PREFERENCE IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STRAND: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Deciding on what strand to take in senior high school is important for it is the beginning of their chosen line of work in the future. This descriptive study was to determine the influence of preference of a Senior High School strand that is commonly encountered by the senior high school students in terms of personal interest, family influence, peer influence, financial condition, and employability. Using an adapted questionnaire it was found out that personal interest was the most influencing factor in choosing a strand of senior high school students of New Bataan National High School; Camanlangan National High School; and San Miguel National High School. Personal interest play an important role in choosing a course to study, however other factors should be consider such as job prospects, job demands, academic prerequisites, and personal circumstances. There should be a regular school career guidance program where the senior high school tracks, strands and specializations are properly discussed so that students can really decide and take the right strand which is in line with their future work or career.

KEYWORDS: *career guidance, personal interest, family influence, peer influence, financial condition, employability, design*

INTRODUCTION
The Problem and its Background
Choosing a senior high school strand is one of the most challenging decisions that junior high school students will have to face. It is greatly important because the strand they choose will serve as their training ground before entering college. Plamo (2015) said that all of these can be learned at the senior high school level, which is equivalent to pre-college. The examinations that shape the students' abilities and talents, the training that prepares them for the global workplace, and the programs that can give them a standard level of education are all significant parts of this program's purpose in getting them ready for college. This is following their diverse dreams and interests in life that can still change over time (Deil-Amen, 2011).

In the study of La (2009) on factors influencing the educational and career choices of senior high school students revealed that parent' supports, school structure, gender and grade point averages have considerable influence on Vietnamese Senior high school student's educational and career choice. In same year, Leonard (2009) study on high school students' selection decisions in South Carolina found out that parents and teachers are highly influential in the course selection decision.

The K to 12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines includes the introduction of senior high school (SHS), or grades 11 an d 12, the final two years of a new 6 -year secondary education system. Rather than merely focusing on post-secondary education

preparedness, the SHS Curriculum aims to prepare students for either higher education or work. (Development Asia, 2019). Students in JHS Grade 10 will follow a shared curriculum and can choose from four specialization options: Academics, Technical Vocational and Livelihood (TVL), Sports, or Arts and Design. Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMMS), Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), Science, Technology and Engineering (STEM), and General Academic Strand are the four strands that make up the Academic Track. Then there is the Technical Vocational Track, which includes Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Home Economics, Agri -Fishery Arts, and Industrial Arts.

The choice of senior high school track and strand is governed by different factors that influenced the academic achievement of the student. Currently, Camanlangan National High School offers only two tracks namely: Academic and Technical Vocational and Livelihood (TVL). Under academic track, general academic strand (GAS) was offered, under TVL, two strands were offered, Information & Communication Technology (ICT) and Agri-Fishery Arts (AFA). Of the three strands offered in Camanlangan National High School, the strand with the least enrollees was the Agri- Fishery Arts. Data showed that there was a drastic decreased in the enrolment of Agri-Fishery Arts strand of the current school year. In the previous school years: S.Y. 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, there were 22% and 20% of enrollees in agri-fishery arts strand, respectively, but in the current school year, S.Y. 2022-2023 only 9% of the total enrollees were enrolled in

Agri-Fishery Arts strand. With these data, the researcher would like to investigate the drastic decrease in the enrolment of Agri-Fishery Arts strand and what factors contributed to this problem. Also, the researcher would like to determine if the trend were the same in other schools offering Agri- Fishery Arts.

Statement of the Problem
This study aimed to determine the influence of preference of a Senior High School strand that is commonly encountered by the senior high school students in terms of personal interest, family influence, peer influence, financial condition, and employability. Specifically, the respondents of the study were the 1,179 senior high school students who are officially enrolled in three different schools namely: Camanlangan National High School; New Bataan National High School; and San Miguel National High School for school year 2022-2023. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

    1. What is the level of the factors that influence the respondents in choosing a strand in the senior high school in terms of:
- 1.1 personal interest,
- 1.2 family influence,
- 1.3 peer influence,
- 1.4 financial condition, and
- 1.5 employability?

