



## Factors and influences on urban adolescents career choices: a qualitative study

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### Abstract

*Career choice today has become a complex science with the advent of information technology, the emergence of post industrial revolution and job competition. There are wide array of occupational choices available for adolescents to choose from. The career choice that adolescents make is a decision that is influenced not only by their development but also by the context in which they live (Chen, 1997). The present study was intended to investigate career choices of urban adolescents. The sample comprised of 180 adolescents (90 boys and 90 girls) between the age range of 15-18 years selected from various government and private co-ed schools of Udaipur city. Comprehensive Interest Schedule developed by Vohra (1992) was used which assesses the vocational or career interests of adolescents in eight broad career areas viz. influential, venturesome, artistic, scientific, analytical, social, nature, clerical. The results of the study revealed that most of the adolescents exhibited low and average level of interest for different vocational fields. Significant differences were found between vocational interests of boys and girls. Adolescent girls were seen to have higher inclination towards artistic, performing, expressive, medical, humanitarian and educational fields whereas boys were found to have greater interests towards defence, sports, technical and computational fields. Parental socioeconomic status had strong influence on adolescent's vocational interests. Job satisfaction and wages were rated as most important internal and external motivational factor for career choices by both boys and girls. Both boys and girls regarded parents as the most influential figure in career choices.*

**Keywords:** Career Choices, Urban Adolescents, Internal motivational factors, External motivational factors.

### Introduction

Choice of a suitable career is one of the major developmental task associated with adolescence. There are wide array of career choices available for adolescent's today, than what were decades ago. Earlier students mostly entered into professions their parents wished them to do but now they have become more active, vocal and informed about their choices. Choice of a career is not only central to one's lifestyle but is also vital aspect of physical and emotional well-being of an individual.

A major turning point in adolescent's lives involves the career choice that they make while in high school.

Career preparation in adolescence is an important precursor for successful career development across the life span and is closely related to adolescence adjustment and well-being Skorikov, 2007<sup>1</sup>. Several studies show that new students all over the world are usually faced with a dilemma in making a career choice decision in their lives McMahon and Watson 2005<sup>2</sup>; Issa and Nwalo 2008<sup>3</sup>; Watson et al. 2010<sup>4</sup>. In most cases, the choice of careers, subjects, and courses of study and the subsequent career paths to follow are a nightmare for prospective undergraduate students. Most often, choosing the right subject combination leading to the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future. Today one has not

only to make due career planning but also exhaustive career research before making career choice so as to adjust with evolving socioeconomic conditions. Choices are not made in isolation, there are multiplicities of factors influencing vocational interests of adolescents including life context, personal aptitudes, educational attainment, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and financial. Among these factors, economic status of the family and gender are prominent factors which have a great bearing on career interests of adolescents. The economic condition prevailing in the family may present opportunities or obstacles which directly or immediately influence where or how adolescent get educated and enters the labour market. Motivation is something within a person that springs into action either to the positive side or negative side. Research on the factors that influence or motivate student career trajectories indicates that various internal and external motivational factors such as passion, salary, past experiences, job satisfaction, job security etc may direct adolescents career choices. Thus the present study was undertaken with the objective of exploring career choices of adolescents and factors influencing them.

### Methodology

The present study was an attempt to assess and compare the vocational interests of adolescent boys and girls. The total

sample for the present study consisted of 180 adolescents (90 boys and 90 girls) between the age ranges of 15 to 18 years, who were studying in coeducational government and private schools. The sample was selected from grades 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> of six coeducational schools of Udaipur city. The sample was equally selected from three categories of income group. For the purpose of assessment, comprehensive interest schedule developed by Vohra<sup>5</sup> was used which assesses the vocational interests of adolescents in eight broad areas viz. influential, venturesome, artistic, scientific, analytical, social, nature, clerical. A self constructed and structured questionnaire was developed to assess internal and external motivational factors affecting career choices of adolescents. The data was collected, coded and analyzed by using frequency, percentage and t test.

## Results and discussion

The results and discussion are presented in two sections.

