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Entering Exits: Exploring the Career Path of Graduating Senior High School Students and Influential Factors

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Abstract

This research investigates the career paths chosen by Graduating Senior High School Students and the various factors that influence these decisions. The study addresses key issues such as the specific career preferences of these students, the factors shaping their choices, the impact of these factors, and the challenges they face in pursuing their careers. It also explores how students cope with these obstacles. The problem exists due to a combination of limited career guidance, socioeconomic factors, family expectations, and the evolving job market, which collectively create uncertainty and pressure for students making significant career decisions at a young age. The research addressed the questions by surveying one-hundred

(100) graduating seniors at Noveleta Senior High School and interviewing ten (10) of them to explore their career preferences, the factors influencing these choices, and the challenges they face. The findings revealed that students' preferred career path is college education. The result also shows that their career path preference are influenced by their interests, family expectations, and financial situations, with many balancing personal passions against economic realities. This research highlights the need for comprehensive career guidance that supports students in navigating both their aspirations and the practical challenges they encounter.

Keywords: Career Path, Education, Cavite

Introduction

K-12 curriculum has been established for the learners, to be ready for the real flow of life even without entering higher education. Senior high school is designed to provide students with the time to gain sufficient information and mastery of skills to equip them for higher education and future work (Balasbas 2021). One of the programs established by this is the Career Guidance Program. This program includes the curriculum exits of the students which determine the learners' career path preference whether it is a college education, employment, entrepreneurship, or middle-level skill development. Given this, career guidance becomes an essential component of student growth since it seeks to assist them in making improved professional and academic choices using greater insight (Cabral & Abanto, 2020) ^[18].

Curriculum exits are one of the utmost priorities of graduating senior high school the Graduating students. Many students struggle to find their preferred career path they can choose whether they continue their studies in college, or start working (employment). Start a business (Entrepreneurship), or start enhancing their middle-level skill (middle-level skill development). According to Arimbay & Veloso (2023) ^[5], the term "curriculum exit" describes the doorways to chances that the students are going to pass through following their career choice. The primary objective is to increase student awareness of How and where to go after graduating from senior high school. In addition, making a career choice while in senior high school is crucial for graduating students from school to take as a lifetime goal (Arimbay & Veloso 2023 ^[5]; Georgia Career Information Center 2013).

As students struggle to find their preferred career choice after they graduate from senior high school many influential factors can affect their way of picking their career path. According to the study by Duku *et al.* (2020), some of the influential factors that affect students' career choices are prospects for employment and high-income expectations. This can support the study of Dzikiri & Maknun (2022) ^[29] the most influential factor affecting the career choice of the students is the family factor which includes the family's economic condition, and their parents' preference. When the family's economic condition is low the students will choose to look for a high-paying job for their family.

In addition, Adams (2021)^[2] dives into the complex tapestry of personal fulfillment, emphasizing the finding of passion as a critical factor in career decision-making. This feeling is consistent with the findings of Johnson and Smith (2020), who strongly support following one's passion as a guiding factor in career aspirations. The quest for personal fulfillment emerges as a repeating theme in the maze of employment options, imbuing the decision-making process with a feeling of purpose and alignment with core aspirations.

According to Nazareno *et al.* (2021)^[52], parental influence and personal choice are crucial elements. Sociodemographic factors including gender, age, place of birth, number of siblings, and family income per month have a slightly positive correlation with the SHS track/strand decision. Even though it mentioned the factors influencing the career path of the senior high school student the researcher found that they did not mention the four career paths of the graduating senior high school. The researcher finds that the career path should also be focused in the study.

Cabanias (2021)^[17] Stated that there is still a significant gap in understanding the dynamics of employment choices among senior high school students, particularly in rural public schools in the eastern Philippines. This study seeks to bridge this gap by shedding light on the factors that influence career choices among senior high school students in rural areas, as well as providing insights for students, parents, and school administrators to assist them in making more informed decisions and planning for their future careers. This study intends to add to the existing literature by delving into the complexity of professional decision-making among senior high school students and analyzing the ramifications for their academic futures. It will also offer practical suggestions for strengthening career development techniques in educational settings.

To further emphasize the students' career path preferences, this study aims to determine the factors that influence graduating senior high students. This study also aims to know what the preferred career paths of graduating senior high school students are. This study will explain how graduating senior high students choose their career path and how the factors influence their career exit choice.

