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Career Choice and Self-Efficacy Toward Senior High School Students' Career Goals in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The study examined the career choices and self-efficacy of Senior High School students in the Philippines and how these are influenced by their demographic profiles such as age, gender, and educational strand.

Methodology: The study employed descriptive-correlational study using an adapted questionnaire with sections on demographic profiles, career choices (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional), and self-efficacy (Career Development Self-Efficacy Inventory. Data were collected from 308 Grade 12 students through Google Forms, analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences, and involved ethics review and informed consent.

Main Findings: Senior High School strand significantly correlates with career choices and self-efficacy. Age and gender show no significantly impact on career preferences or self-efficacy. Students demonstrate high self-efficacy in career goal-setting and training selection.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study provided new insights into how Senior High School strands influence students' career choices and self-efficacy, offering targeted recommendations for career guidance programs and advancing understanding of career development in the Philippine educational context.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Senior High School (SHS) is essential for bridging the knowledge gap between secondary and postsecondary education or the workforce [1]. This academic phase, which includes Grades 11 and 12, is intended to give students the information, abilities, and skills they need to succeed in their chosen careers [2], [3]. Students can choose from various tracks and strands in the SHS curriculum, including Academic, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood, Sports, and Arts and Design, to suit their interests and professional goals. This focused preparation is crucial to ensure students are prepared for college's rigorous coursework or the workforce's real-world demands.

Selecting a career in high school is a crucial option that significantly impacts individuals' future paths [4], [5]. Several theoretical frameworks shed light on the process of choosing a vocation. According to the Theory of Career Choice, people are more likely to succeed in occupations that suit their personality types, increasing their performance and job satisfaction [6]. Additionally, the Theory of Occupational Aspirations highlights the developing aspect of professional aspirations, which shows that people gradually reduce the number of careers they want to pursue depending on how they view themselves and how compatible they are

with others [7]. With an emphasis on self-efficacy and outcome expectations, the Social Cognitive Professional Theory highlights the interaction of behavioral, contextual, and personal elements in determining professional interests, choices, and performance [8].

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened matters for Philippine high school students and youngsters not enrolled. 3.53 million (9.1%) of 39.2 million Filipinos aged 6 to 24 were out-of-school youths (OSYs), with the majority being 16 to 24 years old, according to a 2017 Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) study [9]. Frequently cited causes for not attending school included problems within the family, disinterest in learning, expensive tuition, and financial hardships. The pandemic has made these difficulties even more difficult, especially for Grade 12 students, who encountered unheard-of challenges in the 2020–2021 academic year. The researcher, a guidance counselor at a senior high school, witnessed directly the severe challenges these students faced, underscoring the critical need for assistance and inspiration in their professional decision-making processes.

With this, the Philippine educational system highlights the importance of career guidance in SHS, underscored by policies such as the Republic Act 11206 (Secondary School Career Guidance and Counseling Act of 2019) [10] and DepEd Order No. 41, s. 2015 (Senior High School Career Guidance Program and Early Registration) [11]. This directive mandates schools to provide comprehensive career guidance programs to help students make informed decisions about their futures. These programs often utilize the RIASEC model, categorizing careers into six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional [12]. These initiatives aim to enhance their readiness for post-secondary education or employment by aligning students' interests and strengths with appropriate career paths.

One of the most critical aspects of career growth is self-efficacy, which is the belief in oneself to accomplish particular objectives. The theories of Self-Efficacy indicate that self-efficacy affects people's drive, tenacity, and grit when pursuing professional objectives [13], [14]. Greater self-efficacy is linked to more assurance while making work decisions and a higher chance of achieving lofty professional goals [15]. Strong self-efficacy can give SHS students the assurance they need to negotiate career planning challenges and overcome roadblocks on their chosen routes.

Despite a wealth of studies on self-efficacy and profession choice, little is known about how these variables interact with the age, gender, and SHS strand demographic profiles of SHS students in the Philippines. Since a large portion of the material now in publication is centered on Western contexts, research on the Philippines' distinctive cultural and educational environment still needs to be completed. Furthermore, more studies need to be done on how demographic factors affect Filipino SHS students' self-efficacy and job choice.

This research aimed to look into the self-efficacy and career choices of Senior High School students in the Philippines and to see how these factors relate to the demographic profiles of the students, such as age, gender, and SHS strand. The study intended to offer essential insights into the factors impacting the career aspirations and confidence in attaining these goals of Filipino SHS students by examining these interactions. This study could add to the corpus of information on career development and provide valuable suggestions for career counselors, teachers, and legislators in the Philippines.

