

Study on Understanding Stream Choices of High School Students in Relation to Career Aspirations and Academic Stress in Pilani, Rajasthan India.

A Research Paper presented by:

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(India)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major: Social Policy for Development

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The Hague, The Netherlands
November 2023

Disclaimer:

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BET - Birla Education Trust

CBSE - Central Board of Education

BSP - Birla School Pilani

CISCE - Council of Indian School Certificate Examination

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, I would like to thank supreme personality of godhead KRSNA for being my support and strength for the successful completion of this thesis. Thank you, God, for being my determination and perseverance for carrying out my 1st primary data collection in such short duration of time.

I would extend my heartfelt thanks to the families I have been blessed here with who hold me up when I was falling down and gave me strength to keep moving when it looked tough to me. Special mention to Mrs. Radha manna whom I lovingly call my mother here, she has been a strong pillar of support from bringing food to me so that I don't go hungry to listen to my difficulties, her loving presence was always there.

It is very important to mention Mrs Manpreet as well who has been my elder sister here who gave me guidance to work effectively and lifted my spirits whenever I felt stuck about work or the weather pulled me down, she is an inherent part of this journey. Thank you.

The completion of this work owes its dues to the supportive people from ISS beginning with my supervisor Dr. Irene Van Stavaren and second reader Dr. Arul Chib, your timely feedback and continues guidance has helped me shape this work and bring it in its present form today.

I cannot miss to thank dear Luke and Asha at the reception who always listened to whatever I had to say and made me laugh through this journey by their constant presence.

Lastly, I would like to thank with my whole heart my mother, elder sister Varnita and my brother Devansh who has been pillar of support and strength silently for always praying for me to make me laugh when I cried.

Thank you for taking the burn of all my frustrations during the process, I am grateful to be blessed with you all.

This acknowledgement won't be complete without mentioning my most dearest cows and their blessings back home, they are my inspiration to work for an impact in a good way and the farm animals near my home here, their single hug eased me every time I felt lost.

Much love and respect for all.

ABSTRACT

Education helms at top for the social development of any country and the alignment of educational interests and skills of senior secondary students is of prime importance to have them opt for a career aligned with their educational qualification. This research tries to contribute in probing the reasons for the stream choices of the students who have recently entered into secondary education and what needful actions can be taken for helping students take an informed decision for the stream choice. The research is based on theoretical framework of familial background, social reputation, comparative and competitive mentality, intellectual and superiority bias with meritocracy. The mixed method approach is used to understand the stream choices, academic expectations, career aspirations and destressing mechanisms for the students from both science and commerce stream with the help of an questionnaire for 50 participants and semi structured interviews for 10 participants. The results show that students have freedom in making their choices about stream choices but students express lack of career counselling facility in the school and explain that its needed. Interestingly the results show that parents extend support to choice of their children but the idea of social reputation is an impediment that may push parents to intervene in the choices of their children to alter it. Although the results cannot be generalised but it will be good to address the issue of developing programs for effective career counselling for the students in school on a regular basis giving access to them post their middle school completion and also keeping the needs of students in centre while designing motivational programs such as aradhana.

RELEVANCE TO DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Education is the basis to understand and resolve the developmental issues that any society faces and to curate the education specialization of the students to their interest is very important for high school students. The stream choice at the level of high school also impacts the field of study specialization for the students in graduate program of the university. The structure of education system in Indian context clubs together certain sets of subjects in one particular stream and there is no possibility to choose across different streams hence its relevant to understand the reasons for the stream choice of the students and work on their needs to make an informed decision.

KEYWORDS

Stream choices, career aspirations, academic expectations, destressing mechanisms, social reputation, familial background, interest, education.

INTRODUCTION

This research topic wants to understand the choices of students from the lens of exploratory research after their secondary school graduation on the choice of their field of specialization. The study was conducted in Birla school Pilani, Rajasthan, India as there can be seen the differences in the enrolment of students in different study streams and the main research question will be about trying to understand the how the choices of students are formulated by their social- educational and economic thoughts of their , parents and communities and how their choices are linked to their future aspirations in their further careers. . The research topic wants to dig deeper into the rationale behind these choices and what are the external effects such as influence but what are the inherent causes that makes student choose any stream., I will try to look is it pressure from parents, is it competition among peers, is it lack of information about various well-paying career options other than popular engineering and medical careers or is it fear of not choosing out of herd mentality option as it appears more risk taking as compared to other stable options(Yasmeen 1985, Kumar 1984) . socio-economic status, social reputation and influence of parental education has also been the focus area of the research in field of study stream choices. (Jansari and Kumar, 1999).

Giving in external pressures often leads to stress in managing the choice and here as well we will try to see if students choose stream out of their own choice or not and if that choice brings stress in their academic life and if it brings stress what coping mechanisms do students take to and how does it help them and what are the views of the students about mediation as a tool for managing stress .

As per Sanskrit verse “Tamsa Ma Jyotirgamyā” education is a tool to go away from the darkness of ignorance towards the light of knowledge but today adolescent youths are facing the problems related to academic stress. The present senior secondary education system in India is focused on preparing students for examinations to get admissions into professional degree colleges as the aim is to develop a successful well-paying career and being productive human but in the race of running behind these careers the students get weighed down by heavy academic burden along with stress to manage it and the aspirations of well-paying career choices also may lead students to take up popular streams s which is stereotyped to give easy access to well-paying jobs(Ahluwalia 1988).

The problem of academic stress is on rise in Indian context especially for senior secondary high school students as with psychological and emotional changes they also have to deal with strong competitions in academics, high expectation of parents and self-imposed by society, unrealistic ambitions, limited opportunities and all these distressing factors lead the students into poor academic performance, lack of attention, somatic complaints and substance abuse without any active help solution that can blend in well with their academic life and give them emotional and mental support to deal with difficulties they face in their academic lives.(Baviskar et. el. 2013)

The thematic focus of the paper is to understand the intentions behind stream choices made by the students in highly reputed private senior secondary school and what helps in managing the stress that students face to manage the academic curriculum burden of the stream choice due to

quick and sudden change in the teaching pedagogy in the switch from secondary education to senior secondary level.

1.1 JUSTIFICATION

This research was conducted to understand the stream choices of high school students and what are the reasons for the choices of the students by understanding how students make the choices in relation to their career aspirations and what causes the stress to students and how they address it as we are trying to open up an avenue to discuss openly on the cause and cure of distress for students there by filling a research gap through this research.

Another justification for this research is that its first time such kind of research is being conducted with the students that I conducted it with and they acknowledged the importance on the emphasis of bringing the voice of research participants in this case students to the fore front and trying to know what difficulties they face while making a crucial academic decision such as stream choice that also has long term implications for the career aspirations for the students hence bringing out in light the reasons for the choices and avenues of support for the students are two prominent justifications for this research that I have tried to answer in this research through the research questions and the hypothesis that form the base of this study.

The relevance of this research for development studies is also significant as education is an important tool to move towards resolving the issues of the future and linking the stream choice to the interest is primary goal for the education to become a effective tool for the students to be empowered for themselves and for the marginalised in the society at large. Its important to address the research gap of having education that suits the goals, interests and skills of the students to achieve the desired outcome as education and social development is an interlinked nexus.

The literature will be focused on the previous research done about different stream choice trends in general over time and what are the reasons of the findings that are recorded in relation to ideas of stream choices

1.2 HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis is the theory formulated based on available literature related to the topic. The themes related to the stream choices of the students in high school are influenced vs informed choice, intelligence stereotypes and career stereotypes. The influenced vs informed choice is about the choices of students being influenced by ideas set as standard and normative by the society for their academic choices and the students align their choices with the norms because the social acceptance matters for the family whereas informed choice is more about individualistic behaviour which is beyond the external influences and the student is understood to be an rational being where they make decision on their understanding of their best interests, the students might consult with others before they make a decision but the responsibility for the decision is on the objective and informed thought process of the students to make a decision.

Intelligence stereotypes is related to understanding what kind of conformity is present in the decisions that students make for their stream choices and what are the individual thoughts of the students about intelligence stereotypes which is if science stream is tough than commerce stream

and where are these stereotypes stemming from. We will work on understanding this through qualitative data available for this study.

The career stereotypes are related to intelligence stereotypes in a subtle way that some careers are more popular than others possibly due to ideation that such careers have more economic benefits, social fame and reputation in the society which holds an important place in the Indian middle-class families culturally.

Through this research we will see and understand what aspects of the above mentioned hypothesis can be accounted by the data of the research and what aspects of the hypothesis are not relevant in the present scenario will be rejected out with the prove from the research findings.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What factors affect the stream choice of students in high school?
2. What stress coping mechanisms do students use to deal with academic stress?
3. What are the underlying causes of the transition in the stream choices with the influenced vs informed choice making hypothesis?
4. How does stream choice of students relate to pre conceived notions and intellectual bias in this study?

1.4 BACKGROUND

The main context of this research is to understand the stream choices of high school students and its relation to academic stress and career aspirations of the students. The study aims to delve into the factors that are involved into the stream choice of the students, do students experience academic stress and if so what are the reasons for it and what are the ideas of the career linked to the stream choices. The research wants to understand how economic and social status are one of the primary drivers for the different choices. Additionally the research is also trying to probe into what are the need of students to make more informed decisions relating to their stream choice and careers and what all processes are in place to manage the overall well-being of the students in the school where the study is being conducted as being a high ranked school it's important to analyse their well-being practices for the students to make education more holistic for the students.

BIRLA SCHOOL PILANI (BSP, Pilani henceforth) is a “higher secondary school” established in 1901. “The school was built as an all-boys residential senior secondary school. The school has residential setup for boys with about 5,000 enrolled students and staff of 120 teachers and additional support staff” (website1). The research will focus on the students on the secondary level as on this level students are transitioning in their education to higher secondary level and there are high chances of confusion and stress as they have to make the decision about the stream choice which is the basis for their further career specialization as well. It's also a formative step from where student make further choices about their academic life hence what values and goals they consider important in these decisions will be relevant for the study.

