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Factors Associated with Subjects' Selection Among Secondary School Students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Abstract

Subjects' selection for secondary school students is an important activity. This study investigated factors associated with subjects' selection of secondary level students. Objectives of the study were: finding out factors associated with subjects' selection of secondary school students and developing recommendations for appropriate subjects' selection. The design of the study was quantitative. The population was 30439 students. A sample of 380 was made through a simple random procedure. A questionnaire was developed as a tool for collecting data. The tool was self-used for data collection, and the data were analyzed with mean scores and a test of chi-square. The factors associated with students' subject selection were found to be parents, guardians, teachers, and siblings. Students' personal characteristics and outcomes of careers were also associated with the selection of subjects. Career guidance facilities for subject selection were recommended. Further orientation seminars were needed at the beginning of new sessions to assist students in subject selection.

Keywords: Factors, Associated, Subjects' Selection, Secondary School, Students

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Title

Factors Associated with Subjects' Selection Among Secondary School Students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

Subjects' selection for secondary school students is an important activity. This study investigated factors associated with subjects' selection of secondary level students. Objectives of the study were: finding out factors associated with subjects' selection of secondary school students and developing recommendations for appropriate subjects' selection. The design of the study was quantitative. The population was 30439 students. A sample of 380 was made through a simple random procedure. A questionnaire was developed as a tool for collecting data. The tool was self-used for data collection, and the data were analyzed with mean scores and a test of chi-square. The factors associated with students' subject selection were found to be parents, guardians, teachers, and siblings. Students' personal characteristics and outcomes of careers were also associated with the selection of subjects. Career guidance facilities for subject selection were recommended. Further orientation seminars were needed at the beginning of new sessions to assist students in subject selection.

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Keywords:

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Introduction

The National Educational Policy of 2009, termed the secondary level of education, is a crucial phase of education that is aimed at equipping students with skills for work, education, and successful living in society. This is the time of life in which students go for the selection of school subjects, and

this paves the way for the careers of students in the future. The policy further recommends the establishment of career guidance intervention facilities to facilitate students in the selection of subjects appropriate for them. According to Wright (2005), the selection of subjects brings students to the practical world of professions, and they develop



skills for entering into the expected professions. In view of Swift (2009), the selection of students' subjects in secondary school can be linked to numerous factors like personal, socio-cultural situations, and career opportunities, which in turn, may open or close career opportunities for the young students. Kerka (2000) found the personality, aptitudes, interests, environment, habitus, and demographics of society and family as determiners for students' subject selection at the secondary level.

On the same note, Ahmad et al. (2023) noted that personal capabilities, the interaction between students and their socio-cultural societal factors, contributed greatly to the way students make their choices on the subjects of study at the secondary level. Salami (2008) asserts that the choice of subjects by the students is the result of the likes and dislikes of their parents as well as self-interests, performance, and material attainments, among others. A study done by Edwards and Quinter (2011) brought out personality, socio-demographic environment, family, peers, and schooling and career outcomes as key factors that influenced the choice of subjects for secondary school students. Similarly, Osakinle and Adegoroye (2008) found socio-cultural background, geography, and fellows at school and family context as the most important factors that influenced the choices of the subjects among students. Kiani (2010) indicated that, in the secondary education sector in Pakistan, there are many issues such as the personality of students, their parents and families, socio-economic and social backgrounds, and career influence subjects' selection of students.

At the secondary level, various studies have underlined the impact of personality on the choice of subjects by students (Jehan & Nawaz, 2023). Kiani (2010) determined that personalities affect the selection of the subjects by students. His research also indicated that the interests as well as the aptitude of the students influence their selection of subjects. In a similar manner, Barret (2009) emphasized the impact of personality on the process of selecting the subjects at this level of education. Obinu and Ebunu (2010) indicated that the personal traits and views about self and interests of the students emerged among the key factors that influenced the choice of subjects for students of schools. Gasser et al. (2004) proved that

students whose ambitions and expectations in life were high selected medicine and engineering as the most prestigious professions, differed in personality traits, aptitudes, and interests as compared to the rest of the students at the secondary schools, and in light of that, they made the selection of their subjects. Roe (2006) discovered the use of the personalities and self-concept of the students in the determination of the subjects selected by the students. Having in mind the importance of various factors in the selection of subjects for secondary school students, the research study aimed to carry out research on factors related to the selection of school subjects among secondary level students.

