

Navigating Societal Realities: The Influence of Socioeconomic Status and Social Relationship on Career Decision-Making of Grade 9 Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of socioeconomic status and social relationships on the career decision-making of Grade 9 students in a secondary school in District V, Bocaue, Bulacan. The research aimed to determine how family income, parents' occupation, educational resources, and social influences from peers, teachers, family, and community affect students' career choices. A quantitative correlational research design was used, involving 149 Grade 9 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings revealed that most students come from low-income households and that socioeconomic status significantly affects their access to career information and opportunities. Social relationships were also found to have a high influence on students' career decision-making. Despite these conditions, students demonstrated a high level of self-awareness, information-seeking behavior, and decision-making confidence. The study recommends the implementation of a Career Assessment and Counseling Program to help students make informed career decisions despite socioeconomic challenges.

Keywords: Career, Decision-Making, Social Relationship, Socioeconomic Status, Influence

INTRODUCTION

Background Of the Study

Career decision-making among adolescents has become a central concern in contemporary educational discourse due to increasing global economic uncertainty, rapid technological transformation, and widening socioeconomic inequalities, as education systems are expected not only to develop academic competence but also to prepare learners for complex career pathways that require adaptability, self-awareness, and informed decision-making skills; in this regard, international organizations emphasize that students' career choices are increasingly influenced by structural and contextual factors rather than purely individual interests, with socioeconomic status, access to information, and exposure to career guidance playing significant roles in shaping outcomes (OECD, 2024), and these global patterns suggest that inequality in educational and career development opportunities remains a persistent issue affecting adolescents' transition into higher education and employment. Building on this global perspective, recent studies further indicate that learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often experience limited access to career exploration resources, including counseling services, career exposure programs, and mentoring opportunities, and this lack of access can result in restricted awareness of available career paths and reduced confidence in making informed decisions about their future (UNESCO, 2022), whereas students from higher socioeconomic groups tend to benefit from richer informational environments, greater parental support, and increased opportunities for skill development, which collectively enhance their readiness for career decision-making, thereby reinforcing existing disparities; consequently, these

conditions highlight the importance of examining how structural inequalities influence adolescent career development, particularly in educational systems striving for equity and inclusivity.

Anchored within this global and theoretical landscape, the Philippine context presents a parallel yet distinct situation, where the implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program has strengthened the emphasis on career readiness, especially at the junior high school level, with Grade 9 serving as a critical stage in which learners begin selecting Senior High School tracks that directly influence their academic and professional trajectories; accordingly, the Department of Education has institutionalized career guidance programs intended to assist learners in making informed choices aligned with their interests, abilities, and labor market demands (Department of Education, 2021), yet despite these efforts, challenges remain in ensuring that all students receive equal access to effective career guidance services, as studies have shown that Filipino learners' career decisions are still heavily influenced by parental expectations, peer groups, and socioeconomic conditions rather than structured guidance processes (Laroco, 2022). In connection with these national-level concerns, the situation becomes more pronounced at the local level, where public secondary schools often face constraints such as limited counseling personnel, high student-to-teacher ratios, and varying levels of parental involvement, all of which may affect the delivery of comprehensive career guidance services; as a result, these structural limitations may lead to inconsistencies in students' preparedness for career decision-making, particularly among those who lack strong familial or institutional support systems, and observational studies suggest that learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds tend to rely more on informal sources of information such as peers and family members rather than formal counseling mechanisms, which may lead to less informed or less stable career decisions (Song & Nfu, 2023), thereby underscoring the importance of understanding how socioeconomic status and social relationships interact to influence the development of career decision-making skills among adolescents. Given these layered realities, emerging trends in career development research have shifted from traditional individual-centered models toward ecological and contextual frameworks, as contemporary scholars argue that adolescent career development is shaped by multiple interacting systems, including family environments, peer networks, school institutions, and broader socioeconomic structures (Bronfenbrenner, 2006); consequently, this shift highlights the need to examine career decision-making as a multidimensional process that integrates psychological, social, and economic factors, and within this perspective, understanding how students develop career decision-making skills requires an analysis of both internal cognitive processes and external environmental influences, particularly in contexts where inequality remains evident.