BSP, Pilani is a private school run by the Birla Education Trust (BET) where I want to conduct this study.” BSP is a senior secondary day school for boys which follows the central board of

education (CBSE) curriculum which is a national board across schools in India”.(website 2) As per the structure of this education system the students learn subject of natural science, mathematics, English, social science and Hindi until their secondary level. beyond the secondary level the students have to choose to more particular streams of science(Physics, Chemistry, Maths and Biology), and commerce stream(Accounts, Business Studies, Economics).for the background of the study its relevant to look into the viewpoints of different authors. (S.Sonali,2018) suggests that “The students have to choose any one stream and these choices are highly biased based on various stereotypes based on job opportunities, scope of study stream and intellectual capabilities of students as the students with higher intellect are suggested to take science and students with average or below average intellect are suggested for arts or commerce streams and these biases reflect various problems in relation to education and holistic development of students.”

The ideas suggested by the author above makes it important to investigate the underlying issues related to stream choice and how students access information about their academic interest to make a relevant choice and if there is lack of a systematic approach for the students to clear any confusions that the students might have in relation to their choice. The education is a means to reach the end goal of earning money to have a strong financial position which is related to what career prospects an individual has which is linked to the stream choices which may be effected by the pre-conceived notions and stereotypes present in the society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Few of the studies in this domain suggest that social reputation of the students plays a prominent role in the decision making additional to the influences by the parents, social reputation, , type of labour market jobs availability, social networks and the socio-economic conditions of the family of students. To highlight the main concepts that will build the theoretical framework of this study will be family, school, social class and gender differentiation in relation to the choices that students make choosing streams in higher education and is there high amount of disparity in different choices.

Mukhopadhyay, Seymour, and Dury (2019, pp 53-82) discuss that in India family plays a crucial role in educational decisions and the place of residence and neighbourhood also plays a vital role in shaping the decision.

Nitin Joseph and Aneesha Nallapati(2020) indicated that worrying about future and poor self-esteem was independently associated with academic stress among students. students adopted more of unhealthy means of coping with academic stress. Therefore, they need to be educated regarding the healthy coping methods.”

Yahya and Ismail (2011, pp 190-196) “Parents' support influences their children's education development because parents not only have influence in allowing their children to choose courses in school but also the family history will influence the tendency of the students in choosing certain field or courses.

Ceka and Murati (2016 pp 61-64) research showed that during early child age, parents serve as the most important motivation factor in their children's lives and this includes career decisions. The educational background of parents can also have an impact on the choice the students in relation to their career.”

Keller and Whiston (2008, pp 198-217) The two important factors that influence the career choice of students are parental career expectations which can have effect regarding educational and occupational goals. Second is parental support which involves modelling desired behaviours, encouragement and enthusiastic backing of choice made by the child by financial means.

(Alam and Forhad, 2021 pp 310-331) While primary education delivers basic knowledge, secondary education offers relatively in-depth knowledge in the areas of arts, business, and science.

Cuadra and Monero (2005) These areas are often called academic disciplinary streams or clusters most developed countries adhere to an open system or elective model in secondary provision, allowing secondary students the opportunity to study a range of subjects from different streams.

Alam and Forhad (2021 pp 310-331) argued that the open system offers a liberal journey through study and on to work life. Unfortunately, many developing countries, and particularly the former British colonies, follow a rigid system which is described as the “clustering system.”

Xi Lin, Shu Su and Alyssa McElwain (2019 pp 1134-1154) indicated that students’ academic self-confidence, confidence for success in their future career, and confidence in making the right academic decisions influence their intentions to actively master the knowledge.

Abhirami and Dharshini (2017 pp 18-23) in their study claimed that stress is important to understand as the students give highest importance to their welfare. He also concluded that the education system is more to do with the academic qualifications and does not contribute enough to the holistic development of students.

Love, P.G and Love A.G (1995) mediation is becoming a widely used tool to combat academic stress and its all the more relevant in 21st century because education is viewed more as a holistic process of learning that wants education as a process of academic, emotional, social, ethical and spiritual learning.

As per Owosu et al., (2018 pp 992-1008) the career decisions are made within socio economic factors that include cultural factors, personal factors, significant relationships in society and structural factors, moreover the academic choice of students alter based on their contexts.

Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994 pp 79-122) highlights that trait and factor theory shows that preferences of individuals to gain maximum satisfaction from work life balance based on their interests and capabilities determine their career choices.

Al- Suqri and Al-kharusi (2015 pp- 188-204) discuss through theory of reasoned action (TRA) that individuals evaluate about any particular action in relation to its acceptance in socially accepted subjective norms and these norms may affect the intentions of the individual to perform that action

Ofori G. (2018 pp 992-1108) explains that choice of an individual depends on the value of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that the action holds. The extrinsic factors are the perceived rewards by choosing a particular career in terms of earnings and prestige whereas intrinsic factors include outcomes related to personal satisfaction in doing the job such as an opportunity to be intellectually challenged and be creative.

Barbera and Ajzen (2020 p. 401) says that influence of the subjective norms on an individual depends more on the individual's motivation to comply than the strength of the normative belief.

Howard et. el. (2015 pp 99-111) asserts that individuals choices decisions are influenced by how they develop and their immediate environment. Family, current professionals, social media, prestige of the choice as perceived by the individual through their interactions with school peers, community and family enable them to explore different choices and take a decision.

Agarwala (2008 pp 362-376) study shows that students with high level of individualism attach greater importance to factors in their choice based on their self-efficacy whereas collectivist oriented individuals attach higher importance to factors based on social beliefs.

According to Joshi and Kuhn (2011, p.8) perception of self-efficacy is found to be positively correlated with the choice of an individual.

Crandall, Eshleman and O'Brian (2002, p.359) social influence theory lays strong foundation on how different cohorts influence the individual in a subtle or strong way. The theory suggests that people are more eager to seek acceptance or evaluation of their own opinions and their likes from outside reference group. It also suggests that individuals have propensity to alter their behaviours to conform to societal expectations. It emphasizes that society exercises considerable control over the individual in 3 ways of compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance is described as acceptance of influence to obtain a positive reaction or avoid any negative response from a reference group (parents, cohort, and career advisor). Identification is the process where someone influences another person and that person is influenced to adopt the influencers behaviour example is social media content such as podcasts, talk shows and online career advisors. Internalization is the process of accepting societal norms established by powerful people or groups that are influential to the individual.

Dustin, Chein and Steinberg (2013) say that peer influence is significant in students' decision making for the choice. Sometimes cohort behaviour also shows herding behaviour where students blindly follow their peers without analysing their own capacities.

Srivastava and Dhamija (2022 pp 1221-1237) state that "each generation has its own set of norms and trends" which influence their decision making for higher studies. Students always have an invisible pressure from society in form of comparison with others based on outcome and these social norms govern their thoughts, behaviours and even life decisions.

Bhattacharya (2001) explains that Asian Indians have been found to feel the pressure of achieving their parents' dreams.

Joshi (2005 p.75) states that parents specifically tend to equate career choices with status and the achievements of the children can be considered as family's status and reputation.

Hearn (1991 pp 158-171)) identified educational level of parents, their profession and income as important factors that affect the choice of individuals.

Akosah et. el. (2018 p.58) opines that professions having varying acceptability and scope in different cultures effects the direction that individuals take towards career aspiration.

Kazi and Akhlaq (2017, pp 187-196) suggest that different values are attached to different career options and these values stem from life experiences, educational background, and the cultural environment. The value to any particular choice is also linked to its supposed stability and school culture.

Amoah and Kwofie (2015 pp 57-65) gave importance of counsellors for assisting students in their choice decision process. The career counselling awareness programs should be conducted for all other relevant factors such as parents, teachers, educational institutions, and mentors.

Behling (2005) objective and subjective factor theory show 2 opposing viewpoints in relation to choose. Objective factor theory states that individuals making choice have rational thought process where they take decision after considering tangible benefits of their choice. The subjective factor theory suggests that decision making is dominated by social and psychological factors and they play the important role in decision making.

2.1 LITERATURE ANALYSIS

In accordance with the research questions the literature in alignment with the themes of family influence, societal influence, distressing mechanisms, family educational background, meritocracy, social reputation, comparative and competitive mentality and career related counselling is bringing important perspectives in this research. In my personal understanding the literature backing the societal influence and involvement of parents as the 1st priority in the decision making process is supported by the data set but the literature does not highlight the implications of parental involvement whereas in this research the parents involvement comes out to be positive with increasing awareness of the parents of the negative implications of forced choices but the societal control still holds strong on the parents as the reputation of the families is tied to the choice students make as proposed in the literature.

The literature highlighted that meditation helps students distress but the present research differs in perception related to meditation among the students as a mechanism to distress. The research participants show weak awareness towards any strong mediation practice and without the structural system it is not seen as a viable mechanism for the students to deal with academic stress.

The positive highlights from the literature about increasing awareness in the students about dynamic career perspectives, importance on work-life balance and interest to make a choice supports the evidence from the data set as well.

The literature brings in different perspectives related to the subject matter and it is interesting to see how different ideas relate to each other. The discussion in relation to the stream choices addresses that in Indian context the students are influenced by their families background when they make the choice and the support from parents help students foster well with their choices but if parents put higher expectations on their children they tend to lose their motivation to study which is found to be a situation when students don't express their choice freely. Parents position is vital in the context of this study for the stream choices as culturally in middle class families parents are the first hand guides for children to make decisions that involve career decisions as well.

Another substantial factor that plays crucial role in the choice decisions of students and relating it to further career decisions is occupational goals and the financial benefits with different kind of jobs offered by different specializations which depends on the job market as the skills that are highly in demand become the popular careers.

The literature also highlights the importance of aligning the theoretical knowledge gained by students in schools to their vocations as that will prepare them to work well and have better job satisfaction and as per the qualitative data from the current study the respondents feel that career counselling should be actively pursued from post middle school levels so that students have appropriate time available to understand their interests and skills and diverse career options for their avail in different study specializations before they make their choice post-secondary education.

