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# Determinants of Career Choice Decisions among Management Graduates at Tribhuvan University-Affiliated Campuses in Rupandehi District, Nepal

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**Abstract**

This study examined associations between personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, compensation, and career choice decision among management graduates at Tribhuvan University-affiliated campuses in Rupandehi District, Nepal. A quantitative cross-sectional survey analysed 300 questionnaires using SmartPLS 4.0 and PLS-SEM. Findings: Personal interest (beta = 0.194, p = 0.020), family influence (beta = 0.251, p = 0.002), and compensation (beta = 0.183, p = 0.006) had positive statistically significant path estimates. Peer influence (p = 0.084) and job opportunities (p = 0.071) were not statistically significant. The model R-squared was 0.294 (adjusted R-squared = 0.282). Findings are associations within a nonprobability sample and should not be interpreted causally or generalized beyond this context. Please reconcile whether respondents were students, graduates, or both. The study adopted a quantitative research design. A total of 300 respondents were selected from different management programs using convenience sampling techniques. Moreover, a questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was scored on a 7-point Likert scale. Additionally, the study applied the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach using SmartPLS 4.0 software in analysing the data. The analysis revealed that personal interest, family influence, and compensation had a significant effect on the career choice decisions of management graduates. On the other hand, peer influence and job opportunities had no effect on the career choice decisions of the graduates. Hence, the study established that the graduates placed more value on their personal interests, family influence, and compensation than peer influence and job opportunities. The current study adds to the body of knowledge on career choice by providing evidence of the applicability of Social Cognitive Career Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Human Capital Theory in the Nepalese higher-education context. Moreover, the findings have practical implications for universities, career counselors, employers, and policymakers in terms of designing career guidance programs, family career planning interventions, compensation strategies for sustaining desirable occupational choices, and policies that promote congruence between higher-education programs and labour market needs.

**Keywords:** Career choice decision, Management graduates, Personal interest, Family influence, Compensation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Career decision-making is undoubtedly a significant matter in a person's life since the chosen profession will determine their quality of living, income level, and future professional growth. The current situation in the global economy, technological progress, globalization, and the growing number of job opportunities make it challenging for modern students to choose wisely. Graduates' career decision-making processes are complicated by the fact that every year new people join the workforce, yet not all of them are eager to work in specific fields or possess the necessary skills for

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the most compelling positions. At the same time, scholars stress that this choice is a complex process determined by situational, economic, and psychological factors, not individual desires alone. For instance, previous studies on graduates' career choices revealed that personal interests, family attitudes, peer groups, job opportunities, and financial prospects significantly influence students' decisions (Melak & Derbe, 2022; Monteiro et al., 2025; Purohit et al., 2021). The most recent research findings suggest that graduates' career choices can be explained by individual preferences and external forces such as the job market, social networks, and access to resources (Dankyi et al., 2025; Tannous et al., 2024). Accordingly, it is possible to suggest that the career choice of graduates is a multi-faceted process shaped by personal, social, economic, and situational factors.

In developing countries such as Nepal, career planning of graduates in universities has become a matter of great importance because of the unprecedented rise of higher education and the number of graduates who enter the job market each year. Since Tribhuvan University is the largest public university in Nepal, it produces a significant number of managers from its campus every year. Graduates from Tribhuvan University have raised concerns over which career specialisation to pursue after graduation. There is a shortage of jobs, so the competition for the limited positions is high as young graduates look for jobs in Nepal while others seek opportunities abroad. These managers have several career options, such as working in the banking sector or other businesses, starting their venture, working in government, and seeking employment opportunities overseas. According to previous studies conducted in Nepal, students' career decisions are significantly influenced by personal interests, monetary benefits, the availability of jobs, and social interactions (Purohit et al., 2021; Thapa, 2023). However, recent studies conducted worldwide indicate that the labour market, social networks, and professional expectations significantly influence graduates' career choices in developing countries (Monteiro et al., 2025; Panakaje et al., 2024).

Conceptually, it is understood that the career choice decision involves considering viable professional options and picking the one most desirable to an individual. A number of theories can be used to expound on the mechanisms by which individuals make career decisions. First, it is postulated by the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) that career decisions are dependent on personal interests, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and environmental factors (Lent & Brown, 2020). Subsequently, the theory explains that career interests take part due to personal motivations and environmental factors that influence an individual's occupational aspirations. Similarly, Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities states that people are often attracted to specific careers due to one's personality, aptitude, and interests, thus contributing to higher performance, job satisfaction, and commitment to the profession (Holland, 1997). Furthermore, the TPB Theory explains that career-related cognitions and behaviours are guided by attitudes, control beliefs, and normative beliefs, with actions being dependant on intentions. As such, the family, friends, culture, and society at large can influence an individual's career path (Ajzen, 1991). Finally, according to the Human Capital Theory, individuals make career decisions based on the economic benefits generated by selecting a specific profession over another. As such, the monetary gains, employment opportunities, and job security prospects influence career decisions (Becker, 1964). Overall, it can be asserted that there is a wide array of theoretical relationships that influence career decision-making.

Several studies have examined the effect of various factors on the career decisions of students and graduates. According to Thapa's (2023) study, the prospects for monetary gains, social aspects, and

job opportunities influence management students' career decisions in Tribhuvan University. Similarly, Panakaje et al. (2024) revealed that personal aspects, career opportunities, and working conditions significantly predict the career decisions of commerce and management students. In another study, Ahmed et al. (2025) discovered that self-efficacy, social support, and career prospects significantly influence the career decisions of students in higher education institutions. Melak and Derbe (2022) also found that job opportunity, training, and socio-economic factors significantly predict the career decisions of youths. From the reviewed literature, one can conclude that most factors that influence career decisions emanate from personal, social, and economic needs. Therefore, there is a need to identify the factors influencing the career decisions of management graduates at TU-affiliated institutions in Nepal.

Although the literature is filled with an extensive amount of research on the decision-making process in career choice, a number of research questions still remained unresolved. Firstly, most of the previous studies used students as the sample size but did not concentrate specifically on the management graduates entering the labour market (Melak & Derbe, 2022; Monteiro et al., 2025). Management graduates are confronted with a wide range of career opportunities, including jobs in the banking sector, managerial positions, running one's own business, and working in the government.

