

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE LEVEL OF CAREER AWARENESS AMONG JUNIOR (INTERMEDIATE) COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Awareness of various career options in the given field allows students to start preparing early and acquiring the necessary skills and qualifications. This comparative study explores the level of career awareness among higher secondary (intermediate) students as per their faculty - Arts, Commerce, and Science. This study conducted a survey to examine and compare students' knowledge of the career options available to them through a questionnaire. In all, 75 students registered their participation in this study. After analysing the data, this study found that most of the students, who have already set their career goals, have very limited knowledge of the career options available in their faculty. The present study suggests that here is a need to create career awareness among students through career awareness training and counselling sessions at an early stage.

Keywords: Career awareness, career choices, higher secondary education, goal setting, faculty, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

A career can be understood as a destination set in our academic journey. We all have certain goals and to follow a path to reach them. It is an individual's metaphorical journey through learning, work, and other aspects of life. It is, often, shaped by an individual's skills, interests, and experiences. More recently career has been referred to as the patterns and sequences of occupations and positions occupied by people across their working lives (**Young and Collins, 2000**).

Career goals or career choices are targets, things, positions, and situations related to one's professional life that anyone has set his/her mind on achieving (**Andrei Kurtuy, 2023**). So, setting a career goal is a fundamental aspect of personal growth and development. As for students, career choice has a vital role to play in students' lives as it helps them get informed about their future educational and professional paths (**Tamuli and Hazarika, 2024**). With the vast number of career options available to them, some students, often, feel overwhelmed but, on the other hand, some of them may not be aware of the career options available to them. Being aware of various career options allows them to start preparing early and acquiring the necessary skills and qualifications. Most of the students may not know the career options available to them at school. Hence, they are not sure about their career choices. Various factors, including parents' background, academic performances, their exposure to different career options, and their childhood dreams, etc. have a role to play in their career decisions.

1.1 Faculty-wise Career Opportunities (Sectors and Professions)

Career opportunities may differ as per the faculty of a student and there are several career opportunities in each faculty. Some examples of faculty-wise sectors/professions are mentioned below.

1.2 Career Opportunities for Arts faculty

Some of the career opportunities for Arts faculty students include Writing and Publishing, Media and Communication, Creative Arts, Public Sectors and NGOs, Advertising and Marketing, Law and Government, Tourism and Hospitality, Translation and Interpretation, Publishing and Literary Agencies, etc.

1.3 Career Opportunities for Commerce faculty

Some of the career opportunities for Commerce faculty students include Accounting and Finance, Business and Management, Economics and Analytics, Legal and Compliance, Technology and Innovation, Government and Public Sector, etc.

1.4 Career Opportunities for Science faculty

Some of the career opportunities for Science faculty students include Health and Medicine, Engineering and Technology, Natural Science, Information Technology and Computer Science, Biotechnology and Research, Mathematics and Finance, etc.

