

**MOUNT CARMEL COLLEGE  
AUTONOMOUS  
BENGALURU**

**DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS AND ANALYTICS**

**PROJECT REPORT**

**TO ANALYSE WHAT MOTIVATES STUDENTS WHEN  
PICKING THEIR UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES**

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# INTRODUCTION

The choice of an undergraduate degree is likely to be one of the first major life decisions a person can make. Understanding the factors that affect this decision is important to provide more efficient career advice and to tailor educational programs to students' expectations. Along with external pressure from parents and schools, the choice of an undergraduate degree is affected by multiple psychological factors, including the person's motivations for further education as well as what they expect to get out of their degree. Disciplines offer different opportunities to fulfil these motivations and that, in part, defines the choices people make.

It is of interest to find the different factors that play a pivotal role when a student chooses their undergraduate course and how much of a say the student has in choosing the course.

# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to study the factors that influence students to choose their undergraduate majors. A sample of three hundred and seven students from Bangalore was taken for this study. The students were made to fill out questionnaires. The respondents were mainly from different localities and colleges. We made efforts to involve students from a variety of programs to fully address our research aims. The data gathered from this research instrument was filtered, organized, and tabulated on MS Excel for analysis. Power BI, R and MS Excel were the software used for data representation and analysis to help us reach conclusions with regards to the objectives of the study.

# OBJECTIVES

- To understand what factors- Personal interest, Parents' influence, Career Prospects, Course Content, Institute, and Recommendations from teachers/friends, play an important role when students choose their Undergraduate course.
- To find if the chosen subject aligns with their future career or educational goals.
- To find out if career counselling had an impact on the student's choice.
- To find out whether students are content with their choice or have any second thoughts and the reasons for the latter.
- To find out if the students took a gap year and the possible reasons for the decision.
- To understand what attracts a student to enrol into an institution and how involved the parents were throughout the entire process (from choice of course to admission into an institute).

# TARGET POPULATION

Since our objectives need us to analyse the motivating factors behind students selecting their undergraduate degrees, our target population are students from their first year of undergrad to recent graduates, across different streams and specialisations residing in Bangalore.

**Sampling Units:** The sampling units are individuals who are randomly chosen from the target population

# LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Factors Affecting Z Generation on Selecting Majors in The University: An Indonesian Case - Farida Aryani, Nur Umar [Journal of Social Studies Education Research Volume 11, Number 3, Sep 29, 2020]:**

This research aimed to identify the factors influencing students in deciding their university majors, particularly in Indonesia. The study involved 200 senior high school students, categorized as Generation Z in the last grade (50% boys and 50% girls), from two districts in Indonesia—Maros and Makassar—chosen through a purposive sampling method. Findings show that internal factors influencing Gen Z in selecting their university majors include families, academic achievements, and culture, while the influential external factor is the quality of education.

- **Influences on students' choice of college major - Charles A Malgwi, Martha A Howe, Priscilla A Burnaby [Journal of education for business 80 (5), 275-282, 2005]**

In this study, the authors surveyed undergraduate students at a large northeastern business school concerning influences on their choices of major. The authors examined factors such as why students initially select particular majors, and which positive and negative factors relate to any later changes in those choices. Results show that interest in the subject was the most important factor for incoming freshmen, regardless of gender. For women, the next most influential factor was aptitude in the subject. However, men were significantly more influenced by the major's potential for career advancement and job opportunities and the level of compensation in the field.



- **Effect of Family Influence, Personal Interest and Economic**

**Considerations on Course Choice amongst Undergraduate Students in  
Higher Educational Institutions of Vehari, Pakistan - Asad Afsal**

**Humayon, Shoaib Raza, Rao Aamir Khan, Noor Ul Ain Ansari**

**(International Journal of Organizational Leadership):**

This study examined the effect of family influence, personal interest, and economic considerations in career choice amongst undergraduate students. Target population was undergraduate students of higher educational institutions in Vehari, Pakistan. The results of regression analysis showed that the family influence, personal interest and economic considerations exercised big influence on the career choice of students.

- **Joseph, F. B. (2014). Factors Influencing the Selection of Business**

**Studies: A Comparative Study of Indian Students at an Indian University  
and Chinese Students at a Thai University:**

This research attempted to find out what is in the minds of today's business students when they choose business studies. Indian students at Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, India, and Chinese students at Assumption University, Thailand are the respondents in this study. The research examines the relationship between four independent variables, finance, family and friends, personal interest and job opportunity and career satisfaction, and one dependent variable, the selection of business studies at the Bachelor level. All four influencing factors were found to have an impact on the selection of BBA at a low to medium correlation. The findings also indicate that both Indian and Chinese students are very much influenced by these four factors.

- **Factors Affecting Students' Career Choice - Asma Shahid Kazi, Abeeda Akhlaq [ Journal of Research and Reflections in Education December 2017]**

A sample of four hundred and thirty-two students selected from two public sector universities chosen purposively reveals that role of school counsellors is minimal when it comes to making informed career choices. It also reveals that the youth is impressionable, and gets swayed by peers, and impressed by media when it comes to choosing a career. It also highlights the role of the teachers who motivate and inspire their students. The work environment is also a factor that attracts students towards a career. The study shows that students from these institutions were not influenced by the parents' profession, or pressurized by them. It also reveals that girls are more inclined towards their peers, and their choices are dependent on them.

- **An exploratory study of the factors influencing undergraduate student choice: the case of higher education in Scotland - Briggs, S., 2006:**

Studies in Higher Education Research conducted among Scottish undergraduate students concluded that academic reputation, location and distance from home have most influence and research reputation, quality of faculty and information supplied by university have least influence in selection of a Scottish university

# PILOT STUDY

## **To Analyze what motivates students when picking their Undergraduate Degrees**

This survey is being conducted by the third-year students of B.Sc. Statistics, Computer Science, Mount Carmel College as their 5<sup>th</sup> semester Statistics - Paper 5 research project. Your responses will be confidential and will be used for study purposes only.

