

A Study on Career Preferences among Young Adults in Chennai

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ABSTRACT

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions for young adults, as it shapes their income, identity and long-term well-being. This study examines the career preferences of young adults in Chennai, focusing on four factors, namely Personal Values and Vocational Interests, Family and Socio-Economic Background, Educational Attainment and Aspiration, and Job-Related Work Values. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data was collected from 64 young adults using a structured questionnaire circulated through Google Forms. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, weighted average analysis, multiple regression and correlation analysis were used to analyse the data. The findings indicate a generally favourable response to all Career Preference statements, with the highest weighted average (4.08) for actively seeking information and opportunities aligned with the preferred career path. The four factors together have a significant effect on Career Preference ($p = 0.000$) and explain about 55 per cent of its variation, with Personal Values and Vocational Interests and Educational Attainment and Aspiration emerging as the significant predictors. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.626$) was found between Personal Values and Vocational Interests and Career Preference. The study concludes that interest- and value-based career guidance, better educational and skill development support, and constructive family involvement can help young adults make informed career decisions.

INTRODUCTION:

Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions in a person's life. It influences income, social identity, personal satisfaction and long-term well-being, and for young adults it marks the transition from education to the world of work. Career choice has been studied for more than a century, beginning with Parsons' (1909) early work on matching individuals with suitable vocations. Super (1957) viewed career development as a continuous process in which people choose occupations that allow them to express their self-concept, while Holland (1959) proposed that vocational choice is an expression of personality. Both views place personal values and interests at the centre of career decision-making.

Career preference refers to the occupation, field or type of work that a person favours and intends to pursue. Such preferences are not formed in isolation. In the Indian context, family plays a particularly strong role, as parents' expectations, family income, occupation and social standing often influence which careers young people consider and which they set aside. Education is another major influence, since the level of education attained and aspired to determines the range of careers that are open. Young adults also evaluate careers on the basis of job-related work values such as job security, work-life balance, salary and opportunities for growth.

Chennai is one of the major education and employment centres in South India, with a large population of students and young professionals from varied educational and family backgrounds, which makes it a suitable setting for this study. The Periodic Labour Force Survey for January to December 2025 shows that the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 29 years was 9.9 per cent, compared with 3.1 per cent for all persons aged 15 years and above, so young adults face a competitive job market in which their choice of career becomes very important.

This study examines how Personal Values and Vocational Interests, Family and Socio-Economic Background, Educational Attainment and Aspiration, and Job-Related Work Values are related to the career preference of young adults in Chennai, and which of these factors has the strongest influence. It serves as a useful reference for students, parents, colleges, career counsellors and employers who seek to support young people in making informed career decisions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

To find the career preferences of young adults in Chennai.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

- To assess the level of career preference among young adults.
- To examine the relationship between Personal Values and Career Preference.
- To determine the combined influence of the four factors on career preference.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Atamian & Mansouri (2013): The authors studied the career preferences of 452 accounting students and found that favourite careers differ by gender, age and academic classification, and shift as students move up in their academic standing. This shows that career preference varies across individual characteristics and changes during a person's education.

Tien (2011): Tien examined vocational interests and work values among 206 adults in Taiwan using Holland's RIASEC typology and Super's work value theory. Significant gender differences were found in both interests and work values, supporting the examination of the two together.

Lipshits-Braziler, Arieli & Daniel (2024): Studying 636 young adults who were deliberating on their career choice, the authors identified 14 value-expressive career preferences and four groups with distinct value profiles. They found that personal values are closely linked to what young adults look for in a career.

Tziner et al. (2012): The study of 280 school and university students found that the influence of parents on young people's career preferences depends on the quality of the parent-offspring relationship.

Croll (2008): Using the British Household Panel Survey, Croll found that young people from more advantaged families were more ambitious and achieved better educational and occupational outcomes, concluding that career choice, though real, is heavily constrained for many people.

Dhar (2019): A national youth study in India found that two out of three young people would choose a government job if given a choice, and that this preference rose with greater parental influence on career and education decisions.

Hamid (2020) and Oliveira & Cordeiro (2025): These studies of young adults in Malaysia and Brazil found that starting salary, employer reputation, working environment and career prospects significantly shape job preferences, and that personal values relate to the job attributes preferred.