Literature Review

Parents and family are important factors in the choice of students' subjects in secondary schools (Khan et al., 2023). These give them opportunities as well as insight into the profession they may end up doing in the future, and this influences the kind of subjects their children choose to take up (Kniveton, 2004). The parental, motivational, financial, and guidance assistance in designing the future career aspirations of the children is also provided by the parents and families. Through them, only the future career prospects of the children are validated or discredited, and based on them, the students make choices of subjects (Salami, 2007). Kiani (2010) determined the important role of parents and family, and that of fathers as well, in choosing subjects of study among the students in Pakistani secondary schools. In secondary schools, the determination of subjects to be taken by students largely depends on family, Rauf (2013) reported, and hence, he urged parents to fully recognize that they are the key players in determining the subjects to study by the children. As mentioned by Cannan (2008), the students enjoy full contact with the parents and the individuals in the family; hence, they would be of great assistance and reliable in giving advice on what subjects to pick in schools. Kisilu et al. (2012) identified the fact that parents, family, and siblings (in particular) had a role in the decision of the subjects for students at the secondary schools. The effect of mothers and older sisters in the selection of subjects for female students was also established in the study. Students of educated parents had chosen to study in prestigious subjects compared to

other students with uneducated parents (Fergusson & Woodward, 2000).

In secondary schools, decisions of students on the subjects of study are influenced substantially by the school, teachers, school fellows, and career guides (Siraji et al., 2023). As observed by Kisilu et al. (2012), class fellows and teachers were some of the people who influenced the subjects that students chose. As reported by Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006), just as parents are, the teachers are the major players in the choice of students' subjects. Kniveton (2004) pointed out that the teacher is a resource person who guides students on the choice of school subjects, according to his or her interests, aptitudes, and projected career prospects. Murtaza and Shifa (2012) stated that teachers represent an important source of career guidance for students, and they assist them in the choice of subjects in school, and they also act as role models in the future career progression of students. In his study, Swift (2009) identified career guides or counselors in schools as a great source enshrined in the development of correct subject choice for students at the secondary level. Kiani (2010) proved that the lack of guidance and services of trained career guides is evident in most of the secondary schools in Pakistan; as a result, informal career guidance services are given to the pupils in these schools by the teachers to choose the school subjects. According to Mutekwe et al (2011), the school friends were discovered to have influenced the choice of students' subjects. According to a report, interaction of students in school with other classmates and other schoolmates works positively for students in the choice of subjects (Singaravelu et al., 2005).

In secondary schools, peers and friends play an important role in the subjects chosen by the students (Kniveton, 2004). According to a study, Swift (2009) discovered that peers and friends can be a rich source of information in making decisions on courses to pursue, career choices, and professional college admission processes. They have a good relationship with their fellow students who are friends and always enjoy the luxury of acting on their advice for selecting the subjects of study in school. Based on the findings of Olamide and Salami (2013), the peers were found to be critical in the development of procedures in the selection of subjects by students. Payne (2003)

exposed that peers and friends provide competition to students in the secondary level, and this influences the choice of subjects.

Denga (2004) found that the issue of the socio-economic status and the life responsibilities allotted to students within the society shapes the selection of subjects for secondary school students. According to Obinu and Ebunu (2010), the selection of the subjects is determined by socio-economic status and position in the society, leading to the selection of subjects for students in schools. Students usually select those subjects in which they see good income, power, and honor by adopting certain professions in the future (Mutekwe et al., 2011; Thachenkery, 2010).

Sutherland (2008) pointed out that the selection of the subjects depends on the job market and career opportunities. The job market is nowadays so competitive that it cannot accommodate an increasing number of graduates (Salami, 2004). Salami (2007) brought out that job-related characteristics such as the financial returns, position, and leisure options have a profound influence on the choice of subjects by students. According to Moy and Lee (2002), qualities of jobs in the market are some of the major factors that determine subjects' selection at the secondary level among students. As career opportunities, status, promotion, and leisure, Agarwala (2008) discovered them to be very important issues among those that influence the choice of students' subjects. It is concluded that personal, educational, familial, and environmental factors are associated with the selection of students' subjects at the secondary level; therefore, the research was conducted to investigate the associated factors with the selection of students' subjects at the secondary level in the school of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Methodology

The design of the study was quantitative for the investigation of factors associated with the selection of students in secondary schools. The study's population was 30439 students getting education in government schools of Swat, KP, Pakistan. A sample of 380 was fixed with Raosoft online calculator and selected using a simple random sampling procedure. A questionnaire for associated factors of subjects' selection among students of secondary schools was developed. It

was validated with the help of experts. Then it was piloted, and reliability was found to be 0.820. It was appropriate for the study according to Law (2004). Self-administration of the tool was made for collecting data, and the data were analyzed using

SPSS and applying statistics of mean scores, standard deviation, and chi-square. Research ethical principles were acted upon.