Secondly, prior studies have examined the influence of individual considerations, familial relationships, and job availability on career decision-making processes separately. However, there is limited information on the interrelation between economic, social, and personal factors that influence career decision-making (Panakaje et al., 2024; Purohit et al., 2021). Thirdly, prior research has been conducted in different geographical locations. However, there is a need to generate more information on the career decision-making process of graduates in developing countries such as Nepal (Thapa, 2023). Moreover, studies conducted in Nepal have failed to establish the relationship between different factors and the career decision-making process of management graduates. The current research will employ a quantitative study to determine the effect of personal interest, peer, family influence, job availability, and compensation, on the career decision-making process of management graduates at TU in Rupandehi District, Nepal.

Although the factors affecting career choices of students have extensively been studied worldwide, little is known about management graduates in TU campuses of Rupandehi District, Nepal. Most of the previous research has been focused on investigating the connection between students' career decisions and their interests, peer groups, family, job opportunities, and remuneration. Besides, the status of the education system and economy in Nepal is considerably different from the majority of the countries where such research has been conducted. According to the latest data, financial benefits, social connections, and job opportunities have a significant impact on the career choices of management students in Tribhuvan University (Thapa, 2023). Similarly, the previous studies have revealed that the factors affecting career decision-making of higher education students in different countries include personal interests, socio-cultural influences, job opportunities, and salary (Ahmed et al., 2025; Melak & Derbe, 2022; Panakaje et al., 2024). Moreover, the researchers have found that students' intentions to make particular career decisions are primarily motivated by personal interests, socio-cultural influences, and the labour market situation in the local community (Purohit et al., 2021;

Suhi et al., 2021). Therefore, it is reasonable to conduct further research to determine the career choice influencers in management graduates of TU campuses of Rupandehi District, Nepal.

The current study aimed to reveal the factors affecting career decision-making of management graduates pursuing their studies at TU-affiliated campuses in Rupandehi district, Nepal. The expected results of this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing additional empirical evidence on the subject. Prior research has revealed that exploring factors affecting career decision-making is essential in elevating graduate employability prospects while also enhancing the relevance of higher education curriculums to labour market needs (Melak & Derbe, 2022; Purohit et al., 2021). The results of this study will benefit universities, policymakers, career counsellors, and management graduates. The findings will help universities improve their career counselling services, while policymakers will enact pertinent policies to bridge the gap between higher education and employment (Panakaje et al., 2024). Similarly, the results will benefit management graduates by helping them make educated career decisions based on personal interests, career opportunities, and employment prospects (Ahmed et al., 2025). Ultimately, this study will broaden the existing body of knowledge by providing insight into the relationship between personal, social, and economic factors and career decision-making of management program graduates in Nepal using a quantitative research design.

### 1.1 Research Questions (RQ)

***RQ1.*** *What is the necessary condition for determining career choice decisions?*

***RQ2.*** *What is the effect of personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, and compensation on career choice decisions among management graduates?*

### 1.2 Research Objectives

***RO1:*** *To assess the necessary condition for determining career choice decisions.*

***RO2:*** *To examine the influence of personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, and compensation on career choice decisions among management graduates in Rupandehi District.*

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

Career choice is explained by various theories emphasizing the role played by individual, social, and economic factors. One of the prominent models is the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett in 1994. According to the model, personal experiences, expectations, interests, and environment have an impact on people's choice of career. It also states that individuals are likely to choose a career they find interesting to pursue and feel confident about their ability to be successful. Moreover, family members, friends, and the general social environment play a critical role in influencing personal career interests and increasing or decreasing confidence in pursuing a certain occupation. Indeed, recent studies have revealed the cruciality of personal interest as well as social environment in shaping the career aspirations and choices of students (Lanero et al., 2016; Monteiro et al., 2025).

Another theory of a similar nature is Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (Holland, 1997), according to which people tend to seek occupations that fit their

personalities, traits, and interests. At the same time, the most appropriate job fit improves career satisfaction, performance, and commitment. In particular, managerial education can attract participants with an entrepreneurial, social, or conservative orientation to business, banking, management, marketing, or consultancy careers. Meanwhile, prior findings highlight the role of personality and personal interests in determining one's career prospects and growth (Agarwala, 2008; Tannous et al., 2024).

Career choice can also be explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This theory states that intentions to perform a behaviour are determined by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Attitudes in this context can be seen as the perception of the work, while subjective norms represent the expectations of one's family and society. The perception of control over the desired behaviour is another factor affecting students' intentions and career decisions (Abu et al., 2023; Shahzad et al., 2014).

Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker in 1964 explains the mechanisms of making a career choice from an economic perspective. According to this theory, people are willing to make investments to improve their productivity and gain higher economic gains. Therefore, individuals base their decision on the potential financial benefits and the job market environment. Current studies add to the discussion by providing empirical evidence on the impact of financial gains and labour market trends on students' career decisions and aspirations (Ahmed et al., 2025; Panakaje et al., 2024). In combination with the other two theories, they explain the career choice motives of management students and the factors influencing them.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

The decision on a career choice has been a subject of interest for researchers in education, psychology, and management because of its impact on the future of one's profession. Career-related decisions are influenced by many aspects, including personal, social, and economic factors. The most common variables explored in the literature are personal interest, peer groups, family, availability of jobs, and financial considerations. Various researchers have adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods in understanding the career decision-making process. Such studies have included survey designs, regression analyses, and structural equation modelling. In general, the reviewed literature reveals that the career decision-making process is complex and involves various interrelated factors.

#### 2.2.1 Personal Interest and Career Choice Decision

A number of studies have established personal interest as a predictor of career choice. Personal interest is described as an individual's internal motivation, likes or enthusiasm for a certain occupation or field of study. Students are more likely to make career decisions in line with their interests, abilities, and aspirations. Panakaje et al. (2024) established that personal interest, together with self-development and career aspirations, predicted the career decisions of commerce and management students. Thapa (2023) found that subject interest and interpersonal influence significantly predicted the career decisions of management students at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. Ahmed et al. (2025) found that personal motivation and career opportunities significantly predicted the career decisions of students in tertiary education. Indeed, personal interest appears to be a significant predictor of career choice in general.