To sum up the literature shows that there has been increased awareness among students to make choice with their own understanding prioritizing their interest and work – life balance although the educational backgrounds of the family members play important role for the acceptance or denial of the choice student makes and in households with older siblings the first point of consultation is sibling and then parents whereas in households with single children the parents have much impact on the decision of the child. In the Indian middle class families the cultural values show us that the thoughts of parents are shaped by how their relatives or neighbours think of them that is maintaining the social reputation is inherent in the thoughts of parents and this social reputation also includes the career decision of their children where careers with technical specialization are highly appreciated in comparison to career with business specialization although it cannot be substantiated that from where this superiority bias is coming in the thoughts but it's evident in the behaviours towards these streams that its present epically in the parents' generation which also stems up the comparative and competitive mentality among parents for their children to the children of their relatives.

With such ideation of the streams the decision for the stream choice specialization becomes very stressful for the students as they get confused from hearing so many external noises in form of thoughts of their parents, opinions relating to social reputation from the relatives, comparison to their fellow peers in the extended family and neighbourhood, in such overwhelmed state its not easy to come out strong with one's own decision without support and to deal with such situations the schools must act to appoint student well-being counsellors in schools so that students can have an open channel of communication for students facing any such stressful situations and in consultation with all the person involved in the case the effective decision can be taken in the best interest of the students.

In addition to this the ways to destress for students should be encouraged such as playing sports and engaging in other extracurricular activities for all the students, for the students in residential setup of schooling the extra curriculares are embedded in their schedules and most of them actively participate in it but schools with only day-time schedules may find it little difficult to involve it as a destressor for the students. The present study data set consists students from middle class and upper middle class backgrounds which makes premium education through highly ranked private school accessible to them and with the rising of dynamic careers students studying in such elite schools have more freedom towards making choice reasonable to them as they don't have any economical debts to pay off for their education.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on the theoretical concepts of social reputation, intellectual and superiority bias, familial background, comparative and competitive mentality, dynamic career market and meritocracy. All the above-mentioned concepts relate to stream specialization choices of the students.

Social reputation is defined as the need to maintain respectful and authoritative status by the validation received through members of their social circle. One aspect of maintaining and enhancing this social reputation is the academic choices of the children in these families and how well they perform in their academics, which links us to our next concept of intellectual and superiority bias. The intellectual and superiority bias is the thought that one kind of study specialization is better than other in terms of its scope, monetary value and social norms acceptance. The bias also inherently puts one into comparative and competitive mentality in the families where the children are usually compared to their peers for their academic achievements which also effects the choice of students as the marks scored in 10th grade are related to streams. For the students scoring above 80% they are usually considered to be intellectual in studies and pursue science specialization and someone with 65% is usually suggested to take business specialization as its considered to be comparatively easy stream as indicated by one of our participants Neev who is from business specialization I quote “I scored well in my 10th class then my parents asked me that do you still want to take business specialization and I said yes so they said okay you can take but we want good result as it is easy stream”. This statement is showing the presence of intellectual bias in society very clearly and how it can affect the choice of students or the expectations of parents from the choice that students make.

Familial background here primarily indicates the educational backgrounds of the parents as it can be seen from the qualitative data that parents want to fulfil their dreams through their offsprings as I quote Saurav “I took science because my parents want me to become doctor as both of them are doctors and they want me to work at our hospital”. This statement is highlighting that parental expectations in certain cases effects the choice of students.

Comparative and Competitive mentality is defined as the tendency of parents to have a comparison behaviours of their children academic performance to their other peers which can make students experience stress relating it to low self-esteem and weak social relationships. The choices that students make may be also be effected by supposed stability of the streams and the school culture as the school culture impacts the thought process of students.

The dynamic career markets also play a role effecting the choices of students as the careers are developing in diverse fields but the popularity of certain streams also effect the decisions by students as students gets influenced by social media through podcasts that discuss about higher secondary education and diverse careers that are building up in the present job market such as entrepreneurs.

According to Moore, (2004) social status plays important role in meritocracy as the education level of students determine the merit-based position of students in the society. The creation of these social stratum is based on how access and quality of education determines the economic success any individual can have as an outcome of education. The concept of meritocracy in its theory suggests that based on the abilities a student has they can achieve the highest possible goal but in reality there are various factors that intervene for students to reach at the top of

meritocratic pedestal such as differing economic, cultural backgrounds. The idea tries to end the inequalities present in education but the gaps are further widened sadly because this process segregated some careers as superior from others based on the economic outcomes they provide which also brews fierce competition for pursuing specialized studies in some careers as I quote Saurav “mam I would tell you that competition has become so intense that as per news 7 lakh students appeared for national medical test to become doctors last year whereas the seats are only 60 thousand, it’s really important that government works on improving the infrastructure and awareness of different careers”.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study will use mixed method approach to analyse the stream choice of the students and its relation to career aspirations and academic stress faced by the students in differing forms. A questionnaire for all the research participants is prepared with the themes of choice interest, career aspirations, academic expectations, and destressing mechanisms. The choice interest is about understanding the reasons for the stream choice of the students with different stakeholders such as parents, peers, or high-income careers. The theme of career aspirations is about understanding the stream choices and the need of counselling for the stream choices.

The academic expectations are about understanding how to manage the sudden structural changes in the academic syllabus and excessive coursework. The destressing mechanisms tries to investigate what are the ways that student deal with the academic stress and stress that students might face due to confusions about the choice during the process of making the stream choice decision.

Following the survey semi structured interviews with 10 research participants were conducted on these 4 themes with open ended questions which are semi structured in nature.

3.2 Population and Sampling

This study is conducted in Birla School Pilani, which is a premium senior secondary school in Pilani town located in the Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan state in India. The study includes students from 11th grade from both science and commerce streams where they will take part in the survey together and then randomly 10 participants will be chosen from the total set of the respondents of the survey.

3.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study are students of a private senior secondary school BIRLA SCHOOL PILANI, Pilani Rajasthan, India. It’s a prestigious residential all boys school with “central board of secondary education (CBSE)” (Website 2) and follows the national curriculum of education as per the board direction. The research respondents will be students who have enrolled in science and commerce stream in current academic year.

3.4 Data Gathering Instrument

The primary data gathering tool is the questionnaire and follow up semi structured interviews. The sample size for the questionnaire was 50 students and the follow up interview with 10 students. The questionnaire will focus on understanding their responses for the 4 categories of stream choice, destressing methods, career aspirations and academic expectations. The scale for the questionnaire responses was from 1-5, where 1– Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree and 5 – Strongly Agree.

3.5 Ethical consideration

For the research all the needful permissions of the school authorities were taken before the commencement of data collection as they were briefed about the purpose and process of this research and the role of students in the research. As informed consent from research participants is needed to conduct this research the letter of consent was I attached with questionnaire for research participants, indicating purpose of the study, the time needed to finish answering the questionnaire and process of follow up interview process. The respondents were completely free to refuse from participating in the study as per their will without any forced participation. The data is managed with maintaining the anonymity, confidentiality, and respect for all the participants. It's important to reflect on my positionality as a researcher in this scenario as I conducted this research in my alma mater so access to the institute was easy but now my position as a researcher from a western European university will put me into a position of superiority which may change their behaviour as they would try to conceal their actual thoughts but tell me “what is deemed appropriate” hence I worked on my communication regarding maintaining the confidentiality of my research participants because there were concerns among the students that information shared by them should not go to their teachers with their name as it might hamper their image for which anonymity in the responses was maintained by me as a researcher. . For the students to ease out the situation I am planning to conduct an informal orientation session for rapport building before actual data collection so that they can build in some confidence for talking to me without pre conceived apprehensions.

3.6 Tools for Data Analysis

The quantitative data will be analysed with MS- Excel and interviews were manually transcribed by myself which are analysed considering the themes of this research.

3.7 Research Method

For this research paper the mixed methods techniques are used to collect data. I decided to use both qualitative and quantitative data techniques because quantitative data helps in understanding trends for a big data set and qualitative data techniques supports in viewing the hidden details of the quantitative statistics. In this research project strength of using mixed methods is that statistical trends show “WHAT” of data set and qualitative tools help in gaining knowledge about “WHY & HOW” of data sets.

I conducted this research with high school boys in BIRLA SCHOOL PILANI, (BSP from hereon) Rajasthan India. BSP is a higher secondary all boys school under private trust of Birla Education Trust (BET) presently helmed by Shri S.K Birla. “It was founded by G.D Birla to

provide compulsory education to children of people in and around villages. Currently BSP and its sister schools draws students from all over India". The research participants were from 2 streams science and commerce. For quantitative data I used survey which had 24 questions on a Likert scale with the responses ranging on the scale of 1-5 where 1 shows strongly disagree and 5 indicated strongly agree for all the responses. The questions were broadly distributed among 4 themes which are choice & interests, destressing methods, academic expectations, and career aspirations.

I tried to interlink all the above mentioned four themes as the stream choice and interest in studying it is the precursor to other three streams. On the field I conducted meetings with the teacher coordinators and the school principal before I commenced my data collection with students to secure their permissions and gave them brief description of research I was undertaking, its relevance to the students that were to be part of this project and the credibility of the research project through the authorized letter sign by my thesis supervisor at ISS. I also used my social contacts to reach out to them in a short span of 2 weeks as being an alumni of the one of sister school I wrote to them a request letter and through the principal of my previous school I was able to arrange a meeting with the school principal in short time.

I had an introductory session with all the students from both science and commerce stream where I explained them about what, why and how of the research, its relevance and how could the students from these streams support me in findings for this research project. I had 2 sessions with the complete batch of students where I explained to them that they can expect in the survey forms and answered their queries. In the second session I had printed survey forms with me where I had asked them 24 questions and few demographics that included their school enrolment year and economic status. For the qualitative part of research, I interviewed 10 students from the population sample of 50 students. The participants were chosen randomly from the total research participant sample and they were interviewed individually in a room with my presence only. I did semi structured interviews where I had a set of 10 questions which were sequentially arranged in an exact same manner for all the respondents. The interviews were conducted in both English and Hindi (local language). With the permission of respondents, the interviews were audio recorded for transcription purpose of researcher but the confidentiality of respondents were maintained through use of pseudonyms during interviews.

