

Career Choice Factors As Predictors Of Future Readiness Among Secondary School Students

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Abstract:

Career decision-making represents one of the most significant developmental tasks during adolescence, yet students rarely base their educational and occupational choices on a single consideration. Instead, career decisions emerge from the interaction of personal interests, perceived abilities, labour market expectations, family influences, and practical considerations. While previous research has largely examined these influences independently, limited evidence exists regarding whether distinct career choice orientations are associated with differences in students' Future Readiness. This study addresses this gap by identifying career choice orientation profiles among secondary school students and examining their association with Career Decision Clarity, Future Skills Orientation, and Self-Perceived Competencies.

A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed using data collected from 768 Lebanese secondary school students who completed the validated Future Readiness Questionnaire (FRQ) and selected the factors influencing their future educational and career choices. Descriptive statistics, profile classification, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and post hoc comparisons were conducted using SPSS.

Four career choice orientation profiles were identified: Uncertain and Feasibility-Oriented, Self-and-Opportunity Aligned, Broadly Motivated and Balanced, and Economic and Opportunity-Oriented. Significant differences emerged in Future Skills Orientation and Self-Perceived Competencies, whereas Career Decision Clarity did not differ significantly across profiles. Students characterised by uncertainty and feasibility concerns consistently reported lower Future Skills Orientation and Self-Perceived Competencies than students belonging to the remaining profiles.

The findings suggest that students' preparedness for future educational and occupational transitions is associated less with individual career choice factors than with broader patterns of career decision-making. Identifying distinct career choice orientations provides a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent career development and offers valuable insights for designing personalised career guidance and educational interventions.

Key Word: Career Decision-Making; Career Choice Orientation; Future Readiness; Career Guidance; Secondary Education; Adolescents

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I. Introduction

Preparing adolescents for an uncertain future has become one of the most significant challenges facing education systems worldwide. As educational pathways diversify and labour markets evolve at an unprecedented pace, secondary school students are increasingly required to make important educational and career decisions long before entering higher education or the workforce. The quality of these decisions depends not only on academic achievement but also on students' preparedness to understand themselves, evaluate future opportunities, and develop the competencies required to navigate an increasingly complex social and professional environment. Consequently, preparing young people for future educational and occupational transitions has become a central objective of contemporary education^[1].

The concept of Future Readiness has emerged as a comprehensive framework for understanding students' preparedness to successfully manage future educational and career transitions. Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement or career aspirations, Future Readiness reflects students' ability to make informed educational and career decisions, recognise the importance of future-oriented skills, and maintain confidence in their own competencies. These dimensions collectively enable adolescents to adapt to changing educational demands, respond to labour-market uncertainty, and pursue lifelong learning and professional development^[2].

Career decision-making constitutes one of the most important developmental tasks during adolescence. As students approach the completion of secondary education, they begin evaluating university programmes,

exploring career opportunities, and considering alternative educational and occupational pathways. These decisions frequently influence subsequent academic experiences, career development, and long-term professional success. However, career choices rarely result from a single motivating factor. Instead, adolescents simultaneously consider multiple personal, social, economic, and contextual influences, including their interests, perceived strengths and abilities, expected employment opportunities, anticipated salary, family expectations, teachers' advice, peer influence, social prestige, and other environmental considerations^{[3][4]}.

Extensive research has demonstrated that career decision-making is a complex process shaped by the interaction of individual characteristics and external influences. Previous studies have identified personal interests, self-efficacy, parental expectations, labour-market opportunities, financial considerations, educational guidance, and social influences as important determinants of adolescents' career choices. While this body of literature has significantly advanced understanding of why students choose particular educational or occupational pathways, it has primarily focused on explaining career choice outcomes rather than examining whether these influences contribute to students' preparedness for future educational and professional challenges^{[5][6]}.

This distinction is particularly important because the factors motivating career decisions are not necessarily the same factors that prepare students for future success. For example, selecting a career primarily because of expected salary or social prestige does not automatically imply that students possess confidence in their own abilities or understand the competencies required to succeed in that profession. Conversely, career decisions guided by personal interests, perceived strengths, or informed exploration may encourage greater engagement with learning, promote future-oriented skill development, and strengthen confidence in managing educational and occupational transitions. Consequently, examining career choice factors through the lens of Future Readiness provides a broader understanding of adolescent career development than investigating career decisions alone^[7].