*H1: There is a positive and significant effect of personal interest on career choice decision.*

### 2.2.2 Peer Influence and Career Choice Decision

Peer influence is another factor that can affect career choice, especially at the university level since students interact with each other and share information and experiences about the career options available to them. This influence can be positive and contribute to an individual's decision-making process or, on the contrary, impede it. According to Gwelo (2019), peer influence has a significant impact on students' career choices. On the other hand, Li et al. (2020) note that students' career options tend to be determined by the preferences of peers within social networks. The reviewed articles confirm the initial assumption that peer influence plays a meaningful role in career awareness and can predict decision-making patterns. Thus, it is possible to suggest that peer influence has a positive effect on career choice decisions.

*H2: There is a positive and significant effect of peer influence on career choice decision.*

### 2.2.3 Family Influence and Career Choice Decision

It is common for children to be influenced by their family to take up a certain career. Parents, other family members, or even one's siblings can encourage or influence one's career decision. Previous studies have shown a clear correlation between family and career choice decisions. Penick and Jepsen (1992) demonstrated that the family system plays a role in career exploration, whereas Gamariel and Blaise (2021) showed that parents' education, profession, and expectations influence a child's career decision. Similarly, Abu et al. (2023) and Atangongo et al. (2024) demonstrated that a family's support, parental guidance, and socio-cultural background significantly influence career interests and occupation choices in students. All previous studies show that family is a critical social structure that influences different aspects of life, including making career-related decisions.

*H3: There is a positive and significant effect of family influence on career choice decision.*

### 2.2.4 Job Opportunities and Career Choice Decision

Job opportunities are among the most common considerations for individuals when choosing a profession since the job market's status is usually a primary concern. Contemporary research evidence reveals that employment prospects significantly impact career decisions. Athanasou (2003) explicated that job options are determined by income and employment prospects. Similarly, Suhi et al. (2021) revealed that the likelihood of being employed and the range of opportunities available to graduates influence their career decisions. On the other hand, Thapa (2023) conducted a study on career decision-making among management students in Nepal and uncovered that prospects of future employment opportunities largely define their choices of careers. This piece of evidence, therefore, indicates that job opportunities are indeed a critical consideration when choosing a career.

*H4: There is a positive and significant effect of job opportunities on career choice decision.*

### 2.2.5 Compensation and Career Choice Decision

Compensation is another crucial economic factor that influences career decision-making. Most people consider salary, benefits, and long-term financial prospects when selecting a career. Past research has established a clear link between financial benefits and career choices. For instance, Dulebohn and Werling (2007) established that compensation is a critical element in making a career decision. Ng et al. (2008) discovered that financial incentives determined the career decisions of MBA students, whereas Purohit et al. (2021) concluded that salary expectations and career progression prospects influenced graduates' career choices. In Nepal, the research conducted by

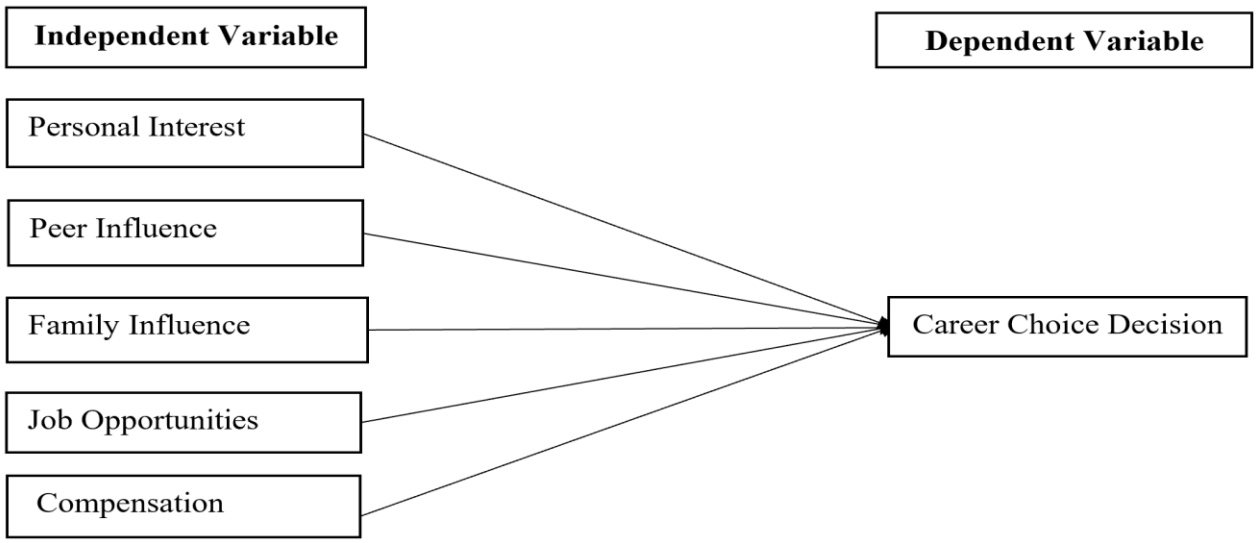
Ahmed et al. (2025) and Thapa (2023) supports the aforesaid studies by revealing that financial expectations significantly impact a student's career decision. Therefore, the review of previous research provides sufficient evidence that compensation plays a crucial role in the career decision-making process of different populations.

*H5: There is a positive and significant effect of compensation on career choice decision.*

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework shown in figure 1 of this study is expounded upon, focusing on the relationships between the five independent variables-personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, and compensation-and the dependent variable-career choice decision. Personal interest indicates the level of motivation and inclinations of the graduates towards selected fields of study based on their needs, abilities, and desires. On the other hand, peer and family influences are the social factors that affect career decision-making in terms of support, guidance or encouragement. Job opportunities and compensation, meanwhile, are economic factors that consider the employment prospects and monetary benefits associated with a career. Together, the theoretical framework considers personal, social, and economic aspects of career choice decision of the management graduates in the Technical Universities (TU) of Rupandehi District, Nepal.

**Figure 1** *Theoretical Framework*




*Note.* Adapted from Agarwala (2008); Gwelo (2019); Shahzad et al. (2014); Suhi et al. (2021); Thapa (2023).

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design to describe respondents and examine associations between personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, compensation, and career choice decision. Because data were collected at one point in time without experimental assignment, the design does not establish causal effects.