However, it is often observed that students are not aware of the career options available to them in the concerned faculty. They rely for their career choices on their peers or family members, who have very limited knowledge of it or believe in the surety of jobs in the limited fields only. For example, science students aspire for engineering or medical fields and they do not like to explore other areas.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tamuli and Biman (2024) studied the career awareness among senior secondary school students in North Lakhimpur, India by comparing the career awareness levels according to gender, faculty of students from government and private institutions. The study found that there were very less percentage of students with high level of career awareness. Norli and Bakar (2024) studied career awareness among students of Islamic secondary school. Four face-to-face counselling sessions were conducted and six samples were drawn. The study found that all respondents were familiar with various fields of work and aware of the jobs they were interested in, but they had limited knowledge about current job trends. They recommend that students need extensive exposure to contemporary careers opportunities. Sharma et al (2024) investigated the career awareness level of rural and non-rural students from Jalandhar district in Punjab, India. The sample consisted of 240 students and the analysis and interpreting of data was done by computing means. The study found that most of the students from rural or government schools had a low and average level of career awareness. Pradeep et al (2020) studied the awareness about pursuing a career among high school students. They used the survey method through a questionnaire which was answered by 101 students. The survey revealed that most of the students were aware of career options but there were still some students who were unsure about their career. Ronany and Lee (2013) studied the relationship between self-concept and career awareness among secondary school students. The survey of 165 students showed a positive relationship between self-concept and career awareness and students with a positive outlook had more career awareness. Chavan and Pithe (2022) studied the career awareness among higher secondary students through a survey consisting of 240 students. From the data analysis the researchers found that career awareness among students was medium. They recommended programme for proper guidance to the students and career guidance programmes for all faculties students. Ranjan (2024) studied the desires of 68 students on their future careers, the difficulties they faced in the economy, and the availability of career assistance. The participants in the study were mostly female. Most of these participants had strong interest in fields like IAS, IPS, and medical and more than half of the students indicated that they had never gotten counselling regarding career before. The above studies have examined the career awareness among school and colleges' students. They have studied this in terms of gender, government/private and also faculty. However, none of these studies have undertaken a comparative study of the career awareness among the students of different faculties, viz., Arts, Commerce and Science. To bridge this research gap, the present study aims to study and compare the career awareness among Arts, Commerce and Science faculty students and to know the reason behind choosing their respective faculty, including their views towards the faculty, knowledge about career options, teachers' and parents' guidance, their efforts to achieve their future career goals and their contingency plan.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

In light of this discussion, higher secondary (intermediate) students are at the stage where they begin to specialise in certain subjects, and they should know the career opportunities available to them. This comparative study aims to explore the level of career awareness among the higher secondary (intermediate) students as per their respective faculties- Arts, Commerce and Science.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

In this light, the present study attempts to find the answers to the following questions:

- 1) What do students know about career opportunities available to them after class XII?
- 2) What is the percentage of students who have set their career goals?
- 3) What is students' attitude towards their selected faculty?
- 4) What is the role of students' family members and background in their career choices?

5. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the present study was to examine and compare the level of career awareness among higher secondary students of Arts, Commerce and Science faculties. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

- 1) To compare and contrast the level of career awareness among Arts, Commerce and Science students in higher secondary;
- 2) To study the students' knowledge about different career options;
- 3) To study the reason behind students' choice of faculty;
- 4) To study the role of students' family members and background in their career choices.

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study is designed to examine and compare the level of career awareness among Arts, Commerce and Science faculties' students through a survey.

6.2 RESEARCH TOOL

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, conducted with the help of a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, the questions in section 'A' were designed for collecting the background information of the participants and section 'B' aimed to understand students' knowledge about career opportunities. Section 'B' of the questionnaire consisted of 11 closed and 9 open-ended questions. In total 20 questions were asked to study students' future career goals, knowledge of career opportunities and their career awareness.

6.3 THE RESPONDENTS

The population of the study comprised the students of class XI and XII of higher secondary colleges in Arts, Commerce and Science from Sangamner in Maharashtra (19.5761° N, 74.2070° E). The sample includes both male and female, and rural and urban students studying in college. The researchers took surveys in Shramik Junior College, Sahyadri Junior College and other colleges located in and around Sangamner. The number of faculty-wise male and female participants involved in this study is presented in **Chart 1** below:

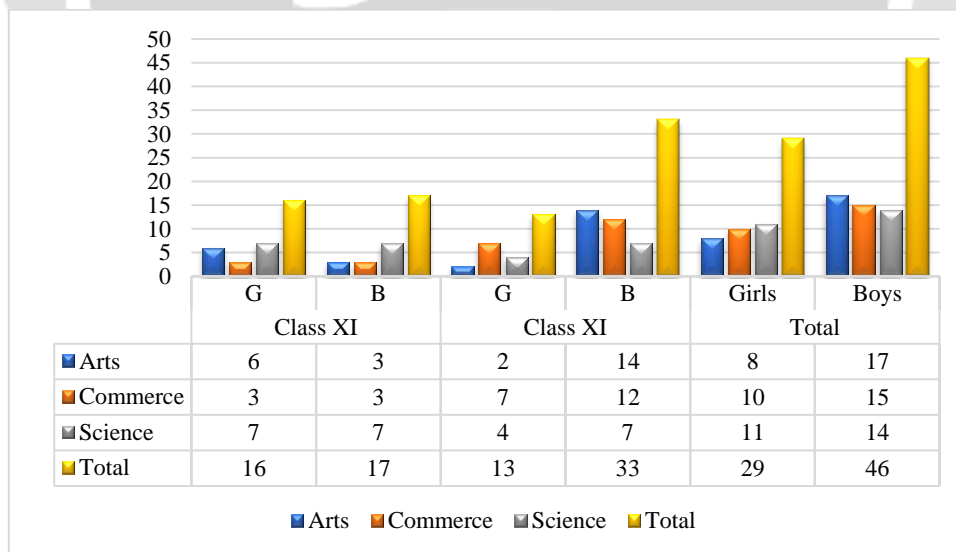


Chart 1: The number of male and female participants

The above **Chart 1** shows that 75 (29 female and 46 male) i.e. 25 students each from Arts, Commerce and Science faculty participated in this comparative study. These students were of class XI and XII from the aforementioned higher secondary colleges.

7. Data and Observations

The information related to the participant students' residential area, medium of instruction and parents' background is presented in the following figures.

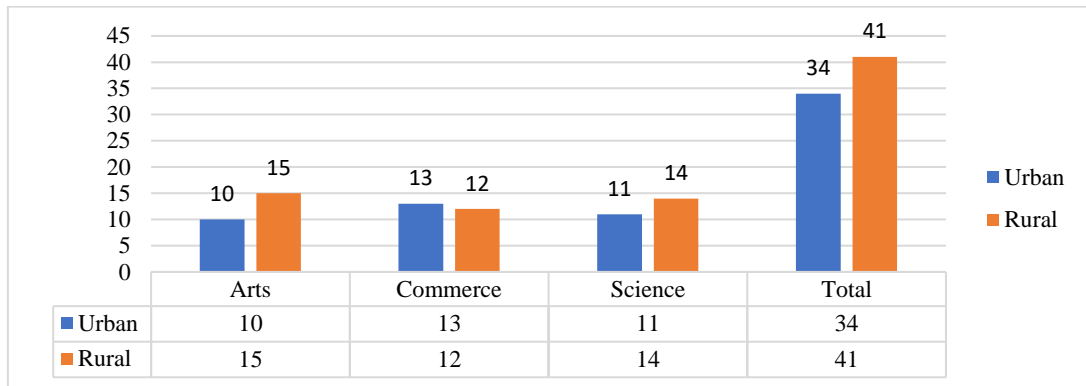


Chart 2: Residential area of the participants

The data presented in Chart 2 shows the residential area of participants. 10 students of Arts faculty were from urban and 15 from rural areas. From Commerce, 13 students were from urban locality and 12 from the rural background and lastly 11 students of Science faculty were from urban and 14 from rural area. The proportion of rural and urban participants is kind of similar within each faculty. Overall, out of 75 participants, 34 were from urban area and 41 were from rural area. This shows slightly a greater number of participants were from rural background.