Despite the growing interest in career development and future-oriented education, empirical research examining the relationship between career choice factors and Future Readiness remains limited, particularly among secondary school students. Existing studies have frequently investigated isolated constructs such as career maturity, career adaptability, vocational interests, or career decision self-efficacy, providing valuable yet fragmented insights into adolescents' career development. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding whether the factors influencing career decisions are also associated with students' overall preparedness for future educational and occupational transitions. This represents an important gap in the literature because Future Readiness integrates multiple dimensions of preparedness, including Career Decision Clarity, Future Skills Orientation, and Self-Perceived Competencies^[1].

Addressing this gap has important theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, investigating career choice factors as predictors of Future Readiness contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent career development by linking career decision-making with future-oriented educational preparedness. From a practical perspective, identifying the career choice factors associated with higher levels of Future Readiness can assist educators, career counsellors, schools, and policymakers in designing evidence-based career guidance programmes that strengthen students' confidence, support informed decision-making, and promote the development of competencies required for successful educational and occupational transitions^[8].

Accordingly, this study examines the influence of career choice factors on Future Readiness among secondary school students. Specifically, it investigates whether personal, social, economic, and contextual career choice influences predict the three dimensions of Future Readiness: Career Decision Clarity, Future Skills Orientation, and Self-Perceived Competencies. By identifying the relative contribution of different career choice factors, this study seeks to extend current knowledge on adolescent career development while providing practical evidence to support more effective career guidance and educational interventions.

Accordingly, the study tests the following hypotheses:

H1. Career choice factors significantly predict students' Career Decision Clarity.

H2. Career choice factors significantly predict students' Future Skills Orientation.

H3. Career choice factors significantly predict students' Self-Perceived Competencies.

II. Literature Review

Future Readiness

The increasing complexity of educational pathways and labour-market environments has intensified the need for students to develop competencies that extend beyond academic achievement. In contemporary education, preparing young people for future educational and occupational success requires more than subject-specific knowledge; it also involves fostering the capacity to make informed decisions, adapt to changing circumstances, and confidently pursue long-term personal and professional goals. Consequently, the concept of Future Readiness has emerged as an important framework for understanding how well students are prepared to navigate future transitions^[9].

Future Readiness refers to an individual's preparedness to successfully manage future educational, career, and professional challenges through a combination of informed decision-making, future-oriented thinking, and confidence in personal capabilities. Rather than representing a single competency, it encompasses multiple psychological and behavioural dimensions that collectively influence students' ability to anticipate opportunities, respond to uncertainty, and actively prepare for future educational and occupational pathways. This multidimensional perspective recognises that students' readiness for the future is shaped not only by what they know but also by how they perceive themselves, evaluate future possibilities, and develop competencies relevant to evolving societal and labour-market demands^[2].

Among adolescents, Future Readiness has become increasingly important because secondary education represents a critical developmental stage during which students begin making decisions with long-term educational and career implications. During this stage, students are expected to explore career options, identify personal interests and strengths, understand future labour-market requirements, and develop the confidence necessary to pursue appropriate educational pathways. The quality of these developmental processes may substantially influence subsequent educational attainment, career adaptability, and long-term employability^[1].

Future Readiness can be conceptualised as comprising three complementary dimensions. The first dimension, Career Decision Clarity, reflects students' ability to establish clear educational and occupational goals while demonstrating confidence in their career-related decisions. Students with greater career decision clarity are generally more capable of evaluating alternatives, setting realistic objectives, and planning future educational pathways^[10].

The second dimension, Future Skills Orientation, represents students' awareness of the knowledge, competencies, and transferable skills required for future educational and professional success. As labour-market demands continue to evolve, students increasingly need to recognise the importance of continuous learning, adaptability, digital literacy, communication, problem-solving, and other competencies associated with lifelong career development. Developing this future-oriented perspective encourages proactive learning behaviours and greater engagement in educational activities that enhance long-term employability^{[9][12]}.

The third dimension, Self-Perceived Competencies, reflects students' confidence in their own ability to perform behaviours associated with future educational and professional success. Positive self-perceptions contribute to motivation, persistence, resilience, and willingness to engage in challenging learning experiences. Students who believe they possess the competencies required for future success are generally more likely to pursue ambitious educational goals, actively explore career opportunities, and remain engaged in developing the skills necessary for future transitions^[10].