### 3.2 Population and Sample Size

The stated target population comprised postgraduate management students at 11 TU-affiliated campuses in Rupandehi District, with an estimated total of approximately 1,475. The manuscript reports distributing 350 questionnaires and retaining 300 completed responses (85.71%). It describes selection as purposive here and convenience-based elsewhere; please reconcile these descriptions and specify eligibility criteria, campuses, recruitment procedure, and whether respondents were enrolled students, graduates, or both. The 10-times-rule calculation gives a minimum of 50 based on five structural paths. This is only a rough heuristic and does not demonstrate adequate statistical power. Provide a defensible sample-size rationale and clarify the discrepancy with the separate statement that population size was unknown.

This section conflicts with the preceding target-population description: the target is described as students at 11 campuses with an estimated population of 1,475, while this paragraph describes graduates and an unspecified population. Please reconcile the target population and remove duplicate or contradictory sample-size calculations. The 10-times rule is not a substitute for a power-based justification.

### 3.3 Sampling Techniques

The study employed a non-probability sampling technique to select postgraduate management students from TU-affiliated campuses in Rupandehi District, Nepal. The sampling procedure focused on students enrolled in MBS, MBA, and other postgraduate management programs who were relevant to the study of career choice decisions. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, of which 300 sufficiently completed questionnaires were retained for analysis, resulting in a usable response rate of 85.71%. Incomplete questionnaires, where applicable, were excluded from the final analysis. Participation was voluntary.

The specific sampling technique should be identified according to the procedure actually followed. Purposive sampling applies if respondents were deliberately selected because they met predefined eligibility criteria, whereas convenience sampling applies if respondents were selected primarily because they were readily available. The participating campuses, data-collection dates, recruitment procedure, eligibility criteria, and number of excluded questionnaires should also be reported to improve methodological transparency.

### 3.4 Nature and Sources of Data Collection

The research will utilize primary quantitative data to evaluate the factors influencing career decisions of management graduates in TU affiliated campuses of Rupandehi district, Nepal. The data will be collected by distributing a questionnaire to management graduates to obtain their views on the influence of personal interest, peers, family, job opportunities and compensation on their career decisions. The questionnaire will comprise of closed ended statements using a seven-point Likert scale for easier evaluation and analysis. Information will be collected from respondents directly to ensure that there are no information gaps and the data collected is reliable and appropriate for the study

The seven-point likert scale will enable the respondents to indicate their perception of the influence of the variables on career decision making of management graduates. Data collection will be done directly from the respondents by distributing the questionnaires and collecting the filled copies back.

The direct method of collecting data will ensure that the data collected is reliable, valid, accurate and sufficient for statistical analysis.

### 3.5 Research Instrument and Scale Items

The items used for the study were adapted from various authors who have worked on career choice and career decision-making scales. The questionnaire had thirty items scored on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. The questionnaire had five independent variables which were personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, and compensation. The dependent variable in the study was career choice decision. The items used for the assessment of personal interest were adapted from the work of Humayon et al. (2018) and Nyamwange (2016). The items assessing peer influence were adapted from the work of Kulkarni and Naz et al. (2014) and Nithyanand (2012). The items for family influence were adapted from Humayon et al. (2018) and Whiston and Keller (2004). The items for the assessment of job opportunities were adapted from Agarwala (2008) and Amasuomo (2014). The items for compensation were adapted from the work of Achim et al. (2019) and Judge and Bretz (1992). The items for the assessment of career choice decision were adapted from the work of Agarwala (2008) and Lent and Brown (2020).

### 3.6 Method for Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected were analysed using SmartPLS 4.0 following the recommendations for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Firstly, there was a descriptive statistic that highlighted the respondents' demographics and displayed their answers towards the research variables. Secondly, the analysis focused on five independent variables namely; personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, and compensation, and one dependent variable, career choice decision.

Next, the measurement model was evaluated to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument. Internal consistency reliability was estimated using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Concurrent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Furthermore, discriminant validity was determined using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to test for multicollinearity.

Once the measurement model's fitness is established, the next step was to explore the structural model, which involves testing the study's hypotheses and examining the relationships between the independent variables and career choice decision. The bootstrap algorithm was used to resample the data 10,000 times, and the resulting estimates were used to obtain the path coefficients, t -values, and p -values, which were used to establish the variables with significant relationships. Additionally, the coefficient of determination was calculated to evaluate the degree to which the model's constructs had explained and predicted the career choice decision. The use of PLS-SEM was justified in this study due to its ability to analyse a multivariate model while providing prediction accuracy for the management graduates' career choice decision in the TU affiliated campuses of Rupandehi district, Nepal.

## 4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Respondents profile

**Table 1 -** *Respondents profile/ Descriptive statistics of participants*

| Gender | Frequency | Percent | Married status | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 189 | 63 | Married | 219 | 73.0 |
| Female | 111 | 37 | Unmarried | 81 | 27.0 |
| **Qualification** | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Current employment status** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| MBS | 164 | 54.7 | Employment (Private sector) | 101 | 33.7 |
| MBA | 56 | 18.7 | Employment (Govt. sector) | 45 | 15.0 |
| Others | 80 | 26.7 | Self-employment / business | 50 | 16.7 |
| | | | Seeking Job | 60 | 20.0 |
| **Graduation status** | **Frequency** | **Percent** | Further study | 44 | 14.7 |
| Recently Graduation within 1 year | 143 | 47.7 | **Age group of respondents** | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
| Graduated (1-3) years ago | 75 | 25.0 | 30 and below | 227 | 75.7 |
| Graduated more than 3 years | 82 | 27.3 | 30 above | 73 | 24.3 |

Table 1 below represents the descriptive analysis of the sample who participated in the research. According to the data, most of the participants (75.7%) belong to the age bracket of thirty years and below, whereas 24.3% are aged above thirty years. Most of the respondents (54.7%) are MBS graduates, followed by others (26.7%) and MBA (18.7%). The majority of the participants (33.7%) are employed in the private sector, whereas 20% are job seekers. On the other hand, 16.7% of the respondents belong to the self-employed sector, 15% are in government employment, and 14.7% are pursuing further studies. In terms of graduation, most of the respondents (47.7%) are recent graduates (within 1 year), followed by 25.0% who graduated between 1 and 3 years, and 27.3% graduated more than 3 years ago. In summary, the majority of the respondents belong to the younger generation (aged thirty years and below) and are recent graduates. Additionally, it was evident that most participants are privately employed (33.7%).