It is now more crucial than ever to comprehend and assist SHS students in developing their careers in the rapidly evolving post-pandemic world. Due to the pandemic's disruption of conventional educational and employment trajectories, career advising and counseling must now take a more adaptable and flexible approach. The results of this study could be especially helpful in guiding students through the uncertainties of the contemporary workforce and ensuring they are prepared to pursue rewarding and long-lasting professions. By filling in the research void and thoroughly examining the variables affecting career decision-making and self-assurance among SHS Filipino students, this study sought to improve career counseling services' efficacy and assist students in realizing their full potential in a world that is changing quickly.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a descriptive-correlational approach to understand better SHS students' professional choices and self-efficacy in the Philippines and the relationships between these variables and the students' demographic profiles. This design was selected because it enables the description of existing conditions and the investigation of correlations between variables without modifying the research environment. The research sites were Three private SHS schools in Central Visayas, the Philippines. The study included grade 12 students (N=309) from different SHS strands through stratified random sampling. The goal in choosing these schools and participants was to offer a broad and varied sample of the SHS student body in this area.

The research utilized a standardized questionnaire to gather quantitative data about the career preferences of senior high school students. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part focused on gathering demographic information such as age, gender, and SHS strands. The second part involved using the RIASEC test adopted from Holland [6] to assess the students' career interests across six categories: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Students used a five-point Likert scale to respond

to the test items. The third part of the questionnaire evaluated the students' self-efficacy in career decision-making, utilizing the Career Development Self-Efficacy Inventory of Yuen et al. [16]. This section included seven categories, each using a five-point Likert scale to gauge the students' confidence levels in career planning, gender-related issues, vocational training selection, job hunt preparation, job hunting, and career goal setting.

During the data collection process, approval from the University Research Ethics Committee, consent from the participating SHS principals and informed consent from the Grade 12 student respondents were obtained. To make the survey more accessible, Google Forms was administered online. The survey form was initially created in Google Forms, with the questions thoughtfully arranged into sections that matched the study's goals. The form began with a brief introduction that described the aim of the study, guaranteed participant confidentiality, and clarified that participation was voluntary. When the form was finalized, distinct survey links were created for each participating SHS school to track responses precisely. The Grade 12 students were then sent these links through their email and messaging applications. Clear instructions on how to access the survey were provided to the students, and a completion deadline was set to guarantee timely data collection. Periodic reminders were sent out to promote participation, and students could get technical support for any problems they encountered when completing the survey. Following the collection of replies, the information was automatically linked into a Google Sheets document and exported as a Microsoft file for further analysis.

Microsoft Excel was used to organize and handle the survey data for initial processing. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used in the study's data analysis. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were described using descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage. Using frequency, the study determined how many students fit into each group, and by percentages, the proportionate distribution within the sample contributed to the understanding of the profiles, including age, gender, and SHS strand. The students' self-efficacy levels and career choices were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation (SD). The mean gave an average score of the students' efficacy levels and the career choices they tended to pursue. At the same time, the SD provided the variability or dispersion of these scores around the mean. The chi-square test of independence was used to examine the connections between professional choices, self-efficacy, and demographic profiles. This statistical test helped determine if the observed distributions in career choices and self-efficacy levels were independent of the demographic profiles and evaluate the significance of relationships between categorical variables.

Throughout the entire study, ethical issues were of utmost importance. Every participant gave their informed consent, guaranteeing that they understood the study's goals, how it would be conducted, and their rights as participants. Each respondent was given a unique code, and data was securely stored to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Participants received guarantees that the information they provided would only be used for research and that they could leave the study at any moment without facing any repercussions. These moral guidelines were put in place to safeguard the respondents' rights and welfare as well as the integrity of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Profile of the SHS Students

The Senior High School (SHS) student profile offers insightful information on the respondents' variety and potential career influences. Their profile is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the SHS students

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20-21 years old	18	5.83
	18-19 years old	205	66.34
	16-17 years old	86	27.83
Gender	Female	156	50.49
	Male	153	49.51
SHS Strand	Technical-Vocational (TVL)	82	26.54
	Humanities & Social Sciences (HUMSS)	58	18.77
	Accountancy, Business, & Management (ABM)	48	15.53
	Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM)	44	14.24
	Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW)	32	10.36
	General Academic Strand (GAS)	20	6.47
	Pre-Baccalaureate Maritime Strand (PBMS)	25	8.09

According to Table 1, most of the students are between the ages of 18 and 19, which indicates that most of the participants are at an average age for Filipino Grade 12 students. This age group is essential because they are in a stage where career decisions are becoming more immediate and definite, which affects how prepared

they are for entering the workforce or postsecondary education [17], [18]. A tiny majority of female students were involved in the virtually equal distribution of genders among the students. This equilibrium suggests that the present study incorporates viewpoints and professional goals from both genders, which is crucial for identifying biases or patterns peculiar to one gender in self-efficacy and career decisions. Gender-sensitive career advisory programs can be informed by analyzing this data to see if male and female students have distinct career choices or self-efficacy levels [19], [20].