    2. What is the preference of senior high school students
- 2.1 GAS
- 2.2 HUMSS,
- 2.3 TVL-AFA,
- 2.4. TVL-AI,
- 2.5 TVL-HE, and
- 2.6 TVL-ICT?

    3. What is the most dominant influencing factor?

METHODS
Research Design
This study employed the quantitative descriptive-survey research design which used an adaptive survey questionnaire to determine the influence of preference of a Senior High School track that is commonly encountered by the senior high school students in terms of personal interest, family influence, peer influence, financial condition, and employability. It is descriptive since the researcher observes, investigates, and describes the association between the factors that influence the respondents in choosing a track and the strand preference.

Research Locale
The study was conducted in the three public secondary schools namely: Camanlangan National High School, New Bataan National High School, and San Miguel National High School for school year 2022-2023.

Camanlangan National High School is located in Barangay Camanlangan, New Bataan, Davao De Oro along a national highway. It has a total land area of about 9,000 square meters. Presently, CNHS has 225 senior high school and 586 junior high school enrolled students. There were 7 senior high school teachers, 29 junior high school teachers, and 5 non- teaching staff.

New Bataan National High School is located in Purok 3-A Barangay Cabinuangan, Poblacion New Bataan, Davao De Oro. There were 802 officially enrolled students. Currently, there were 84 junior high and senior high school teachers in total and 10 non-teaching staff.

San Miguel National High School is located in Barangay San Miguel, Compostela, Davao De Oro and has a land area of approximately 1.8 hectares. San Miguel National High School has 22 junior high school teachers and 6 senior high school teachers. It also has 7 non-teaching staff. There were 539 junior high school and 152 senior high school students officially enrolled.

Research Respondents
The respondents of the study were the senior high school students in Camanlangan National High School, New Bataan National High School, and San Miguel National High School who were enrolled for school year 2022-2023. The Table below showed the distribution of respondents per school.

Table 1
Respondents of the Study

Name of the School	No. of Student Respondents
New Bataan National High School	225
Camanlangan National High School	802
San Miguel National High School	152
Total	**1,179**

Research Instrument
The main tool that was used in this study was an adapted questionnaire, which was modified and enhanced through validation of the panel experts. The questionnaire contained questions that were categorized according to the five factors that may influence the students in their preference in choosing the strand. Here the student respondents would rate each factor indicator using a scale from one to four point scale: 4 – Highly Influential; 3 – Moderately Influential; 2 – Slightly Influential; 1 – Not at All.

Validation of Instrument
The adapted instrument underwent validation by five members of the panel who were identified by the Dean of the Graduate

School. After the validation, vital changes were made according to the comments and suggestions of the panel. After then, the instrument was tried out to 20 identified students who were not part of the study. The purpose of this try-out would identify whether the instrument was reliable and if it would ask what was needed in the study. Should there be some unnecessary things that were not very important, the researcher would have to change or modify if it guarantees its validity and reliability.

Research Procedure
The following steps were followed in gathering of data:
Seeking of Permission to Conduct the Study.
The researcher wrote a letter of permission to conduct the study to the Schools Division Superintendent, Division of Davao de Oro. A written letter of request were also given to the Principal of Camanlangan National High School, New Bataan National High School, and San Miguel National High School for formal consent. Upon receiving the confirmation from the authorities, the researcher started the administration of the questionnaire. The researcher took into consideration the standard health protocols following the advice of the local health officials so as to ensure the safety of the researcher and the students.

Administration and Retrieval of the Research Instrument.
The researcher herself distributed and administered the research instruments to the student respondents who were asked to participate in the survey. Proper orientation was made to let students understand about the study. The students were given enough time to read and answer the survey questionnaire.