Research Problem

Despite the presence of institutionalized career guidance programs in schools, many Grade 9 students continue to experience difficulty in making clear, confident, and informed career decisions, and this issue is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional concern influenced by both structural and interpersonal factors; in particular, existing literature indicates that socioeconomic disparities significantly affect students' access to educational resources, career exposure opportunities, and guidance services, all of which are essential for developing informed career choices (Duru, 2022), such that students from lower-income households often face constraints that limit their ability to explore a wide range of academic and career options, thereby affecting their long-term educational trajectories. In addition to these economic considerations, social relationships play a critical role in shaping adolescents' career development processes, as family members, peers, and teachers significantly influence students' perceptions of career possibilities, levels of motivation, and decision-making confidence; accordingly, Social Cognitive Career Theory emphasizes that self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations are shaped by environmental interactions, suggesting that strong social support systems can enhance students' ability to make informed decisions (Lent et al., 1994), whereas inconsistent or misaligned support may lead to confusion, indecision, or reliance on external pressures rather than personal aspirations. Given the convergence of these structural and relational influences, there is a need to systematically investigate the combined impact of socioeconomic status and social relationships on the career decision-making skills of Grade 9 students, especially since existing research has largely examined these variables independently rather than within an integrated framework, and this gap is particularly evident in the Philippine junior high school context;

therefore, understanding these relationships is essential in addressing disparities in career readiness and in developing evidence-based interventions that promote equitable access to career development support systems.

Review of Related Literature

A growing body of literature emphasizes the significant role of socioeconomic status in shaping educational and career development outcomes, as students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds generally have greater access to academic enrichment activities, private tutoring, career counseling services, and parental guidance, all of which contribute to stronger career decision-making confidence and clarity (OECD, 2024), whereas students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often experience resource constraints that limit their exposure to diverse career options and structured decision-making processes, resulting in narrower aspirations and reduced career clarity; in explaining these disparities, theoretical frameworks such as Social Cognitive Career Theory provide a psychological lens by emphasizing the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and contextual supports in shaping career behavior, and empirical research grounded in this theory demonstrates that students who receive encouragement and guidance from parents, teachers, and peers are more likely to engage in career exploration activities and exhibit higher levels of decision-making confidence (Lent et al., 1994), with parental influence, in particular, identified as a significant determinant of students' academic and career trajectories, especially in collectivist societies where family expectations strongly shape individual choices (Kobra et al., 2024); extending this perspective, Ecological Systems Theory further situates adolescent development within multiple environmental layers, including the microsystem composed of family, peers, and school, and the macrosystem encompassing broader socioeconomic and cultural structures, thereby highlighting that career decision-making is not an isolated cognitive process but rather a product of continuous interaction between individuals and their environments (Osborn et al., 2023), within which socioeconomic status functions as a structural condition influencing access to opportunities while social relationships operate as immediate sources of emotional and informational support; in terms of empirical evidence, studies conducted in Southeast Asia and the Philippines reveal that although career guidance programs are widely implemented, their effectiveness varies depending on institutional capacity, counselor availability, and program design, leading many students to rely on informal networks such as peers and family members for career information, which may not always provide accurate or comprehensive guidance (Jabar & Valerio, 2020), and this reliance on informal sources highlights persistent gaps in formal career development systems as well as concerns regarding the consistency of students' decision-making processes; consequently, despite extensive research on the individual roles of socioeconomic status and social relationships, there remains ongoing debate regarding their relative influence on career outcomes, as some scholars argue that economic resources are the primary determinants of career opportunities, while others contend that strong social support systems can mitigate the disadvantages associated with low socioeconomic status by enhancing motivation and self-efficacy (Horanicova et al., 2022), and this debate ultimately underscores the complexity of career decision-making as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by both structural and relational factors, thereby necessitating further empirical investigation.

Research Gap

Although previous studies have extensively examined socioeconomic status, social relationships, and career decision-making as separate constructs, there remains a limited body of research that integrates these variables within a single analytical framework, particularly in the context of junior high school students in the Philippines, as most existing literature focuses on senior high school or tertiary-level learners, leaving Grade 9 students underrepresented despite their critical role in early career formation and track selection; building on this limitation, many available studies are conducted in international contexts that may not fully reflect the sociocultural realities, educational structures, and resource limitations present in Philippine public schools, thereby limiting the applicability of their findings to local educational settings; moreover, there is also a lack of empirical studies that simultaneously examine how socioeconomic status and social relationships interact to influence the development of career decision-making skills among early adolescents, as these variables are often treated independently rather than as interconnected factors; taken together, these gaps indicate the need for localized research that captures both structural inequalities and interpersonal dynamics within a unified

