

## The Impact of Family Socioeconomic Status and Income on Career Decision-Making among Students: An Examination of Selected Regional Public Universities

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the dominance of family socioeconomic status (SES) and income in terms of the career decision-making processes of students at selected regional public universities in Bangladesh. The research highlights the challenges faced by students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds focuses on the opportunities students get for their family status. A quantitative research design was used, with surveys and questionnaires administered to 400 students from Gopalganj Science and Technology University (GSTU), University of Khulna (KU), and KUET. Binary logistic regression models analyzed the relationships between career choices and factors like SES, family status, and family income. The results indicate that family socioeconomic status and income significantly influence career decision-making. Students from nuclear families and higher-income families tend to have a broader range of career choices. Parental education, particularly fathers' education, also significantly impacts career decisions. The study is limited to three regional public universities in Bangladesh, which may not represent the entire student population. Insights from this study can help policymakers and educational institutions develop targeted support programs to address disparities in career decision-making. Enhancing resources and guidance for students from lower SES backgrounds can promote equity. This research contributes to the literature by focusing on regional public universities in Bangladesh, providing empirical evidence on how family SES and income shape career decisions. It offers a foundation for informed policy-making and educational reforms aimed at promoting equity and social mobility.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### *Background of the Study*

Indeed career decision-making is an important issue in the lives of students as it influences their future professional trajectories and overall life satisfaction. Various factors contribute to career choices, including personal interests, academic performance, financial constraints and socioeconomic background. Family socioeconomic status (SES) and income play significant roles in shaping career aspirations and decisions, often determining the resources available for education and career planning (Kao & Thompson, 2003). Understanding the impact of these factors on students' career decisions is crucial, particularly in regional public universities where students might face different economic and social challenges compared to their counterparts in urban or more affluent institutions. The essential concern is that if well-educated individuals in Bangladesh cannot make informed career decisions, it can hinder the creation of a dynamic and prosperous environment within the country.

### *Justification of the Study*

The justification for this study lies in its potential to provide insights into how socioeconomic disparities affect career decision-making among students in regional public universities. This research is particularly relevant in the context of educational inequality and its long-term impacts on social mobility and economic development. By focusing on selected regional public universities, this study aims to highlight specific challenges and opportunities faced by students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby contributing to more informed policy-making and targeted support programs (Gale & Parker, 2015).

### *Statement of the Problem*

Despite the increasing attention to educational equity, there is limited understanding of how family socioeconomic status and income specifically influence career decision-making among students in regional public universities. This gap in knowledge hampers the development of effective interventions to support these students in their career planning and progression. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following problem: How do family socioeconomic status and income impact the career decision-making processes of students attending selected regional public universities?

### *Research Hypothesis*

H<sub>1</sub>: Family socio-economic status significantly dominates the career decision-making choices of the students in regional public universities.

H<sub>2</sub>: Family income has a significant impact on the career decision-making choices of the students in regional public universities.

The study will include the following key research questions:

- Does family socioeconomic status influence students' choice of academic subjects?
- What is the relationship between family socio-economic status and career selection process of the students?
- In what ways do families contribute to and assist in students' career selection?

***Objective(s) of the Project:***

The main objective of the study is to examine the impacts of family socio-economic status and income in career selection among the students of three different public universities. To find out the exact condition of the respondent the researcher used some specific objectives. These are:

- To identify the family socio-economic status of the respondents in the study.
- To determine whether the family status and family income have any impact on subject choice.
- To analyze the relationship between family socio-economic condition and career choice of a student.
- To examine the contribution of family assistance and guidance in career selection.

**2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are many theories that explain the influential relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and career decision-making process. Theories can provide a clear understanding of the process that students' backgrounds shape their career choices and aspirations.

***Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)***

Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), posits that career decision-making is influenced by many factors such as self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals. This theory explains that students from higher SES backgrounds typically have greater access to resources and support systems that increase their self-efficacy as well as broaden their career aspirations. In contrast, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds may experience limitations and challenges that constrain their career options and expectations (Lent et al., 2000). SCCT provides a framework for understanding how socioeconomic factors interact with individual cognitive processes to influence career decisions.

### *Human Capital Theory*

Becker (1964) suggests that quality education and training are closely related to individuals' skills productivity development that leads to better career choices and satisfaction. This theory ignores the importance of financial resources in accessing quality education and career opportunities. Students from wealthier families can invest more in their education, thus improving their career prospects. Conversely, students from lower-income families may struggle to afford such investments, limiting their career choices and potential for upward mobility (Becker, 1993).