The students' distribution among the different SHS strands demonstrates the variety of educational paths the respondents choose. The most popular strand is TVL, which follows STEM, ABM, and HUMSS. This diversity indicates SHS students' broad range of interests and professional goals. Every strand gives students specialized information and abilities that impact their choice of careers [21], [22]. Students in the STEM strand might want to work in science and engineering, whereas those in the TVL strand might be more interested in technical and vocational employment. Students in more specialist strands, such as PBMS and SMAW, suggest that particular skills and careers are prioritized. Given their specialized training, these students may have specific professional goals, such as employment in the welding or maritime industries [23], [24]. Knowing how students are distributed among various strands makes it easier to customize career counseling to support each student's chosen career route and raise self-efficacy.

3.2. Career Path of the SHS Students

SHS students' career choices offer essential insights into their preferred job paths and the extent to which they agree with each RIASEC model-based profession type. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Career paths of the SHS students

Career	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Conventional	3.67	1.07	Agree	1
Social	3.53	1.09	Agree	2
Realistic	3.45	1.10	Agree	3
Enterprising	3.37	1.12	Moderately Agree	4
Artistic	3.34	1.12	Moderately Agree	5
Investigative	3.15	1.11	Moderately Agree	6

Overall, Table 2's findings show that SHS students in this study tend to favor more traditional and socially conscious job pathways and show less interest in occupations in the arts and sciences. Conventional is the profession category with the highest mean score, indicating that SHS students generally prefer occupations involving organized, compliance-focused, and meticulous work. This preference shows that a sizable portion of students envision occupations involving mundane procedures, administration, and organization [25]. Students who agree with jobs involving social interaction, assisting others, and interpersonal abilities place social careers second. This inclination highlights a strong interest in occupations where interaction and communication are essential, such as teaching, counseling, and healthcare [25], [26]. Additionally, students believe they are drawn to practical, hands-on work that frequently involves physical activity and using tools and machines, making realistic careers the third most chosen option. This group includes professions in engineering, skilled trades, and technological fields [25]-[27].

On the other hand, occupations involving entrepreneurship have students agreeing that they are drawn to positions involving business endeavors, leadership, and persuasion. Careers in sales, entrepreneurship, and business management fall under this area [28]. Similarly, students' moderate agreement with having interests in creative and expressive activities, such as writing, music, and the arts, is indicated by the fifth-place ranking of artistic occupations. In contrast to the more traditional, social, or realistic job pathways, the mean score indicates fewer students anticipate choosing artistic careers [26], [28]. Last but not least, students who moderately agreed that they are interested in occupations involving research, analytical thinking, and intellectual activities also had the lowest mean score for investigative careers. Careers in science, research, and academia fall under this category. There is a broader range of viewpoints regarding investigative careers, which suggests that fewer students are drawn to these careers [29].

3.3. SHS Students' Level of Self-Efficacy Toward Career Choice

SHS students' self-efficacy in choosing a career offers significant insights into their confidence in a range of areas related to career choice. The level of their self-efficacy toward career choice is gleaned in Table 3.

Table 3. Level of self-efficacy on career choice

Aspects	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Career Goals Setting	3.90	1.03	Confident	1
Training Selection	3.75	0.99	Confident	2
Gender Issues in Career	3.74	1.01	Confident	3
Job Hunting	3.69	0.99	Confident	4
Job Hunt Preparation	3.68	1.02	Confident	5
Career Planning	3.54	1.00	Confident	6

Overall, the results in Table 3 show that SHS students have high self-efficacy when making career choices, especially when defining goals, choosing suitable training, and handling gender issues. SHS students are confident in their ability to set career objectives. Most students can identify and organize long-term professional goals [30], [31]. Training Selection comes in second place, with students feeling confident in their capacity to select the suitable courses of study and training to suit their professional objectives. This assurance indicates a strong sense of purpose in their choice of curricula or programs that will give them the know-how and abilities needed for their intended careers [30], [32]. The third-ranked aspect, Gender Issues in Career, demonstrates that students feel confident in their capacity to make career decisions in the face of obstacles or prejudices connected to gender. This conclusion is noteworthy because it shows that students believe they have the skills to surpass any potential hurdles based on gender in the workplace [30], [33].