Collation and Tabulation of Data. After the collection of the survey questionnaire, the researcher tallied, collated and tabulated all the data and submitted them to the statistician for statistical treatment and the results was subjected to analyses and interpretations using the four-point Likert scale.

Statistical Tool
The responses to the items in the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted using the appropriate statistical tools as follows:

Mean. This was used to describe the level of the factors that influence the respondents in choosing a strand in the senior high school and to determine the most dominant influencing factor in choosing a strand.

Percentage. This was used to describe the number of enrolled students in each strand of the 3 different schools.

RESULTS
In this chapter, the presentation, data analysis, and interpretation of the results of the study are presented.

Level of Influence
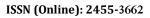 **Personal Interest.** Table 2 presents the level of influence on the personal interest of the respondents.

Table 2
Level of influence of Personal Interest of the Students

Strand	Mean	Description
General Academic Strand	2.917	Moderately Influential
Humanities and Social Sciences	3.060	Moderately Influential
Agri-Fishery Arts	2.866	Moderately Influential
Industrial Arts	3.025	Moderately Influential
Home Economics	2.967	Moderately Influential
Information and Communication Technology	3.033	Moderately Influential
AVERAGE MEAN	**2.978**	**Moderately Influential**

Table 2 shows the level of influence of personal interest on the choices made by the students on what strand they opted to enroll with an average mean of 2.978 which is described as moderately influential. The data appears that most of the respondents are influenced moderately by their own personal interest. There is no strong conviction that in choosing the strand they are influenced by their own interest of the course. However, practically speaking, it can assist in creating a more accurate perception. According to research, students' personal factors have a significant impact on how they decide on a career (Su, Chang, Wu, & Liao, 2016). They can develop their interest by identifying their perfect strand and sticking with it. It might give students the confidence that whatever they are doing is right since it stems from an ideal perspective.

 Family influence. Presented in Table 3 is the level of family influence of the students in deciding what strand they have to enrol.

Table 3
Family Influence

Strand	Weighted Mean	Description
General Academic Strand	2.029	Slightly Influential
Humanities and Social Sciences	2.182	Slightly Influential
Agri-Fishery Arts	2.291	Slightly Influential
Industrial Arts	2.499	Slightly Influential
Home Economics	2.388	Slightly Influential
Information and Communication Technology	2.405	Slightly Influential
AVERAGE MEAN	**2.299**	**Slightly Influential**

Table 3 presents the level of family influence on the chosen strand of the students with an average mean of 2.299 which is described as slightly influential. This means that the family slightly influenced the students in choosing their strand. As to their decision the students are not influenced so much by their own families with regard to choosing a strand. Few of them are influenced by the decision of their families. It could not be denied that the family is the most influential institution in the life of the children, however, in this study only few parents who convinced their children to choose the strand that their children would take. Unlike, in the study of Tortor, et al. (2020) reveals that majority of the respondents are inclined to moderately influential in considering their parents in selecting a strand in SHS. Understanding and appreciating parental participation can result in more helpful discussions and well-informed choices, promoting a welcoming environment where students can follow academic paths that are in line with their interests and their parents' enthusiasm.

Peer Influence. Table 4 shows the level of peer influence of the students in deciding what strand they are going to enroll.

Table 4
Peer Influence

Strand	Weighted Mean	Description
General Academic Strand	2.355	Slightly Influential
Humanities and Social Sciences	2.507	Moderately Influential
Agri-Fishery Arts	2.494	Slightly Influential
Industrial Arts	2.507	Moderately Influential
Home Economics	2.408	Slightly Influential
Information and Communication Technology	2.346	Slightly Influential
AVERAGE MEAN	**2.436**	**Slightly Influential**

Table 4 presents the level of peer influence on the decision made by the students in choosing the strand that they have to take in senior high school with an average mean of 2.436, described as slightly influential. The data showed that the students are less affected by their peers in getting the strand. Dissimilar to the study of Tortor et al. (2020), it was shown that peer influence moderately affects senior high school students in choosing a strand. Students' career decisions in choosing their strand are influenced by sociological aspects, including social groups (Obiunu & Ebunu, 2010). Peer groups and the environment of students also play a significant role in how Senior High students choose their strands of study (Obiyo & Eze, 2015).