The location is a small town called Pilani in state of Rajasthan in India. The purpose of conducting this research in such a remote town is to see if the findings are concurrent with the larger audiences in the city schools as this research has been conducted multiple times in past with diverse set of students but it was first time that initiative was taken to perform it in such a school as they hold good reputation for their education curriculum , pedagogy and career development of students but I wanted to understand how are they faring on holistic education as the subject choice alignment with interest is something that is relevant in the transitioning stage of education.

The survey responses were recorded in excel for all the students on the count of 1-5 where 1 signified strong disagreement and 5 signified high agreement. For the visual representation of the findings all the questions were individually coded to count on the responses of students on the Likert scale. The coded response were used to create single bar graphs for all the questions and clustered bar graphs for combined questions which were assimilated in the four categories as per the relevance of the questionnaire statements.

Post recording the responses of all 50 respondents in excel sheet in the 5 categories going from strongly disagree to strongly agree the number of response for each scale from 1-5 were counted and the categories were formed as per the classification of the themes by taking relevant statements from each theme together and creating clustered bar graph chart to have comparatives. For the data set I also conducted regressions with 5 sets of statements to see how the relationship between those 2 variables occur and it can be linked with the theoretical framework.

To give a small background of the regression performed it's the simple regression with one dependent and one independent variable, dependent variable is defined as the outcome that we are interested in measuring and independent variable is the cause through which we measure the outcome. I present the regression on a scatter plot with a linear trendline and r^2 . The regression was run using MS-EXCEL where with the number of respondents the dependent variable (Y) was stored in an adjacent column and then X variable beside it which was then worked through regression command and plotting the scatter plot graph.

3.8 Constraints

During my design seminar I had to make a choice between 2 topics and I made a choice for this one as I was able to arrange logistics for data collection but for the other choice I was not able to connect with the education institute and the unsupportive weather conditions of monsoon did not allow me to travel for data collection to the location and primary aspect for that topic was having in-personal observation of research participants which was not possible in my circumstances so after considerable deliberation I decided for the current topic.

Another constraint that I had to face on field was that for survey collection I wanted the arrangement of students on separate desks and chairs in vertical lines where students were sitting behind each other but I could only arrange for the sitting arrangement where students were sitting beside each other and out of my observation I realized that because of sitting beside each other they were getting influenced by each other responses which brought distortion in data set that was beyond my situational control.

Also due to anonymity of the respondents the comparative study of the responses from science and commerce students is not possible which could have enhanced the understanding but the ethical consideration is more important to maintain as a researcher for the participants and there was no other way to manage it other than anonymity in the present scenario.

The time constraint also played a role as I had to wrap my interview schedule for 10 students in a span of 4 days and because of the school being residential I had to time limit my respondents interviews and in that way I was constraining their space to express themselves more freely to certain extent. Also conducting more than one informal meet-up session would have helped students to be more open and expressive as it would have further strengthened the personal rapport but I tried to manage it by giving my time to their queries beyond the interviews as well.

3.9 Weaknesses

The school that I conducted this study with only had 2 streams namely science and commerce which is a drawback as presence of arts stream would have given more comprehensive data on the differences between choice of streams and its related reasons. The presence of only all boys

school and upper middle class and middle-class economic backgrounds also is a weakness as the findings cannot be related on these 2 highly relevant categories.

DATA FINDINGS

The data findings will be presented thematically under the sets of choice interest, career aspirations, academic expectations, and destressing mechanisms through presentation of bar charts which will highlight the responses of the participants in a cluster format. The cluster for each category contains 4 relevant statements as per the variable that the particular category is trying to understand to form a comparative bar chart. Further to understand the relationship between certain sets of interesting statements from the quantitative data set regression was done and a scatter plot was deployed. The qualitative responses will also be analysed with the above-mentioned categories.

4.1 Choice Interest Findings

In the category of choice interest majority of the respondents acknowledged that they choose the stream by their own choice but there is always involvement of parents, teachers, peers, previous academic performance and future career goal in making the relevant choice.

In the clustered bar chart, we analysed the statements about 3 external categories in relation to choice of students that were namely parents influence, peers influence and high paying career aspirations.

The graph shows us that majority of respondents agree on making a well thought choice without getting influenced by their peers and their parents in a general sense but there are implicit involvement of parents as shared by stark says “that in addition to the interest we also have to think on social, familial and financial aspirations, other than the interest these are the multiple reasons as the choice is dependent on an future outcome.”. The agreement of making a choice in lieu of aspiration of high career aspiration is visible in the data chart which is an interesting relationship which we will further explore in our discussion section about what may be the reasons for this statistics with the available literature.

In Indian context the science stream is seen as a broad gate way to various career options and the one that have more money, this presumption clears out that in the present batch the number of students taking science stream is more than the number of students taking commerce. Out of the total strength 30 students have science stream whereas 20 has commerce stream and as per the school authorities this gap has narrowed in recent years as in previous years the students in science stream were comparatively high as compared to commerce but as we see with the current batch that the number of students in both streams doesn't have big difference which is an appreciative outcome of this research because this thought is highly active in society and it puts influence on students to choose for science stream. Through the interviews I tried to find the reasons behind this stereotype so I got some reasons such as I quote Maddy “this stereotype of science being superior stream is coming from the typical Indian family mindset where they think that money is the only way to have a better life and you can only get good jobs if you take science , otherwise you are doomed”. On a positive note the students are becoming more aware of the changing dynamics of career scenarios post Covid 19 and the importance of work life balance in a job as I quote stark “it's important to understand the positive and negative

implications of the job and we should also see our interest and skills before running behind any job otherwise we will just feel burned out”

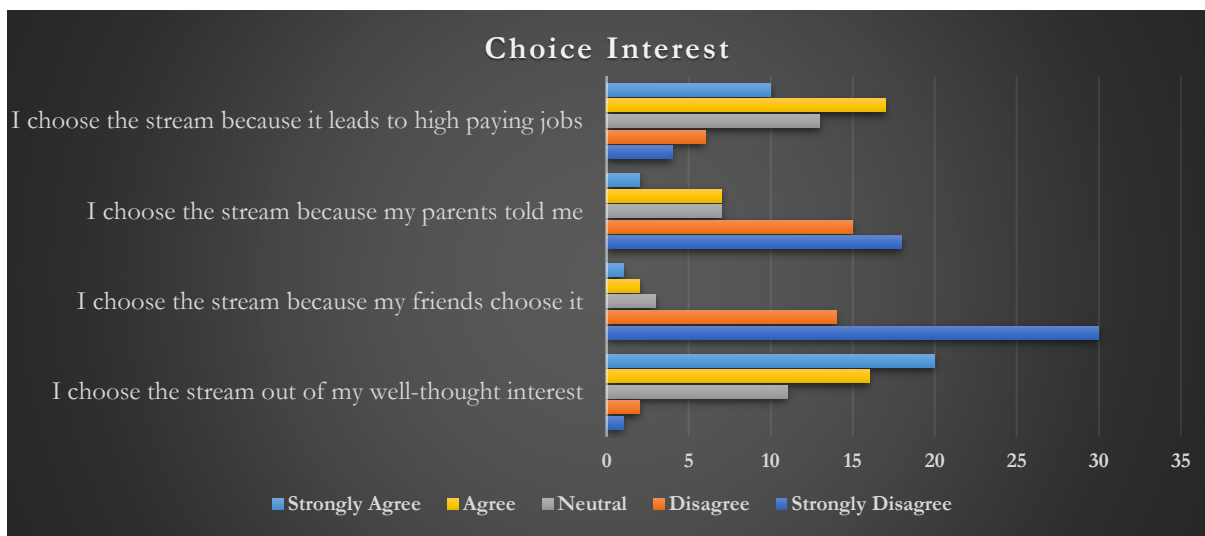


Figure 1 Choice Interest, Source: Field work

4.2 Career Aspirations Findings

The theme of career aspirations is trying to understand the structural understanding of students towards various career options and the process to work towards it rather than having a futile pathway influenced out of social media or any other non-credible source of information. The theme is also trying to understand the need of effective career counselling mechanisms in the schools and role of school as an organization to help students make informed decisions about their choices.

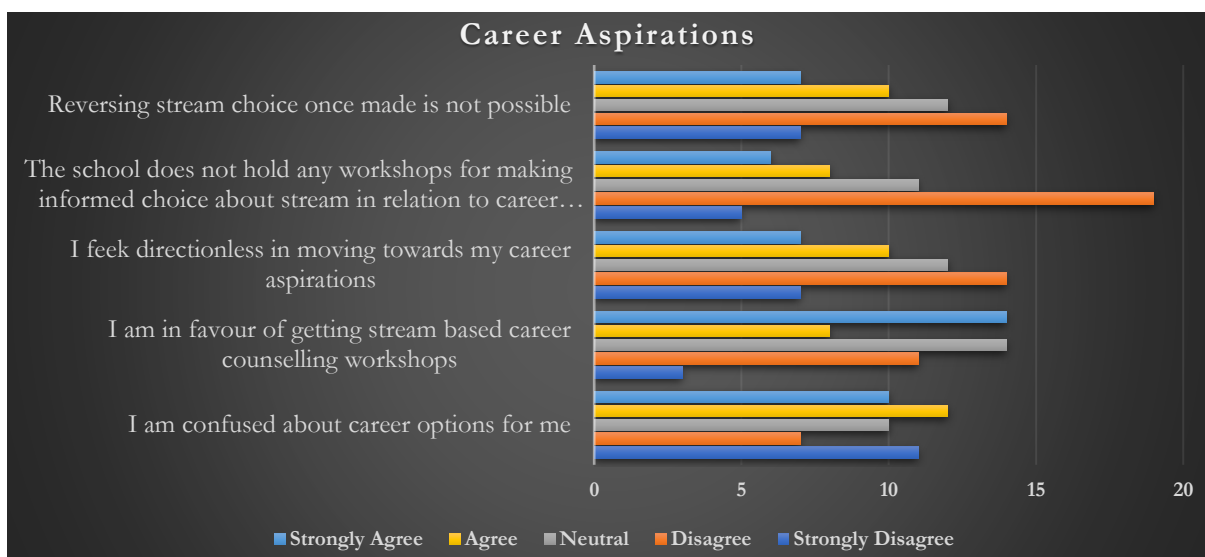


Figure 2 Career Aspirations, Source: Field work

The bar graph shows respondents to be in favour of getting career counselling workshops and there is a significant distribution for students who report feeling of confusion towards various career options. The data shows that school does hold workshops for facilitating students to make informed decisions which is good but what is the effectiveness of these workshops that we will explore further with the help of qualitative data set of this research.