Students show confidence in preparing for and executing the job search process, with job hunting and preparation coming next. This covers things like interviewing, writing resumes, and applying for jobs. The results show that most students believe they can find work and feel well-prepared [34]. Even though confidence is strong, some students may feel more confident in their preparation efforts than in the job-hunting process. However, a slightly lower level of self-efficacy in more comprehensive career planning points to the need for increased resources and help in this aspect. Career planning comes last, although it is still considered confident. This suggests that, compared to other aspects, students need more confidence in their overall capacity for career planning. This component includes many tasks, such as creating long-term career strategies and short-term goal-setting. The result implies that there is potential for development in terms of assisting students in feeling more confident in their thorough career planning even though it still shows confidence [35], [36].

3.4. Relationship between SHS Students' Profiles and their Career Choice

The correlational analysis between SHS students' career trajectories and profiles, as reflected in Table 4, provides important insights into how many demographic parameters affect these students' career choices.

Table 4. Correlational analysis between SHS students' profile and their career path

Profile	Chi-square	df	Critical Value	Significance	Result
Age	5.142	8	15.507	Not significant	H_{01} is failed to be rejected.
Gender	4.413	4	9.488	Not significant	H_{02} is failed to be rejected.
SHS Strand	52.606	28	41.337	Significant	H_{03} is rejected.

The results in Table 4 indicate no discernible relationship between SHS students' career paths and age. Because the age chi-square value is far below the crucial value, it is determined that the null hypothesis (H_{01}) cannot be ruled out. This suggests that the age groups of students have little influence on the careers they choose. The lack of significance implies that students' career inclinations stay generally consistent and are probably impacted by variables other than age, regardless of how old they are when they enter high school [37]. The lack of a substantial correlation between age and profession choice implies that career counseling programs at the SHS level can be implemented consistently for all age groups. Age-specific career interventions are unnecessary, making career counseling efforts more efficient and reliable.

Likewise, there is no discernible relationship between gender and career choices. The gender chi-square value is likewise less than the crucial value; hence, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) cannot be rejected. This suggests that there are no appreciable differences in the career choices of male and female students. It also indicates that there is some gender neutrality in the professional intentions of SHS students and that gender does not significantly influence career preferences [38]. Addressing gender stereotypes and advancing gender equality in professional goals are significantly impacted by the non-significant link between gender and career choice. Career advice programs can concentrate on upholding and advancing gender-neutral environments since gender has no bearing on career decisions. This will ensure that male and female students feel equally encouraged to follow any career route.

The SHS strand, on the other hand, shows a strong relationship with career choices. Since the chi-square value for the SHS strand is significantly more than the crucial value, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected. This important finding suggests that students' career choices are significantly influenced by the educational

strand they are enrolled in [22]. The SHS strand includes several specialized programs that offer different knowledge and abilities, including STEM, HUMSS, and TVL. As a result, the instruction and training students receive in their strands align with their career goals. The strong correlation between the SHS strand and profession choice highlights how crucial the educational program influences students' career goals. This result implies that students' career choices are directly impacted by the specialized education they receive in the chosen strands. Thus, policymakers and teachers must ensure that every strand offers thorough career assistance suited to the particular disciplines of study. With this focused approach, students can choose careers that fit their interests and the abilities acquired via their strand-specific schooling.

3.5. Relationship between SHS Students' Profile and their Self-Efficacy on Career Goals

The correlational study between the profiles of SHS students and their self-efficacy toward career objectives provides essential insights into how various demographic profiles affect students' self-efficacy toward their career goals. The results are reflected in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlational analysis between SHS students' profile and their self-efficacy on career choice

Profile	Chi-square	df	Critical Value	Significance	Result
Age	5.397	6	12.592	Not significant	H_{04} is failed to be rejected.
Gender	0.412	3	7.815	Not significant	H_{05} is failed to be rejected.
SHS Strand	33.094	21	32.671	Significant	H_{06} is rejected.