analytical model, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of career decision-making among Grade 9 students.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development, which conceptualizes career choice as a lifelong process shaped by the gradual development of self-concept over time (Super, 1957), and according to this theory, individuals progress through distinct developmental stages, with adolescents typically situated in the exploration stage, where they begin to examine, evaluate, and narrow down potential career options based on their interests, abilities, and environmental opportunities; within this theoretical perspective, career decision-making is not viewed as an isolated event but as a continuous developmental process influenced by both internal and external factors, and within this theoretical framework, socioeconomic status and social relationships are considered external factors that significantly influence the formation of self-concept and career maturity, as students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have access to educational resources, career exposure activities, and academic support systems that enhance their self-understanding and career clarity, while those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may encounter limitations that affect their exploration opportunities; in a similar vein, supportive social relationships with family members, peers, and teachers provide emotional encouragement and informational guidance that strengthen students' ability to engage in meaningful career exploration, whereas the absence or inconsistency of such support may hinder the development of confidence and clarity in career choices, and thus, Super's theory provides a comprehensive explanation of how environmental conditions and developmental processes interact to shape career decision-making outcomes among adolescents.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship between socioeconomic status and social relationships as independent variables and career decision-making skills as the dependent variable, wherein socioeconomic status represents the economic and social standing of students' families, including indicators such as income level, parental occupation, and educational attainment, while social relationships refer to the quality and extent of support students receive from family members, peers, teachers, and the broader community; taken together, these variables provide both structural and interpersonal contexts that shape student development, and in this model, these independent variables are hypothesized to influence career decision-making skills, which encompass self-awareness, information-seeking behavior, and decision-making confidence, as these components reflect students' capacity to understand themselves, explore available opportunities, and make informed choices; consequently, the framework assumes that both structural conditions and interpersonal support systems play significant roles in shaping students' ability to make informed and realistic career choices, and accordingly, career decision-making is conceptualized as an outcome of the interaction between socioeconomic conditions and social environmental influences.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status, social relationships, and career decision-making skills among Grade 9 students in a public secondary school context, with the aim of generating empirical evidence that explains how both structural conditions and interpersonal influences contribute to adolescent career development and readiness; in particular, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students' economic background and social environment collectively shape their ability to make informed and confident career choices within the framework of junior high school education. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the level of socioeconomic status among learners by examining relevant indicators such as family income, parental occupation, and educational attainment, to assess the quality and extent of their social relationships in terms of support received from family members, peers, teachers, and the broader community, and to evaluate their career decision-making skills in relation to self-awareness, information-seeking behavior, and decision-making confidence; furthermore, it aims to analyze whether significant relationships exist between socioeconomic status and career decision-making skills, as well as between social relationships and career decision-making skills, in order to determine the extent to which these

variables individually and collectively influence students' career development outcomes, and through these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper and more contextualized understanding of the factors influencing adolescent career development within the Philippine public school setting.