1. How old are you? ○

- Under 18      •19-20      •21-22      •23-24      •Over 25

2. Gender

- Female      •Male

3. Are you from Karnataka?

- Yes      •No

4. What are you studying right now?

- PUC      •Undergrad      •Graduated

5. What field are you studying?

- Science
- Commerce
- Engineering
- Humanities
- Medicine

6. Why did you choose your field ?

- Parents
- Institution
- Career prospects
- Personal interest
- Result of career counseling

7. Was this undergrad degree program your first choice?

- Yes      •No

8. If not, why didn't you choose that course?

- I was unable to qualify for the course.
- I chose a course that was in an adjacent field of study.
- My present course has better career prospects.
- I prioritized institution over subject.
- Financial constraints

9. Did you take a drop year? If yes, why?

- No
- Yes, I was prepping for competitive exams.
- Yes, I was indecisive about which subjects I should pursue.
- Yes, I didn't get into institution of choice.

10. Did you attend any career counseling sessions? Did they impact your decision in anyway?

- No
- Yes, they affected my decision.
- Yes, but they did not impact my choice.

11. How involved were your parents in the decision-making process on a scale of 1-10? (1 being minimally involved and 10 being highly involved)

•1      •2      •3      •4      •5      •6      •7      •8      •9      •10

12. Why did you choose this institution?

- Location
- Curriculum
- Placement opportunities
- Prestige
- Social life
- It was my last resort

13. Are you having any second thoughts? Why?

- No
- Yes, the market has become unstable
- Yes, I lack passion for the subjects I'm studying
- Yes, the course is difficult to follow
- Yes, it wasn't my first choice
- Yes, because of financial constraints

- Yes, due to faded interest

14. Do you see yourself pursuing a career or further education in the field you're majoring in?

- Yes
- No

# CHANGES MADE IN PILOT SURVEY

Pilot Survey: We conducted our pilot survey by collecting 30 responses from a diverse range of the considered population. We have collected responses from students studying in different streams and colleges, and students in our localities. The method of contact was direct responses. Changes made to the questionnaire after the conclusion of the pilot study:

- Redefined our objectives according to the respondents' feedback.
- Q3: Changed the wording of the question from "Are you a resident of Karnataka" to "Do you have domicile status in Karnataka?" for greater clarity.
- Q4: Discarding the PUC option and restricting the population to undergraduate students and graduates only.
- Q5: Adding an 'others' choice, since we encountered students who did not conform to the already stated options.
- Q6: Substituting the 'Parents' choice with 'Family' and adding an 'Influenced by Peers' choice.
- Q7: Combining Q7 and Q8 and adding the 'Parental intervention' option.
- Q10: Changing the format of the choices from a 10-point Likert scale to a 3-point Likert scale.
- Asking individuals to choose any two options instead of just one in Q6, Q11, Q12 and Q13.
- Q11: Adding a 'curriculum and faculty' option instead of just 'curriculum' and replacing 'it was my last resort' with 'it was my backup'.
- Q13: Adding a 'Maybe' option, taking into account the uncertainty some students face with the binary nature of the options.

# MAIN SURVEY

## To Analyse what motivates students when picking their Undergraduate Degrees

This survey is being conducted by the third-year students of B.Sc. Statistics / Computer Science, Mount Carmel College as their 5th-semester research project. Your responses will be confidential and will be used for study purposes only.

1. How old are you? ☐
  - Under 18
  - 19-20
  - 21-22
  - 23-24
  - Over 25
2. Gender
  - Female
  - Male
3. Do you have domicile status in Karnataka?
  - Yes
  - No
4. What are you studying right now?
  - Undergrad
  - I've completed my Undergrad degree
5. What field are you studying?
  - Science
  - Commerce
  - Engineering
  - Humanities
  - Medicine
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Why did you choose your field? (Choose any 2 options)
  - Family
  - Institution
  - Career prospects
  - Personal interest
  - Result of career counseling
  - Influenced by peers
7. Was this undergrad degree program your first choice? If not, why didn't you choose that course?
  - Yes, it was my first choice
  - No, I was unable to qualify for my first choice.
  - No, my first choice didn't have great career prospects.

- No, my parents / family intervened
- No, I prioritized the institution over the subject.
- No, I had financial constraints

8. Did you take a drop year? If yes, why?

- No
- Yes, I was prepping for competitive exams.
- Yes, I was indecisive about which subjects I should pursue.
- Yes, I didn't get into my institution of choice.

9. Did you attend any career counselling sessions? Did they impact your decision in any way?

- No
- Yes, they affected my decision.
- Yes, but they did not impact my choice.

10. How involved were your parents while you were choosing your course?

- Not involved at all
- Minimally involved
- Highly involved

11. Why did you choose this *institution*? (Choose any 2 reasons)

- Location
- Curriculum / Faculty
- Placement opportunities
- Prestige
- Social life
- It was my backup institution

12. Are you having any second thoughts? Why? (If yes, choose any 2 reasons)

- No
- Yes, the job market has become unstable
- Yes, I lack passion for the subjects I'm studying
- Yes, the course is difficult to follow
- Yes, it wasn't my first choice
- Yes, because of financial constraints
- Yes, due to faded interest

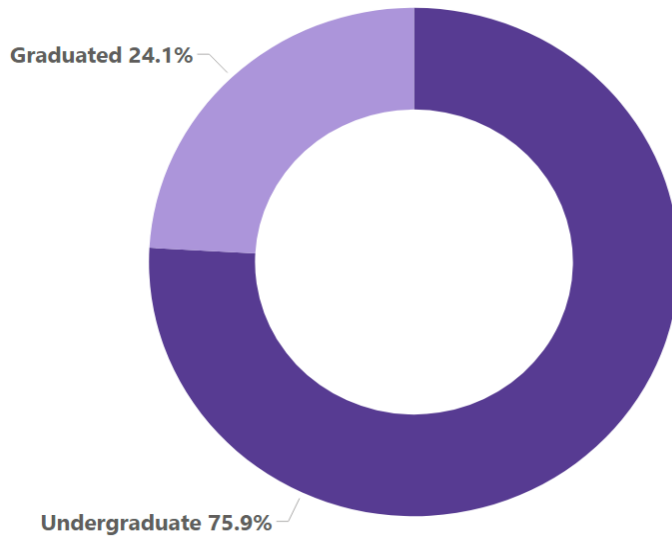
13. Do you see yourself pursuing a career or further education in the field you're majoring in?