**Section-1:** This section describes percentage distribution of Adolescents for their level of Vocational interest in different Vocational fields, gender differences in the vocational interests of adolescents and differences in the vocational interests of adolescents belonging to different categories of Income group.

Data presented in the Table-1 depicts the trends emerging in adolescents in terms of their level of interest for different vocational fields. Results from the table reveal that most of the adolescents exhibited low and average level of interests for different vocational fields. Very few adolescents were having

high interest. The Vocational interest fields for which adolescents showed high level of interests according to their preference were Sports in which maximum number of adolescents 22.7 per cent were interested followed by enterprising and education field where 18.8 per cent adolescents seemed to have high interest, 17.7 per cent adolescents in the administrative field, 15.5 per cent in defence and 15 per cent were having high interest in computational field. Vocational interest areas for which adolescents exhibited low level of interests in the decreasing order of preference were Performing 62.2 per cent, Technical 63.8 per cent, Medical 64.4 per cent, Humanitarian 67.7 per cent. Nature and Clerical fields were least preferred by majority of respondents that is 82.7 per cent and 71.1 per cent respectively.

Thus from the above results it can be concluded that majority of adolescents exhibited average and low levels of interests for different vocational fields. This may be due to lack of career counseling or guidance services provided to them. Counselors, parents, and educators may be better able to assist adolescents in their exploration of occupational options, help them seek career-related information, and obtain support for their career plans by developing a greater understanding of adolescent's occupational aspirations. The findings of the study are in line with the study undertaken by Talib. A *et al.*<sup>6</sup> which identified the Predictors of Career Indecision among Malaysian Undergraduate Students which revealed that female undergraduates with high academic achievement and low occupational information, and vocational identity were more unlikely to have decided on their career.

**Table-1:** Percentage distribution of Adolescents for their level of Vocational interest in Different Vocational fields. N = 180.

Vocational Interest fields	Sub Fields	Level of Interest					
		High		Average		Low	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Influential	Administrative	32	17.7	50	27.7	98	54.4
	Enterprising	34	18.8	52	28.8	94	52.2
Venturous	Defence	28	15.5	58	32.2	94	52.2
	Sports	41	22.7	60	33.3	79	43.8
Artistic	Creative	20	11.1	68	37.7	92	51.1
	Performing	17	9.4	51	28.3	112	62.2
Scientific	Medical	16	8.8	48	26.6	116	64.4
	Technical	23	12.7	42	23.3	115	63.8
Analytical	Expressive	15	8.3	75	41.6	90	50
	Computational	27	15	58	32.2	95	52.7
Social	Humanitarian	16	8.8	42	23.3	122	67.7
	Education	34	18.8	38	21.1	108	60
Nature	-	6	3.3	25	13.8	149	82.7
Clerical	-	20	11.1	32	17.7	128	71.1

Table-2 reveal that Out of eight vocational fields significant differences were found between male and female adolescents in Venturous, Artistic, Scientific, Social fields and in the Computational subfield of Analytical field at 0.05 level of significance and in rest of the areas the differences failed to arrive at this level of significance. From these results it is revealed that boys are inclined towards Defence, Sports, technical and Computational field However, girls are reported to be higher in Creative, Performing, Medical, Expressive,

humanistic and Education fields. Gender differences could not be established between boys and girls on Influential, Nature, Clerical, and Expressive subfield of Analytical vocational field. Thus it can be inferred that both the groups of students have inclination towards these areas to an equal extent. The findings of this study correspond to those of Almisky *et al.*<sup>7</sup>, Wais *et al.*<sup>8</sup> and Kniveton<sup>9</sup> which indicated that males preferred investigative and realistic career types while females preferred social, artistic and conventional careers.

**Table-2:** Comparison of Adolescents Boys and Girls for their Vocational Interests in different Vocational fields. N=180.