Research Questions/Hypothesis

This study is guided by research questions that seek to determine the socioeconomic status of Grade 9 students, the level of their social relationships, and their career decision-making skills, as well as the relationships between these variables, thereby providing a comprehensive basis for examining how structural and interpersonal factors interact in shaping students' career development; specifically, it examines whether socioeconomic status is significantly related to career decision-making skills and whether social relationships significantly influence these skills among learners, with the aim of identifying the extent to which these variables contribute to students' ability to make informed career choices, and in line with these research questions, the study tests the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and career decision-making skills among Grade 9 students, and that there is no significant relationship between social relationships and career decision-making skills, and these hypotheses are intended to be examined using appropriate statistical analysis to determine the presence or absence of significant relationships, thereby ensuring an objective and empirical basis for interpreting the findings.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for multiple stakeholders within the educational system, as its findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how socioeconomic conditions and social relationships influence career decision-making processes among Grade 9 students, thereby promoting greater self-awareness and more informed decision-making among learners; in this regard, for students, the results may provide insights into the external and interpersonal factors that shape their career development, enabling them to better recognize the influences affecting their choices and strengthen their ability to make more deliberate and informed decisions, while for teachers and school counselors, the study may serve as a basis for designing more targeted and responsive career guidance interventions that address the needs of students experiencing limited support or resources, particularly those who may be disadvantaged by socioeconomic constraints or insufficient social support systems. Building on these implications at the classroom level, for school administrators and policymakers, the results may contribute to the development of more equitable and effective career guidance programs that reduce disparities in career readiness among learners from different socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby supporting the strengthening of career development initiatives under the K to 12 curriculum and promoting more inclusive educational practices across schools; furthermore, for future researchers, this study provides empirical evidence within a Philippine junior high school context and serves as a foundation for further investigations into the interaction of socioeconomic and social factors in adolescent career development, particularly in relation to integrated models that examine both structural and relational influences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study applied a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive-correlational approach, to examine relationships between variables using numerical data rather than personal narratives or observations. The descriptive aspect provided a clear picture of the respondents' socioeconomic background such as family income, parents' occupation, and access to educational resources as well as their perceptions of how peers, teachers, and family members influence career decisions, and their level of self-awareness, information-seeking, and confidence in choosing a path. Meanwhile, the correlational component focused on identifying meaningful relationships among these variables by observing existing patterns rather than manipulating conditions, such as whether students with greater access to resources or stronger support systems demonstrate better career decision-making skills. Regression analysis was further employed to determine whether socioeconomic status and social relationships could significantly predict career decision-making outcome.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in a public secondary school in District V, Bocaue, Bulacan, chosen because it represents a typical public school environment in the Philippines, where students come from diverse economic backgrounds, making it a suitable setting for examining how socioeconomic factors influence career decisions. As a Department of Education school offering Junior High School education, particularly Grade 9, it is relevant since students at this level begin to seriously consider their future paths in preparation for Senior High School. The school provides basic learning facilities, but access to resources such as the internet, gadgets, and updated tools varies among students, with some relying solely on what is available in school while others benefit from digital resources at home, highlighting disparities that affect career decision-making. Moreover, the daily interactions students have with teachers, classmates, and school staff, alongside guidance from their families, create a network of social influences that shape their career choices, making the school a practical and meaningful location for the research.

Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted of all Grade 9 students enrolled during the academic year 2025–2026 in the selected school, grouped into sections Gold, Silver, Magnesium, Neon, and Argon. From this population, 149 students were purposively selected as respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the study, particularly their stage of beginning to make academic and career decisions. While purposive sampling does not ensure randomness, it allowed the researchers to focus on participants most appropriate to the topic, and the sample size was deemed sufficient for meaningful results and statistical analysis. Inclusion criteria required students to be currently enrolled in Grade 9, willing to participate, and able to secure parental or guardian consent, while those absent during data collection or who failed to complete the questionnaire properly were excluded from the final dataset.

Participants Profile

The respondents were described according to several background characteristics to provide context for the study, including age, gender, family income, parents' occupation, and access to educational resources at home. Most participants were between 14 and 16 years old, the typical age range for Grade 9 students, and both male and female students were included to capture diverse perspectives. Family income was categorized into low, middle, and high, allowing researchers to examine how financial capacity might influence opportunities and information access. Parents' occupation was also considered, as it can shape both the family's economic condition and the career exposure students receive. Finally, the availability of educational resources such as books, gadgets, internet connection, and a suitable study space was assessed to better understand the environment in which students make decisions about their future.

Research Instruments

The study utilized a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, with items drawn from related studies and aligned with the research objectives. It consisted of four main sections: respondent background information, socioeconomic status (including family income and resources), social relationships (family, peers, and teachers), and career decision-making skills (self-understanding, information gathering, and choice-making). Most items were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," allowing for numerical analysis of responses. To ensure clarity and relevance, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts and was conducted to verify reliability, confirming that the instrument was consistent and suitable for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers followed a systematic process in gathering the data: they first sent a formal request to the school administration for permission to conduct the study, and after approval, coordinated with teachers to schedule the collection. Consent forms were then distributed to students and their parents or guardians, with the

study’s purpose explained and participation made voluntary. On the scheduled day, questionnaires were personally handed out to respondents, with clear instructions provided before answering and sufficient time allotted for completion. Once collected, the researchers checked each questionnaire for completeness, encoded the data into a spreadsheet, and carefully organized all information to minimize errors during analysis.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with descriptive measures such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation used to summarize the responses, while inferential techniques, particularly regression analysis, were employed to examine whether socioeconomic status and social relationships significantly influence career decision-making. All analyses were conducted using statistical software to ensure accuracy and efficiency in processing the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the study, with participation being voluntary and students free to withdraw at any time. Consent was obtained from both the students and their parents or guardians, and all responses were kept confidential, with no names or identifying details included in the final report. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes and stored securely. Furthermore, permission from the school was obtained prior to the commencement of the research, ensuring that all procedures were properly authorized.