Financial condition. Table 5 shows the level of influence of respondents in terms of financial condition.

Table 5
Financial Condition

Strand	Mean	Description
General Academic Strand	2.292	Slightly Influential
Humanities and Social Sciences	2.450	Slightly Influential
Agri-Fishery Arts	2.453	Slightly Influential
Industrial Arts	2.507	Moderately Influential
Home Economics	2.538	Moderately Influential
Information and Communication Technology	2.456	Slightly Influential
AVERAGE MEAN	**2.449**	**Slightly Influential**

Table 5 shows the level of financial condition that influence the students to choose what strand they are to enrol which obtains an average mean of 2.449 which means they are slightly influenced by their financial condition. The data reveals that finances for them are not the strongest influencer in choosing their career. The financial condition of their families does not affect their decision. The result could be an indicator that the students are not affected by their financial condition whether they have enough financial resources or not as long as they are happy about the decision they made. In other words what is important for them is their satisfaction. There is no connection between students' academic success in their chosen strand and the socioeconomic status and level of education of their parents (Ogunshola & Adewale, 2012). Additionally, according to Obiyo and Eze (2015), students' choice of strand is not greatly influenced by their parents' financial situation.

Employability. Table 6 presents the level of employability influence in deciding the strand that the students should take.

Table 6
Employability

Strand	Weighted Mean	Description
General Academic Strand	2.830	Moderately Influential
Humanities and Social Sciences	3.069	Moderately Influential
Agri-Fishery Arts	2.626	Moderately Influential
Industrial Arts	2.817	Moderately Influential
Home Economics	2.757	Moderately Influential
Information and Communication Technology	2.840	Moderately Influential
AVERAGE MEAN	**2.823**	**Moderately Influential**

Presented in Table 6 is the level of employability influence in the choices made by the students on what strand they are going to enrol in senior high school which yield an average mean of 2.823 which is described as moderately influential. The data shows that most students based on their choice on employability. This means that the students are looking for a strand that offers better opportunities in the future. Their decision in choosing the strand is influenced by the job opportunity that the course could offer to them. For practical reasons, students are wise enough to decide for their own future. According to the research by Palafox, Q., et al. (2018), students' perceptions of their employability skills proficiency as well as the importance of each employability skill to their career development and future endeavors like employment or career placement are presented. Employability skills are crucial for students and are seen to be important for educational and employment opportunities, as they directly impact their readiness for the job market and success in their chosen fields.
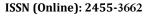
Preference of Senior High School Students
Table 7 indicates the total preference of enrollees in the different strands in New Bataan National High School for school year 2022-2023.

Table 7
Preference in Choosing in Strands

Strand	Number of Enrolled Students	Percentage
Humanities and Social Sciences	324	40%
General Academic Strand	177	22%
Home Economics	97	12%
Information and Communication Technology	81	10%
Industrial Arts	71	9%
Agri-Fishery Arts	52	6%
TOTAL	**802**	**100%**

Presented in Table 7 is the total number of enrolled senior high school students in New Bataan National High School. Humanities and Social Sciences strand is the most preferred strand of which 40% or 324 students are enrolled. There are 177 or 22% of the students chose the General Academic strand. Home Economics strand has a total number of enrolled students for about 97 or 12%; Information and Communication Technology is chosen by 81 or 10% enrolled students; Industrial Arts has 71 or 9% enrolled students; and 52 or 6% enrolled students in Agri- Fishery Arts.

The data show that more than half of the enrolled students selected the academic strands and almost half of the enrolled students chose Technical Vocational Livelihood or TVL strands. Among the six strands, HUMSS is the most popular strand majority of the students are inclined to take up humanities and social sciences related subject.