The researcher will use descriptive methods to determine the preferred career path of the graduating senior high school. The researcher will also use thematic analysis to know the influential factors affecting their career path preference. The researcher will explain the preferred career path and the factors influencing it in this study.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to determine the preferred career path of the graduating senior high school students of Noveleta Senior High School. Specifically, it aims to (1) determine the career path of the graduating senior high school students; (2) to know what factors influence the career path of the senior

high school students; (3) why the graduating students choose that curriculum exit as their career path; (4) the challenges they encounter while pursuing their career choice; and (4) how do they cope on those challenges.

Methods and Materials

The research will use a mixed method research design called sequential explanatory design where the research will explain the factors influencing the career path preference of the graduating senior high school students in Noveleta Senior High School. According to George (2023), sequential exploratory design is where the researchers get the quantitative data first and then it will be followed by the qualitative data collection and analysis. This will help the researchers to determine the preferred career path of the graduating senior high school students.

For the Quantitative data, the research will use descriptive as the research design. According to McCombes (2023), using descriptive design will help to answer the research questions asking the questions what, where, when, and how. Using this design will help the researcher to know what the preferred career path of the graduating students is. This design will also help the research what are the factors influencing the career path of the graduating senior high school students.

For the Qualitative data, the researcher will use the case study design as the research design of this study. According to McCombes (2023), using a case study design the researcher wants to obtain thorough, relevant, and visible information on a particular topic. It enables you to investigate the case's important characteristics, interpretations, and effects. This design is appropriate for this study since the researcher wants to determine the effects of the factors that influence the career path of graduating senior high school students. This design will help the researcher to answer the question of how the factors influence the graduating students on their preferred career path.

The researcher will use purposive sampling as the sampling technique in this study as defined by Nikolopoulou (2023)^[53] purposive sampling refers to a collection of non-probability sampling methods where groups are chosen based on the qualities that are required in the sample being collected. Put differently, purposive sampling involves the "on purpose" selection of units. In employing this sampling technique, the researcher will determine the influential factors of the career path of graduating senior high school students.

This research will gather one hundred (100) graduating students to determine the career path preference of the students and its influential factors. After getting the data the researcher will invite ten (10) students who answered the survey to answer the interview questionnaire that the researcher prepared for the qualitative data.

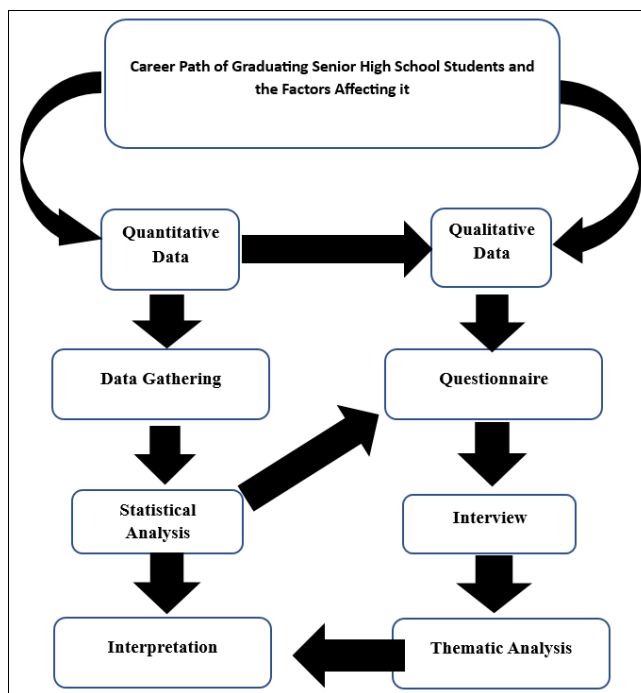


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

The figure above shows the conceptual framework of the study. The researcher will use a sequential explanatory design to gather the data from quantitative to qualitative. The researcher will start to gather quantitative data and gather its statistical analysis to determine the factors affecting the career path of the graduating students. Then the researcher will use this to make the appropriate questionnaire for the qualitative data. The researcher will interpret this data using thematic analysis

The researcher will analyze the data using descriptive methods to describe the preferred career path and its influential factors. The researcher will use a percentage and frequency distribution table to determine the preferred career path of the graduating students and the influential factors affecting it. According to Turney (2023) [76], the occurrence rate of an amount is the total number of times it occurs in a set of data. The frequency distribution of a variable is its pattern of frequencies. It is the number at which a variable appears in a dataset at every possible value. The researcher will use thematic analysis as its qualitative data analysis. This will determine how influential the factors are on the graduating student's career path and how they cope with the challenges they face when determining their preferred career path. According to Caulfield (2023) is an approach to qualitative data analysis. Usually, it is used for a collection of documents, such as recordings or interviews. To find recurring themes, topics, concepts, and patterns of meaning the researcher carefully investigates the data.

