

# Diverse Currents: Understanding the Intersection of Gender and Locale in Secondary School Stream Selection

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## Abstract

career guidance and counseling services to assist student`s in making informed stream choice. Overall, this research provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers and stakeholders in addressing The study examines the perceptions and decision making processes of students in selecting academic streams, such as arts, science and commerce, at secondary level. Drawing on sample of 200 students from both private and government schools, the research employs a survey method to collect data. The analysis reveals significant differences in stream preferences between male and female students, highlighting distinct inclinations towards arts and science streams. Additionally, the investigation identifies influential factors driving student`s stream choices, including their interests, perceived career utility of the stream, technological influences, and availability of streams in nearby schools. Tool was made by investigator (self constructed tool). The sample was collected by using random purposive sampling technique. The sample of present study was confined to 15 schools of private and government schools of Kathua district of J&K UT of India. The findings underscore the importance of creating inclusive and supportive learning environments to empower students to explore diverse educational pathways aligned with their interests and aspirations. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for comprehensive gender disparities and socio-economic factors in educational decision making processes, thereby promoting equitable opportunities for all students in kathua district and beyond.

**Keywords:** Gender, Locale, Secondary School , Stream Choice.

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a very significant role for the development of human. Education is the heart of society as well as individual. It changes the way of living, way of thinking and also helps to contribute for the welfare of nation also. The future of the India is shaped in the classrooms of the children. In the educational landscape, students stand as central figures, wielding significant influence as the architects of a nation`s future. Their role transcends mere participation; they are the cornerstone of the educational system, contributing to the foundation upon which society evolves. Among the myriad choices students face, the selection of subjects at the secondary school level emerges as pivotal juncture, casting a long shadow over their academic journey( Javed, 2018). Career planning is indeed crucial for a successful and fulfilling professional life. Starting with the right subject combination after class X sets the foundation for one`s future career path. It is not just about select subject randomly but rather making informed decision that aligned with one`s skills, passion and long term goal (Yadav and Rani, 2017).

Students entering secondary education often expect to have the freedom to choose their subject based on their abilities and interests. It is crucial for schools to offer a diverse range of subjects and provide support and guidance to help students make informed decisions about their academic pathways (Komba and Joyce, 2014) . The foundation for cultivating skilled human resources across various professions often begins with the subject choices made during lower secondary education, particularly at the ordinary level. Schools play a pivotal role in shaping these choices as the subject selected at this stage can have profound consequences for individuals` academic achievements and their prospects in the labor market (Ntawigaya, 2021).

### **Significance of the study**

Students at secondary level of education do not select stream in a random way, choosing a particular stream at secondary level education is most crucial decision which determines the whole career and future of an individual. Student`s decision to enter into secondary education and to choose suitable courses deploys critical and complex discourses. There is no single factor at work. There are always combinations of factors that influence the decision regarding choice of subjects .The present study is timely and of immediate policy relevance. Secondary education level is the most important stage for a child it is the stage where the child is at the position where he/she choose one stream whether he/she continue their studies. The important rationale of this study is that the information from this study might give parents a more accurate depiction of their kid`s choice and behaviors. This information might facilitate communication and understanding between students and their parents. Another important rationale for doing research on this topic will prove very much beneficial for a good guidance giver and counselor also. The present study will help and provide information to the policy makers about the effective approaches for how decisions of students regarding subject choice are determined and what factors influence them.

### **Review of related literature**

Student`s cognitive preferences would be expected to influence subject choice decisions and should be included in subject selection models. The career mate instrument was able to provide significant information on student cognitive preferences as they relate to selection of specific subjects. Aspects of the student`s preferences were correlated with their subjects choices and gender and subject specific relationships emerged(Malone and Cavanagh, 1997). Student`s perception of the factors influencing their decision to choose between science and arts stream for ordinary level of secondary schools. Factors such as student`s examination scores, self efficacy, knowledge of available careers, gender and school resource context affect student`s choice of stream(Kinyota,2013). Different factors have been found which influence students, regarding choice of particular stream at secondary level of education. Future employment, income and interest in the particular stream have been found as one of the most influential factors regarding student`s selection of particular stream(Saleem and Yousaf,2015).

### **Research questions**

1. Does the prospective stream choice of secondary school students differs with respect to demographic variables such as gender, and locale
2. What are the different influencers of prospective stream choice of secondary school students.

3. What are the relative strength of different influencers of prospective stream choice of secondary school students.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

**The main objectives of the study were-**

1. To study the differences in the prospective stream choice of secondary school students with respect to gender.
2. To study the differences in prospective stream choice of secondary school students with reference to locale.
3. To identify the potent influencers for prospective stream choice of secondary school students.
4. To identify the relative strength of the potent influencers of the prospective stream choice of secondary school students.