Vocational Interest fields	Subfields	Mean		Standard deviation		Standard Error		t-Value
		Boys n=90	Girls n=90	Boys n=90	Girls n=90	Boys n=90	Girls n=90	
Influential	Administrative	3.75	3.55	2.98	2.89	.31	.30	0.45
	Enterprising	4.05	3.65	3.12	2.94	.32	.31	0.88
Venturous	Defence	5.11	2.53	3.08	1.98	.32	.20	6.65*
	Sports	5.64	3.02	2.93	2.18	.30	.23	6.79*
Artistic	Creative	2.14	5.48	1.60	2.43	.16	.25	10.88*
	Performing	2.71	3.77	2.29	2.65	.24	.28	2.87*
Scientific	Medical	2.3	3.63	2.04	2.51	.21	.26	3.90*
	Technical	4.6	2.02	2.89	1.71	.30	.18	7.26*
Analytical	Expressive	3.3	3.86	2.64	2.49	.27	.26	1.47
	Computational	4.71	2.87	3.16	2.17	.33	.22	4.52*
Social	Humanistic	2.04	3.72	1.79	2.59	.18	.27	5.04*
	Education	2.17	5.13	2.47	2.88	.26	.30	7.38*
Nature	-	1.87	2.15	1.62	2.06	.17	.21	1.004
Clerical	-	4.0	1.4	3.17	1.25	.33	.13	7.005

\*Significant at 0.05% level of significance.

**Table-3:** Comparison of Adolescents belonging to different Categories of Income group for their Vocational Interests in different Vocational fields.

Vocational Interest Fields	Subfields	t-Value					
		MIG n=60	HIG n=60	LIG n=60	MIG n=60	LIG n=60	HIG n=60
Influential	Administrative	14.267*		1.358		18.172*	
	Enterprising	16.541*		0.390		15.401*	
Venturous	Defence	1.271		4.558*		4.826*	
	Sports	3.080*		3.219*		7.069*	
Artistic	Creative	1.769		1.090		2.994*	
	Performing	2.663*		0.592		2.068*	
Scientific	Medical	0.577		0.552		0.080	
	Technical	1.823		1.390		3.387*	
Analytical	Expressive	4.168*		2.031*		1.892	
	Computational	0.163		1.627		1.813	
Social	Humanistic	0.837		1.454		0.814	
	Education	3.291*		1.277		2.186*	
Nature	-	1.123		2.22*		1.353	
Clerical	-	2.676*		2.610*		4.462*	

\*Significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Parental socioeconomic status had strong influence on adolescents vocational interests as adolescents from High Income group showed greater interests towards influential vocational field, those from middle income group preferred venturous vocation whereas adolescents from low income group preferred technical and clerical fields.

The results of the study are in conformity with the findings of Osa Edoh and Alutu (2011)<sup>10</sup> which revealed significant difference in educational value and career aspirations of the students from high and middle socio-economic homes in favour of the former.

**Section-2:** Results presented in this section depicts career motivation factors or internal and external factors motivating adolescents career choices and influencing figures in adolescents career choices.

Figure-1 and 2 clearly depicts Job satisfaction was highest internal motivating factor, followed by independence and skills involved in job among boys and girls career choices. External factor which motivated most of the adolescents was wages. Amongst girls social status/prestige was second highest motivational factor while for boys prospect of employment and job security were the motivation behind their career preferences.