4.3 Academic Expectations Findings

The theme of academic expectations combined all the statements related to experience of students during examinations, coursework load and academic performance expectations. The bar graph shows that substantial number of research participants agree examinations to be stressful and the size of curriculum workload to be excessive whereas expectations from parents, teachers and peer competition score towards neutrality in the responses.

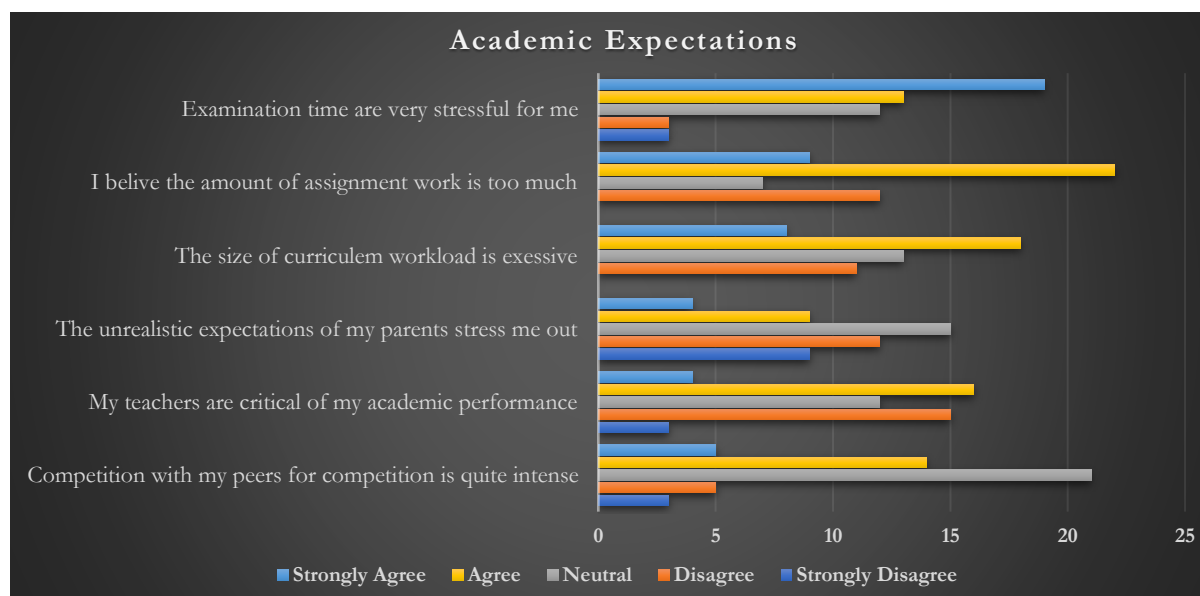


Figure 3 Academic Expectations, Source: Field work

The variations in the responses to various statements in the clustered set points out to various reasons as per the literature. In addition to structural problems of not being able to cater to diverse subject interests of students within the specializations in the higher secondary education. In addition as students enter into their specialization post their secondary education their scope of study becomes very narrow to which students do not have any exposure till their secondary education and this sudden change in the coursework, teaching methodology makes it difficult to cope up with as raised by some responses in the qualitative interviews as I quote Shreyas “mam I do get overwhelmed at times specially during exams as the coursework is bit heavy and subjects are not easy to understand as these are our 1st set of exams in 11th standard (post-secondary education)

As the structural problem in the education system needs to be continually raised to achieve any successful reformative actions towards it. To cope with the issues students face while they are in transitional phase of education, they have developed own systems of coping academic burden such as acknowledging that with sudden change in their teaching pattern their academic performance may go down as to their previous performance and in the residential school setup as in the current study case the students depend on their peer support groups as the respondents in qualitative study shared that many of them do group studies. As they are not in constant physical presence of their parents they also shared that they do not feel their expectations right outside their doorstep. In words of shubh I quote “the situation is a bit like that it’s out of sight out of mind thing, although we know we have to perform well”

The interesting factor that also come to fore front were the structural differences between two higher secondary boards as those who come from international board of secondary education (CISCE) to CBSE they find it relevantly easy to cope up as I quote Maddy “I don’t feel difficult in managing as in CISCE board the amount of syllabus, and teaching level was higher so it’s easy for me”. Another factor is the sudden increase after 10th grade in syllabus, change in teaching patterns and inclusion of particular specialization. As I quote naman “I don’t feel pressure because I have chosen commerce out of my interest and teacher are helpful in teaching”. In relation to unrealistic expectations of parents I remember words of Keshav as I quote “my parents have cleared out to me that you should score really well in commerce because it’s an easy stream”. The intellectual bias of science being tough stream and other easy one also leads such expectations from students as I quote Hemant “mam physics and math is really tough to manage and sometimes when I am not able to do it I simply give up”.

4.4 Destressing Mechanisms Findings

The discussion from academic expectations to destressing mechanisms is a good flow moving from causes of academic stress to the ways to deal with it which we will explore in the category of destressing mechanisms.

The clustered bar graph presents the statements about various ways of managing stress that include extracurricular activities like playing sports, doing arts or music as Shreyas shares with me I quote “that one of my reason for coming to this school is there sports facilities and whenever I feel stressed I play badminton, sing songs and write diary it makes me feel better” Another destressing mechanism shared is practice of meditation in addition to believing stress as an part of academic life and involvement of school to actively provide way for destressing.

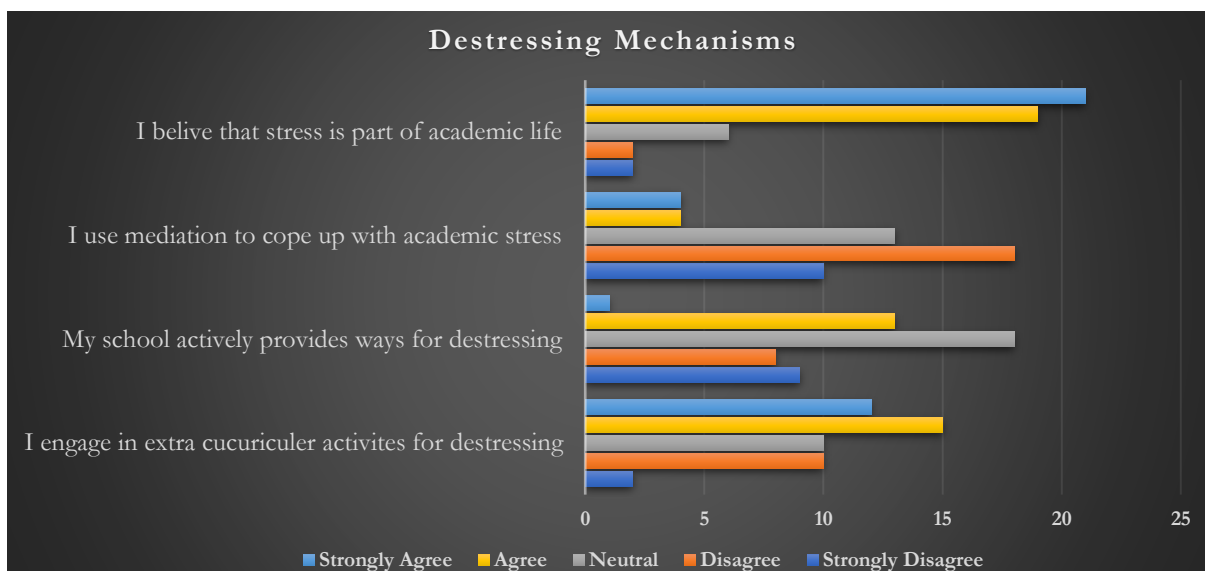


Figure 4 Destressing Mechanisms, Source: Field work

As the graph projects that majority of the participants agree that stress is part of academic life, as in the interview stark told me as I quote that “when we accept that stress is an constant part of academic life, then we are better equipped to deal with the stressful situations either through consulting our families , friends or mentally preparing ourselves”. although this acknowledgement is an inherent coping mechanism from the lens of behavioural sciences but it’s not a healthy coping mechanism because the acknowledgement of stress will not take away the stress and stress is not an end goal of the education.

The engagement in extracurricular activities is one of the ways for many students to be stress free and living a more balanced and active lifestyle with their studies. as I quote our interviewees who share that playing sports is a way of destressing as they engage in sports activities for actively destressing as I quote Hemant “every day I need 30 minutes to do sports in my schedule to get away with stress and study better”. Naman also strongly supports that “playing sports is really helpful as I play karate at district and state level other than helping me distress it’s also an added skill and my teacher always say that when you do sports you perform well academically”

For the meditation majority of students denied having any personal meditation practice but showed support for the program of “ARADHANA” which literally translates to prayers to the holy name of God. The students were appreciative of the prayer ceremony where they would collectively chant the holy name of God post of which many of them expressed being infused with positive energy that shows efforts from school to conduct such prayer sessions were helpful for the students. Although the understanding for meditation was very vague and weak among students on an individual level as Neonick shares I quote “I have tried doing meditation to deal with my stress as I sit to down to mediate my mind starts to fill with more thoughts and gives me stress whereas mediation is practice that helps you empty your mind but it doesn’t work for me so I don’t do it”.

