 (3)</td>
<td>4 (1)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>100 (25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2 highlights that most pertinent reason for arts students for selection of particular stream is because no other option was open in front of them. 40.9 percent of the arts students have cited this reason for selection of the particular stream. Interestingly not even a single student from commerce and science stream has cited this reason. The most pertinent factor which influenced commerce and science students for selection of the particular stream is the future employment prospect. Above table highlights that 36 percent of the commerce students and 26.5 percent of the science stream students have cited this reason for selection of the particular stream. As compared to commerce and science stream students only 22.7 percent of the students from arts stream have highlighted this factor which has influence their selection of particular stream. The other pertinent factors which have influenced commerce and science students is the interest in the particular course. 24 percent of the commerce, 11.8 percent of the science and 12.1 percent of the arts students have reckoned that interest in the particular course is the factor which they have considered before selection of the particular course and which has influenced their selection of the particular stream.

Selection of the particular stream will help the students for generation of high income and it has also significantly considered by the students before selection of the particular course. Interestingly, students from the science stream have considered this factor more prominently as compared to students from the commerce and arts stream. 23.5 percent of the students from the science stream have considered high future income prospects before election of particular stream.

Multinomial Logistic regression model has been used on the sample of 125 first year students. Choice of the stream at secondary level of education has taken as the dependent variable in order to find the factors which are influencing students’ choice of educational stream.

Dependent variable taken is categorical in nature with choice for arts =1, commerce=2 and science=3. The decline in the value of -2 log likelihood as highlighted in table 4.3 explains the improvement of the predictability of the model by the inclusion of independent variables. The value of -2 log likelihood is 225.524 with the constant. With the inclusion of independent variables the value of -2 log likelihood has reduced to 153.136. The reduction of 72.388 told that model has better predicted the choice of stream at secondary level than it was before when only constant was included.

### Table 4.3 Model Fitting Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Model Fitting Criteria</th>
<th>Likelihood Ratio Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept Only</td>
<td>-2 Log Likelihood</td>
<td>Chi-Square df Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>225.524</td>
<td>72.388 24 .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>153.136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, Cox & Snell R Square and the Nagelkerke R square value, provide an indication of the amount of variation in the dependent variable. These are described as pseudo R square. The value of Cox and Snell R square comes out to be 0.445 which reveals that 44.5 % variation in choosing different streams of secondary education is explained by predictor variables as highlighted in 4.4 table.

| Cox and Snell | .445 |
For each of the independent variables, I compared the effect of a certain category to a reference category. For gender, ‘female’ is the reference category and for location, rural area is the ‘reference category. For father’s academic qualification, fathers who are illiterate have been treated as the reference category. The parameters estimates of all categorical variables should be interpreted in relation to reference category.

Below table highlights the results of factors influencing students’ choice of streams. The first column gives the parameter estimates of a logistic regression for commerce stream. The second column gives the parameter estimates of a logistic regression for science stream. Arts stream has been taken as the reference category.

### 4.5 Multinomial logistic regression model of education choice regarding different streams in secondary education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Commerce vs. Arts</th>
<th>Science vs. Arts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Exp (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.869*</td>
<td>-6.062*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous academic achievement (Low=reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>1.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>2.360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s academic qualification (illiterate=reference)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below matric</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td>1.416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior secondary</td>
<td>1.289</td>
<td>3.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation and Post-graduation</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>2.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose present stream because of my own ability and interest in it</td>
<td>1.165***</td>
<td>3.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose present stream because of high income and employment prospect</td>
<td>2.136*</td>
<td>8.463</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at 1%, ** Significant at 5%, *** Significant at 10%*

Interpretation of the results is made through the values of the Exp (B). The values of the Exp (B) reveal that male students are six times more likely to opt for commerce stream as compared to female students.

Previous academic achievement is coming significant in case of science students and insignificant in case of commerce students when compared with the arts students. The value of Exp (B) highlights that high achievers are 37 times more likely to opt for science stream as compared to low achievers and medium achievers are 16 times more likely to opt for science as compared to low achievers.

Father’s academic qualification is coming as a significant variable in case of science students and insignificant in case of commerce students. Students whose father is graduate and post-
graduate are six times more likely to opt for science as compared to students whose father is illiterate as revealed by the value of Exp (B). Students whose father is senior secondary are seven times more likely to opt for science as compared to students whose father is illiterate as highlighted by the value of Exp (B) in above table.

Ability and interest is coming out as the pertinent factor which influence students’ selection of a particular stream and is coming significant in case of students who opted for commerce and science. The value of Exp (B) highlights that students who opted for commerce and science are three times more likely to choose the particular stream because of interest and ability in the particular stream as compared to other reasons.

Economic prospect has been found as the determining factor for selection of the particular stream. The value of Exp (B) highlights that students who considered employment prospect are eight times more likely to opt for commerce and science stream as compared to students who considered other reasons.

2.3 DISCUSSION

Employment prospect has been found as the most influential factor while selecting a particular stream by secondary level students. Therefore parents and students employ standard investment criteria by looking at the employment prospect of the particular course. This argument is well supported by Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) that when considering core benefits, students are not buying degrees; they are buying the benefits that a degree can provide in terms of employment, status and lifestyle, among others (Cited in Cubilllo, 2006, pp-104).

Another important factor which has been found is the interest in the particular course or stream which students consider. The finding of the present study is well supported by literature. Interest in a course topic or subject is often the driving force behind students’ enrollment in classes (e.g. Anderson et al., 2006, p.1311; Curran & Rosen, 2006, p. 145; Malgwi et al., 2005, p. 278; Smith et al., 2006, p. 4). A student’s perceived interest in a course is based on factors such as subject matter, topics, and major readings (Babad & Taybe, 2003, p. 391).

One of the important finding is that Gender is coming as a significant variable in case of commerce stream students when compared with the arts students. The finding of the present study is well supported by literature (Oakes,1990, Beyer, Mifflin.11 ABCD (2005), p.14.

The argument behind this choice has been highlighted in the World Bank Report (2011: xix) that: “...the housework burden on females ... limits their time for market work [and] allows them to engage only in productive activities compatible with their household duties” which limits their choice. Females are less likely to enroll in science and math classes compared to men, but more likely to enroll in English classes (Riegle-Crumb, Farkas, & Miller, p. 214; Tenenbaum, 2008, p. 454).

Previous academic achievement is coming as a significant variable in case of science students when compared with the arts students.

Parents’ academic qualification is coming as a significant variable in case of science students when compared with the arts students. The finding of the present study is consistent with the literature. The literature highlights that students whose parents are educated, they are having high aspiration for their children. Highly qualified fathers can adequately guide their children to the next step in succeeding in the college-educated workforce. Family involvement in the education of underserved students is restricted by limited resources, time, confidence, and language skills (A Shared Agenda, 2004).

3 CONCLUSION

In this particular study, different factors have been found which influence students, regarding choice of particular stream at secondary level of education. Future employment, income and interest in the particular stream have been found as the most influential factors regarding student’s selection of particular stream.

More study needs to be carry out to better understand the complex relationship between the multidimensional construct of factors influencing the students choice for particular stream at secondary level of education.

REFERENCES