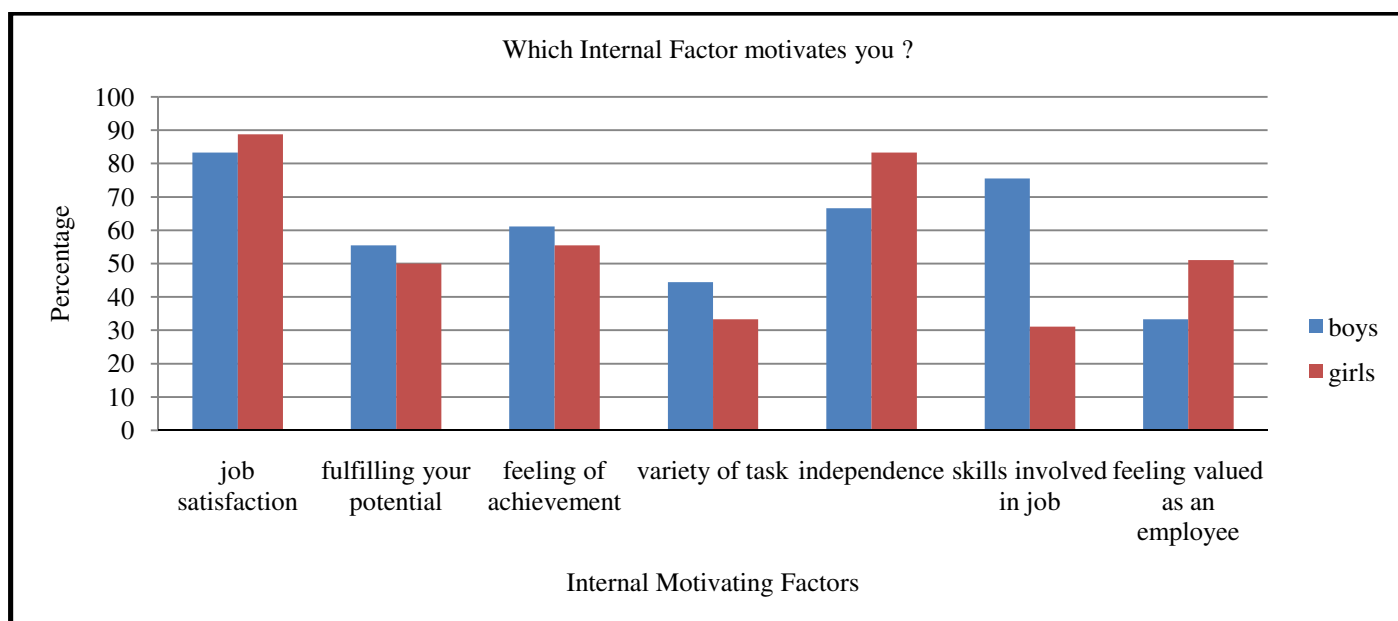


Figure-1: Internal motivational Factors.

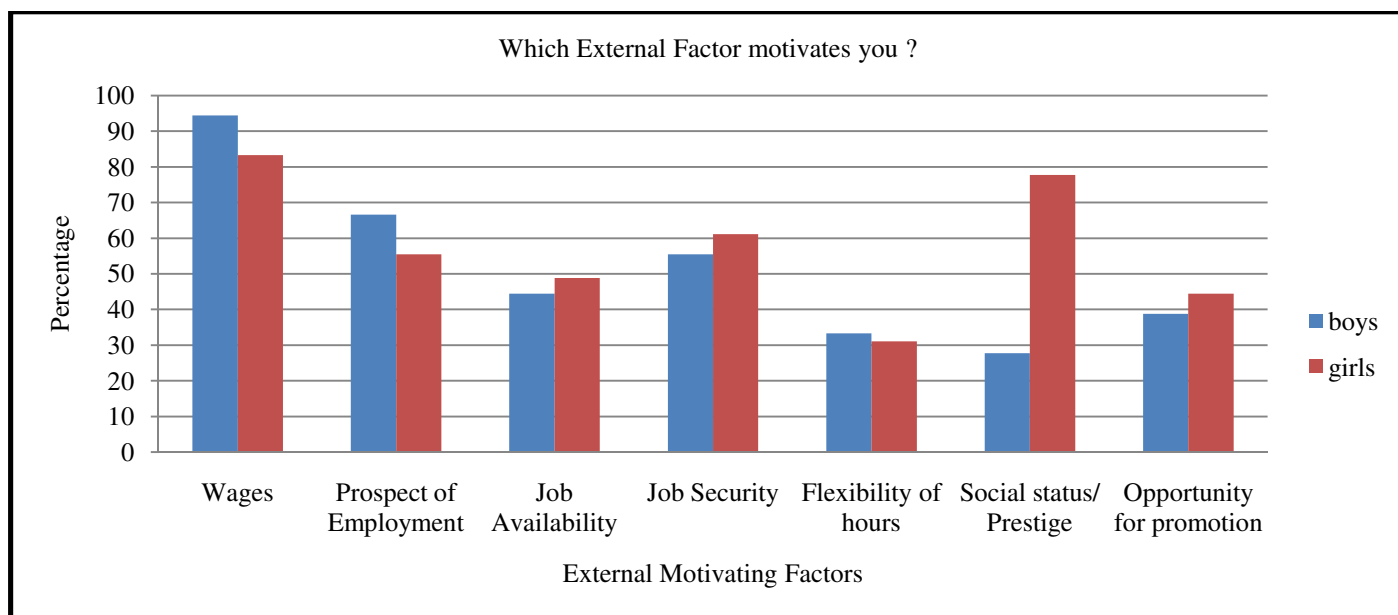


Figure-2: External motivational Factors.