Taken together, these three dimensions provide a comprehensive perspective on students' preparedness for future educational and occupational challenges. Rather than viewing future preparedness solely as a matter of academic achievement or career planning, Future Readiness recognises that successful transitions require the integration of clear career direction, awareness of future skill requirements, and confidence in one's own capabilities.

From an educational perspective, Future Readiness represents more than an individual characteristic; it reflects the extent to which education systems successfully prepare students for lifelong learning, informed career decision-making, and meaningful participation in an increasingly uncertain labour market. As educational institutions seek to equip learners with competencies that extend beyond traditional academic knowledge, understanding the factors that strengthen Future Readiness has become both an educational priority and a research imperative. Identifying these factors can support the development of evidence-based career guidance programmes and educational interventions that not only facilitate informed career choices but also enhance students' overall preparedness for future educational and professional transitions^[12].

Career Choice Factors

Career decision-making is widely recognised as a multifaceted process influenced by the interaction of personal characteristics, social relationships, economic considerations, and broader environmental conditions. Rather than being determined by a single factor, adolescents typically evaluate multiple sources of information when considering future educational and occupational pathways. The relative importance of these influences may vary according to individual experiences, cultural context, educational opportunities, and perceptions of future labour-market conditions^{[13][14]}. Understanding these influences is essential because they shape not only students' career preferences but also the way they prepare for future educational and professional transitions^[1].

Personal Factors

Personal factors represent the internal characteristics that guide students' educational and career decisions. Among these, personal interests and perceived strengths are consistently identified as two of the strongest determinants of career choice. Students are generally more motivated to pursue careers that align with their interests, values, and personal aspirations, while perceived strengths and abilities contribute to confidence

in selecting educational pathways that match their capabilities^{[15][16]}. Career decisions based on intrinsic motivation are associated with greater engagement in learning, stronger educational commitment, and higher persistence when facing academic or professional challenges^[17]. Consequently, personal factors provide an important foundation for career exploration and long-term career development^[1].

Economic Factors

Economic considerations also play a significant role in adolescents' career decision-making. Expected salary, employment opportunities, and perceptions of labour-market demand frequently influence students' evaluation of potential careers. As young people become increasingly aware of economic uncertainty and employment competition, many consider financial security and career stability alongside their personal interests. Careers perceived to offer attractive salaries or favourable employment prospects may therefore become more appealing, particularly within environments characterised by economic instability^{[18][19]}. While economic considerations often contribute to rational career planning, an excessive emphasis on financial outcomes may discourage students from pursuing careers that better reflect their personal interests and competencies^[20].

Social Factors

Career decisions are also influenced by interactions with significant individuals within students' social environments. Parents often shape educational aspirations through expectations, encouragement, financial support, and shared values regarding career success. Teachers contribute by identifying students' strengths, providing academic guidance, and exposing learners to future educational opportunities. Friends may influence career preferences through shared aspirations, social comparison, and peer discussions, particularly during adolescence when peer relationships become increasingly important^{[21][22][23]}. Although these social influences can provide valuable guidance and emotional support, they may also create pressure that affects students' ability to make independent educational and career decisions^{[24][25]}.

Contextual Factors

Beyond personal, economic, and social influences, career decisions are shaped by broader contextual considerations. Perceived social prestige associated with particular professions may encourage students to favour careers that provide recognition, social status, or professional respect. Social media has also emerged as an increasingly influential source of career information by exposing adolescents to success stories, professional role models, and lifestyle representations that may shape career aspirations. At the same time, students frequently consider the perceived difficulty of educational programmes and uncertainty regarding future career opportunities when evaluating alternative pathways. These contextual influences reflect the broader environment within which career decisions are made and illustrate the complexity of adolescent career development^{[26][27]}.

Overall, career choice emerges from the combined influence of personal aspirations, economic realities, social relationships, and contextual conditions rather than from any single determinant. The relative importance of these influences differs across individuals, making career decision-making a dynamic and multidimensional process. Examining these factors collectively rather than independently provides a more comprehensive understanding of how adolescents approach educational and occupational decisions and establishes the foundation for investigating whether these same influences contribute to Future Readiness^{[1][13][28]}.