RESULTS

1. What is the socioeconomic status of Grade 9 students in terms of:

- 1.1 Family income
- 1.2 Parents’ occupation
- 1.3 Educational resources available at home

Table 1

Socioeconomic Status According to Family Income

	Family Income	Frequency	Percentage
	Below ₱20,000	124	83.22%
	₱20,001 – ₱40,000	21	14.09%
	₱40,001 & Above	4	2.68%
	TOTAL	149	100.00%

Table 2

Socioeconomic Status According to Father/Guardian Occupation

	Father/Guardian Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
	Unemployed	0	0.00%

	Self-employed	60	40.27%
	Government Sector\Private Sector Employee	87	58.39%
	Professional (Doctor, Engineer, Teacher, etc.)	2	1.34%
	TOTAL	149	100.00%

Table 3

Socioeconomic Status According to Mother/Guardian Occupation

	Mother\Guardian Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
	Housewife\Self-employed	35	23.49%
	Government Sector Employee	30	20.13%
	Private Sector Employee	72	48.32%
	Professional (Doctor, Engineer, Teacher, etc.)	12	8.05%
	TOTAL	149	100.00%

Table 4

Socioeconomic Status According to Number of Educational Resources at Home

	Number of Educational Resources	Frequency	Percentage
	1 (1)	32	21.48%
	2 - 3 (2)	33	22.15%
	4 - 5 (3)	25	16.78%
	6 (4)	59	39.60%
	TOTAL	149	100.00%

In terms of family income, the majority of the respondents (83.22%) belong to families earning below ₱20,000 monthly, followed by 14.09% earning between ₱20,001 and ₱40,000, and 2.68% earning ₱40,001 and above. The computed mean score is 2.81 with a standard deviation of 0.46.

In terms of parents' occupation, the findings show that among fathers or guardians, 58.39% are employed in the private or government sector, 40.27% are self-employed, and 1.34% are professionals, with no reported cases of unemployment. For mothers or guardians, 48.32% are employed in the private sector, 23.49% are housewives or self-employed, 20.13% are government employees, and 8.05% are professionals. The mean score for fathers or guardians is 2.61 with a standard deviation of 0.52, while mothers or guardians have a mean score of 2.41 with a standard deviation of 0.94.

In terms of educational resources available at home, 39.60% of the respondents reported having six resources, 22.15% have two to three resources, 21.48% have one resource, and 16.78% have four to five resources. The computed mean score is 2.74 with a standard deviation of 1.19.

2. In what ways do social relationships affect the students’ career decision-making in terms of:

- 2.1 Influence of Peers
- 2.2 Influence of Teachers
- 2.3 Influence of Parents/Family
- 2.4 Influence of Community

Table 5

Descriptive Measures of the Influence of Social Relationship

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Influence of Peers	2.88	0.56	Agree	High Influence
2. Influence of Teachers	2.83	0.31	Agree	High Influence
3. Influence of Parents\Family	2.83	0.46	Agree	High Influence
4. Influence of Community	2.98	0.51	Agree	High Influence
OVERALL	2.88	0.30	Agree	High Influence

The results show that all four indicators obtained a verbal description of “Agree” and an interpretation of “High Influence,” indicating that social relationships play a significant role in students’ career decision-making. Among the variables, the influence of the community recorded the highest mean score (M = 2.98, SD = 0.51), followed by the influence of peers (M = 2.88, SD = 0.56). Both the influence of teachers (M = 2.83, SD = 0.31) and parents or family (M = 2.83, SD = 0.46) obtained the same mean score, indicating comparable levels of influence. The overall mean score for social relationships is 2.88 with a standard deviation of 0.30, which falls under the description “Agree” and interpretation of “High Influence.” The relatively low standard deviation suggests that the responses of the participants are consistent, reflecting a shared perception regarding the influence of social relationships on their career decision-making.