Research Gap: The reviewed studies examined these factors separately and in different settings. None examined personal values and vocational interests, family and socio-economic background, educational attainment and aspiration, and job-related work values together as predictors of career preference among young adults in Chennai. The present study addresses this gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive research design, which focuses on describing the views of young adults in Chennai about their career choices and the factors that influence them. It examines four independent factors, namely Personal Values

and Vocational Interests, Family and Socio-Economic Background, Educational Attainment and Aspiration, and Job-Related Work Values, and one dependent factor, Career Preference.

The study uses a convenience sampling method, a non-probability technique, in which the Google Form link was circulated among accessible young adults in Chennai who were willing to respond. In line with the broad definition of youth (15 to 29 years) used in India's National Youth Policy, respondents who are about to begin career planning were also included. A total sample size of 64 respondents was obtained, and all responses were valid with no missing data.

Data collection was carried out through a structured questionnaire covering demographic details and five constructs measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

PRIMARY DATA

Primary data was collected directly from young adults in Chennai through a structured questionnaire prepared using Google Forms, which ensured that the information gathered is original and relevant to the objectives of the research.

SECONDARY DATA:

Secondary data was collected from academic journals, articles and prior studies on career choice behaviour. It was used to develop the conceptual understanding of career preference, support the review of literature and design the questionnaire constructs.

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

For data analysis, percentage analysis, weighted average analysis, multiple linear regression and Pearson correlation analysis were used. These tools helped in identifying patterns, relationships and the combined influence of the factors on career preference, at the 5 per cent level of significance.

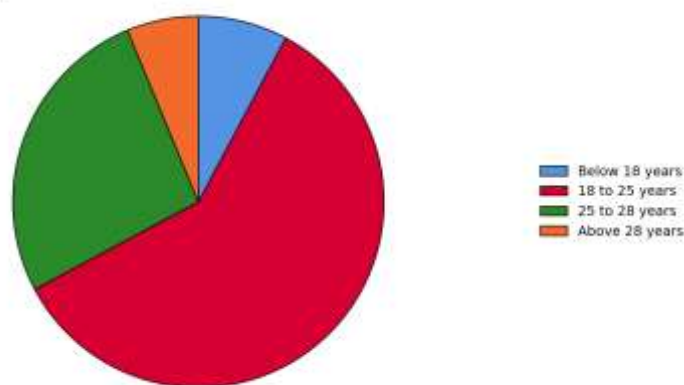
DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Percentage Analysis:

Percentage analysis converts raw data into percentages, which helps in identifying patterns and comparisons among the responses of the 64 young adults regarding their demographic profile and each statement of the five constructs. The key results are presented below.

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Age of the respondents

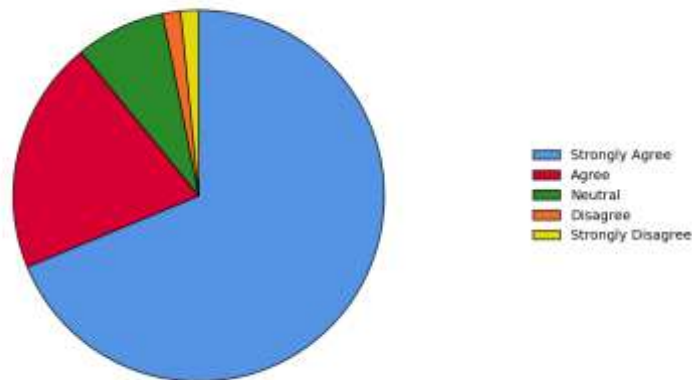


Inference

The table shows that 38 respondents (59.4%) belong to the 18 to 25 years category, making it the predominant age group. This is followed by 25 to 28 years (26.6%), below 18 years (7.8%) and above 28 years (6.3%). In terms of gender, 65.6% of respondents are female and 34.4% are male; 51.6% are undergraduates, 42.2% postgraduates and 6.3% diploma holders.

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF CAREER CHOICE GUIDED BY PERSONAL INTEREST

My career choice is guided mainly by what I personally find interesting.