Career Choice Factors and Future Readiness

Although career choice factors have traditionally been investigated as determinants of educational and occupational preferences, their influence may extend beyond career selection itself. The process through which adolescents evaluate personal interests, perceived abilities, economic opportunities, and social influences also contributes to the development of attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that support future educational and occupational success. Consequently, career choice should not be viewed as a single decision but rather as a developmental process that may strengthen or hinder students' preparedness for future transitions^[29].

Career decisions that are guided by personal interests and perceived strengths are generally associated with greater engagement in learning, increased motivation, and stronger commitment to long-term educational goals. Students who actively reflect on their abilities and aspirations are more likely to explore educational opportunities, seek relevant experiences, and develop a clearer understanding of their future pathways. Such behaviours contribute not only to more informed career decisions but also to greater confidence in managing future educational and professional challenges^[30].

Economic considerations may similarly influence Future Readiness by encouraging students to become more aware of labour-market conditions and future employment opportunities. Evaluating expected salary, career stability, and employment prospects requires students to gather information, compare alternatives, and consider long-term outcomes. These behaviours promote future-oriented thinking and may strengthen students' ability to make informed educational decisions^{[19][31]}. However, when career decisions rely primarily on financial incentives without considering personal interests or competencies, students may experience lower engagement and reduced commitment to their chosen pathways^[20].

Social influences can also contribute to Future Readiness through guidance, encouragement, and access to information. Parents, teachers, and peers often provide advice, share experiences, and support educational aspirations, thereby facilitating career exploration and decision-making. Positive social support may enhance students' confidence and encourage proactive planning for future education and employment^{[32][33]}. Conversely, excessive dependence on external opinions may reduce students' autonomy and limit opportunities for independent career exploration, potentially affecting their confidence in making future decisions^[22].

Contextual influences further shape students' perceptions of future opportunities. Professional prestige, exposure to career information through social media, perceptions regarding programme difficulty, and uncertainty about future employment may influence how students evaluate educational alternatives and prepare for future transitions. While access to diverse sources of information can broaden students' understanding of career opportunities, inaccurate or unrealistic perceptions may contribute to misconceptions about occupations and influence educational decisions in ways that do not necessarily support long-term preparedness^{[26][27]}.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that career choice factors are likely to influence Future Readiness through multiple pathways. Personal influences may strengthen self-awareness and motivation, economic influences may encourage future-oriented planning, social influences may provide guidance and support, and contextual influences may shape perceptions of educational and occupational opportunities. Rather than acting independently, these influences interact throughout adolescence to affect students' preparedness for future educational and professional transitions^[34].

The literature suggests that career choice is influenced by multiple personal, economic, social, and contextual factors, each of which may contribute differently to students' preparedness for future educational and occupational transitions. However, empirical evidence examining the simultaneous influence of these factors on the multidimensional construct of Future Readiness remains limited. Addressing this gap requires an integrated examination of how different career choice influences relate to students' preparedness for future educational and professional success. Accordingly, the present study investigates the predictive relationship between career choice factors and the three dimensions of Future Readiness through the following hypotheses.

H1. Career choice factors significantly predict students' Career Decision Clarity.

H2. Career choice factors significantly predict students' Future Skills Orientation.

H3. Career choice factors significantly predict students' Self-Perceived Competencies.

Figure 1 presents the Hypothesized Research Model underpinning the study. It illustrates the hypothesized relationships between the four categories of career choice factors; personal, economic, social, and contextual factors; and the multidimensional construct of Future Readiness, comprising Career Decision Clarity, Future Skills Orientation, and Self-Perceived Competencies. Consistent with the empirical analysis, grade level is included as a control variable to account for potential developmental differences among secondary school students.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Research Model