These prayer sessions were conducted every Sunday as an obligatory session to attend but some respondents shared being helped by these sessions as I quote Maddy “the weekend sessions of aradhana are good but they can be improved by bringing the variety into its content in terms of the motivational content that students see in each session addition to the prayers”.

The school is actively trying to help students combat with academic stress but still there is scope for the school to broaden its prayer program and making it more impactful by taking regular insights from the students Stark told me as I quote “that keeping the needs of students in the center when designing such programs will be much more beneficial”.

Further to delve deeper into the data set regression was conducted with 5 sets of statements which will guide us towards better insights about the relatedness of 2 variables in each set and how does it indicate towards the findings for our research questions.

In the regression an r^2 is coefficient of determination. This coefficient of determination can be understood by the linear trendline in the scatter plot. It means that when r^2 is high more points on the scatter plot will be closer to the linear trendline which shows the strong relationship between both the variables on which regression is being carried out whereas when r^2 is low the points on the scatter plot will be far from the linear trendline which shows a weak relationship between the variables on which the regression is being carried out.

4.5 Excessive Curriculum and Influenced Choice

The 1st case has Y variable as excessive curriculum stress and X variable as influence of parents on the choice. Here we are trying to find that if stress due to inability to manage excessive curriculum stress is related to making the choice out of parents’ influence.

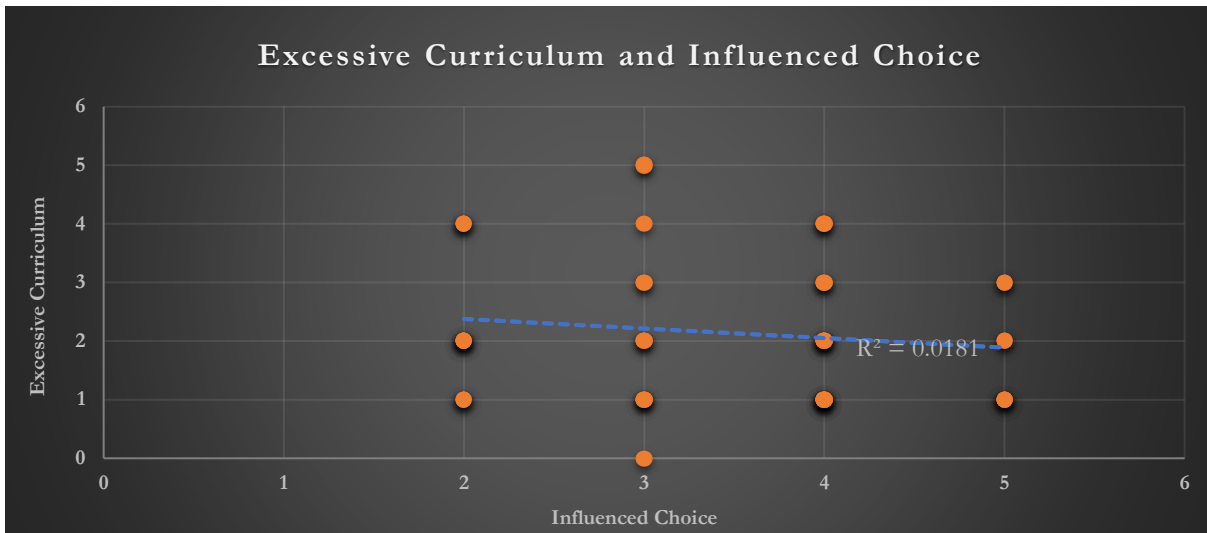


Figure 5 Excessive Curriculum and Influenced Choice, Source: Field work

Here we can see the value of r^2 is low and many points are away from the linear trendline which shows that these two variables are not strongly related to each other. The stress due to excessive curriculum is not out of any influenced choice because the influenced choice variables score high on disagreement that choices are influenced and it also does not show strong relation to academic curriculum stress.

4.6 Parents Influence on The Choice and Exam Time Stress

The next 2 variables are parents influence on the choice and exam time stress. We see that the r^2 value is low which signifies that there is not a strong relationship between these 2 factors that shows that students are making choices out of awareness and not sheer influence of their close social groups such as parents, although parents play a significant role in making of the choice decision as they are first point of consultation for the students while making decision.

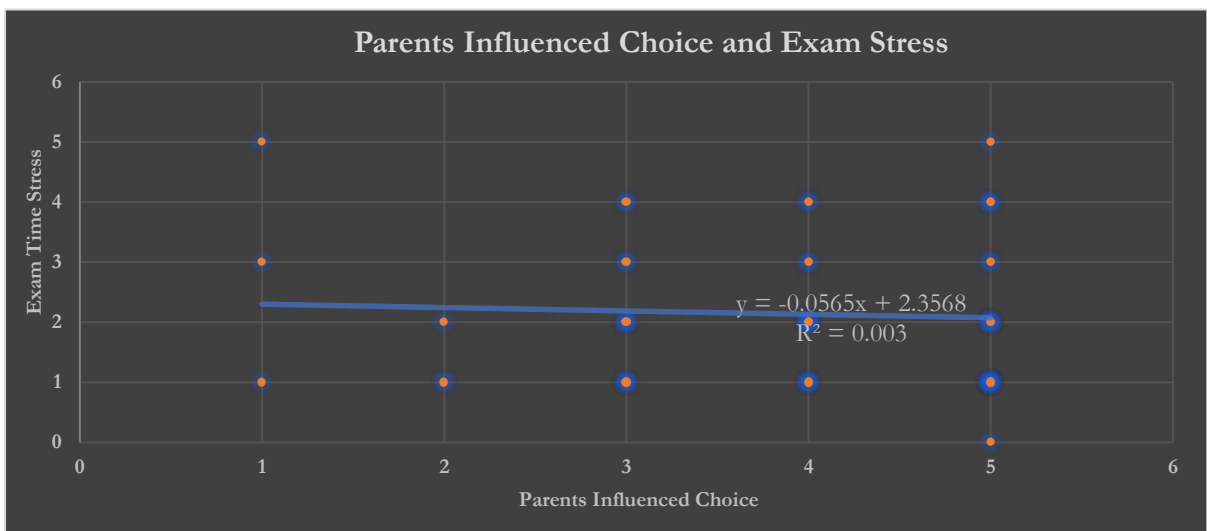


Figure 6 Parents Influence on The Choice and Exam Time Stress, Source: field work

4.7 Well-Thought Process and Career Confusions

The next 2 variables are looking into the relationship between choice made after well-thought process and career confusions. career confusions are the confusions of students that they face post making their stream choice but has lack of understanding on how they can align their choices with their career aspiration or in other words how to make the right choice to suit their career aspirations, The diagram shows that relationship between these 2 variables is significant to note as even though students think on the lines of their interest and other related factors while making a choice and not restrict their choice to an external influence still a gap is experienced by the students in streamlining their choices to career aspirations, hence it's important to do the needful actions such as career counselling workshops and understanding the nuances of dynamic nature of job markets and culture w.r.t relevant skills and qualifications tailored to high school students level needs to have an effective impact from conduct of such workshops.

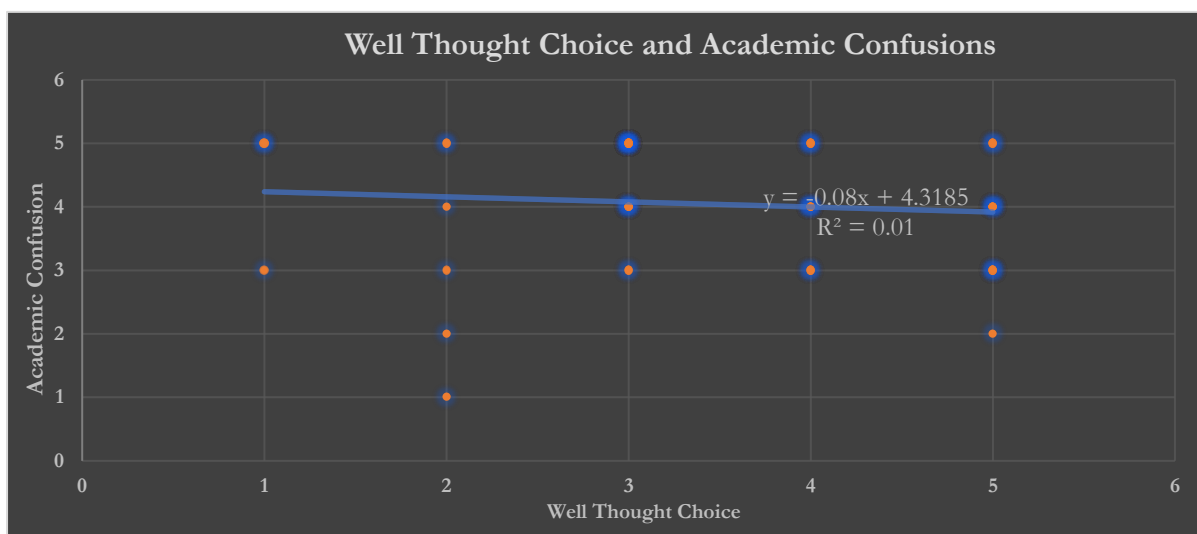


Figure 7 Well-Thought Process and Career Confusions, Source: field work

4.8 Well Thought Choice w.r.t High Paying Jobs Aspiration

Another interesting variable that are showing strong relationship with each other is well thought choice w.r.t high paying jobs aspiration. The choice of students and further career aspiration is reflected into the ideation that their current choice will lead them to high paying career opportunities. The diagram shows that this idea is interrelated in the mind of young students as economic value of education is the inherent in the modern education system as the concept of meritocracy also highlights that primary goal of education is to earn money and with this ideation reimposed by society in general that end goal of education must be money is holds strongly in Indian society, these ideas are filled into the students through sociological process.