3. What is the level of career decision-making skills of Grade 9 students in terms of:

- 3.1 Self-awareness
- 3.2 Information-seeking
- 3.3 Decision-making confidence

Table 6

Level of Career Decision-Making According to Self Awareness

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. I carefully plan for my future career.	3.64	0.48	Strongly Agree	Strong Influence
2. I recognize that my strengths align strongly with a specific career path.	3.41	0.55	Agree	High Influence

3. I think that choosing a career) is very important.	3.65	0.50	Strongly Agree	Strong Influence
4. My interests clearly point toward a particular career path.	3.48	0.54	Agree	High Influence
5. I am responsible for the decision I make regarding my profession.	3.54	0.51	Strongly Agree	Strong Influence
OVERALL	3.54	0.36	Strongly Agree	Strong Influence

Table 7

Level of Career Decision-Making According to Information Seeking

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
6. I review all the professions/careers available in the market before choosing one of them.	3.42	0.56	Agree	High Influence
7. I need to learn and acquire all the details related to a profession/career before practicing it.	3.54	0.54	Strongly Agree	Strong Influence
8. I feel that the information available on careers' specific requirements is insufficient.	3.14	0.73	Agree	High Influence
9. I study the professions/career related to my options before making a career choice.	3.45	0.55	Agree	High Influence
10. I seek to obtain enough information on professions matching my capabilities before I make a career choice.	3.41	0.59	Agree	High Influence
OVERALL	3.39	0.37	Agree	High Influence

Table 8

Level of Career Decision-Making According to Decision-Making Confidence

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
11. I can make decisions in any profession/career at any time.	3.01	0.82	Agree	High Influence
12. I choose the profession/career that I am convinced of, regardless of its income.	3.21	0.71	Agree	High Influence
13. I am interested in making appropriate professional/career decisions.	3.51	0.61	Strongly Agree	Strong Influence
14. I feel depressed when I fail to make the right decision.	3.28	0.60	Agree	High Influence
15. I care about the professional/career growth that I am choosing.	3.52	0.60	Strongly Agree	Strong Influence
OVERALL	3.30	0.41	Agree	High Influence

In terms of self-awareness, the overall mean score is 3.54 with a standard deviation of 0.36, described as “Strongly Agree” and interpreted as “Strong Influence.” This indicates that respondents generally show a high

level of awareness regarding their personal strengths, interests, and responsibilities in making career decisions, with responses being consistent among the group. For information-seeking, the overall mean score is 3.39 with a standard deviation of 0.37, described as “Agree” and interpreted as “High Influence.” The results reflect that respondents actively engage in gathering and reviewing career-related information prior to making decisions, with responses showing a consistent pattern. In terms of decision-making confidence, the overall mean score is 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.41, described as “Agree” and interpreted as “High Influence.” This suggests that respondents generally exhibit confidence in making career-related choices, with responses remaining relatively consistent across participants. Overall, the results indicate that students demonstrate high to strong levels of career decision-making skills across all three indicators, with minimal variation in responses.

4. Does socioeconomic status affect the career decision-making of the students?

Table 9

Regression Analysis of the Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Career Decision-Making of the Grade 9 Students

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig-value	Decision	Interpretation
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1. Family Income	-0.175	0.061	-0.175	-2.032	0.044	Reject Ho	The Family Income significantly influences the career-decision making of Grade 9 students.
2. Father\Guardian Occupation	0.032	0.052	0.032	0.392	0.696	Do not Reject Ho	The Father/Guardian Occupation does not significantly influence career decision-making of Grade 9 students.
3. Mother\Guardian Occupation	-0.099	0.030	-0.099	-1.144	0.254	Do not Reject Ho	The Mother/ Guardian does not significantly influence the career decision-making of Grade 9 students.
4. Educational Resources at Home	0.125	0.022	0.125	1.519	0.131	Do not Reject Ho	The Educational Resources at home does not significantly influence the career decision-making of Grade 9 students.
Decision: Do not Reject Ho							
Interpretation: The socio-economic status does not significantly influence career decision-making of Grade 9 students.							

The results of the regression analysis revealed that socioeconomic status partially affects the career decision-making of Grade 9 students. The statistical findings show that family income has a Sig-value less than 0.05 (0.044), indicating that the null hypothesis was rejected and that family income significantly influences students’ career decision-making. However, father/guardian occupation (0.696), mother/guardian occupation (0.254), and educational resources at home (0.131) have Sig-values greater than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis for these variables was not rejected. Among the variables, family income obtained the highest standardized coefficient (Beta = -0.175), indicating that it has the most significant influence among the socioeconomic factors on students’ career decision-making. These findings suggest that students’ financial background plays a role in shaping their career choices and opportunities.