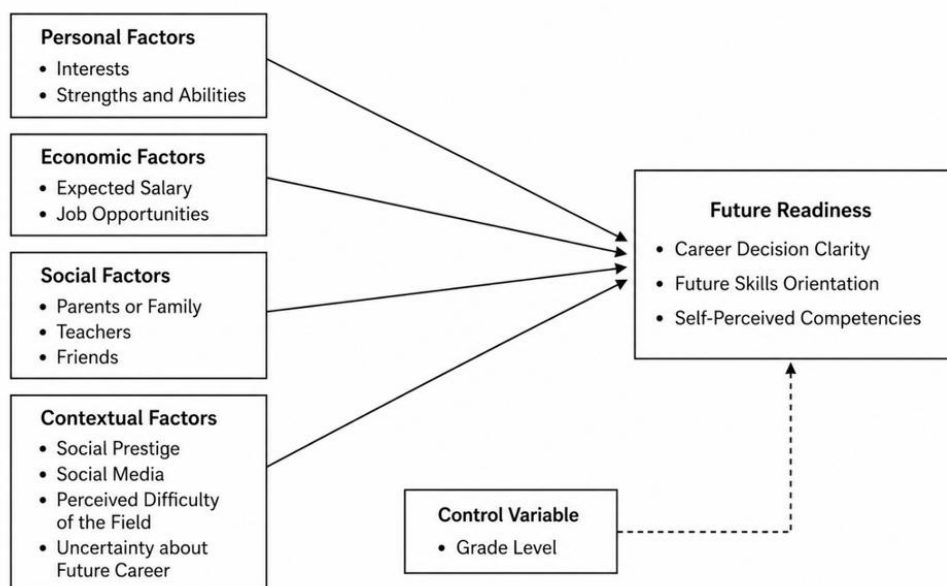


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

III. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between career choice factors and Future Readiness among secondary school students. A survey-based approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of standardized data from a relatively large sample at a single point in time while facilitating the examination of relationships among multiple variables.

The study adopted an explanatory research design in which career choice factors were examined as predictors of Future Readiness. Three separate multiple linear regression models were estimated to investigate whether career choice factors predicted each dimension of Future Readiness while controlling for grade level.

Participants

The study targeted secondary school students enrolled in Grades 10, 11, and 12 in Lebanon. Following data screening, 768 valid questionnaires were retained for statistical analysis.

These grade levels were selected because adolescence represents a critical stage during which students begin exploring higher education opportunities and making decisions regarding future careers. Consequently, this population provides an appropriate context for investigating both career choice influences and Future Readiness.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Prior to analysis, the dataset was screened for incomplete questionnaires, duplicate responses, and inconsistencies to ensure the quality of the final dataset.

Research Instrument

Future Readiness Questionnaire

Future Readiness was assessed using a structured questionnaire comprising three dimensions: Career Decision Clarity, Future Skills Orientation, and Self-Perceived Competencies. The instrument contained fourteen items distributed across the three constructs (3, 4, and 7 items, respectively).

Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater Future Readiness.

Composite scores for each dimension were calculated by averaging the corresponding items.

Career Choice Factors

Career choice factors were measured by asking participants to identify the factors influencing their intended educational and career decisions. Students were instructed to select the factors that best reflected their decision-making process from a list of eleven possible influences.

The factors included personal interests, strengths and abilities, expected salary, job opportunities, parents or family, teachers, friends, social prestige, social media, perceived difficulty of the field, and uncertainty regarding future career decisions.

For statistical analysis, each factor was coded as a binary variable, where 1 indicated that the participant selected the factor and 0 indicated that it was not selected.

Variables of the Study

The study examined the relationship between career choice factors and Future Readiness using multiple regression analysis.

The independent variables consisted of the eleven binary career choice factors reported by participants.

The dependent variables were the three dimensions of Future Readiness:

- Career Decision Clarity
- Future Skills Orientation
- Self-Perceived Competencies

To account for possible developmental differences across educational stages, grade level was included as a control variable in all regression models.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics.

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were computed to summarise participant characteristics, career choice factors, and Future Readiness scores.

Three multiple linear regression models were subsequently estimated to examine the extent to which career choice factors predicted each dimension of Future Readiness. Career choice factors were entered simultaneously as predictor variables, while grade level was included as a control variable.

Prior to model estimation, the assumptions of multiple linear regression were assessed. Multicollinearity was evaluated using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) and tolerance statistics. Residual plots were examined to assess linearity and homoscedasticity, and standardized residuals were inspected to identify potential outliers or influential observations.

To improve the robustness of statistical inference, heteroscedasticity-consistent (HC3) standard errors were estimated. Because multiple regression models were examined, the Benjamini-Hochberg False Discovery Rate (FDR) procedure was applied to adjust for multiple testing. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% level ($p < .05$).

IV. Results

Descriptive Findings

A total of 768 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. Participants reported multiple influences on their intended educational and career decisions, with an average of 3.09 career choice factors selected per student.