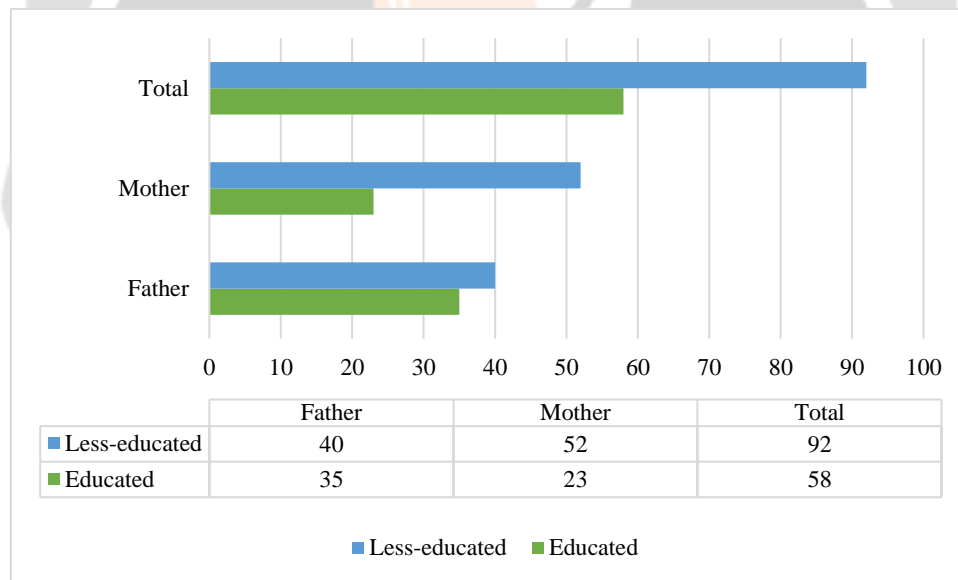


Chart 3: Students' parents' education

The data presented in chart 3 shows students' parents' educational qualification. It reveals that out of 150 parents (75-Father, 75-Mother) 40 male parents and 52 female parents are less educated and on the other hand 35 male parents and 23 female parents were well educated. It shows that majority of parents were less educated.

As mentioned above, Section B of the questionnaire was designed to seek students' responses to the questions of their career choices, guidance, level of career awareness, etc. The responses to all 20 questions in this section are presented in Table 1 below. The questions are given in column 1 of the table while in column 2, the responses are specified. The common responses are given in a single column while the faculty-wise varied responses to question no. 8, 9, 12, 13, and 20 are given in the sub-columns.

Table 1. Questions and students' responses to those questions

Questions	Responses		
	Arts	Commerce	Science
Q.1 Why did you choose this faculty?	Considering their career goal.		
Q2. Was it your own choice or suggested by others?	Almost all responded that it was their own choice.		
Q.3 You are <u>Very Happy/ Happy/ Unhappy/ Can't say</u> with the choice of your faculty.	Majority of students were just happy with their choice.		
Q.4 & Q.5 What opinion do your family members, relatives or other people around you have about your faculty and how do you feel about it?	Parents/ relatives were positive about choice and students felt happy about their parents'/relatives' perspective.		
Q.6 & Q.7 Do you know the career opportunities available to your faculty? Name them.	Students think they are aware about career options but they could only name 4 career opportunities.		
Q.8 Have you ever attended any sessions on career opportunities?	Most of them did not attend any session.		Have attended sessions related to career.
Q.9 Name the sessions	Only 3 of them named the session.	10 students named the session.	5 students named the session.
Q.10 & Q.11 Do your parents and teachers guide you about your future career opportunities?	Majority of the students' parents and teachers guide them about their career.		
Q.12 Have you set your goal?	All of them had set their career goals.	Four of them had not set their goal.	All of them had set their career goals.
Q.13 What is your goal?	Jobs or Police/Army	CA, CS or Business	Doctor, Engineer or other jobs
Q.14 & Q.15 Is it the same goal decided in school? If not, what was the reason?	Most of the students are following their goal but some changed due to financial and family problems.		
Q.16 & Q.17 Are you aware of the educational and skills requirements? and Do you think you have all the skills?	Almost everyone thought they knew the skills and qualifications required and thought that they have all the skills.		
Q.18 Have you started working on it?	Majority of the students are working on it.		

Q.19 Do you have any back-up plan?	Most of the students from Arts and Science faculty have back up except Commerce.		
Q.20 Have you joined a coaching class for your goal?	Only a few students had joined classes.	Majority of the students had not joined any coaching classes.	Most of them had joined coaching classes.