After the responses were analyzed, the conclusions and summary were formed to support the study's quantitative findings. The conclusions formed with two quantitative and qualitative phases provided even firmer results and a more comprehensive understanding of the career path preference of graduating senior high school students and its influential factors

Results and Discussion

This study section discusses the acquired results from the gathered data. This was divided into two-part analysis and

discussion sequential-explanatory design. Wherein the quantitative data will be collected and analyzed first before the qualitative data. The quantitative data are computed through Microsoft excel and discuss the descriptive analysis of the data. Followed by the qualitative data that undergoes the thematic analysis process to explain further and strengthen the results.

Table 1: Curriculum Exits

Curriculum exit	Frequency	percentage	rank
College Education	66	66%	1
Employment	8	8%	3
Entrepreneurship/ Business	6	6%	4
Middle-Level Skills Development	10	10%	2
None in any of the curriculum exits	10	10%	2
Total	100		

Table 1 shows the different curriculum exits that the graduating students can choose. The result shows that the graduating students' preference for choosing a career path is a college education that has been chosen by (66%) of the graduating students of Noveleta senior high school. This indicates that the students preferred to continue their learning through higher education. This supports the claim of Manuga *et al*, (2022) [46] which shows that college education is the most important to graduating students.

This shows despite the challenges the student face through their senior high school journey they have a strong desire to continue their career to higher education. No matter how influential the factors are to their career path the students will strive for more in higher education. This result shows that the graduating senior high school students is most likely to go to college. During the qualitative stage, the researcher finds out the reason *why they chose that curriculum exit*. First is because of their *personal preference and fulfilling their dreams*. According to Lent and Brown (2022), personal choice is important to the cognitive psychology principles, thorough evaluations, and preparedness for career interruptions to facilitate long-term career choices in

the face of unforeseen circumstances. This shows how important the personal choice of the students in choosing their career path with help of it the students can be prepared for their career path in the future. Most of the respondent response that they preferred that career path and they want to fulfill their dream. Respondents 4 said, *“College education. Because as a g12 student college is the next journey. For me, in college education, I will encounter more problems that I know will be a way to more strengthen me to continue my studies so can **achieve my dreams**, after college I know, I will have a better and good job for me. Also, in a college education because this was the biggest part of education will be the key to our success in the future”*. In addition, respondent 5 stated, *“The reason why I chose this career path is because it’s my **personal choice** to study in college and I want to pursue my college. In the course Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education Major in English because I want to work in school and I was inclined to my plan in my life. I want to be a teacher to strengthen the knowledge of the children of the next generation”*. In another situation, respondent 7 said, *“My first reason for choosing this career path is because I pursue to go in college and university also to achieve my dream as a future psychologist, lawyer or any jobs under in government or public service. **It is my interest to enter college because it’s my dream”**”*.

Table 2: Factors influencing the career path of the students

Influential Factors	Frequency	percentage	rank
Personal choice	89	42.38%	1
Influence of parents or relatives	24	11.43%	2
Peer influence	11	5.24%	6
Prospect for employment in the future	23	10.95%	3
Status or prestige of being a college graduate	14	6.67%	5
Opportunity for employment abroad	15	7.14%	4
No particular choice or no better idea	9	4.29%	7
Inspired by a role model	2	0.95%	11
Financial constraints	6	2.86%	9
No available college or university in our place	4	1.90%	10
was not accepted in my preferred college course	2	0.95%	11
lack of interest in pursuing college or other training	7	3.33%	8
Attractive work and compensation	2	0.95%	11
Attractive opportunity to earn health condition	1	0.48%	12
	1	0.48%	12