### 4.2 Common Method Bias (CMB)

**Table 2 -** *Variance Explained*

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 14.808 | 49.359 | 49.359 | 14.808 | 49.359 | 49.359 |
| 2 | 4.061 | 13.538 | 62.897 | | | |
| 3 | 2.917 | 9.723 | 72.619 | | | |
| 4 | 2.462 | 8.206 | 80.825 | | | |
| 5 | 1.695 | 5.649 | 86.474 | | | |
| 6 | 1.163 | 3.878 | 90.352 | | | |
| 7 | .350 | 1.168 | 91.520 | | | |
| 8 | .288 | .960 | 92.480 | | | |
| 9 | .225 | .751 | 93.231 | | | |
| 10 | .208 | .694 | 93.925 | | | |
| 11 | .190 | .633 | 94.557 | | | |
| 12 | .175 | .583 | 95.140 | | | |
| 13 | .156 | .519 | 95.659 | | | |
| 14 | .143 | .478 | 96.137 | | | |
| 15 | .117 | .391 | 96.528 | | | |
| 16 | .114 | .381 | 96.909 | | | |
| 17 | .106 | .353 | 97.262 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | .092 | .306 | 97.568 | | | |
| 19 | .087 | .290 | 97.858 | | | |
| 20 | .083 | .278 | 98.136 | | | |
| 21 | .079 | .262 | 98.398 | | | |
| 22 | .068 | .228 | 98.626 | | | |
| 23 | .065 | .218 | 98.844 | | | |
| 24 | .064 | .212 | 99.056 | | | |
| 25 | .057 | .190 | 99.246 | | | |
| 26 | .054 | .180 | 99.426 | | | |
| 27 | .052 | .175 | 99.601 | | | |
| 28 | .046 | .152 | 99.754 | | | |
| 29 | .040 | .132 | 99.885 | | | |
| 30 | .034 | .115 | 100.000 | | | |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | | |

Table 2 Common method bias (CMB) was examined using Harman's single-factor test through principal component analysis (PCA). As shown in Table 2, the first factor explained 49.359% of the total variance, which is below the commonly used 50% threshold. This indicates that a single factor did not account for the majority of the variance. However, this test alone cannot establish that common method bias is completely absent. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Procedural safeguards used during questionnaire design and data collection, if applicable, should also be reported. These may include ensuring respondent anonymity, using clear and neutral wording, and emphasizing that there were no right or wrong answers. The original SPSS output was reviewed to verify the reported eigenvalues, percentage of variance, cumulative variance, and extraction results.

Table 3 below gives evidence on the assessment of measurement items used in the study. The results show that all indicator outer loadings met the recommended value of 0.70 as recommended by Sarstedt et al. (2017). As a result, all measurement items were retained. In addition, multicollinearity among indicators was evaluated by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each indicator. Although a value below 3 is ideal, the results of the VIF test met the threshold value of 5 as recommended by Sarstedt et al. (2014). Consequently, there was no evidence of multicollinearity among the measurement items used in the study.

**Table 3 -** *Assessment of scale items or measurement model assessment*

| Items | Outer loadings | VIF | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CCD1** | 0.934 | 1.519 | 5.527 | 1.742 |
| **CCD2** | 0.952 | 2.985 | 5.687 | 1.609 |
| **CCD3** | 0.968 | 1.521 | 5.633 | 1.663 |
| **CCD4** | 0.967 | 4.212 | 5.663 | 1.618 |
| **CCD5** | 0.955 | 3.408 | 5.743 | 1.591 |
| **COM1** | 0.958 | 2.363 | 4.81 | 1.862 |
| **COM2** | 0.964 | 4.943 | 5.037 | 1.85 |
| **COM3** | 0.971 | 4.686 | 4.993 | 1.858 |
| **COM4** | 0.971 | 3.972 | 5.143 | 1.852 |
| **COM5** | 0.952 | 3.948 | 5.073 | 1.88 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FI1** | 0.913 | 4.942 | 4.727 | 1.667 |
| **FI2** | 0.959 | 3.668 | 4.89 | 1.601 |
| **FI3** | 0.966 | 3.918 | 4.927 | 1.621 |
| **FI4** | 0.953 | 3.761 | 4.977 | 1.609 |
| **FI5** | 0.953 | 3.559 | 5.063 | 1.608 |
| **JO1** | 0.924 | 4.66 | 4.237 | 1.973 |
| **JO2** | 0.965 | 3.47 | 4.463 | 1.938 |
| **JO3** | 0.963 | 4.451 | 4.547 | 1.901 |
| **JO4** | 0.96 | 3.029 | 4.523 | 1.854 |
| **JO5** | 0.958 | 3.568 | 4.613 | 1.937 |
| **PERI1** | 0.935 | 4.539 | 5.64 | 1.652 |
| **PERI2** | 0.958 | 3.453 | 5.7 | 1.656 |
| **PERI3** | 0.954 | 4.591 | 5.643 | 1.646 |
| **PERI4** | 0.948 | 3.828 | 5.633 | 1.673 |
| **PERI5** | 0.952 | 4.493 | 5.713 | 1.655 |
| **PI1** | 0.904 | 3.904 | 4.38 | 1.694 |
| **PI2** | 0.915 | 3.541 | 4.61 | 1.731 |
| **PI3** | 0.935 | 4.64 | 4.667 | 1.686 |
| **PI4** | 0.945 | 3.805 | 4.673 | 1.691 |
| **PI5** | 0.922 | 4.739 | 4.767 | 1.72 |

Table 3 reports outer loadings from 0.904 to 0.971, so all listed loadings exceed 0.70. Item VIF values range from 1.519 to 4.943; none exceeds 5, although several exceed the more conservative threshold of 3. State which threshold was specified. VIF results below 5 do not establish that all forms of collinearity are absent.

**Table 4 -** *Construct Reliability and Validity/Inner Model Assessment /Convergent Validity*

| Variables | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability (rho_a) | Composite reliability (rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Career choice decision | 0.976 | 0.976 | 0.981 | 0.912 |
| Compensation | 0.981 | 0.982 | 0.985 | 0.928 |
| Family influence | 0.972 | 0.974 | 0.979 | 0.901 |
| Job opportunities | 0.975 | 0.977 | 0.981 | 0.910 |
| Peer influence | 0.957 | 0.958 | 0.967 | 0.854 |
| Personal interest | 0.973 | 0.974 | 0.979 | 0.902 |

Table 4 presents the construct reliability and convergent validity results. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.957 to 0.981, composite reliability ((\rho_A)) ranged from 0.958 to 0.982, and composite reliability ((\rho_C)) ranged from 0.967 to 0.985. The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.854 to 0.928, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50 and supporting convergent validity. The high Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values indicate strong internal consistency; however, the fact that all (\rho_C) values exceed 0.95 raises a potential concern about item redundancy. Therefore, the original SmartPLS output and questionnaire items should be reviewed to verify the reported statistics and determine whether any items are excessively similar. The reported values are retained pending this verification, and no statistical results have been altered.