- Yes                      •No                      •Maybe



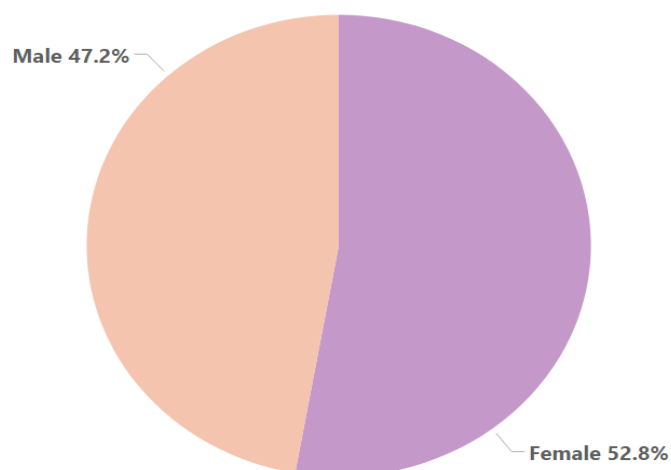
DATA  
REPRESENTATION  
USING CHARTS AND  
ITS  
INTERPRETATION

## Educational Qualification of the sample units



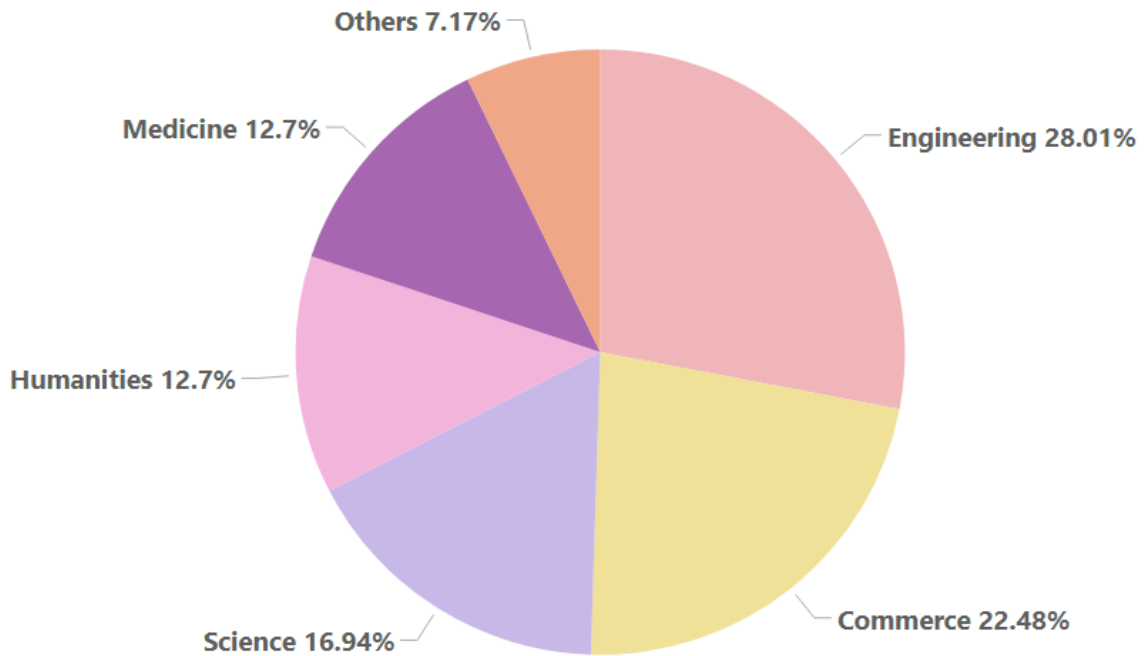
Nearly 80% of the sample consists of undergraduates, while the remaining 24% consists of graduates.

## Gender Distribution in the Sample



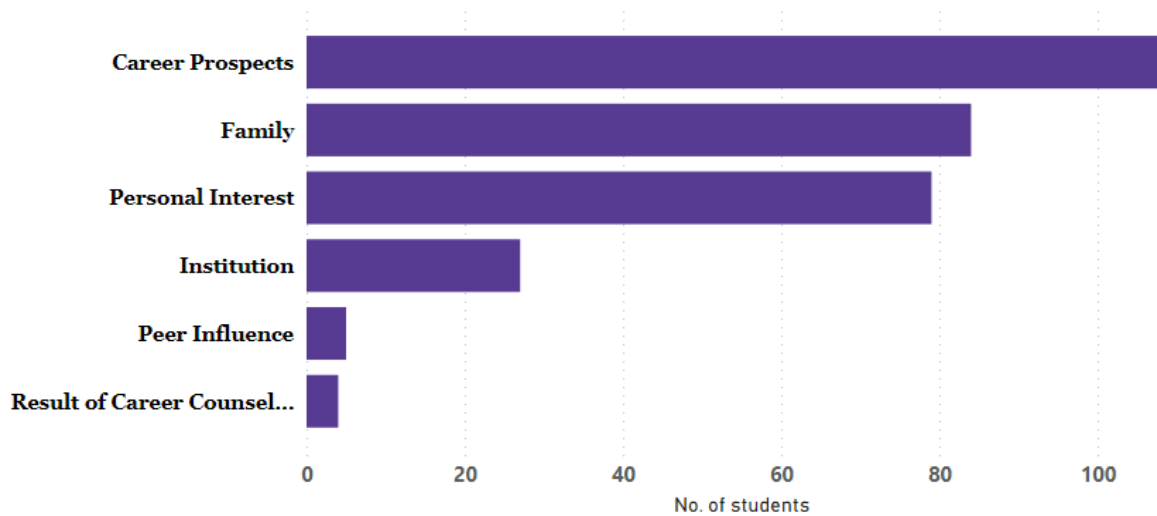
Out of the 307 sample units, 52.8% of the data constitute the female population and over 47.2% constitute the male population.