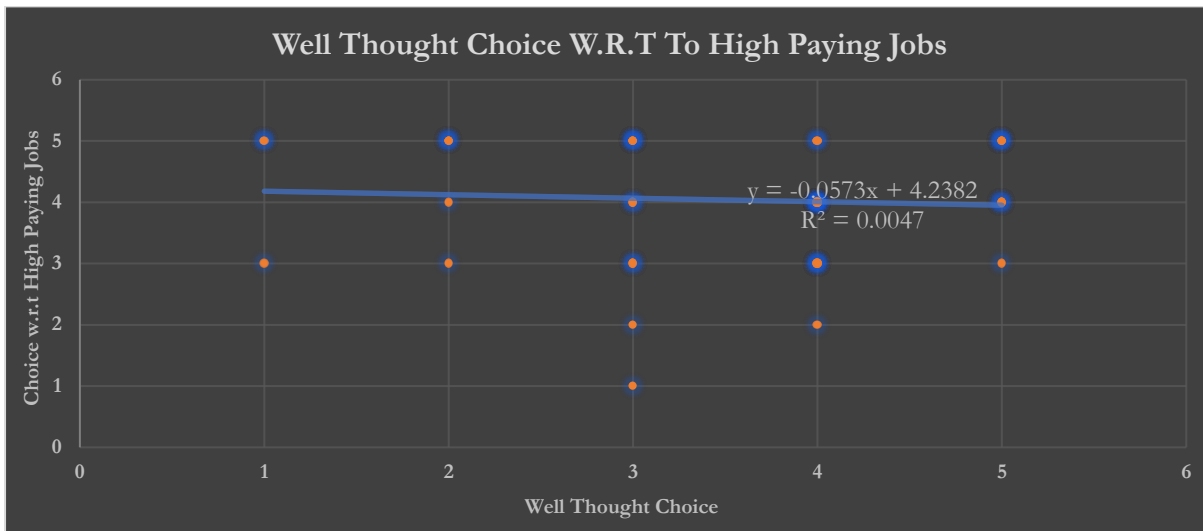


Figure 8 Well Thought Choice w.r.t High Paying Jobs Aspiration, Source: Field work

4.9 Career Counselling Workshops and Reversing Choice

The last 2 sets of variables that we have are related to understand the confusion about careers with need for career counselling and efforts by school to make informed choice with ease of reversing the choice. Both sets of variables represent strong relationships with each other that shows the students do feel confused about their decisions or in other words they will appreciate more structured guidance such as career counselling workshops as Keshav shared with me I quote “that when they have to make a decision they get a lot of unsolicited advices and opinions which only adds onto the confusion in their minds instead of any help”. The stream choice decision is a crucial decision for the students and the data shows that school does try to help students to make an informed decision as reversing once made choice is not easy as it also involves academic adjustments in a fast paced setup of study.

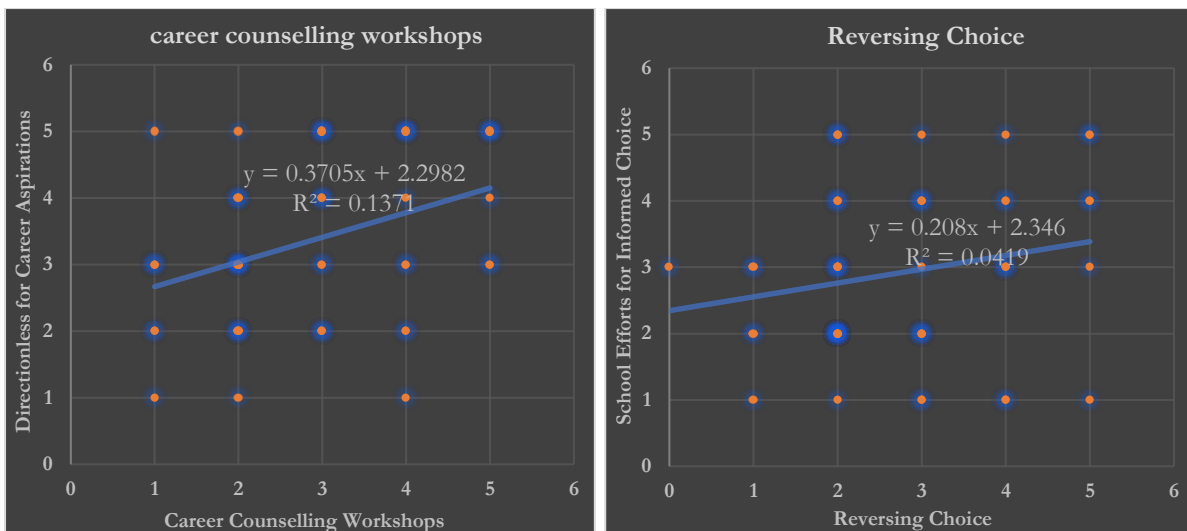


Figure 4.9.1 Career Counselling Workshops, Figure 4.9.2 Reversing Choice, Source: Field work

To conclude three out of five sets of statements in the regression analysis show weak relationships with each other which proves our hypothesis wrong that the students make decision stream choice decisions under external pressure.

These results show that students have freedom to express their opinions and make decisions by their own choice although they do get influenced by their parents, peers and society to certain extent but there is also a strong sense of independent responsibility that the students show for their choices which is possible due to clear idea about their career aspirations or understanding that they have to manage their choice academically nobody else will bear any consequences of the choice they make, the use of social media as a source to gather information also brings up the importance of work -life balance both in academic and professional life that gives students understanding to protect their mental peace over other things which are all good indicators towards the changing scenario of the stream choices.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this section the analysis of the findings will be discussed with the theoretical framework as basis. The analysis will be divided into 4 sections of merit and education, family and reputation, social media, and extracurricular engagement as each one of them relates to 4 discussed themes in data findings section. The analysis will conclude with summing up the discussion through responding to research questions posed by the research.

Putting above mentioned findings in the light of our theoretical framework of meritocracy. Meritocracy is defined as a concept where one is focused to achieve great heights by self-sufficient effort and hard work. Although Michael Sandler in his book Tyranny of Merit utilizes the concept of meritocracy to cast light on how the fierce competition in the higher education leads wealthy class of America to use unscrupulous means to get their children into elite education through which author argues that the higher education is not meritocratic as it seems.

Contextualizing this definition to our study we can understand that in the fierce competition for different careers and top level universities there is possible use of unfair means but even before that in higher secondary education the differences in economic positions of parents decides their ability on what kind of education can the parents support for their children out of public or privately funded. In context of India with an aspiration of the bright future the families with middle class and upper middle class backgrounds prefer to enrol their children in private funded education as public funded education lacks quality in general perspective.

As in the case of this study the students are usually from well -off backgrounds and hence they are studying in the chain of well reputed residential school in India and have all the facilities to achieve academic success as per their skills. With this pattern of education, the meritocratic emotion has increased in students that one can reach at top of ladder with effort that shows in the findings that students choose the stream that gives them a stronger hope of a bright future. Although strong dependence on only few streams and its related career aspirations which is fuelled by stereotypes in Indian context is a problem.

This meritocracy approach has powered fierce competition in the society where parents and children aspire for high league institutions for their children and the race begins at secondary level of education when students have to make a choice many times out of external influences such as from their parents which is stemmed from societal reputation of the parents, generational baggage for their offspring to achieve what they couldn't and s understanding of education as a means to earn money that is sole way of happy life.

This run of rat race influences students negatively where they start to believe stress to be part of their academic life which might adversely affect their choice and their education. In this study the quantitative shows that students make choice out of their own interest with an aspiration of high paying career but the qualitative data shows that although they do have support from their parents for their choice but the decision to make the choice is not easy as parents tend to get influenced by relatives although it cannot be generalized as a result but the relatives and external family members try to influence the decision of the students through their parents so on the outside their seems to be a discrepancy among both types of data but this difference in the data sets is also interesting finding as in the survey there had only been question about if students choose the stream out of parents influence whereas in the interviews I also dwelled into the intricacies of human relationships and behaviours through which I realized that although parents have started to become more aware and conscious of the choice of their children yet societal reputation and prestige linked to the academic choices of their children affect them because of which they try to influence their children but it's not coercive in nature and also when children build confidence in their parents in relation to their choice the parents tend to agree with them as Stark says I quote "mam we have to give reasons and share our planning on how we are going to proceed academically in the stream that we have chosen to our parents as when we liaison with them and they will see that we have a good planning for our choice they will accept it, we should be ready with the logical reasons for our choice". The worst is the regret that individuals have for the wrong choices made and time wasted in studying something that does not strongly align with their career aspiration and interest.

Interestingly while conducting the interviews I came across with Akshat about the conversation that although the students in surveys suggest that they have chosen streams out of their own interest but when I am conducting interviews I am getting different perspectives in relation to nuisance related to choices to which Akshat told me that mam it's a first time experience for all of us to be a part of such a study and there is always fear of being socially judged because of which many of us don't prefer to open up easily and this may be a possible reason for the differences that reflect in the quantitative and qualitative data set of the study.

This mentality has such strong hold on students that one of my respondent Shubh I quote told me that "I can only pursue my artistic interest when I do engineering and have a "stable career". Another instance where my respondent stark said switching from science to humanities as a "safe play move" later on because there is lack of awareness and guidance on how one can grow in career that interest them other than the "so-called" mainstream careers. In line with it is also what Neonick shared with me as I quote "I want to become a writer but before becoming a writer it's important to have financial stability in my career for which I am choosing science and later on I will pursue my passion for writing." These statements show that idea of financial stability holds strongly in the choices that the students make.

Another understanding on why do we observe this phenomenon is because this idea runs deep in the moral institutions of students and a hyper competitive market society where the fear of failure and loss instils the idea to achieve the maximum in individuals.

From aspects of literature review mentioned above we also find corollary to role of parents support in being education support system for students as even in the interview responses students who have support or liaison with their parents in relation to their choice don't feel academic stress to great extent. The parents are financers of the education for their children and they want the best results for their children in education sector which translates as achieving a

high paying career as financial success is related to happiness in the society but parents also understand that students should not have stress because of education hence they agree with their children on the choices that students make given the student brings them prestige by good academic achievements and success in the future.