**Table 5 -** *Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTML) ratio of correlation*

| | Career choice decision | Compensation | Family influence | Job opportunities | Peer influence | Personal interest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Career choice decision** | | | | | | |
| **Compensation** | 0.388 | | | | | |
| **Family influence** | 0.463 | 0.460 | | | | |
| **Job opportunities** | 0.245 | 0.631 | 0.491 | | | |
| **Peer influence** | 0.416 | 0.352 | 0.598 | 0.376 | | |
| **Personal interest** | 0.473 | 0.579 | 0.539 | 0.366 | 0.624 | |

Table 5 reports HTMT values from 0.245 to 0.631, all below 0.85 and 0.90. These values support discriminant validity under the cited criteria. HTMT assesses discriminant validity, not multicollinearity.

**Table 6 -** *Fornell- Larcker Criterion*

| | Career choice decision | Compensation | Family influence | Job opportunities | Peer influence | Personal interest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Career choice decision | **0.955** | | | | | |
| Compensation | 0.380 | **0.963** | | | | |
| Family influence | 0.452 | 0.449 | **0.949** | | | |
| Job opportunities | 0.239 | 0.617 | 0.480 | **0.954** | | |
| Peer influence | 0.402 | 0.342 | 0.578 | 0.364 | **0.924** | |
| Personal interest | 0.462 | 0.566 | 0.525 | 0.357 | 0.602 | **0.949** |

Table 6, below, provides the result of the Fornell-Larcker criterion for discriminant validity. In the table, a diagonal represents the square root of Average Variance Extracted while the off-diagonal values are the correlations. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of AVE should be greater than the value of correlation. This result proves that constructs are distinct from each other and the indicators reflect different constructs with appropriate discriminant validity. Therefore, the measurement model is valid based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

### 4.6 Model Fit Indices

**Table 7 -** *Model Fit*

| | Saturated model | Estimated model |
|---|---|---|
| **SRMR** | 0.027 | 0.027 |
| **d_ULS** | 0.332 | 0.332 |
| **d_G** | 0.751 | 0.751 |
| **Chi-square** | 1340.311 | 1340.311 |
| **NFI** | 0.908 | 0.908 |

Table 7 reports SRMR = 0.027 and NFI = 0.908 for both saturated and estimated models. These values meet the thresholds cited in the manuscript (SRMR below 0.08 and NFI above 0.90). Report table values precisely rather than rounding SRMR to 0.08. Model-fit indices do not demonstrate predictive power.

**Table 8 -** *F-square (Effect Size)*

| | f-square | Effect size |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Compensation -> Career choice decision | 0.022 | Small |
| Family influence -> Career choice decision | 0.049 | Small |
| Job opportunities -> Career choice decision | 0.009 | No effect |
| Peer influence -> Career choice decision | 0.010 | No effect |
| Personal interest -> Career choice decision | 0.025 | Small |

Table 8 reports small f-squared values for compensation (0.022), family influence (0.049), and personal interest (0.025), and negligible values for job opportunities (0.009) and peer influence (0.010). These effect-size classifications are distinct from bootstrapped significance in Table 10.

**Table 9 -** *R-square*

| | R-square | R-square adjusted | Predictive Power |
|---|---|---|---|
| Career choice decision | 0.294 | 0.282 | Weak |

Table 9 shows that the R-square value for Career Choice Decision was 0.294, while the adjusted R-square was 0.282. This indicates that personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, and compensation collectively explained 29.4% of the variance in career choice decision, with an adjusted estimate of 28.2%. Based on the criterion used in this study, the model's explanatory power was classified as weak.