Table 8 indicates the preference of enrollees in the different strands in Camanlangan National High School for school year 2022-2023.

Table 8
Preference in Choosing in Strands

STRAND	Number of Enrolled Students	Percentage
General Academic Strand	116	52%
Information and Communication Technology	75	33%
Agri-Fishery Arts	34	15%
TOTAL	225	100%

Shown in Table 8 are the offered strands in Camanlangan National High School. One academic strand and 2 TVL strands. In the table presented, 52% or 116 of the enrolled students chose the general academic strand, and 33% or 75 enrolled students preferred Information and Communication Technology strand; and 15% or 34 enrolled students preferred Agri- Fishery Arts strand. In the table presented, more than half of the enrolled students chose academic strands, and almost half preferred TVL strands. Among the three strands offered in Camanlangan National High School the most popular strand is the General Academic Strand (GAS). In this strand the students could take any courses in college which is advantageous on their part.

Table 9 indicates the preference of enrollees in the different strands in San Miguel National High School for school year 2022-2023.

Table 9
Preference in Choosing in Strands

STRAND	Number of Enrolled Students	Percentage
General Academic Strand	77	51%
Agri-Fishery Arts	75	49%
TOTAL	152	100%

Shown in Table 9 are the strands offered in San Miguel National High School and the number of enrolled students. In the table presented, the General Academic Strand is the preferred strand of the 77 or 51% of enrolled students; and 49% or 75 enrolled students selected the Agri- Fishery Arts strand. A difference of two students only which make up almost the same decision they made.

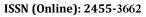**Dominant Influencing Factor in Choosing a Strand**
Table 10 presents the most dominant influencing factors in choosing a strand.

Table 10
Dominant Influencing Factors

Influencing Factors	GAS	HUMSS	Agri-Fishery Arts	Industrial Arts	HE	ICT	Mean
Personal Interest	2.917	3.060	2.866	3.025	2.967	3.033	2.978
Employability	2.830	3.069	2.626	2.817	2.757	2.840	2.823
Financial Condition	2.292	2.450	2.453	2.555	2.538	2.454	2.457
Peer Influence	2.355	2.507	2.494	2.507	2.408	2.346	2.436
Family Influence	2.029	2.182	2.291	2.499	2.338	2.405	2.291

Table 10 shows the most dominant influencing factors in choosing a strand. The statistics showed that personal interest with a mean of 2.978 followed by employability with a mean of 2.823 were the most dominant influencing factors in choosing a strand of the students. Personal interests play a significant role in choosing a strand. When selecting a strand it is important to consider your passions, strengths, and long-term goals. Studying something you are interested in can bring personal fulfillment and allow you to explore your passion and expand your knowledge. Likewise, employability is influenced by various factors, including economic conditions, job market demands, and specific industry requirements. Building a strong employability profile involves a combination of education, skills development, work experience, networking, and personal attributes.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the discussion, conclusion and recommendations drawn from the results obtained.

Discussions

After the data were analyzed and interpreted, the following discussions of the data are made:

Level of Influence in terms of Personal Interest. The level of influence in terms of personal interest has obtained an average mean of 2.978 which is described as moderately influential. The data reveals that most of the respondents are influenced moderately by their own personal interest. What they are interested about the strand motivates them to choose their strand. It is but normal for an individual to follow what he is aspiring of rather than entertaining the dictation of other people. In the study of Rio et. al. (2022), personal interests were discovered to be the crucial element in deciding on a career path. Brown (2002) points out that in psychologically focused studies of career choice, personality factors that incline a person to pursue a certain sort of work are greatly emphasized.

Level of Family Influence. The level of family influence on the chosen strand of the students received an average mean of 2.299 which is described as slightly influential. This means that the family slightly influenced the respondents in choosing their strand, which is contrary to the study of Moneba and Malbas (2019) that the family is one of the most influential factors that impact Filipino students in career decisions. Tortor et al. (2020) said that understanding and appreciating parental participation can result in more helpful discussions and well-informed choices, promoting a welcoming environment where students can follow academic paths that are in line with their interests and their parents' enthusiasm.