5. Do peers, teachers, family, and community affect the career decision-making of the students?

Table 10

Regression Analysis of the Influence of Social Relationship on Career Decision-Making of the Grade 9 Students

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig-value	Decision	Interpretation
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1. Influence of Peers	0.324	0.045	0.324	4.153	0.000	Reject Ho	The Influence of Peers significantly influence career decision-making of students.
2. Influence of Teachers	0.205	0.084	0.205	2.544	0.012	Reject Ho	The Influence of Teachers significantly influence career decision-making of students.
3. Influence of Parents\Family	0.179	0.058	0.179	2.212	0.028	Reject Ho	The Influence of Parents/Family significantly influence career decision-making of students.
4. Influence of Community	0.155	0.047	0.155	2.119	0.040	Reject Ho	The Influence of Community significantly influences career decision-making of students.
Decision: Reject Ho							
Interpretation: The Social Relationship significantly influences the career decision-making of Grade 9 students.							

The results of the regression analysis revealed that peers, teachers, parents/family, and community significantly affect the career decision-making of Grade 9 students. The statistical findings show that the Sig-values for all variables are less than 0.05, specifically peers (0.000), teachers (0.012), parents/family (0.028), and community (0.040), which indicates that the null hypothesis was rejected. Among the variables, peer influence obtained the highest standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.324), indicating that it has the strongest influence on students' career decision-making. This is followed by teachers (Beta = 0.205), parents/family (Beta = 0.179), and community (Beta = 0.155). These findings suggest that students' career decisions are significantly shaped by the social relationships and support systems present in their environment.

6. What school-based intervention program can be proposed to guide and strengthen the positive influence of peers, family, teachers, and community despite socioeconomic barriers?

Career Assessment and Counseling Program: A Peer-Led & Values Based Intervention

Program Component	Description
Program Title	Career Assessment and Counseling Program: A Peer-Led & Values Based Intervention
Program Duration	School Year Implementation
Target Beneficiaries	Grade 9 Students

Program Implementers	School Heads, Values Education Teachers, Class Advisers, Parents, Community Partners
Estimated Budget	P 10,000

II. Program Components and Activities

	Strategic Activity	Description	Person Responsible	Success Indicators
Peers	Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Circle (“Career Circles”)	Formation of small peer groups where students share career goals, strengths, and aspirations. Activities include guided discussions and peer support sessions to promote positive influence.	Guidance Counselor, Class Adviser, Student Leaders	Increased student participation; improved career awareness; students demonstrate positive peer influence in decision-making
Teachers	Career Guidance Integration Sessions	Teachers integrate career discussions, reflections, and guidance activities in their subject areas to support students’ career planning.	Subject Teachers, Guidance Counselor	Students show improved understanding of career paths; increased engagement in career-related activities
Family/Parents	Financial Literacy & Scholarship Awareness Seminar	Conduct seminars for parents and students about scholarships, financial aid, and budgeting to support education.	School Head, Guidance Counselor, Invited Speakers (e.g., scholarship representatives)	Increased parent participation; improved awareness of scholarships; more students applying for financial assistance
Community	“Dignity of Labor” & Career Exposure Workshops	Workshops and talks from community professionals highlighting different careers, work values, and the dignity of all types of labor.	Community Leaders, Alumni, Guidance Counselor	Students develop respect for all jobs; improved self-concept and values; increased career motivation

III. Implementation Timeline

Phase	Activities	Schedule
Phase 1	Program Orientation and Planning: Presentation of the “Career Pathways” program to school heads, teachers, parents, and students; formation of Career Circles; coordination with stakeholders and invited speakers	June

Phase 2	Initial Program Implementation: Launch of Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Circles; start of Career Guidance Integration by teachers; initial sessions on self-awareness and career exploration	July - September
Phase 3	Mid-Year Evaluation and Adjustment: Assessment of students' participation and feedback; evaluation of peer mentoring effectiveness; necessary adjustments to program strategies	October
Phase 4	Continued Implementation: Conduct Financial Literacy & Scholarship Awareness seminars; implementation of "Dignity of Labor" workshops; continuation of Career Circles and teacher-led activities	November-February
Phase 5	Monitoring and Evaluation: Final evaluation of program outcomes; analysis of students' career decision-making improvements; preparation of reports and recommendations	March

Based on the findings, the researchers proposed the **Career Assessment and Counseling Program: A Peer-Led and Values-Based Intervention** as a school-based program aimed at guiding and strengthening students' career decision-making. The program is designed for Grade 9 students and will be implemented throughout the school year with the involvement of school heads, teachers, parents, and community partners. The proposed program includes key components focusing on peers, teachers, family, and community. These include peer-to-peer mentoring through Career Circles, integration of career guidance in classroom instruction, financial literacy and scholarship awareness seminars, and career exposure workshops that emphasize the dignity of labor. Each activity is supported by designated implementers and corresponding success indicators to monitor participation and outcomes. The program will be carried out in phases, including orientation, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring, to ensure systematic execution. An estimated budget of ₱10,000 is allocated to support the activities and materials needed for the program.