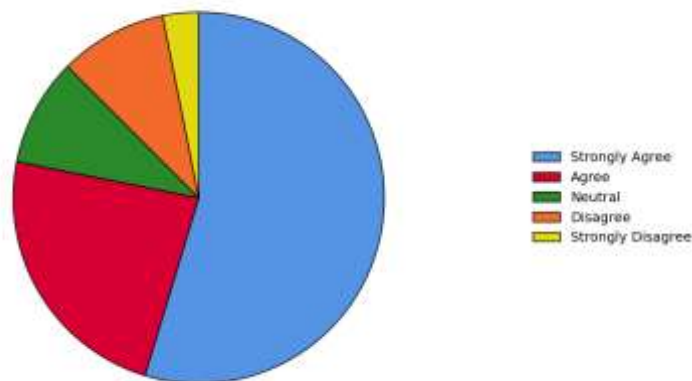


Inference

The data shows that 44 respondents (68.8%) strongly agreed and 13 respondents (20.3%) agreed that their career choice is guided mainly by personal interest. Overall, 89.1% agreed or strongly agreed, indicating a very high level of agreement. Across the Personal Values statements, 82.8% agreed that they choose careers that express their interests and passions, and 75.0% agreed that personal beliefs and values influence their career.

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF SALARY AND COMPENSATION AS A CAREER CONSIDERATION

Salary and compensation are key considerations in my career preference.

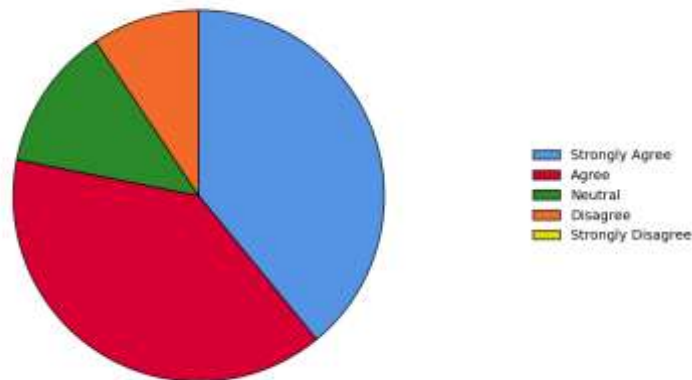


Inference

About 54.7% of respondents strongly agreed and 23.4% agreed that salary and compensation are key considerations, so 78.1% agreed or strongly agreed. Among the other job-related work values, 79.7% preferred stability and long-term prospects, and 79.7% considered job security important (53.1% strongly agreed). Family and socio-economic factors were less dominant, with 64.1% agreeing that family finances influence career options and 50.0% agreeing that parents' occupation shaped their aspirations.

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS OF SEEKING INFORMATION AND OPPORTUNITIES (CAREER PREFERENCE)

I actively seek information and opportunities aligned with my preferred career path.



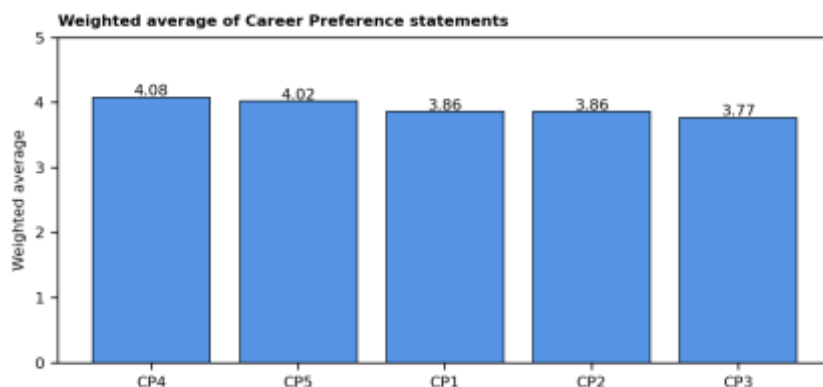
Inference

The table shows that 25 respondents (39.1%) agreed and 25 respondents (39.1%) strongly agreed that they actively seek information and opportunities aligned with their preferred career, so 78.1% agreed or strongly agreed. For the other Career Preference statements, 68.8% had a clear idea of their career path and felt confident about their direction, and 75.0% felt their preference reflects what they truly want to do.

WEIGHTED AVERAGE ANALYSIS

The weighted average of each Career Preference statement was calculated as $\Sigma (\text{Weight} \times \text{Frequency}) \div \text{Total Responses}$, using scale weights of 1 to 5.