But in this study the result reveals that decision of the parents appears not to be highly influential on their children's decision especially in choosing the strand they would take in their senior high school education.

Level of Peer Influence. The level of Peer Influence on the decision made by the students in choosing the strand that they have to take in senior high school received an average mean of 2.436, described as slightly influential. The data show that the students are less affected by their peers in getting the strand. In the study conducted by Kaneez and Medha (2018) revealed that peer influence is slightly affecting the students in choosing their strand. Peer groups and the environment of students also play a significant role on how Senior High students choose their strands of study (Obiyo & Eze, 2015).

Level of Financial Condition. The level of financial condition that influence the students to choose what strand they are to enroll obtains an average mean of 2.449 which means they are slightly influenced by their financial condition. The data reveals that finances for them are not the strongest influencer in choosing their career. The financial condition of their families does not affect their decision. This phenomenon is similar to the result of the study of Moneba and Malbas (2019) that financial condition is fairly influenced the career choice of the students. Additionally, according to Obiyo and Eze (2015), students' choice of strand is not greatly influenced by their parents' financial situation.

Employability. The level of employability that influence the students in their decision to choose the strand yields an average mean of 2.823 which is described as moderately influential. This means that the respondents are looking for a strand that offers better opportunities in the future. In choosing strand respondents considered employment prospects that assures better salary and inclined to their interest and passion.

Strand Preferences In New Bataan National High School, Humanities and Social Sciences strand is the most preferred course of which 40% or 324 students are enrolled. There are 177 or 22% of the students chose the General Academic strand. Home Economics strand has a total number of enrolled students for about 97 or 12%; Information and Communication Technology is chosen by 81 or 10% enrolled students; Industrial Arts has 71 or 9% enrolled students; and 52 or 6% enrolled students in Agri-Fishery Arts.
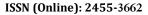
In Camanlangan National High School, 52% or 116 of the enrolled students chose the general academic strand, and 33% or 75 enrolled students preferred Information and Communication Technology strand; and 15% or 34 enrolled students preferred Agri- Fishery Arts strand. Among the three strands offered in Camanlangan National High School the most popular strand is the General Academic Strand (GAS). In this strand the students could take any courses in college which is advantageous on their part.

In San Miguel National High School General Academic Strand and Agri-Fishery Arts strands had almost the same number of enrolled students. The General Academic Strand is the preferred strand of the 77 or 51% of enrolled students; and 49% or 75 enrolled students selected the Agri- Fishery Arts strand. A difference of two students only which make up almost the same decision they made. Based on the data there are only two strands offered by the school so students could not venture to other strands so that they are forced to have either GAS or Agri-fishery Arts.

Further, the data reveal that the personal interest and employability are the dominant influencing factors affecting the students in choosing the strand they would take in senior high school education. This information suggests that the students are very true to themselves; whatever they decide should be in line with their self-fulfillment and satisfaction and wanted to be stable with their chosen career.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, factors such as peer influence, family influence and financial condition showed less influence to the senior high school students in choosing a strand. Personal interest and employability are the factors that most influence them

in choosing a strand in senior high school. Personal interest play an important role in choosing a course to study, however it is important to note that other consideration such as future job prospects, market demand, and personal circumstances should also be considered. Striking a balance between the interest and practical considerations could help the students to make sound decision.

Among the different strands offer in three different schools, most respondents preferred general academic strand. Possibly, as respondents will pursue a college courses that suit their personal interest.

Recommendations
Based from the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. There should be a regular school career guidance program where the senior high school tracks, strands and specializations are properly discussed so that students can really decide and take the right strand which is in line with their future work or career.

2. Similar study is recommended and will be conducted in schools with complete offering of strands.

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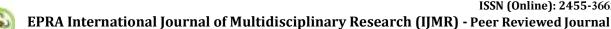
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