### 4.7 Structural Equation Model

**Figure 2 -** *Structure Model*

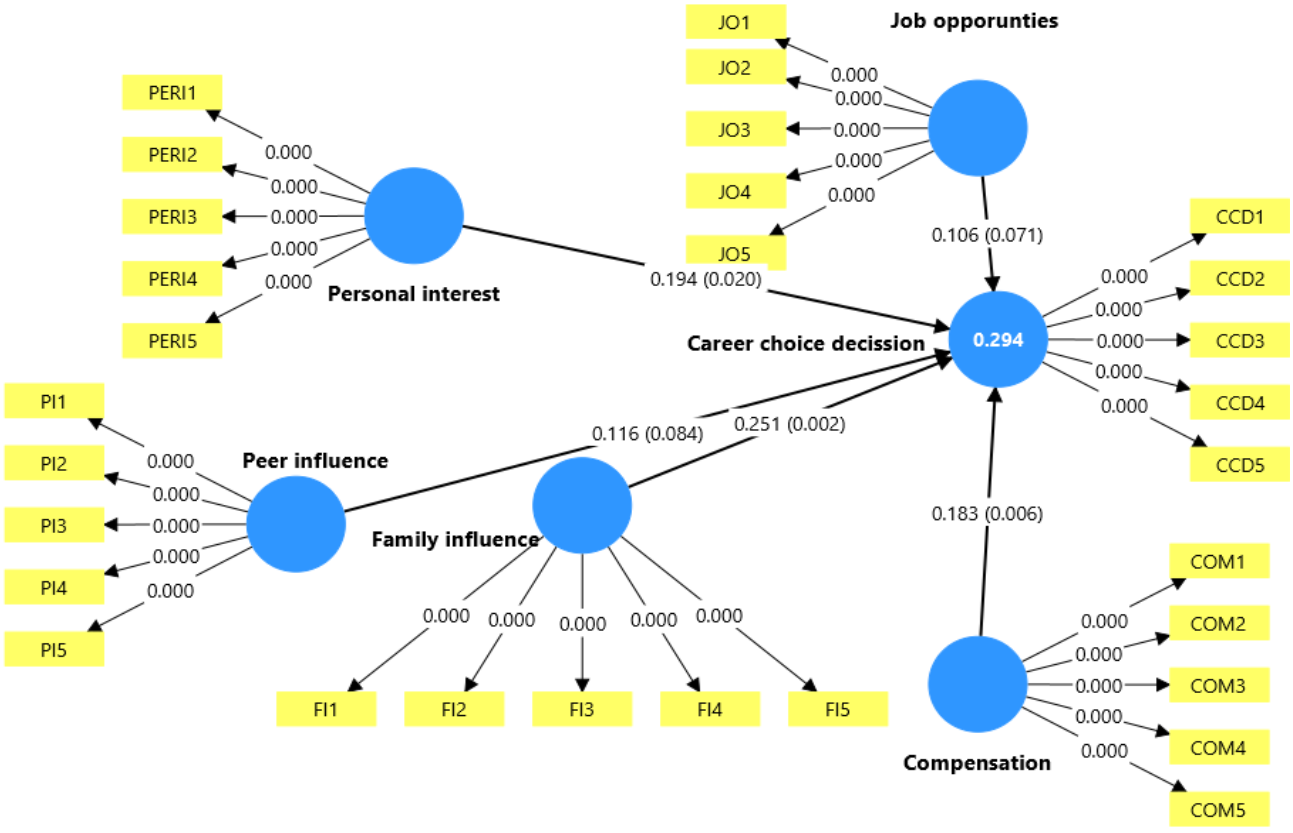


**Table 10 -** *Hypothesis Testing using Bootstrapping*

| | Original sample (O) | Sample mean (M) | Standard deviation (STDEV) | T statistics (\|O/STDEV\|) | P values | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1: Personal interest -> Career choice decision | 0.194 | 0.190 | 0.083 | 2.328 | 0.020 | Supported |
| H2: Peer influence -> Career choice decision | 0.116 | 0.118 | 0.067 | 1.728 | 0.084 | Not supported |
| H3: Family influence -> Career choice decision | 0.251 | 0.252 | 0.080 | 3.144 | 0.002 | Supported |
| H4: Job opportunities -> Career choice decision | 0.106 | 0.105 | 0.059 | 1.807 | 0.071 | Not Supported |
| H5: Compensation -> Career choice decision | 0.183 | 0.181 | 0.067 | 2.727 | 0.006 | Supported |

Table 10 indicates that personal interest (beta = 0.194, p = 0.020), family influence (beta = 0.251, p = 0.002), and compensation (beta = 0.183, p = 0.006) have positive statistically significant path estimates. Peer influence (beta = 0.116, p = 0.084) and job opportunities (beta = 0.106, p = 0.071) are positive but not statistically significant at 0.05. These findings support H1, H3, and H5, but not H2 and H4. Non-significance does not establish that these factors have no effect.

## 4.8 Importance performance map analysis (IPMA)

Figure 3 Importance Performance Map

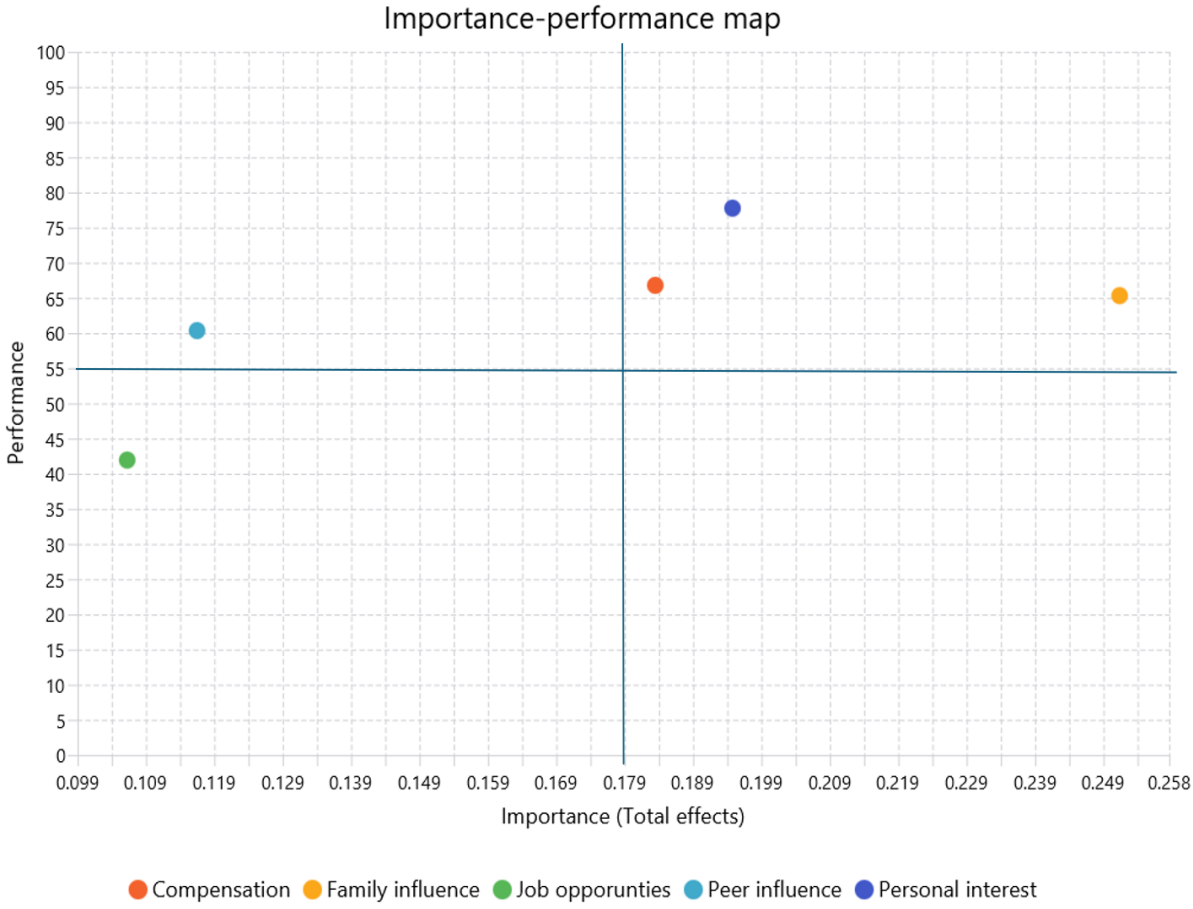


**Table 11 -** *Importance Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)*

| | Performance | Importance |
|---|---|---|
| Compensation | 66.794 | 0.183 |
| Family influence | 65.324 | 0.251 |
| Job opportunities | 41.946 | 0.106 |
| Peer influence | 60.354 | 0.116 |
| Personal interest | 77.764 | 0.194 |
| **Mean** | **62.4364** | **0.17** |

Table 11 shows that family influence had the highest importance score (0.251), while personal interest had the highest performance score (77.764). Compensation also showed considerable importance (0.183) and performance (66.794). Peer influence recorded lower importance (0.116), whereas job opportunities had the lowest importance (0.106) and performance (41.946). These findings suggest that family influence is particularly important in career choice decisions, while job opportunities may require greater attention to improve their perceived performance. However, IPMA does not establish a specific increase in career choice decision from these scores alone.