## Field of Education

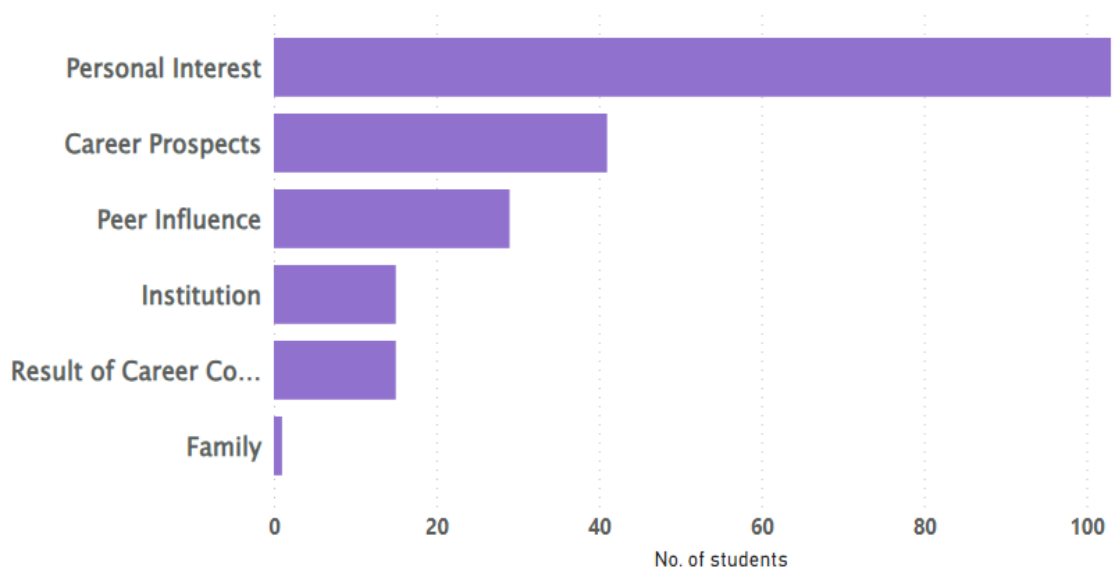


It is evident from the pie chart that engineering is the more sought out field by students as it constitutes 28% of the sample data collected, followed by commerce which stands at 22.48%. Science, Humanities and Medicine are also popular choices. And Others constitute fields such as Design, Architecture, Aviation and Hospitality which are relatively less popular choices while picking undergraduate courses.

Primary Reason for Choosing Undergrad Degree

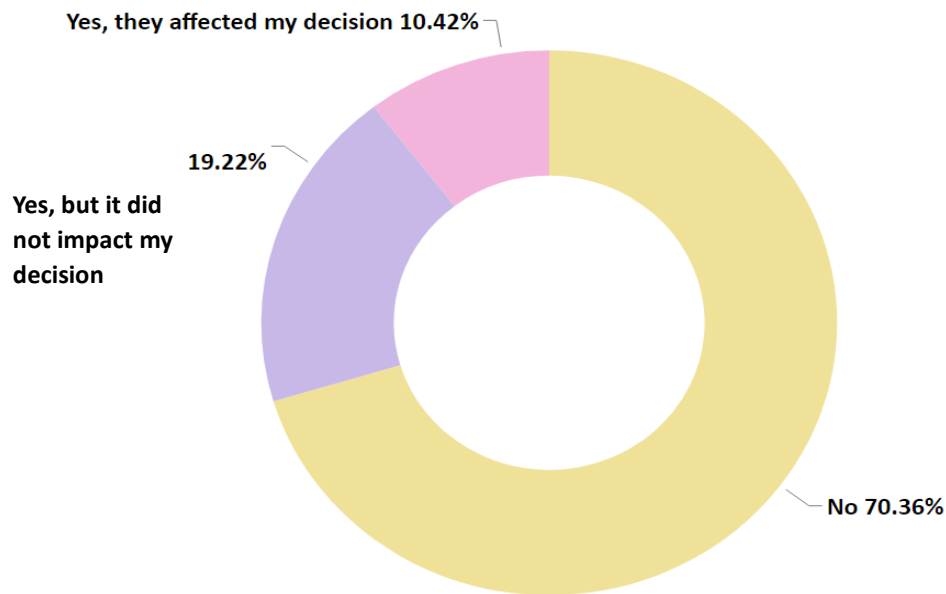


Secondary Reason for Choosing Undergrad Degree

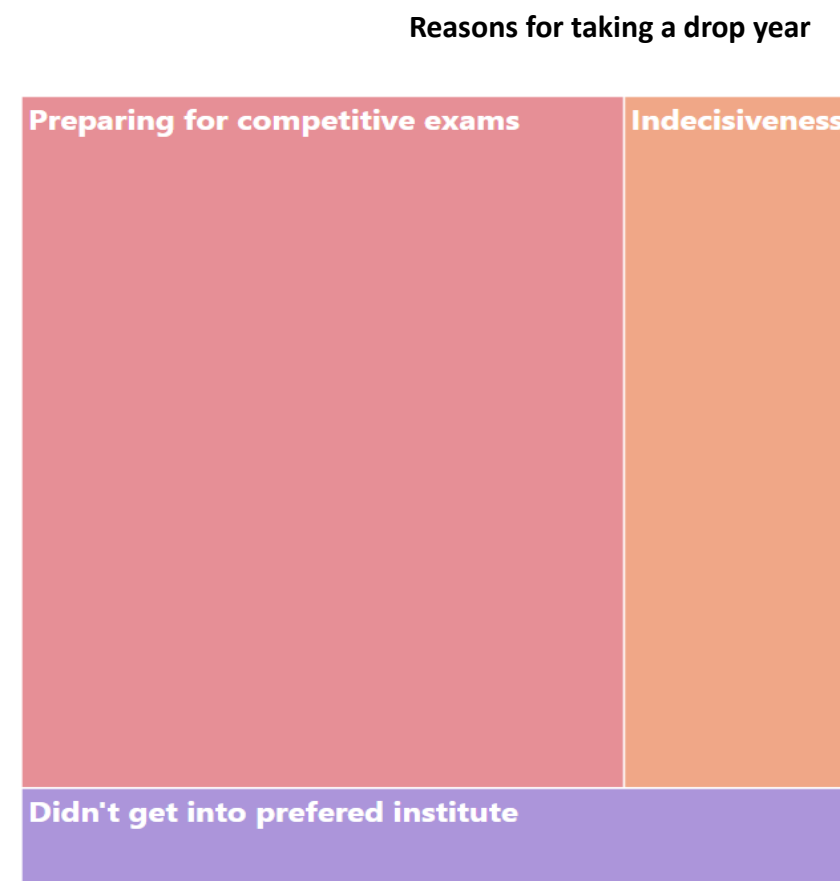
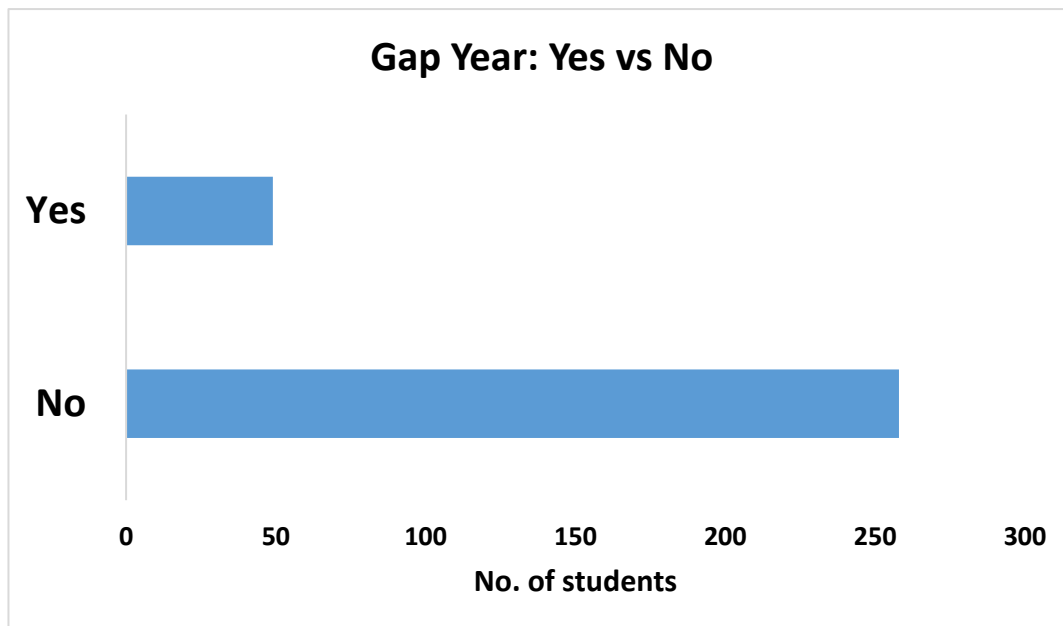