As far as high income careers are concerned parents who push their children other than their choice do hold the idea that science stream is good whereas commerce is not going to sustain your future as I quote Maddy “the idea that you can only do good in life when you take science otherwise you will be doomed is running deep in our family values and its superimposed by the society as well”.

It was also highlighted through transcripts that even though students try to make choices with their interest but still they have to give their families confidence for their success in their choice. Also, there is lack of effort on part of school to work for providing information about diverse careers and personalized individual workshops from resource person from different backgrounds that can help students gain personal exposure to experiences of these persons.

With the increasing social media presence of youth, the respondents also showed heavy reliance on social media to do research about scope of their study specialization. As stark says I quote “I watch podcasts and interviews of people from different backgrounds to gain insights about their careers and insights on how they worked on building it”. Naman also shares with me that for the basic information about different streams and their scopes we students use social media sources but the credibility of such sources is problematic as we do not know the authenticity of information”. The main source are the podcast series and self-made video creators on YouTube but the biggest drawback of content consumed by the students from such social media platforms is its credibility because there is no way to check its credibility but youth is actively consuming it.

The responses also shown that the choices are influenced by the familial education background as parents support their children based on their background and only in some cases parents support their children who are different from their background where the parents are from science stream background but the students want to choose differently whereas the parents whose background are from different stream are supportive in any choice that their children make. Naman tells me as I quote “that I choose commerce even though my relatives taunted me for not taking science but as I got confused I talked to my parents they supported my choice as my family has business background” whereas Saurav tells me as I quote “I wanted to take commerce but because my parents are doctors they don’t think highly of commerce and did not allow me to take it”.

The final analysis of the data will be with the responses to the research questions posed at the beginning of this study.

5.1 Stream Choice

The first research question investigates the factors that affect the stream choice of students which as per study are that although the students have good degree of freedom in making their choices without any external pressures but parents play prominent role as a counsellor for the decision of stream choices among students, also data shows that students make stream choices with an aspiration of getting a high paying career in future and the information to move towards

such career aspiration they either use social media to search about different careers and its scope, also the older sibling plays an important role in the stream choice as the younger siblings put trust in the experience of their older siblings and tend to follow their guidance in many cases as Neonick points out I quote “before taking my decision I consulted my older sibling who is an software engineer in US for guidance and I consider his opinion to be important because he is successful”.

5.2 Academic Stress

The second research question attempted to understand how do students deal with academic stress. In this study the participants are from residential school setup where there are obligatory sessions of extracurricular activities which include sports and attending motivation sessions with prayers on weekends. Interestingly respondents shared that most of them engage in sports for destressing or activities such as singing songs, writing poems or painting. The cause for academic stress as shared by our participants was that in post-secondary education the sudden change and increased burden of academics in their specializations cause stressful situations for the students but there were not strong evidences of stress caused by the choice of the students, the data showed that stress was more about managing the choice that the students have made well by scoring good in their academics.

5.3 Influence vs Informed Hypothesis

Third research question focused on understanding transition in the stream choices with respect to influence vs informed choice hypothesis. The data shows that students make stream choice decision out of information they gather from online sources and personal experiences of their older siblings aligning with their interests and the future career scope of their choice analysing the monetary benefits and the best possible availability of work life balance prioritizing their mental health as Naman states I quote “mam it’s important to choose out of interest and also see in the far sightedness of how can we manage our career with our family time”.” This is a positive result from the study that students are free to make their stream choice and they are doing it out of awareness although the reliability of information they get on internet is questionable. The factor of influence is not completely outdated in the stream choices as parents do have a say in the choices that students are making but their say is suggestive in nature as Shreyas says I quote “mam interestingly we can see in our batch there are more students in commerce then science stream which is encouraging”. Its motivating to see that students are making their choices with a well thought process and are convincing their parents as-well to support their decisions.

5.4 Intellectual Stereotype Bias

The final research question tries to investigate the effect of superiority and intellectual bias on the stream choices of students. When I asked about both of these biases to my interviewees they acknowledged that there is presence of these biases based on pre conceived notions in the society in general which is amplified through the ideas of parents and relatives about different streams but the students themselves are detached from these biases as they understand that every stream has its own set of difficulties in subjects and how any individual will perform depends on the interest and skills that the student has rather than the stream in itself being difficult or easy as Stark says I quote “mam humanities is also not easy as many people think it has so much of

theoretical coursework and as I have difficulty in managing too theoretical subjects I choose science, it's about what you can do". Shreyas shares with me I quote "mam the stereotypes is not about the streams in the students but there are stereotypes that some career options have more income than others which might affect the choice of students". Keshav also shares that choosing the stream by trying to conform to these stereotypes can bring us stress as I quote "mam during my choice I talked with one of my sister's friend who has switched from engineering to photography and she told me that please choose the stream out of your interest don't succumb to the pressure that these stereotypes build as it will only bring stress so choose wisely".

To sum up these examples from the data highlight that the students understand the importance of making stream choices by their own interest and understanding their own abilities to perform well with their choice although parents involvement as a counsellor is surely present but its not bounding and the students have desire to achieve high income careers but they lack practical tools to turn their aspirations into actions hence consider career counselling guidance as an important aspect that should be included in the schools for the students to put up their queries regarding their careers which starts from the stage of making stream choices for the specialization for the students in the high school education.

CONCLUSION

The main of this research was to understand how high school students make stream choices post their secondary education. Its satisfying to see that the hypothesis of this research has been proved wrong because the students make informed decisions with good degree of freedom but it comes with additional responsibility to perform academically well in the choices that students make as parents have prominent role in the stream choice decision. The parents want their children to do economically well as it's a sign of status and reputation in the society. The intellectual bias about superiority of the streams is also not present in the students but the students do express their experiences where they have heard about these biases from their relatives and neighbours in society. The research also highlighted the significance of career counselling in the schools and including diverse careers spokesperson workshops in the curriculum of the schools starting post middle school for the students to take complete advantage by having credible and ample information about various career avenues for the students before they reach the stage of making the stream choice decision. Finally this research adds value to the available pool of literature about stream choices that although we are observing positive changes in the stream choices of students still long road has to be walked in making the stream choices in education more wholesome and interest based by curating opportunities for diverse careers and bringing awareness about it to students especially by individuals successful in diverse fields through workshops to the students as structurally the specializations are grouped into narrow subjects and it's not viable to pursue education moving out of it so its relevant on the small scale to organize career workshops for the students to strike an appropriate balance in their interest for their stream choice and future education goals on the level of school, this is an important result gained out of this research.

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WEBSITE LINKS

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2. [CBSE - Central Board of Secondary Education](http://cbse.gov.in)
3. [BET Facts & History | Birla Education Trust, Pilani](http://bet.birlaeducationtrust.org)
4. [CISCE |](http://cisce.org)

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Questionnaire Form

Demographic Questions

Which year did you enrol in this school ----- economic status -----

Stress related to Academic Expectations

1. Competition with my peers for grades is quite intense

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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2. My teachers are critical of my academic performance

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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3. The unrealistic expectations of my parents stress me out

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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4. The size of curriculum workload is excessive

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
5. I believe that amount of assignment work is too much

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
6. I have enough time to relax after work

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
7. Examination time are very stressful for me

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
8. I am confident that I will be a successful student

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
9. I can make academic decisions easily

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

10. Even if I pass my exam I am confused about future

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

Coping Mechanism

1. I engage in extracurricular activities for destressing

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

2. My school actively provides ways for de-stressing

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

3. I use mediation to cope with academic stress

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

4. I believe that stress is part of academic life

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

Stream Choices

1. I choose the stream out of my well thought career interest

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

2. I choose this stream because my friends chose it

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

3. I choose this stream because my parents told me

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

4. I choose the stream because it leads to high paying jobs

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

Career Related

1. I am confused about career options for me

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

2. I am in favour of getting stream-based career counselling workshops

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

3. I feel directionless in moving towards my career aspirations

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

4. The school does not hold any workshops for making informed choice about streams in relation to career aspirations

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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5. Reversing stream choice once made is not possible

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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Appendix 2 Semi Structured Interview Guide

Interview Questions

1. How did you decide for your career stream after 10th class?
2. How are you liking your stream until now?
3. How are you dealing with the change in teaching pattern and syllabus at your current grade?
4. Do you feel overwhelmed sometimes with dealing the academic pressures? If yes, how do you deal with that if no what are the reasons?
5. Who all did you consult while you took your stream choice decision?
6. Did you get benefited or confused talking to other people while deciding your stream choice?
7. What interested you to take science stream?
8. Is there any aptitude test provided by school to help students make an informed stream choice or did you individually do any aptitude test? If no why not?
9. Did you have any future career plans with which you aligned your present stream choice?
10. Did your other close friends also took up the same stream as you?
11. What is your thought on the idea that science stream is more difficult and have broader career scope in relation to other streams?
12. Is vocational training embedded into the teaching methodology and syllabus of your stream choice?
13. Whenever you experience stress or overwhelmed by your study pressure what coping mechanisms do you have?
14. Are you aware of transcendental meditation technique to combat academic stress?
15. Do your school provide any intervention in terms of meditation or life skill workshops to deal with study related pressures?
16. Many of the surveys indicated that high paying jobs are one of the reasons to choose this stream so are you informed of various career aspirations in this regard or were you influenced by hearing it from your social circle?
17. The surveys also indicated that the stream were chosen out of your own choices and not any kind of external influences in terms of friends and family so is it because that you are enrolled into residential school and are not actively in touch with everyone on daily basis which makes it easy to do as per one own will?
18. In our society the choices of students are highly influenced by external factors and less on the skills and aptitude of individuals what is your thought on this and do you think influenced choices can lead students into more stress additional to the academic burdens.

Demographic Questions

Name, 2. Stream, 3. Economic Status, 4. School Enrollment Year