The most frequently reported career choice factor was Strengths and Abilities (55.7%), followed by Job Opportunities (51.6%), Personal Interests (51.0%), and Expected Salary (51.0%). Approximately one-third of the participants considered Prestige (30.2%) and Parents or Family (28.1%) when making career decisions, whereas fewer students identified Difficulty of the Field (23.4%) as an influential factor. Only a small proportion reported being influenced by Uncertainty regarding Future Career Choices (6.8%), Social Media (5.2%), Friends (3.1%), or Teachers (3.1%).

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate that students primarily based their career decisions on personal characteristics and labour-market considerations, while social influences and external information sources were less frequently reported.

Career Choice Factors as Predictors of Future Readiness

Three multiple linear regression models were estimated to examine whether career choice factors predicted the three dimensions of Future Readiness after controlling for grade level. Robust HC3 standard errors were used to account for potential heteroscedasticity, and the Benjamini-Hochberg False Discovery Rate procedure was applied to adjust for multiple hypothesis testing.

Career Decision Clarity

The regression model explained approximately **12.5%** of the variance in Career Decision Clarity ($R^2 = .125$). Among the eleven career choice factors examined, Prestige was the only variable positively associated with Career Decision Clarity ($B = 0.421, p = .020$), suggesting that students who considered professional prestige when making career decisions tended to report greater confidence and clarity regarding their future educational and occupational plans. However, this association did not remain statistically significant after applying the False Discovery Rate adjustment. No other career choice factor demonstrated a significant relationship with Career Decision Clarity.

Future Skills Orientation

The second regression model accounted for approximately **17.5%** of the variance in Future Skills Orientation ($R^2 = .175$). Prestige emerged as the only significant positive predictor ($B = 0.454, p < .001$), indicating that students who valued professional prestige also reported stronger orientation toward acquiring the knowledge and competencies required for future success. Unlike the previous model, this relationship remained statistically significant after adjustment for multiple testing, demonstrating the robustness of the finding.

Self-Perceived Competencies

The regression model predicting Self-Perceived Competencies explained approximately **15.5%** of the variance ($R^2 = .155$). Before adjustment for multiple testing, Prestige was positively associated with Self-Perceived Competencies ($B = 0.314, p = .004$), whereas Social Media demonstrated a negative association ($B = -0.474, p = .009$), suggesting that students influenced by social media tended to report lower confidence in their future competencies. Nevertheless, neither association remained statistically significant following the False Discovery Rate correction.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings provide partial support for the proposed research model. Career choice factors exhibited differential relationships with the three dimensions of Future Readiness, with Prestige emerging as the most consistent positive predictor across the regression analyses. However, after controlling for multiple comparisons, Prestige remained a significant predictor only of Future Skills Orientation, while no significant

relationships were observed for Career Decision Clarity or Self-Perceived Competencies. In addition, traditional social influences; including parents, teachers, and friends; as well as economic considerations such as expected salary and job opportunities, did not significantly predict any dimension of Future Readiness in the final models.

V. Discussion

Discussion of Findings

The present study examined whether career choice factors predict Future Readiness among secondary school students. Overall, the findings indicate that the relationship between career choice influences and Future Readiness is selective rather than universal. While several career choice factors demonstrated associations with specific dimensions of Future Readiness, professional prestige emerged as the only consistent predictor, remaining significantly associated with Future Skills Orientation after controlling for multiple comparisons. These findings suggest that not all influences guiding career decisions contribute equally to students' preparedness for future educational and occupational challenges.

One of the most important findings was the positive relationship between professional prestige and Future Skills Orientation. Students who considered the social status and recognition associated with future careers demonstrated greater awareness of the competencies and transferable skills required for long-term success. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that adolescents often associate prestigious occupations with higher educational attainment, continuous professional development, and greater career aspirations. Studies on career motivation have similarly shown that occupational prestige can encourage students to invest more actively in developing future-oriented skills and competencies. Rather than functioning solely as an external reward, prestige appears to serve as a motivational mechanism that encourages students to prepare for careers perceived as demanding and socially valued.

Prestige also demonstrated positive associations with Career Decision Clarity and Self-Perceived Competencies before adjustment for multiple testing. Although these relationships did not remain statistically significant after applying the False Discovery Rate correction, their consistent positive direction across all three regression models suggests that prestige may represent a broader motivational influence on adolescent career development. Similar patterns have occasionally been reported in studies examining career aspirations and educational motivation, where students pursuing highly respected professions often report greater confidence and stronger educational commitment. However, because these relationships did not remain statistically significant after correction, they should be interpreted cautiously and verified through future studies employing larger and more diverse samples.