### 4.9 Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA)

**TABLE 12 -** *Bottleneck Percentile*

| Career Choice Decision | LV scores - Family influence | LV scores - Job opportunities | LV scores - Peer influence | LV scores - Personal interest | LV scores Compensation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.000% | NN | NN | NN | NN | NN |
| 10.000% | NN | NN | NN | NN | NN |
| 20.000% | NN | NN | NN | NN | NN |
| 30.000% | NN | NN | NN | NN | NN |
| 40.000% | NN | NN | NN | NN | NN |
| 50.000% | NN | NN | NN | NN | NN |
| 60.000% | NN | NN | NN | 4.3% | NN |
| 70.000% | NN | NN | NN | 4.3% | NN |
| 80.000% | NN | NN | NN | 4.3% | NN |
| 90.000% | NN | NN | NN | 5% | NN |
| 100.000% | NN | NN | NN | 5% | NN |

Table 12 presents the NCA bottleneck levels for five constructs Personal Interest, Peer Influence, Family Influence, Job Opportunities, and Compensation at different target levels of Career Choice Decision (CCD). The results show that all five constructs are marked as NN at CCD target levels ranging from 0% to 50%, indicating that no necessary condition is identified at these levels. Personal Interest has a reported bottleneck level of 4.3% at target levels of 60%, 70%, and 80%, increasing to 5% at 90% and 100%. The remaining constructs are marked as NN across all target levels. Therefore, the results suggest that Personal Interest has a small minimum requirement for achieving higher CCD targets, whereas the other constructs do not show identified bottleneck requirements in this analysis.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Discussion

This study examined associations between personal interest, peer influence, family influence, job opportunities, compensation, and career choice decision among management graduates at TU-affiliated campuses in Rupandehi District. Table 10 shows positive statistically significant path estimates for personal interest, family influence, and compensation; peer influence and job opportunities are not statistically significant at 0.05. Family influence has the largest path coefficient. These results are based on a cross-sectional, nonprobability sample and do not establish causality or show that nonsignificant factors are unimportant.

The observed role of personal interest was aligned with Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), where students' career interests predicted their career decisions based on their self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Lent & Brown, 2020). Furthermore, this finding was consistent with the reviewed literature that showed the importance of personal interest, aspirations, and skills in career decision-making (Ahmed et al., 2025; Panakaje et al., 2024; Thapa, 2023).

The positive influence of family support provides evidence for the Theory of Planned Behavior by highlighting the relevance of subjective norms and social support on behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). In the Nepalese context, family members influence graduates' career decisions through encouragement and guidance, which has been reported by previous studies to be a critical source of social support (Abu et al., 2023; Atangongo et al., 2024; Gamariel & Blaise, 2021).

The connection between remuneration and the decision to choose a profession was determined. This phenomenon can be explained by Human Capital Theory, which posits that individuals make rational economic decisions when considering the future economic benefits of various types of employment (Becker, 1964). Consequently, the results of the study align with previous empirical findings, which state that salary expectations, financial stability, and opportunities for career growth significantly influence graduates' professional choices (Ahmed et al., 2025; Purohit et al., 2021; Thapa, 2023).

The insignificant effect of peer groups and job opportunities can be explained by context such as Tribhuvan University management students and Rupandehi Districts. For instance, students are likely to choose their career path considering their interest, skills, and future plans rather than what their peers suggest or jobs available in the market. At the same time, uncertainty about job opportunities might reduce the impact of employment prospects on students' career decisions.

### 5.2 Conclusion

The research made an in-depth analysis of factors affecting students' career decisions in management studies at selected campuses of Tribhuvan University in Rupandehi District, Nepal. It revealed that personal interest, influence from family members, and salary are the critical factors affecting career decisions of graduates, whereas peer groups and availability of jobs have no significant influence. The study can be considered as a valuable source of information since it highlights how people studying management tend to make choices about their future career. The factors mentioned above have a considerable impact on the decision-making process, which means that graduates will mainly rely on their interests, family relationships, and expected income. The research is also important because it provides empirical evidence from the specific educational context, enriching the understanding of career decision-making processes. Therefore, it can serve as the basis for additional studies related to the chosen topic and help identify other factors affecting the decision-making process in different populations.

### 5.3 Implications

#### 5.3.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings provide context-specific evidence on associations between personal, family, and economic factors and career choice decision among sampled management students or graduates. Results may be discussed in relation to Social Cognitive Career Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Human Capital Theory, but this study did not directly test the mechanisms proposed by these theories. Interpret nonsignificant paths as estimates not statistically distinguishable from zero in this sample, rather than proof that the factors do not matter.

#### 5.3.1 Practical Implications

The practical implications of the findings of the study can be used by universities, career counsellors, employers, and policymakers. To begin with, universities should invest more in career counselling and guidance so that students can make informed decisions regarding their careers after graduation. Career counsellors should encourage the involvement of families in the career decision-making process and use such information to advise students on the most appropriate career options based on the values that they hold dear. Employers, on the other hand, should ensure that they offer attractive salaries and career opportunities to management graduates to woo the best minds in the labor market. Finally, policymakers should develop policies that foster curriculum and career awareness campaigns among students so that they do not struggle with career decision-making after school. By implementing these practical implications, it will be possible to enhance graduate employment while at the same time boosting their career decision-making processes.

### 5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. The sample was drawn from management students or graduates at TU-affiliated campuses in Rupandehi District using a nonprobability approach; clarify whether sampling was purposive or convenience-based and whether participants were students, graduates, or both. The cross-sectional self-report design limits causal interpretation and may be subject to response and common-method biases. Findings may not generalize to other districts, universities, or disciplines. Future studies could use probability-based sampling, longitudinal or mixed-source data, and verified measures.

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