### **DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

1. The study was confined to secondary school students.
2. The study was conducted on a sample of 200 students including boys and girls of high school.
3. The investigation was confined to Kathua district only.
4. The study was confined only 15 schools of Kathua district.
5. The study was confined both private and government schools of Kathua District.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Population**

In the present investigation, the population frame constitutes 350 schools in Kathua district. Students studying in class 10th of both private and government schools of Kathua District constituted the population,

#### **Sampling technique**

Random purposive sampling technique was used by the investigator to select the schools. The sample in the present investigation is comprised of 15 schools of Kathua district of J&K UT of India. Out of 11 Education zones of Kathua District, Investigator chooses 5 zones by using lottery method. She selected 20 Schools as her sample for her study. Investigator chooses 4 schools from each zone 2 government school and 2 private school. All the students present in class include in the sample.

#### **Sample**

The sample of the present investigation was drawn from all 10th Class students studying in both Private and Govt. Schools. A Sample of 200 Students was taken which includes 95girls and 105boys.

#### **Tool used**

The survey method was used for the collection of data. A Opinionnaire was prepared by the investigator. It mainly involves two sections i.e selection of tool and validation of tool. Opinionnaire consist of 15 items which are prepared for the students of 10th class. Out of 15 items 8 items are positive and 7 items are negative.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

**Gender difference in the prospective stream choice of secondary school students**

	ARTS	SCIENCE	COMMERCE	TOTAL
<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>MALE</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>200</b>

**Percentage analysis**

STREAM	ARTS	SCIENCE	COMMERCE
<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>37.8%</b>	<b>51.5%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>
<b>MALE</b>	<b>36.15%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>25.7%</b>

**Difference in stream choice of secondary school students with respect to locale**

	ARTS		SCIENCE		COMMERCE	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
<b>URBAN</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>RURAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>24</b>

**Table 4. Potent influencers for prospective stream choice of secondary school students**

S.NO	Categories	No. of students opted	Percentage
<b>1.</b>	<b>Interest of the students</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>95%</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Stream useful for future</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Technological influence</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Availability of stream in nearby school</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Economic status of family</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Influence of ideal person</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Friend`s choice of stream</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Influence of social prestige</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Gender influence</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20%</b>

Table 4 inferred that 95% of the students will opt their stream on the basis of their interest, 94% of the students will opt that stream which is beneficial for their career, 79% of the student`s stream choice influenced due to the effect of technology, 48% of the students choice stream on the basis of oppurtunities provided to the students i.e nearby school offers such as stream, tuitions centre etc.40% students will opt stream by the influence of economic status of their family. 37% students choose their stream influenced by their ideal person such as teacher, parents, sibling etc. 37% students will opt their stream under the influence of their friends, As per data collected gender influence plays very little role for choosing the stream i.e20%.

**Potent influencers for prospective stream choice are:-**

- Interest of the student
- Career usage
- Influence of the technology
- Availability of stream in nearby school
- Opportunities of the student

**Findings of the study**

As per the findings percentage of female students who will opt arts stream are less than than male . Females who will opt art stream are 38% and male who opt arts stream are 36%. This shows that males are more influenced towards arts than female. Percentage of female who think they opt science stream is more than the males. Percentage of females will op commerce is much less than males. Majority of the females from urban area opted science stream, majority of male of rural area opted arts stream. Present study found that relative strength of categories interest of students and stream useful for future career are extremely high. Relative strength of categories technological influence and fall under availability of stream nearby school and economic status of the family are moderate. Relative strength of category gender influence is negligible.

**Implications for Educational Practice**

The findings of this study have several implications for educational practice and policy. Firstly, educators and policy makers should strive to create inclusive and supportive learning environments that empower students to explore diverse educational pathways based on their interests and aptitudes, regardless of gender or geographical location. Secondly, efforts to enhance career guidance and counseling services should prioritize providing comprehensive information and support to help students make informed stream choices aligned with their academic and career aspirations. Last but not least interventions aimed at addressing socio economic disparities and improving access to educational resources should be prioritize to ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the factors influencing the prospective stream choices of secondary school students, with a focus on gender disparities and geographical locales within kathua district, J&K ,India. The analysis revealed notable differences in stream preferences between male and female students. While males showed a higher inclination towards arts stream, females displayed a stronger preference for science streams. Furthermore, the percentage of females opting foe commerce streams was considerably lower compared to males. The investigation identified several influential factors driving student's stream choices. The most prominent influencers included the student's interest, perceived career utility of the stream, technological influences and the availability of streams in nearby schools. Additionally factors such as economic status, influence from ideal persons and peers, and social prestige also played roles, albeit to a lesser extent.

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