There are multiple factors that come into play when students pick their undergrad degree. We segregated them into primary and secondary reasons to get a better understanding of what goes into decision making. And from above, it's evident that career prospects stand to be a key factor while considering a course, followed by family. Personal Interest ranks high only in secondary reasons. Other factors such as peer influence, institution, career counselling have minimal influence while deciding on the course. Thus, we can conclude that career prospects play a pivotal role while picking a course.

## CAREER COUSELLING

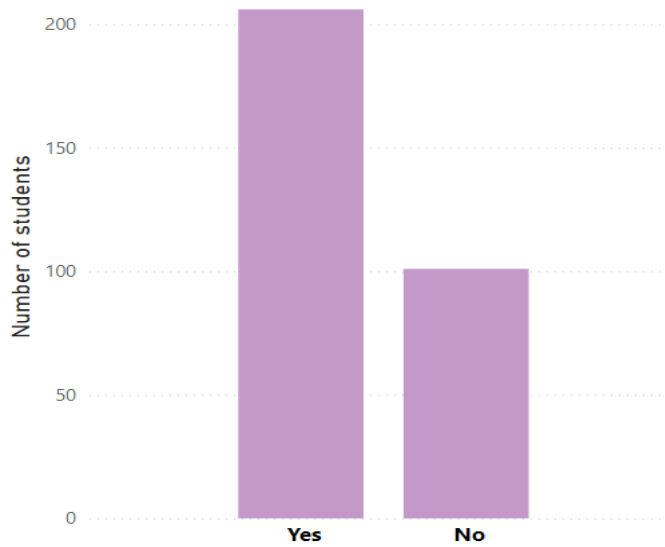


Career counselling is another factor students resort to, when they are unsure on what to choose. And the result of the survey pointed that over 70% of the students did not opt for career counselling. And out of the remaining 29.6% who did go to career counselling, over 19% of the student's decision weren't impacted by the counselling and only over 10% of the students found it helpful. Thus, we conclude career counselling doesn't hold much sway in decision making.

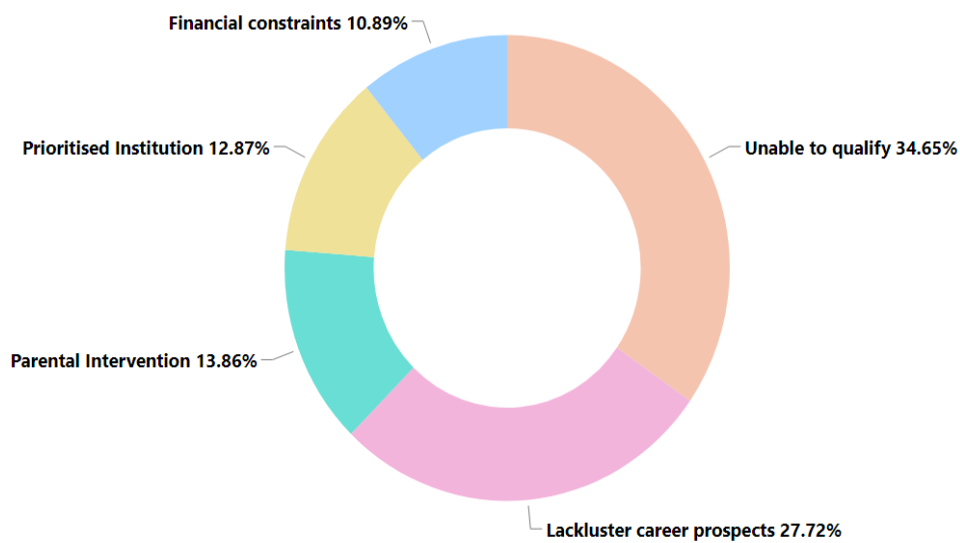


Our study revealed that not many students take a drop year before their undergrad. However, from the tree map we infer that for those, who did take a drop year it was majorly due to preparations for competitive exams. Further indecisiveness also plays a role in students taking a drop year.

**First choice: Yes vs No**

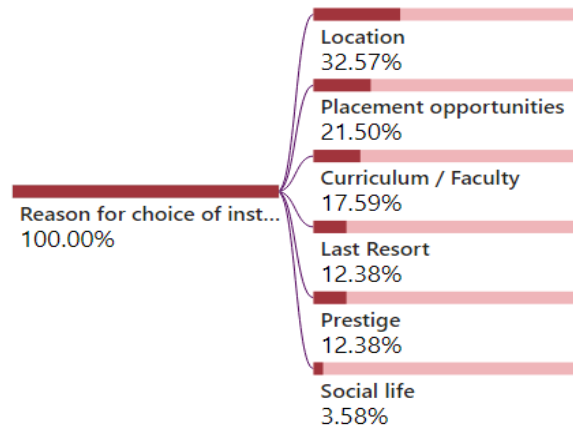


**Reasons for not choosing first choice**



Over 200 students opted for their respective courses as a first choice. And the remaining were unable to choose their first preferences due to multiple reasons, majorly because they were unable to qualify for the course. Mediocre career prospects and parental intervention are other reasons responsible in making students not opt for their first preference.