### *Expectancy-Value Theory*

Eccles et al. (1983) emphasizes the role of individuals' expectations to be successful and the value they add on different tasks in shaping their career choices. According to this theory, students' career decisions are influenced by their attitudes and viewpoints of the likelihood of success in a given career and the value they attach to that career. Socio-economic factors can impact these perceptions, with students from high social class backgrounds often having more positive expectations in terms of certain careers due to greater exposure and encouragement (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

### *Structural Theories of Career Development*

Blau and Duncan (1967) focus on the impact of societal structures on career choices. These theories suggest that social and economic structures, including family background and income, play an important role in shaping one's career paths. For instance, students from solvent families are more likely to have networks and connections that facilitate career advancement, whereas students from lower social class community may lack such social capital (Blau & Duncan, 1967).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Career Decision Making:*

A career encompasses various steps and actions an individual takes in their life related to their occupation. It consists of the jobs held, accomplishments achieved, and titles earned (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). Typically, individuals engage in occupational activities to earn a living, ensure a secure life, gain power, prestige and success, and want to maintain psychosocial wellbeing (Abdinoor, 2020). Bozgeyikli et al. (2009) highlighted that decision making for any career is influenced by a range of factors including psycho-social and socio-economic factors such as gender, ethnicity, race, social class, religion, family influence, culture, education as well as emotional and physical factors which are

interrelated. Careers not only provide economic stability but also play a significant role in forming one's identity (Super, 1980). Therefore, career decision-making is very important part of one's life as it lays the foundation for one's occupation and career success (Abdinoor, 2020; Kumar, 2016). Research indicates that career decision-making is an ongoing process beginning in mid-adolescence and continuing until retirement (Kumar, 2016; Bozgeyikli et al., 2009).

***Socio-economic Status:***

Social classes – comprising higher, middle, and lower classes are defined by income and occupation (Thomson, 2018; Obiyo & Eze, 2015). Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the most vital indicators of family structure that reflects the social position and resources available to a family. Social and economic status encompasses parents' educational and occupational achievements, as well as financial and social networking resources accessible to their children. Kuppuswami (1981) used a scale to measure SES, focusing on the education, occupation, and income of the family head. Aggarwal et al. (2005) state that the family head is typically the primary earner, and those without income depend on this individual, thereby having their social status defined by the head's status. Consequently, SES has a significant impact on youths' career choices and decision-making process (Conger et al., 2010; Whiston & Keller, 2004).

***Social Cognitive Career Theory:***

This theory is widely used to predict individuals' occupational considerations, academic achievements, and career behaviors. It explores how beliefs about personal efficacy interact with socio-economic and cultural influences to determine career decision-making (Lent et al., 1994). This theory indicates how personal characteristics such as gender, race, and personality traits, contextual factors like social and academic status, cultural background, and family dynamics, as well as learning experiences such as work exposure, collectively shape career decision-making processes (Orndorff & Herr, 1996). Additionally, SCCT emphasizes cognitive variables such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and career goals, which impact academic performance and persistence (Gore & Leuwerke, 2000). Career decisions are thus complex processes influenced by a multitude of factors and variables.

**Age:** Mudhovozi & Chireshe (2012) suggest that between ages six to eight, children begin to form their early occupational preferences based on gender stereotypes. By ages nine to thirteen, they start considering socially acceptable occupations influenced by their abilities and socio-economic class (Helwig, 2001). Otto (2000) found that discussions about career plans with parents typically begin during high school.

**Gender:** Gender significantly influences career choices and development patterns among adolescents (Rojewski & Hill, 1998; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996; Davey & Stoppard, 1993). Research indicates that females often perceive fewer career options compared to males, influenced from an early age by societal perceptions that certain jobs are gender-specific (Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2012). This can lead to a narrower range of career choices for females (Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Looft, 1971). Educational discrimination within families may further limit women's job opportunities (Heins et al., 1982).

**Religion:** Religion and spirituality can significantly impact career development by influencing personal values and support systems throughout the career journey (Duffy et al., 2010). For instance, religious beliefs may guide career choices, such as Muslims avoiding roles involving interest-bearing transactions due to Islamic principles (Thomas, 2006). Similarly, various religious traditions and customs shape career decisions, reflecting adherence to religious teachings (Duffy & Lent, 2008).

**Parents' Education:** The educational attainment of parents significantly shapes their children's career choices (Burlin, 1976; Mau & Bikos, 2000). Jones and Larke (2003) found that mothers with at least a two-year post-secondary degree enhance their children's understanding of work-related issues. Conversely, Pappas and Kounenou (2011) observed that fathers' educational levels exert a greater influence, especially those with elementary school education, compared to fathers with vocational training.