This table shows the influential factors affecting students' preference in picking college education as their curriculum exit. The result shows that the most influential factor influencing students in choosing their career path is personal choice (42.38%), this shows that most of the graduating students in Noveleta Senior High School mostly chose their career path because they want to do it and they have a personal interest in it. This result supports the claim of Lent & Brown (2020) who propose the importance of personal career choice when planning the career path of students. This was followed by the influence of parents or relatives (11.43%) which shows that the influence of parents or relatives is still crucial for choosing the career paths of the students. Since the parents are the ones who are always on the side of the students their influence to the career path preference of the students cannot be denied. According to

Vautero *et al.* (2021) family values, expectations, and support indirectly influence students' career choice implementation through perceived environmental supports or barriers and self-efficacy. This supports the claim of Hoang & Huy (2021) identified that family influences such as Self-Interests, Self-Outcome Expectations, University Gains, and References affect students' workplace choices. Many graduating students choose college education as their career path after graduation. One of the reasons why they chose this path was because of the **prospect of employment in the future** (10.95%). this support the claim of respondent 3, *“I am choosing to go to college because having a **degree is almost always required to earn a job**. Unfortunately, people without degrees are discriminated against. Moreover, my parents want me to pursue college, as I'd assume most parents do. I also see it as a goal for myself: An achievement to hopefully look back on. If I do go to the college I'm aiming for, I believe I would enjoy it very much”*. This shows that the students want to pursue a college education because they can get a proper job when they graduate. This supports the research of Ganiyeva & Pfeifer (2020)^[32] career opportunities mean a set of internal resources for the individual and management of these resources which can be obtained when you have a certificate of your college education. Furthermore, while pursuing their career path there is always a barrier or challenges the students will face. As one of the factors affecting, the students' career path **financial constraints** (2.86%) is one of the challenges students face as stated by respondent 1, *“The most hindrance to me was our financial status that is the reason why I can't pursue my college so I need to look for a job. I was also very pressured since most of them need a college degree”*. In the other situation, respondent 4 said, *“I have encountered many problems like **financial problems** plus the project that need to be passed early. Plus the work that should be passed as soon as possible. Also, there are so many activities that my friends always ask me to go out with them so I need to think about what should I do”*. In addition, respondent 5 said, *“In choosing my career path **the most challenging to me was financial**, especially since im just a senior high schooler. I don't have any budget, especially on going to college plus I'm also an introvert there are so many public speaking to also the struggle to transition from being a high schooler to a college student”*. To overcome these challenges there are countermeasure the graduating students do like, **Trusting oneself**, as stated by respondent 5, *“The financial problem there is no choice but to rely on my parents and I look for some scholarship that can offer in my place. For me being an introvert, I start to go out of my comfort zone, I join to some extracurricular activities so I can get used to public speaking. **My friends also helping me and my teachers to gain self-confidence**. I give myself the importance of improving my communication skills. I will overcome these challenges because of my determination, with the help of my family, and friend”*. In addition, respondent 6 said, *“I overcame it by **trusting myself more** and learning more about this career. I trusted my own capabilities and I told myself that I am willing to learn about everything about what i chose or what I will choose in the future”*. **Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses** will make them break the barrier that hindering them in pursuing their career path. As respondent 7 said, *“I think when I understand my strength and weaknesses and the day I decided to pursue a college education. **I overcome**”*

my weakness because I get the motivation to do my best to go to college". In addition, respondent 9 said, "*The way I cope on my challenges was face it on and try to overcome it with my help of my friends and love ones since I don't want to disappoint them, I do my best to overcome the challenges my weaknesses it makes it my strength in the future*". **Time management** is one of the best ways to cope is managing the time properly as respondent 2 said, "**Time management, because, here's the thing. If you can't manage properly all the task or jobs you have, all the stress on that piled of job was risen up.** You can't think properly, feel lazy even if you have enough sleep... Also, determination, focus on your goals in life, and put effort in and always tap yourself to continue even if you're having a challenge. That is my secret to cope with my problems". The least influential factors that affect the career path of the student are Attractive opportunity to earn, and health condition (0.48%) which shows that despite they don't have much financial just to pursue their dream they will choose what career path they want even when they are having a bad health condition if it does not affect their way to choose a path, they are going to choose what they want.

Conclusion

To conclude the result of this research I shows that the students are positively facing their struggles and overcome it. The Noveleta Senior High School graduating students can be ready on their future endeavour. Because they can face the challenges and overcome it so they can fulfil their career goal. Overcoming the challenges no matter how hard it is this research will conclude that the graduating students are very strong willed and can faces any hardships they can get throughout their career journey.

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