Statement	Weighted Total	Weighted Average	Rank	Code
CP4 – Seeks information and opportunities	261	4.08	1	CP4
CP5 – Preference reflects true wishes	257	4.02	2	CP5
CP1 – Clear idea of career path	247	3.86	3	CP1
CP2 – Combination of personal, family and job factors	247	3.86	3	CP2
CP3 – Confidence in career direction	241	3.77	5	CP3



Inference

CP4 has the highest weighted total (261) and weighted average (4.08), followed by CP5 (4.02). CP1 and CP2 share the third rank (3.86), and CP3 is the lowest (3.77). Since all five weighted averages are above 3.5, respondents lean towards

agreement with every Career Preference statement, and actively seeking information and opportunities emerges as the most dominant career preference among young adults in Chennai.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Multiple regression examines the relationship between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables. Here, the four factors were entered as predictors of Career Preference.

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

The four factors (Personal Values and Vocational Interests, Family and Socio-Economic Background, Educational Attainment and Aspiration, Job-Related Work Values) do not have a significant effect on Career Preference.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

The four factors have a significant effect on Career Preference.

ANOVA (Dependent Variable: Career Preference)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	17.31	4	4.33	18.30	.000
Residual	13.95	59	.24		
Total	31.26	63			

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.74	.55	.52	.49

Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	Result
Personal Values and Vocational Interests	.49	4.82	.000	Significant
Educational Attainment and Aspiration	.40	3.60	.001	Significant
Family and Socio-Economic Background	.16	1.71	.092	Not significant
Job-Related Work Values	-.09	-.77	.443	Not significant

Inference

The ANOVA shows an F-value of 18.30 with $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05), so the model is statistically significant, the null hypothesis is rejected and the four factors together have a significant effect on Career Preference. The R Square of .55 indicates that the factors explain about 55 per cent of the variation in Career Preference (adjusted R Square = .52). Personal Values and Vocational Interests ($\beta = .49$, $p = .000$) is the strongest predictor, followed by Educational Attainment and Aspiration ($\beta = .40$, $p = .001$). Family and Socio-Economic Background ($p = .092$) and Job-Related Work Values ($p = .443$) are not significant individual predictors when all four factors are considered together.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no significant relationship between Personal Values and Vocational Interests and Career Preference.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a significant relationship between Personal Values and Vocational Interests and Career Preference.

Correlation between Personal Values and Vocational Interests and Career Preference

Variables	Personal Values	Career Preference
Personal Values	1.000	.626
Career Preference	.626	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	64	64

Inference

The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.626 with $p = 0.000$ (< 0.05), indicating a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between Personal Values and Vocational Interests and Career Preference. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. Respondents whose career choices are guided by personal values and interests tend to have a clearer career preference, although correlation does not by itself establish cause and effect.

FINDINGS

Strong Role of Personal Interests

89.1% of respondents agreed that their career choice is guided mainly by personal interest.

Importance of Education

Education and future educational goals have an important influence on the career options chosen.

Job Security, Salary and Stability

78.1% regarded salary as a key consideration and 79.7% preferred stability and long-term prospects.

Active Career Search

Seeking information and opportunities ranked first, with the highest weighted average of 4.08.

Combined Influence of the Factors

Regression shows the four factors together explain about 55% of the variation in Career Preference.

Significant Predictors

Personal Values and Vocational Interests ($\beta = .49$) and Educational Attainment and Aspiration ($\beta = .40$) are the significant individual predictors.

Strong Relationship

Correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.626$) between personal values and interests and career preference.

SUGGESTIONS

Encourage interest-based career choices – Provide career guidance and mentoring so young adults understand their interests, strengths and values before choosing a career.

Improve educational and skill development opportunities – Colleges should guide students on higher education, professional courses and certifications.

Create awareness about career opportunities – Organise career talks, workshops, internships and industry interactions.

Support students who are confused about their careers – Offer proper career counselling to build confidence in their direction.

Encourage family support – Parents should support their children's interests and abilities while explaining the importance of financial stability.

Focus on job security and career growth – Employers should provide clear information on salary, stability, work-life balance and promotion.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that young adults in Chennai consider several factors when choosing their careers, and most respondents stated that their personal interests, values, education, salary, job security and career stability influence their decisions. Many actively search for information and opportunities related to their preferred careers. Regression results confirm that the four factors collectively have a significant influence on career preference, with personal values and vocational interests and educational attainment and aspiration being the only significant individual predictors, and correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship between personal values and interests and career preference. Some respondents were unsure about their career goals, so career guidance, mentoring and better access to career opportunities can help young adults make informed decisions. As the study included only 64 respondents selected through convenience sampling, the findings should be interpreted within this limitation.

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