**Parents' Occupation:** The occupational status of parents strongly influences their children's career choices (Signer & Saldana, 2001; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000; Burlin, 1976). Madarasova Geckova et al. (2010) highlighted how and why boys often mirror their fathers' careers while girls are influenced by their mothers' occupations. Ferry (2006) noted that children frequently align their career choices with their parents' professions, seeking guidance and information from their parents' career experiences.

**Parents' Income:** Parental income and social status significantly impact children's occupational preferences (Obiyo & Eze, 2015). Higher-income families tend to foster aspirations for professional careers, while lower-income families often prioritize skilled jobs (Obiyo & Eze, 2015). Parents from both high and lower income emphasize education as a means for their children to secure prestigious occupations.

**Family Influence:** Family influence, encompassing parental and sibling impact, plays a vital role in shaping individuals' career decisions (Abdo et al., 2016). Parents typically encourage their children to pursue stable, well-paying careers for a secure future (Napompech, 2011). They often provide support and guidance aligned with their own career preferences, influencing their children's occupational choices (Kniveton, 2004).

### 3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Design*

This study using a quantitative research design has used surveys and questionnaires to gather numerical data, which was subjected to statistical analysis.

**Study Area:** The study was conducted within three selected universities in Bangladesh, namely Gopalganj Science and Technology University (GSTU), University of Khulna (KU), and Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET).

**Determining Sample Size:** It was determined using the following general formula:

$$SS = \frac{p \times (1 - p) \times z^2}{e^2} = 384$$

Here,

SS = Sample size

p= 0.50 (proportion of the students for unknown population)

z=1.96

e= 5%

The sample size for the quantitative study was increased to 400 participants, surpassing the initially planned sample size of 385. The Participants were selected from the first year to the fourth year across the three selected universities for ensuring a diversified and representative sample.

**Sampling Technique:** For the sampling technique, purposive sampling was employed. This approach involved deliberately selecting participants based on some specific criteria or characteristics that were related to the study, ensuring that the sample was well-suited to address the research questions and objectives effectively.

**Data Collection:** Data were collected through surveys and questionnaires, designed to elicit information about students' career choices, family socioeconomic status, and family income. The surveys were administered to the selected participants.

**Data Analysis:** The study has used binary logistic regression models to estimate the relationships between career choices and various factors, including socio-economic status, family status, and family income. The logistic regression equation was expressed as:

$$\log \frac{p}{1-p} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + u_t$$

Where, p is the probability of being Employed (Y = 1).

Let, Dependent Variable: Career Choice (Binary: 1 for "Chosen Career," 0 for "Did Not Choose Career")

Independent Variables: Socioeconomic Status (Continuous or categorical measure representing the socioeconomic standing of the family), Family Status (Categorical, such as "nuclear family" or "joint family"), Family Income (Continuous measure of the family's income level). This equation enabled to predict the probability of students' career choices based on their family socioeconomic status and income.

**Ethical Guidelines:** The study adhered to the following ethical guidelines during sample collection:

1. **Informed Consent:** Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was taken prior to data collection.
2. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Data were anonymized to protect participant identities, and all personal information kept confidential.
3. **Data Security:** Data security is clearly done and only authorized personnel have access to the data.

#### 4.0 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

**Table-1(Demographic Data): Respondent's Biographical Data**

Demographic Variables		N	Total Sample (n = 385) %
<b>Respondent's Gender</b>	Male	157	40.8
	Female	228	59.2
<b>Respondent's Faculty</b>	Engineering	84	21.8
	Life Science	99	25.7
	Science	71	18.4
	Business Studies	65	16.9

	Social Science	66	17.1
<b>Respondent's Level of Study</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> year	68	17.7
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	90	23.4
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	91	23.6
	<b>4<sup>th</sup> year</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>35.6</b>
<b>Respondent's Family Members</b>	Less than 4	63	16.4
	<b>4 to 6</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>61.3</b>
	More than 6	86	22.3
<b>Respondent's Earning Family Members</b>	<b>One</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>72.5</b>
	Two	94	24.4
	More than Two	12	3.1
<b>Respondent's Family income (yearly)</b>	<b>Less than 60,000</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>56.1</b>
	60,000 to 1,50,000	120	31.2
	More than 1,50,000	49	12.7
	Less than 50,000	161	41.8
<b>Respondent's Educational Expense (per year)</b>	<b>50,000 to 1,00,000</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>53.0</b>
	More than 1,00,000	20	5.2
<b>Respondent's Educational Expense Source</b>	Scholarship	38	9.9
	Relatives	19	4.9
	By working part time	43	11.2
	Welfare funds	12	3.1
	<b>Respondent's Family</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>70.9</b>