Another noteworthy finding was the negative association between social media and Self-Perceived Competencies before adjustment for multiple testing. Although this relationship was not retained following the False Discovery Rate adjustment, it raises important questions regarding the influence of digital environments on adolescents' perceptions of their own capabilities. Previous studies have suggested that extensive exposure to carefully curated online representations of academic achievement and professional success may contribute to upward social comparison, unrealistic career expectations, and reduced self-confidence. The present findings appear to align with this perspective, indicating that reliance on social media as a source of career information may not necessarily strengthen students' confidence in their future competencies. Nevertheless, given the lack of statistical significance after correction, this result should be regarded as exploratory rather than conclusive.

An equally important finding concerns the absence of significant relationships for personal factors, including personal interests and perceived strengths, despite these being the most frequently reported influences on career decisions. Previous studies consistently identify interests and abilities as central determinants of career choice and career satisfaction. However, the present findings suggest that factors influencing career selection are not necessarily the same factors that promote Future Readiness. While personal interests may help students identify preferred educational pathways, they do not automatically foster future-oriented thinking, career planning, or confidence in one's future competencies. This distinction contributes to the literature by highlighting that career decision-making and preparedness for future transitions represent related but conceptually distinct developmental processes.

Similarly, economic considerations, including expected salary and job opportunities, were not significant predictors of any dimension of Future Readiness. This finding differs from research demonstrating that labour-market expectations frequently influence students' educational choices, particularly within economically uncertain contexts. The discrepancy may be explained by the different outcomes examined across studies. Whereas previous research has generally focused on factors influencing career preferences or occupational intentions, the present study investigated preparedness for future educational and professional challenges. Consequently, although economic considerations may shape the careers students aspire to pursue, they appear to contribute less directly to the development of the competencies, confidence, and future-oriented attitudes captured by the concept of Future Readiness.

Likewise, social influences, including parents, teachers, and friends, did not significantly predict any dimension of Future Readiness. This finding contrasts with a substantial body of literature emphasising the important role of family support, teacher encouragement, and peer relationships in adolescent career development. However, these previous studies have primarily examined career aspirations, educational choices, or career exploration behaviours rather than Future Readiness itself. The present findings therefore suggest that while social relationships remain important during career development, their influence may operate indirectly through career exploration and decision-making rather than directly strengthening students' preparedness for future educational and occupational transitions.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the multidimensional nature of Future Readiness and support the argument that readiness for future educational and occupational success cannot be explained solely by the factors that influence career choice. Instead, the results indicate that Future Readiness reflects a broader developmental process involving motivation, future-oriented thinking, confidence, and awareness of the competencies required for long-term success. This distinction contributes to the emerging literature by demonstrating that selecting a career and preparing for future career success are related yet fundamentally different developmental processes.

From a practical perspective, the findings have important implications for educators, school counsellors, and policymakers. Career guidance programmes should move beyond helping students identify suitable occupations and instead adopt a more comprehensive developmental approach that strengthens Future Readiness. Educational interventions should promote awareness of future labour-market demands, encourage the development of transferable competencies, and support reflective career planning. At the same time, schools should strengthen students' digital literacy by helping students critically evaluate career information encountered through social media and distinguish realistic educational pathways from idealised online portrayals.

Overall, the present study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that career choice factors do not uniformly predict Future Readiness. Among the factors examined, professional prestige emerged as the most consistent predictor, particularly in relation to Future Skills Orientation, whereas personal, economic, and traditional social influences demonstrated limited predictive value. These findings extend existing research by distinguishing between the determinants of career choice and the determinants of Future Readiness, suggesting that educational policies and career guidance initiatives should place greater emphasis on developing students' preparedness for future learning and employment rather than focusing exclusively on career selection.

Although the present study identified only a limited number of statistically robust predictors, the findings underscore the complexity of adolescent career development and reinforce the importance of distinguishing between the factors that influence career choice and those that enhance Future Readiness. Rather than viewing career decision-making as the final objective, educators and policymakers should recognise Future Readiness as a broader developmental outcome requiring targeted educational support and continuous skills development.