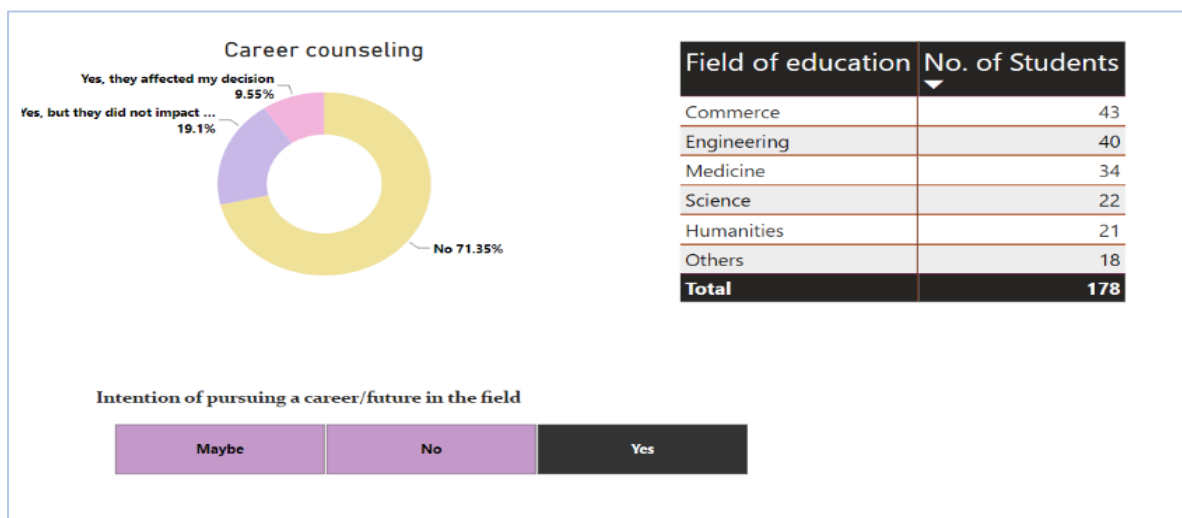
### Reasons for choice of institute



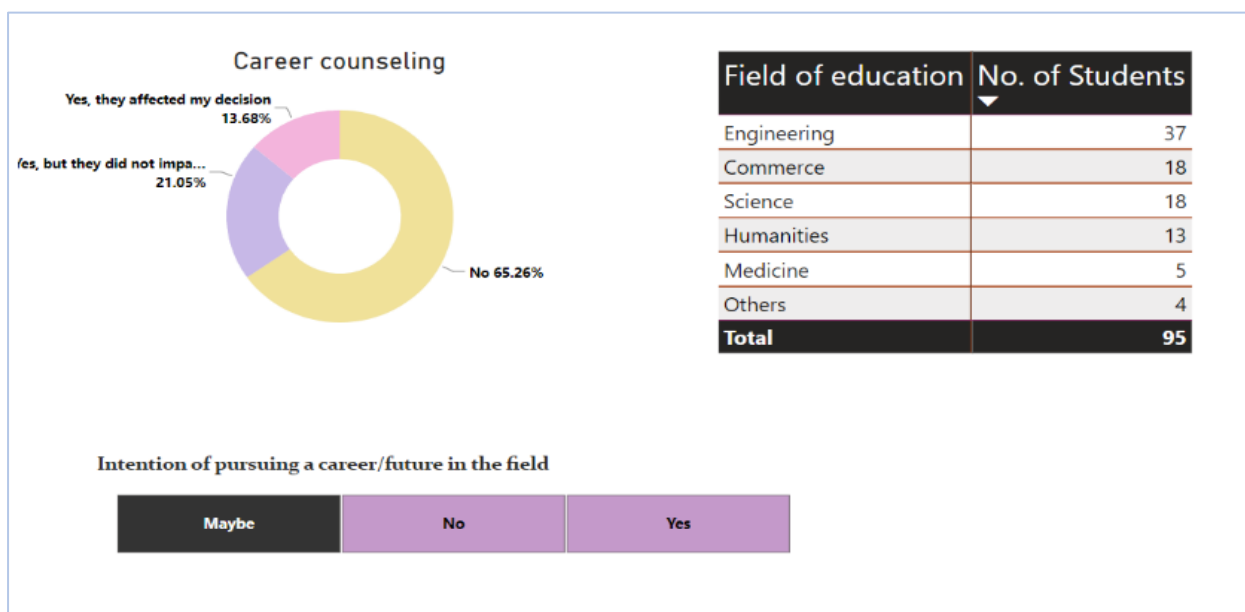
What attracts students to enrol into an institution? Our survey revealed that location tops the list at 32.57%, followed by placement opportunities and curriculum or faculty of the institution. Prestige and the social life at the institution remain less popular reasons for choosing an institution.

### Does intention of pursuing a career in the chosen field have any connection with the student's field of education and career counselling?