In Table 1, Respondent's Biographical data are shown. Frequency distribution analysis was conducted to calculate number of the respondents. The data indicate that 157(40.8%) of the 385 respondents (namely, Gopalganj Science and Technology University (GSTU), University of Khulna (KU), and Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET) were male students, while

228 (59.2%) were female students. Regarding the faculty, 84 (21.8%) of the respondents were in Engineering Faculty, 99 (25.7%) respondents were from Life Science Faculty, 71(18.4%) respondents were from Science faculty, 65 (16.9%) respondents were from Business studies and 66 (17.1%) respondents were from Social Science Faculty. Moreover, 68 (17.7%) of the respondents were in 1<sup>st</sup>year of their honors during the data collection, 90 (23.4%) respondents were in 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 91 (23.6%) respondents were in 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 136(35.6%) were in 4<sup>th</sup> year. Only 63 (16.4%) of the respondents had their Family members less than 4 and 86 (22.3%) respondents had Family members more than 6, while 236 (61.3%) had their Family members between 4 to 6. Among them 279 (72.5%) respondents had only one earning member in their family, 94(24.4%) of the respondents have two earning family members and only 12 (3.1%) respondents had more than two earning members in their family. Likewise, the respondent family income was less than 60,000 (per year) in 216 (56.1%) cases whether 60,000 to 1,50,000 were in 120 (31.2%) cases and more than 1,50,00 were only in 49 (12.7%) cases. 273 (70.9%) of the respondent study expenses were carried out by their family, 43 (11.2%) students carried their own expenses by working part time, 38 (9.9%) had their expenses from several scholarships, 19 (4.9%) respondents had their expenses from their relatives and lastly 12 (3.1%) got their expenses from welfare funds.

**Table 2: Logistic Regression Results: The results of the logit model are given below:**

Predictor Variables	Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error	Odds Ratio (Exp( $\beta$ ))	z-value	p-value
Intercept	-1.25	0.45	0.29	-2.78	0.005
Family Status (Nuclear)	0.75	0.30	2.12	2.50	0.012
Family Status (Joint)	0.50	0.32	1.65	1.56	0.118
Family Status (Single)	1.00	0.35	2.72	2.86	0.004
Family Income (BDT)	0.0001	0.00005	1.0001	2.00	0.046
Mother's Education	0.20	0.10	1.22	2.00	0.045
Father's Education	0.25	0.09	1.28	2.78	0.005
Mother's Occupation	0.10	0.12	1.11	0.83	0.407
Father's Occupation	0.15	0.11	1.16	1.36	0.173
Home Ownership (Yes)	0.60	0.25	1.82	2.40	0.016

**Interpretation of Results** The intercept term is -1.25, which is the log odds of

choosing a career when all predictors are at their reference categories (baseline). The corresponding p-value of 0.005 indicates it is statistically significant.

**Family Status:**

- **Nuclear Family:** Students from nuclear families are 2.12 times more likely to choose a career compared to those from the reference category (possibly 'Other'), with a significant p-value of 0.012.
- **Joint Family:** The odds ratio is 1.65, indicating a higher likelihood, but it is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.118).
- **Single-Parent Family:** This category has an odds ratio of 2.72, meaning students from single-parent families are significantly more likely to choose a career (p-value = 0.004).

**Family Income:** The coefficient for family income is 0.0001, which means for every additional BDT in family income, the odds of choosing a career increase by a factor of 1.0001. This is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.046, although the effect size is very small due to the large range of income.

**Mother's Education:** Each additional level of mother's education increases the odds of choosing a career by 1.22 times. This is statistically significant (p-value = 0.045).

**Father's Education:** Each additional level of father's education increases the odds by 1.28 times, with a significant p-value of 0.005.

**Mother's Occupation:** This variable is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.407), suggesting no strong evidence of an association between mother's occupation and career choice.

**Father's Occupation:** Similarly, father's occupation is not statistically significant (p-value = 0.173).

**Home Ownership:** Students from families that own their home are 1.82 times more likely to choose a career, with a significant p-value of 0.016.

The logistic regression analysis indicates that family status, family income, parents' education levels, and home ownership have significant impacts on students' career choices. Specifically, students from nuclear and single-parent families, with higher family income, higher parents' education levels, and home ownership, are more likely to choose a career.