As presented in Table 1 above, the participants from all three faculties responded that they chose their respective faculty by considering their career goals. For example, students chose Arts faculty because they aspired to become teachers or their dream is to join Army/Police departments. When participants were asked that if it was their own choice or others suggested them to choose their faculties, almost all participants responded that it was their own choice and they were happy with their choice of faculty and their parents/relatives were also happy with their decision. To check the level of career awareness among them, the participants were asked if they know the career opportunities available to their respective faculties and if they could name them. They thought that they were aware of career opportunities available to their faculty but none of them was able to mention at least ten career opportunities in their fields. Most of the students from Arts and Commerce faculty did not attend any kind of career-oriented sessions but a good number of students from Science faculty attended such sessions. However, only eighteen of them were able to recollect the name of the sessions they had attended. In response to Q10 and Q11, the participants informed that their parents or teachers had guided them regarding future career paths. The participants were asked if they have set their career goals, students from Arts and Science faculties replied affirmatively but four students from Commerce informed that they have not set their career goals yet. As stated earlier students were not able to name ten career opportunities available to them and this reflected in their career goal setting. When they were asked about their goals, their responses showed that almost every student had aspired for commonly aspired careers. Most common career goals from Arts students were to become a teacher, police, army man, etc. Commerce students aspired to become a CA, CS or businessman while Science students aspired to become a doctor or an engineer.

The participants were asked if their goal was the same as they had set it in their school days and if not, what factors made them change it. Most of the students found to be consistent with it. However, a few of them were unable to do so due to financial problems or family problems. Although students set career goals, it is essential for them to be familiar with the educational qualification and skills required for it. It was observed that the participant students were aware of these requirements and were working to improve their skills. Most of the students from Arts and Science faculties had alternative career options as backup plans but students from Commerce faculty were yet to find the alternative option. Only a few of the students from Arts and Commerce faculties had joined coaching classes for their future career goals but majority of the students from Science faculty had joined coaching classes to achieve their career goals.

8. Findings and Conclusions

Based on the data analysis, the present study found that 92% of the respondents had chosen their faculty as their own choice and 90% of the students informed that they were aware of career opportunities but could not even tell the names of ten career opportunities available to their field. 64% students of Arts faculty wanted to join the army/police and remaining 36% students wanted to do other jobs. In the Commerce faculty, 72% students aimed to become chartered accountants or company secretaries and 28% wished to start a business and lastly in Science faculty 60% students focussed on pursuing engineering, 32% on medical field and remaining wanted to do other jobs. Students' family background also has a crucial role to play in students' career choices because some students had to change their goal due to financial and family problems. 94% participants had set their goals on the basis of their limited knowledge about career opportunities and 82% participants thought that they had all the skills required for their future goals. Only 58% participants informed that they had backup plans. The students of Commerce faculty did not have any backup plan as compared to students of Arts and Science. Some of the major findings are mentioned in the following table 2 and the same data is presented in Chart 4 below:

Table 2: Percentage of faculty-wise responses

Major Points	Arts	Commerce	Science
Their own choice	88%	96%	92%

Know the career opportunities	80%	94%	96%
Attended sessions	36%	48%	52%
Teachers' and parents' guidance	88%	80%	96%
Have set goal	100%	84%	100%
Aware of skill requirement	80%	68%	100%
Have back up plan	64%	44%	68%
Joined coaching classes	24%	40%	64%

Chart 4 below is the graphical representation of the data presented in Table 2.