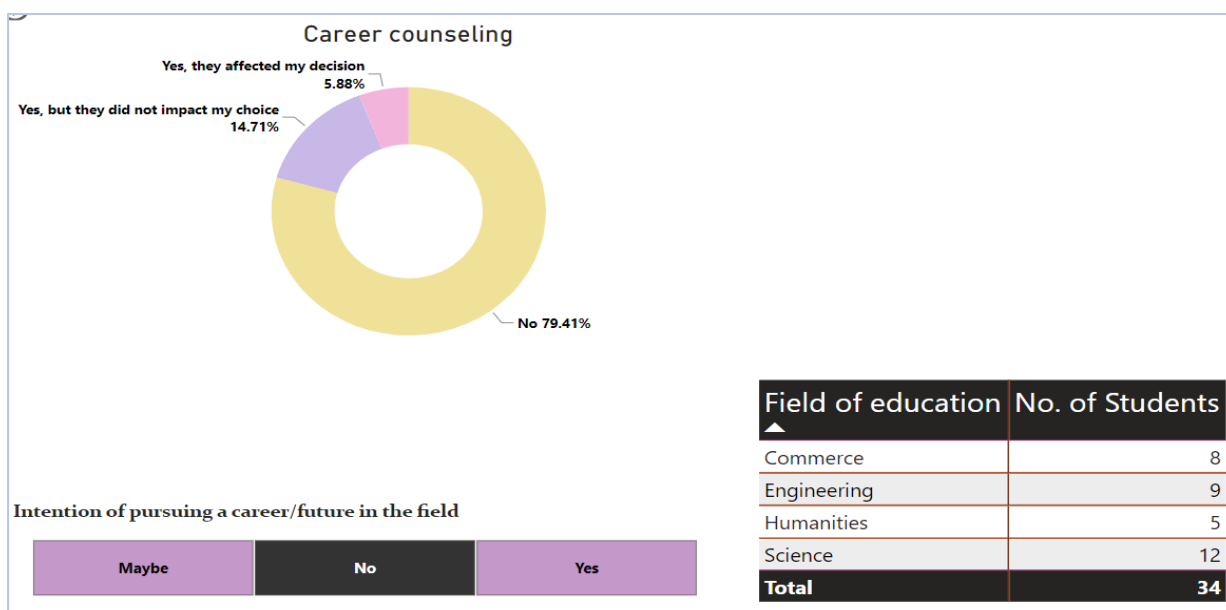
On doing a small analysis with the help of a slicer for the ordinal data- intention of pursuing a career, our study revealed the following information.







(B)



(C)

From the above pictorial representation (A) we infer that the students who wish to pursue a career in their fields are high (57.98%) and commerce stream takes the lead, followed by engineering students. However, 71% of them did not go for counselling. From (B) we infer that unsurety of pursuing a career in opted field grips a good amount of the students (30.9%), and engineering students stand at

the top of the table. And from (C) we infer that relatively few students choose not to pursue a future in the field they opted. And here too career counselling doesn't hold much sway in a student's intention of pursuing a future in the chosen field and no course particularly stands out in terms of a student's intention.

# CHI SQUARE TEST FOR INDEPENDENCE OF ATTRIBUTES

1.

Contingency table:

		Second Thoughts	
		YES	No
First Choice	YES	48	158
	NO	60	41

Hypothesis:

$H_0$  : Students having second thoughts about their course during their term of study and the UG degree chosen by them being their first choice are independent events.

v/s

$H_1$  : Choosing their preferred course and having second thoughts about the course are not independent i.e. they are dependent.

Test Statistic:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum_i^N \sum_j^N (O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \sim \chi^2_{(m-1)(n-1), \alpha}$$

Where N->Total no. of students(Here, N=307),

m->no. of rows

n->no. of columns

$O_{ij}$ ->observed frequency

$E_{ij}$ -> expected frequency

$$E_{ij} = P[A_i B_j] = \frac{A_i * B_j}{N}$$

		Second Thoughts(B)		
		YES	No	
First Choice(A)	YES	48	158	$A_1=206$
	NO	60	41	$A_2=101$
		$B_1=108$	$B_2=199$	$N=307$

### Decision Rule:

We accept  $H_0$  . when  $\chi^2_{cal} < \chi^2_{(m-1)(n-1), \alpha}$

and reject  $H_0$  when  $\chi^2_{cal} > \chi^2_{(m-1)(n-1), \alpha}$

where  $\chi^2_{(m-1)(n-1), \alpha} = \chi^2_{(1, 0.05)} = 3.841$

### Computed chi square value:

$$\chi^2_{cal} = 38.74$$

### Conclusion:

At  $\alpha=5\%$ ,  $\chi^2_{cal} > \chi^2_{(1, 0.05)}$ . Hence, we reject  $H_0$  and conclude that first choice of course and having second thoughts about the course are dependent attributes.

2.

Contingency table:

		Involved parents	
		YES	No
Gender	Female	137	25
	Male	105	40

Hypothesis:

$H_0$  : Students' gender and parents' involvement are independent of each other

v/s

$H_1$  : Students' gender and parents' involvement are not independent of each other.

Test Statistic:

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum_i^N \sum_j^N (O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \sim \chi^2_{(m-1)(n-1), \alpha}$$

Where N->Total no. of students(Here, N=307),

m->no. of rows

n->no. of columns

$O_{ij}$ ->observed frequency

$E_{ij}$ -> expected frequency

		Involved parents(B)		
		YES	No	
Gender(A)	Female	137	25	$A_1=162$
	Male	105	40	$A_2=145$
		$B_1=242$	$B_2=65$	$N=307$

$$E_{ij} = P[A_i B_j] = \frac{A_i * B_j}{N}$$

Decision Rule:

We accept  $H_0$  . when  $\chi^2_{cal} < \chi^2_{(m-1)(n-1), \alpha}$

and reject  $H_0$  when  $X^2_{\text{cal}} > X^2_{(m-1)(n-1),\alpha}$

where  $X^2_{(m-1)(n-1),\alpha} = X^2_{(1, 0.05)} = 3.841$

Computed chi square value:

$$X^2_{\text{cal}} = 6.7723$$

Conclusion:

At  $\alpha=5\%$ ,  $X^2_{\text{cal}} > X^2_{(1, 0.05)}$ . Hence, we reject  $H_0$  and conclude that students' gender and parents' involvement are not independent of each other.

# TEST FOR MULTIPLE PROPORTIONS

Let us conduct a test for proportion of Male and Female students who choose their subject based on personal interest to analyse if the choices made by the respective genders had any impact due to their personal interests.

Assumptions:

Sample Size – 307

No. of males in the sample:  $n_1 = 145$

No. of females in the sample:  $n_2 = 162$

No. of male students who choose the subject due to personal interest – 54 [X1]

Proportion of male who choose the subject due to personal interest:

$$P_1 = a_1/n_1 = 54/145 = 0.37$$

No. of female students who choose the subject due to personal interest – 58 [X2]

Proportion of female who choose the subject due to personal interest:

$$P_2 = a_2/n_2 = 58/162 = 0.33$$

$$Q_1 = 1 - P_1 = 0.63 \quad Q_2 = 1 - P_2 = 0.66$$

So,

$$X_1 \sim B(n_1, P_1) \quad X_2 \sim B(n_2, P_2)$$

For large values of n,

$$X_1 \sim N(\mu_1, \sigma_1^2) \quad X_2 \sim N(\mu_2, \sigma_2^2)$$

$$\mu_1 = n_1 p_1 = 145(0.37) = 54 \quad \sigma_1^2 = n_1 p_1 q_1 = 34.02$$

$$\mu_2 = n_2 p_2 = 58 \quad \sigma_2^2 = n_2 p_2 q_2 = 38.28$$

Hypothesis:

H0:  $P_1 = P_2$

i.e, Proportions of male student who choose the field of education due to personal interest is equal to the proportion of female student who choose the field of education due to personal interest

H1:  $P_1 \neq P_2$

i.e, Proportions of male student who choose the field of education due to personal interest is not equal to the proportion of female student who choose the field of education due to personal interest.