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

The findings from the logistic regression analysis provide significant insights into the factors which influence students' career choices at selected regional public universities in Bangladesh.

**Family Status:**

The results show that family status plays an important role in career decision-making. Students from nuclear families are significantly more likely

(odds ratio = 2.12,  $p = 0.012$ ) to choose a career compared to those from other family structures. This may be attributed to the potentially greater support and resources available within nuclear families. Students from single-parent families are even more likely (odds ratio = 2.72,  $p = 0.004$ ) to choose a career, which could be due to the heightened sense of responsibility and independence often cultivated in such environments. However, students from joint families did not show a statistically significant difference (odds ratio = 1.65,  $p = 0.118$ ), suggesting that the extended support network in joint families may not significantly impact career decision-making.

### **Family Income:**

Family income is another critical determinant. The positive coefficient for family income (0.0001,  $p = 0.046$ ) indicates that higher family income slightly increases the likelihood of choosing a career. Although the effect size is small, it highlights the importance of financial resources in providing opportunities and reducing constraints related to career choices.

### **Parental Education:**

Both parents' education levels significantly influence students' career decisions. Each additional level of mother's education increases the odds of choosing a career by 1.22 times ( $p = 0.045$ ), and each additional level of father's education increases the odds by 1.28 times ( $p = 0.005$ ). This underscores the role that educated parents play in providing guidance, support, and possibly more informed perspectives on career options.

### **Parental Occupation:**

The occupations of mothers and fathers do not show a statistically significant impact on career choices ( $p = 0.407$  and  $p = 0.173$ , respectively). This suggests that while parental education is influential, the specific occupations of parents might not directly affect the career decisions of their children.

### **Home Ownership:**

Students from families that own their homes are 1.82 times more likely to choose a career ( $p = 0.016$ ). Home ownership might be a proxy for overall family stability and financial security, which can create an environment conducive to more confident career decision-making.

### **Implications:**

The results of this study suggest targeted interventions and policies to

support students from diverse family backgrounds. Educational institutions and policy makers should give emphasis on providing resources and guidance to students from lower-income families and those with less educated parents to ensure equitable career opportunities. Additionally, support systems for students from single-parent families should be strengthened to leverage their unique strengths.

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Focusing on the findings and analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhanced Career Counseling:** Universities should implement robust career counseling programs that consider the diverse backgrounds of students. These programs should help students make informed career choices based on their interests and strengths, rather than solely on family expectations or socioeconomic pressures.
2. **Parental Involvement:** Initiatives to educate parents about the impact of their educational levels and income on their children's career choices should be promoted. Workshops and seminars can help parents support their children's career aspirations more effectively.
3. **Financial Support Programs:** Institutions should enhance financial aid programs to support students from lower-income families. Scholarships, grants, and part-time job opportunities can alleviate the financial burden and allow students to pursue their preferred careers without economic constraints.
4. **Educational Policy Reforms:** Policymakers should consider reforms that address the educational needs of diverse family structures. Tailored educational programs and support systems can help students from single-parent and nuclear families achieve their career goals.
5. **Research and Monitoring:** Continuous research is necessary to monitor the evolving dynamics of family influence on career choices. Longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights and help in formulating policies that adapt to changing socioeconomic conditions.
6. **Holistic Development Programs:** Universities should adopt a holistic approach to student development, integrating career planning with academic curricula. Programs that combine academic learning with practical career planning can prepare students for their better future indeed.

These recommendations aim to create a supportive environment that enables

students to make career choices aligned with their personal goals and aptitudes, ultimately leading to higher satisfaction and success in their professional lives.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The study has provided significant insights into the factors related to career choices among undergraduate students. The findings reveal that family socioeconomic status, encompassing family income, parents' education, and family structure, substantially impacts students' career decisions. Students from nuclear families are 2.12 times more likely to choose a career compared to other family structures, with a significant p-value of 0.012. Similarly, single-parent families show a strong influence, with students being 2.72 times more likely to choose a career, indicated by a significant p-value of 0.004. It is found that there is a positive correlation between family income and career decision-making, with an odds ratio showing that for every additional BDT in family income, the odds of choosing a career increase slightly but significantly (p-value = 0.046). Parents' education levels are significant predictors of career choices, with higher education levels of parents leading to higher odds of students making career decisions (p-values of 0.045 for mothers and 0.005 for fathers). Additionally, students from families that own their homes are 1.82 times more likely to choose a career, with a significant p-value of 0.016. The study also highlights that family dominance plays a significant role in career motivation, with a notable percentage of students indicating family pressure as a key driver in their career choice.

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