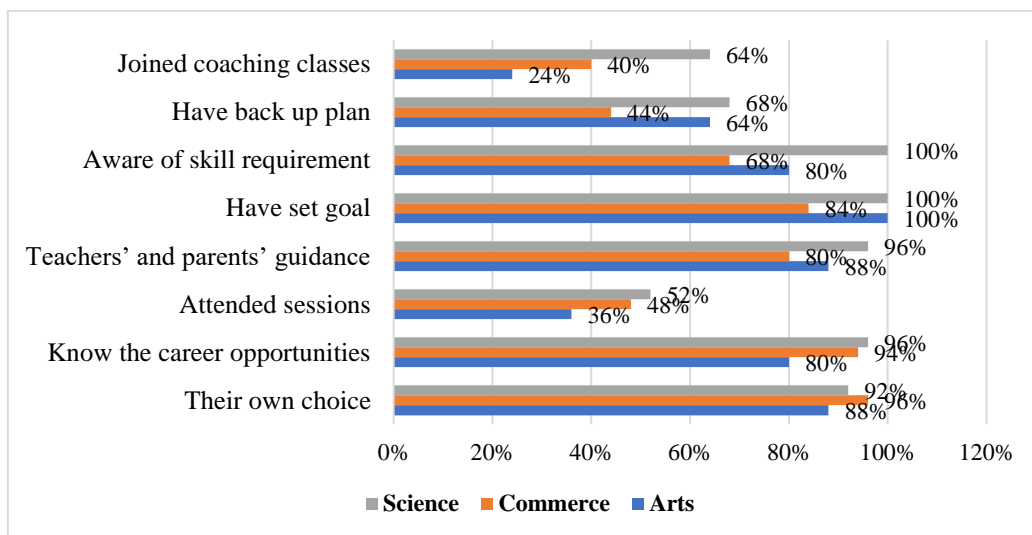


Chart 4: Percentage of faculty-wise responses

The data presented in Table 2 and Chart 4 highlight some similarities and differences across faculties. The data reveals that majority of students (88% in Arts, 96% in Commerce and 92% in Science) chose their respective faculties indicating it was their own choice. 80% students of Arts, 94% students of Commerce and 96% students of Science thought that they knew the career opportunities available to them. Further, 36% students of Arts, 48% students of Commerce and 52% students of Science faculty attended sessions regarding career. 88% Arts students', 80% Commerce students' and 96% Science students' parents and teachers guided them for their career. Surprisingly, 100% students of Arts and Science, and 84% students of Commerce have set their future goal. 80% students of Arts, 68% students of Commerce and 100% students of Science faculty were aware of the skills required for their goals. Regarding backup plans, 64% students of Arts, 44% students of Commerce and 68% students of Science faculty have set back up plans for their current goals. Lastly, 24% students of Arts, 40% students of Commerce and 64% students of Science have joined the coaching classes to reach their future goals.

After analysing the responses of all faculty students (mentioned in Chart 4), the present study found that students of higher secondary classes choose their faculty considering availability of career opportunities. However, the limited knowledge of the career opportunities available to their faculty affects their career goal setting. Science faculty students are more satisfied with their choices as compared to Arts and Commerce faculty students. Talking about the backup plan, Arts faculty students have alternative plans but students of Commerce faculty do not think of it despite attending career-oriented sessions. On the other hand, these kinds of sessions/programmes helped Science faculty students to keep back up career options. Most of the students of Science faculty opt for coaching classes to achieve their future goals while there were very few students in Arts and Commerce faculty who have joined such classes regarding their future career goal.

Based on the above findings, the study concludes that students of all three faculties set their goals, but their knowledge of career options needs further development. Students mostly know the common/traditional career fields but they do not know about many other job opportunities available in their faculty. For example, students from Arts are familiar with options like teaching and competitive exams but they are not aware of the job opportunities like becoming

interpreters, private tutors, content creators, researchers etc. and the same is case of other faculty students as well. Therefore, students need proper guidance regarding various career opportunities available to them from an early stage itself.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the importance of career awareness among students here are some recommendations:

- The study recommends that students need to be oriented about different career options. It will help them to pursue the right career path that matches their interest and skills.
- Teachers and parents should introduce students to a wide range of career options at an earlier stage.
- Schools/colleges should conduct programmes/sessions regarding career awareness which will make students aware of different fields/sectors. Further, the sessions should orient students regarding the eligibility, skills, required qualifications and salary, etc.

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