Test Statistic:

Under H0, the test statistic is given by,

$$z = \frac{\hat{p}_1 - \hat{p}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}_1(1-\hat{p}_1)}{n_1} + \frac{\hat{p}_2(1-\hat{p}_2)}{n_2}}} \sim N(0,1)$$

Computation (Using R Studio):

```
> Gender <-matrix(c(58,104,54,91),ncol=2,byrow=TRUE)
> rownames(Gender) <-c("Female","Male")
> colnames(Gender) <-c("PI","NPI")
> Gender=as.table(Gender)
> Gender
```

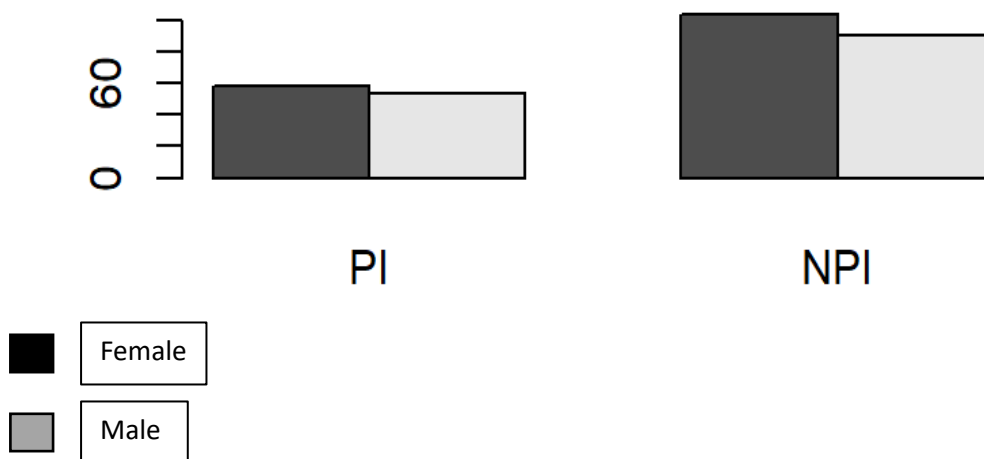
	PI	NPI
Female	58	104
Male	54	91

```
> barplot(Gender,beside=TRUE)
> prop.test(Gender)
```

2-sample test for equality of proportions with continuity correction

```
data: Gender
X-squared = 0.02037, df = 1, p-value = 0.8865
alternative hypothesis: two.sided
95 percent confidence interval:
 -0.1288226  0.1000444
sample estimates:
 prop 1    prop 2 
0.3580247 0.3724138
```

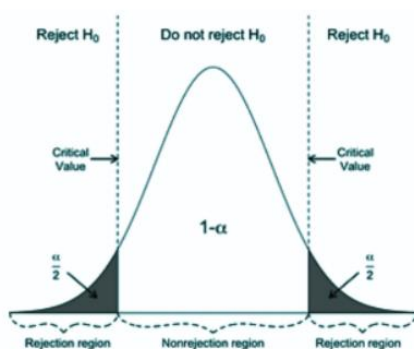




Decision Rule:

At  $\alpha = 5\%$  level of significance, since  $P1 = P2$ , the test is two sided.

The test statistic value is  $Z = 0.1427235$  P Value = 0.8865



Conclusion:

For  $\alpha = 5\%$  level of significance,  $p \text{ value} > \alpha$ .

So, we accept  $H_0$ , and conclude that the proportion of male student who choose the field of education due to personal interest is equal to the proportion of female student who choose the field of education due to personal interest.

# CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the major factors that play an important role when students choose their Undergraduate course. We find that Engineering and Commerce are the most popular choices followed by science and humanities.

It's evident that career prospects stand to be a key factor while considering a course, followed by family. Personal Interest ranks high only in secondary reasons. Other factors such as peer influence, institution, career counselling have minimal influence while deciding on the course. Thus, we can conclude that career prospects play a pivotal role while picking a course.

Over 70% of students did not opt for career counselling. And out of the remaining 29% who did go to career counselling only 10% of the students found it helpful. Thus, we conclude career counselling doesn't hold much sway in decision making.

We find that for those who did take a drop year it was mostly due to preparations for competitive exams. Further indecisiveness also plays a role in students taking a drop year.

When, it comes to choosing an institute, location is the top reason, followed by placement opportunities and curriculum or faculty of the institution. Prestige and the social life at the institution remain less popular reasons for choosing an institution.

We conclude that a students' gender and the degree of their parents' involvement are dependent on each other.

We see that you are less likely to have second thoughts if you pursued the degree of your first choice.

We find that most students are looking to pursue a career in their chosen field, Commerce students are the most enthusiastic about their future in the field while engineering students are the least enthusiastic.

Male and female students are equally likely to pursue an education in their chosen field due to personal interest

# LIMITATIONS

- The sample which we have collected is only from the city of Bangalore, so the data might be an inaccurate representation of our country's population.
- Reliance on self-reported data might introduce bias, as respondents may not always accurately recall or report their experiences.
- As personal interest and feelings are subjective, respondents might find it challenging to express their motivation accurately.

# FUTURE USE

Our study reveals significant patterns, institutions and policy makers could use this information to tailor educational and career counselling policies.

It contributes to the development of more effective career counselling programs, aiding students in making informed decisions.

Educational institutions may use our findings to improve course offerings, communication strategies, and support services for students.

Future researchers could build upon our work by conducting studies to track changes in students' choice and experiences over time.

Comparing findings across different regions or cultural contexts could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing undergraduate course choices.

Recommendations based on our research could be used to enhance the involvement of parents in the decision-making process, fostering better communication between parents and students.