Results

Table 1

Associated Factors of Students' Subject Selection

Statements	Number	Mean	S. D	χ^2	P
Parents	380	4.42	.85	87.09	.000
Personal Qualities	380	3.88	.46	56.34	.000
Teachers	380	3.69	.83	43.57	.000
Counselors	380	2.53	.76	57.34	.000
Friends	380	3.58	.47	68.67	.000
Socio-cultural	380	1.43	.39	85.96	.000
Economic	380	1.67	.63	67.64	.000
Outcomes of Career	380	3.82	.91	35.05	.000
Others	380	1.32	.17	64.44	.000

Table 1 highlights the associated factors of students' subject selection in secondary schools. The mean scores of 4.42, 3.88, 3.82, 3.69, and 3.58 demonstrated that students agreed that parents, qualities of personality, outcomes of career, friends, and teachers were associated factors with the selection of their subjects. The chi-square test proved the findings as significant. This established parents, qualities of personalities, outcomes of careers, friends, and teachers as associated factors with the selection of schools' subjects among secondary school students.

Discussions

The study found that parents, qualities of personalities, outcomes of careers, friends, and teachers are associated factors with the selection of schools' subjects among secondary school students. Parents understand their children well and also their qualities, and consider these in the selection of subjects for them. Personal qualities make students eligible for the study of different subjects. Similarly, teachers and friends also understand students and help in the selection of school subjects for them. Similarly, outcomes of a career like income, image, and power also play their role in the selection of students' subjects. The findings

of the study are in line with the findings that in secondary schools, decisions of students on the subjects of study are influenced substantially by the school, teachers, school fellows, and career guides (Siraji et al., 2023). Similarly, Elizabeth (2012) established a strong influence of the environment in school, teachers, career guidance individuals, and other students in determining the decision-making of subjects for the students. Also, as observed by Kisilu et al. (2012), class fellows and teachers were some of the people who influenced the subjects that students chose. Also, as reported by Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006), just as parents, the teachers are the major players in the choice of students' subjects. Similarly, Kniveton (2004) pointed out that the teacher is a resource person who guides students on the choice of school subjects, according to his or her interests, aptitudes, and projected career prospects. Murtaza and Shifa (2012) also stated that teachers represent an important source of career guidance for students, and they assist them in the choice of subjects in school, and they also act as role models in the future career progression of students. In his study, Swift (2009) also identified career guides or counselors in schools as a great source enshrined in the development of correct subject choice for

students at the secondary level. Kiani (2010) also proved that the lack of guidance and services of trained career guides is evident in most of the secondary schools in Pakistan; as a result, informal career guidance services are given to the pupils in these schools by the teachers to choose the school subjects. Likewise, according to Mutekwe et al (2011), the school friends were discovered to have influenced the choice of students' subjects. Also, according to a report by Singaravelu et al. (2005), interaction of students in school with other classmates and other schoolmates works positively for students in the choice of subjects. Similarly, in secondary schools, peers and friends play an important role in the subjects chosen by the students (Kniveton, 2004). Likewise, according to a study, Swift (2009) discovered that peers and friends can be a rich source of information in making decisions on courses to pursue, career choices, and professional college admission processes. They have constant contact and communication with each other, for the selection of subjects, and normally go for the selection of courses with the approval and confirmation of friends. Based on the findings of Olamide and Salami (2013), who also found that the peers were critical in the development of procedures in the selection of subjects by students. In a similar vein, Payne (2003) exposed that peers and friends provide competition to students in the secondary level, and this influences the choice of subjects.

Conclusion

The study concluded that parents, qualities of personalities, outcomes of careers, friends, and teachers are associated factors with the selection of schools' subjects among secondary school students. Parents understand their children well and also their qualities, and consider these in the selection of subjects for them. Personal qualities make students eligible for the study of different subjects. Similarly, teachers and friends also understand

students and help in the selection of school subjects for them. Similarly, outcomes of a career, like income, image, and power, also play their role in the selection of students' subjects. This is a contribution to the establishment of guidance strategies to help assist the students of this level in making subject choices that are better for them.

Recommendations

On the basis of the objectives and findings of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded to assist secondary school students in making the selection of proper subjects in schools:

1. Career guidance may be provided to students in secondary schools to assist them in the selection of proper subjects of their interests and aptitudes.
2. Schools and homes need to collaborate, and teachers and parents need to communicate for the proper selection of subjects at the beginning of the academic session of secondary schools.
3. Teacher education and professional development interventions may be strengthened to equip teachers with the skills of effective guidance for selecting students' subjects in secondary schools.
4. Library, digital technologies, and social media may be utilized for the guidance of students in relation to the selection of courses for study in secondary schools.

Areas for further research

1. Future studies are needed in tertiary educational institutions for making the selection of disciplines.
2. The study may be replicated at the elementary level as well.
3. It may also be done in schools of the private sector.

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