In Table 5, age did not significantly correlate with students' self-efficacy toward career aspirations. Since the age chi-square value is less than the crucial threshold, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) cannot be ruled out. This suggests no appreciable differences exist in students' self-efficacy levels about their profession choices among different age groups [39]. The suggestion is that interventions to increase self-efficacy be used consistently for all ages, indicating that age is not a significant factor in determining how confident students feel about their career decisions. Age and self-efficacy do not significantly correlate, suggesting that career advice programs to increase self-efficacy can be widely implemented at the SHS level for all age groups. These programs don't require age-specific changes, which makes it possible to take a more coordinated approach to increasing students' confidence in their career choices.

Likewise, there is no discernible relationship between gender and self-efficacy in achieving career goals. The gender chi-square value is likewise less than the crucial value; hence, the null hypothesis (H_{05}) cannot be rejected. This suggests that there are no appreciable variations in students' levels of self-efficacy between male and female students. This indicates that male and female students are generally equally confident in making professional decisions, highlighting the lack of gender differences in self-efficacy in this setting [40]. The fact that gender and self-efficacy do not significantly correlate suggests that career advice and counseling services are helping students, male and female, develop confidence in their chosen choices. The fact that both genders' levels of self-efficacy are equal indicates that existing procedures are effectively reducing any potential gender biases and encouraging a fair and inclusive approach to professional development.

On the other hand, the SHS strand demonstrates a strong link with self-efficacy about career ambitions. The null hypothesis (H_{06}) is rejected since the chi-square value for the SHS strand is greater than the crucial threshold. This meaningful conclusion suggests that students' self-efficacy levels are significantly influenced by the particular educational strand they are enrolled in. The SHS strand offers unique educational experiences and training that affect students' confidence in their chosen prospects [41]. It consists of several tracks, including Technical-Vocational, Humanities and Social Sciences, and STEM. The substantial association between self-efficacy and the SHS strand highlights the importance of specialized education on students' confidence in their professional choices. This study implies that students' self-efficacy is influenced by the particular knowledge and abilities they acquire across many strands. For example, students enrolled in more practical, hands-on courses might have greater confidence in pursuing occupations linked to their education. This highlights the need for customized career counseling that corresponds with the distinct emphasis of every strand, guaranteeing that students obtain pertinent assistance that boosts their self-confidence in their selected domains.

3.6. Research Implications and Limitations

The study has research implications, especially regarding career advising and counseling for SHS students in the Philippines. The strong correlation between the SHS strand and self-efficacy and career choices indicates that educational paths are essential in determining students' career trajectories and confidence in following them. This emphasizes the necessity of specialized career counseling programs to fit every SHS strand's unique requirements and features. To assist students in making confident and well-informed career decisions, educators and counselors should concentrate on building their self-efficacy by offering resources and support that correspond with the strands they have selected. Furthermore, the constant levels of self-efficacy between genders and ages suggest that existing career advice approaches adequately address these demographic

aspects. However, the study also makes the case that students' particular struggles within each SHS strand deserve more significant consideration. This might entail creating customized interventions that cater to students' unique requirements and goals in various strands, ultimately resulting in more effective and individualized career counseling.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations despite its contributions. Three private SHS schools in Central Visayas made up the sample, which may not accurately reflect most SHS students in the Philippines. This institutional and regional restriction may limit how far the results can be applied. Additionally, students may overestimate or underestimate their skills and goals, which introduces bias into the self-reported data used to measure self-efficacy and career choices. Future research could consider increasing the sample size and incorporating public schools and additional locations to improve the study's representativeness. Incorporating longitudinal designs may also offer more significant insights into how students' career choices and self-efficacy change, resulting in a more thorough understanding of the variables influencing students' career development.

4. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the career choice and self-efficacy of Senior High School students in the Philippines and how those choices related to demographic features, including age, gender, and SHS strand. The results supported the hypothesis that career choice and self-efficacy are greatly influenced by SHS education. In particular, the SHS strand was a significant factor that correlated with theoretical perspectives on professional development and education. However, age and gender did not significantly affect career inclinations or confidence. Additionally, the students had high self-efficacy, especially when choosing the proper training and establishing career goals. This demonstrated their great confidence in their career choices. This shows that students receive adequate support from the existing career advising programs. The fact that self-efficacy levels are constant for both genders and ages indicates that these programs effectively advance inclusive and balanced career development strategies. The study suggests various areas for further investigation and implementation in the future. Subsequent studies should investigate the determinants influencing self-efficacy in different educational situations and the long-term benefits of SHS strand-specific instruction on career outcomes. These findings will help improve career counseling procedures and guarantee that they assist students in successfully navigating their professional pathways in a rapidly changing post-pandemic world.

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