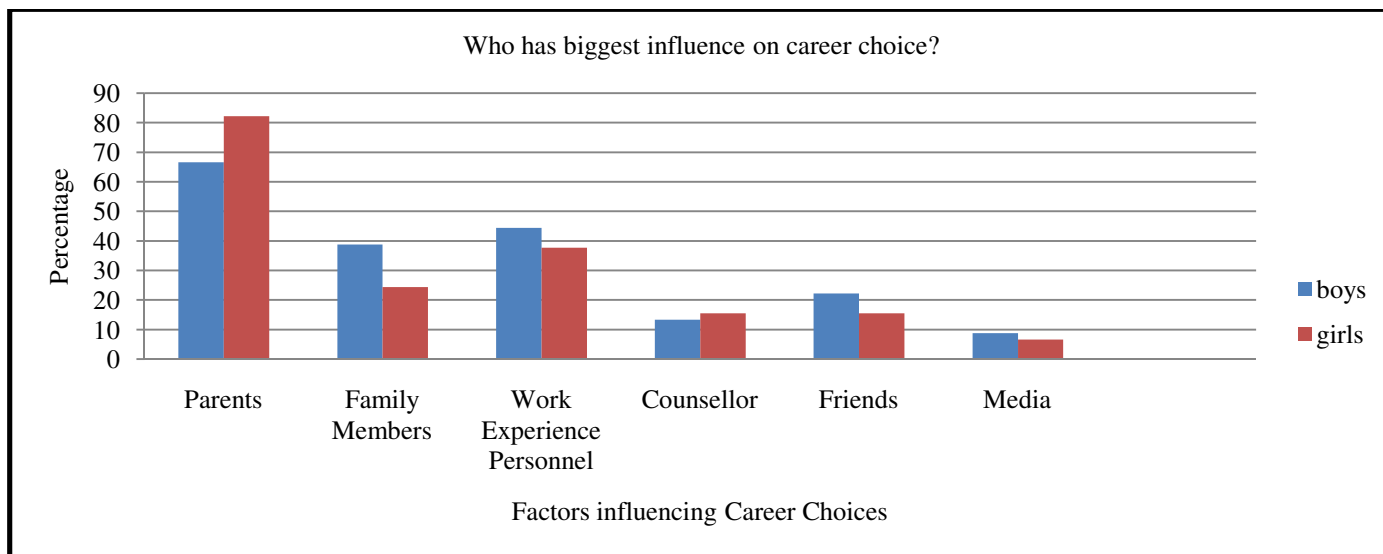


Figure-3: Factors influencing career choices.

Results depicted in Figure-3 highlights that parents were the most influential figure in career choices of both boys and girls.

## Conclusion

Summarizing the aforementioned results concerning the vocational interests of adolescents and factors influencing, it can be stated that in the prevailing conditions of confusion and chaos in all walks of life, adolescents all over the world encounter highly turbulent situations. An adolescent of the modern world in addition to undergoing changes within himself / herself, faces a tough time in adjustment, catering to the demands and expectations of parents at home and teachers in the external world. The life of youth has become very complex with the advancement in science and technology. Availability of wide spectrum of career choices has lead most young people to stumble or drift into a job giving little scope or thought for consequences. They make career decisions for superficial reasons and land up in inappropriate choices resulting in dissatisfaction and disillusion. The findings of the study reveal that gender stereotyped career preferences continue to exist till today. Also socioeconomic status of an individual has found to have prominent influence on vocational interests of adolescents with adolescents having inclination towards careers which are congruent with their social status.

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