Future research should extend this line of inquiry by examining larger and more diverse student populations, incorporating additional psychological and contextual variables, and employing longitudinal designs to better understand how career choice influences shape Future Readiness over time. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the developmental processes that prepare adolescents for successful educational and occupational transitions.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for educational practice, career guidance, and policy development. Although career choice factors are widely recognised as important determinants of students' educational and occupational preferences, the present findings suggest that these factors do not necessarily enhance students' Future Readiness. Consequently, career guidance initiatives should adopt a broader developmental perspective that extends beyond helping students select future careers.

For educators, the findings highlight the importance of integrating Future Readiness into secondary education curricula. Schools should provide students with opportunities to develop future-oriented competencies such as career planning, critical thinking, adaptability, communication, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills alongside traditional academic instruction. Strengthening these competencies may better prepare students to navigate rapidly evolving educational and labour-market environments.

For school counsellors and career advisors, the results suggest that career guidance programmes should move beyond occupational matching and encourage students to reflect on the competencies required for long-term professional success. Career counselling should therefore combine career exploration activities with structured opportunities for self-assessment, future planning, and awareness of emerging labour-market trends. Such an approach may contribute to both more informed career decisions and greater Future Readiness.

The findings also have implications for educational policymakers. National career education policies should promote comprehensive career development frameworks that integrate career decision-making with future skills development throughout secondary education. Particular attention should be given to strengthening career

education programmes that foster students' preparedness for lifelong learning, career adaptability, and continuous professional development rather than focusing exclusively on immediate educational choices.

Finally, although professional prestige emerged as the strongest predictor of Future Skills Orientation, educational institutions should encourage students to evaluate careers using a balanced perspective that considers personal interests, competencies, societal needs, and opportunities for long-term growth. Helping students understand the relationship between career aspirations and continuous skills development may contribute to more sustainable educational and occupational outcomes.

VI. Conclusion

Preparing young people for an increasingly uncertain educational and labour-market environment requires understanding not only how they choose future careers but also how those choices relate to their preparedness for lifelong learning and professional success. Against this backdrop, the present study examined the extent to which career choice factors predict Future Readiness among secondary school students.

The findings demonstrate that career choice factors do not contribute equally to Future Readiness. While several factors exhibited associations with individual dimensions of Future Readiness, professional prestige emerged as the only predictor that remained significantly associated with Future Skills Orientation after controlling for multiple comparisons. In contrast, personal factors, economic considerations, and traditional social influences demonstrated limited predictive value across the regression models. These findings suggest that the factors influencing adolescents' career preferences are not necessarily the same factors that strengthen their preparedness for future educational and occupational success.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the growing literature on adolescent career development by distinguishing between career choice and Future Readiness as related but conceptually distinct constructs. Whereas previous research has primarily focused on identifying the determinants of career preferences, the present study extends this perspective by examining whether these same influences contribute to students' preparedness for future educational and professional transitions. The findings support the view that Future Readiness represents a multidimensional developmental construct that cannot be fully explained by traditional career choice factors alone.

The study also offers important practical implications. Career guidance programmes should extend beyond supporting students in selecting educational and occupational pathways to include initiatives that strengthen Future Readiness through future-oriented skill development, reflective career planning, and awareness of evolving labour-market requirements. Schools should also encourage critical evaluation of career information obtained from digital platforms while promoting the development of transferable competencies that support lifelong learning and career adaptability.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional research design, preventing conclusions regarding causal relationships between career choice factors and Future Readiness. Second, the findings were based on self-reported data, which may be influenced by response bias or participants' subjective perceptions. Third, although the sample provided valuable insights into secondary schools students' career development, additional research involving larger and more diverse populations is needed to enhance the generalisability of the findings.

Future research should examine these relationships using longitudinal designs to better understand how career choice influences evolve throughout adolescence and contribute to Future Readiness over time. Further studies may also investigate additional psychological, educational, and contextual variables, including career self-efficacy, parental support, school climate, career adaptability, and socioeconomic background, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that prepare young people for future educational and occupational success.

In conclusion, the present study demonstrates that Future Readiness should be viewed as more than an outcome of career decision-making. Rather, it represents a broader developmental capacity that reflects students' preparedness to navigate future educational and professional transitions with confidence, adaptability, and purpose. By distinguishing between the factors that influence career choices and those that foster Future Readiness, this study provides a foundation for developing more comprehensive career education strategies that equip adolescents not only to choose their future careers but also to succeed within them.

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