Summary of Major Findings

The study examined the influence of socioeconomic status and social relationships on the career decision-making of Grade 9 students. The findings revealed that most respondents belong to low-income households, with parents or guardians primarily employed in the private or government sector, and varying access to educational resources at home. Social relationships, including peers, teachers, parents or family, and community, were found to have a high influence on students' career decision-making, with peers emerging as the strongest predictor. Students also demonstrated high to strong levels of career decision-making skills in terms of self-awareness, information-seeking, and decision-making confidence. Regression analysis showed that socioeconomic status has a partial effect, with family income significantly influencing career decisions, while parents' occupation and educational resources do not. Overall, social relationships were found to significantly influence career decision-making. Based on these findings, a school-based intervention program was proposed to strengthen positive social influences and support students in making informed career choices despite socioeconomic challenges.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive interpretation of how socioeconomic status and social relationships interact to influence the career decision-making of Grade 9 students. The results indicate that while a large proportion of respondents come from low-income households, financial limitations do not completely determine their career choices. Instead, socioeconomic status functions as a structural condition that shapes the

feasibility of options, whereas social relationships serve as dynamic influences that shape aspirations, motivation, and confidence. This suggests that career decision-making among adolescents is not solely driven by economic capacity but is deeply embedded in relational and environmental contexts. Students demonstrate the ability to balance practical constraints with personal goals, indicating a level of adaptive decision-making despite socioeconomic challenges. The significant effect of family income on career decision-making implies that students prioritize affordability and long-term sustainability when considering career paths. This reflects a pragmatic approach where financial realities serve as a filtering mechanism in narrowing down options.

Comparison with Previous Studies

These findings are consistent with previous studies such as Nja et al. (2022) and Faturrahman et al. (2025), which found that family income significantly affects access to educational resources and opportunities. Similarly, Alamsyah and Rahman (2021) observed that students from low-income backgrounds often face limitations in motivation and persistence due to financial constraints. However, this study presents a nuanced perspective that contrasts with purely deterministic interpretations of socioeconomic status. While previous studies emphasize limitations, the current findings show that students actively negotiate these constraints, suggesting that financial status informs but does not entirely restrict career aspirations. This highlights a new contribution of the study in demonstrating the agency of students in navigating structural barriers. In contrast, the non-significant influence of parental occupation presents a deviation from traditional findings in the literature. Earlier research often emphasized occupational inheritance, where children tend to follow the professions of their parents due to familiarity and exposure. However, the results of this study indicate that students are increasingly forming independent career aspirations. This contradiction may be explained by increased access to information through schools, digital platforms, and peer networks, which broaden students' awareness of career possibilities. This aligns with Lent and Brown (2019), who argued that career decisions are influenced by access to information and learning experiences rather than solely by background characteristics. Thus, this study contributes new insights by highlighting a shift toward a more exploratory and self-directed approach to career development among adolescents. The strong influence of peers on career decision-making supports the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the role of social interactions in shaping self-efficacy and career behavior. The findings are consistent with Wilson et al. (2023) and Ginevra et al. (2023), who found that peer relationships positively influence motivation, emotional support, and career exploration. However, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating that peer influence may be stronger than that of traditional authority figures such as parents and teachers.

Explanation of Results

This suggests that peer groups function as primary reference systems during adolescence, particularly in contexts where exposure to professional role models is limited. This finding provides a new contribution by emphasizing the dominant role of horizontal social relationships in shaping career decisions, supporting Bandura's concept of observational learning. Teacher influence also emerged as a significant factor, reinforcing the importance of the school environment in career development. This finding aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which identifies the school as a key microsystem influencing development. Consistent with Lippard et al. (2023), positive teacher-student relationships were found to enhance engagement and confidence. Additionally, Cheung (2024) highlighted that school-based career support reduces career indecision by strengthening self-efficacy. However, this study extends previous findings by emphasizing the role of teachers as mediators of socioeconomic disadvantage. Teachers not only provide academic instruction but also act as mentors who bridge the gap between students' aspirations and their financial limitations. This highlights the critical role of educators in promoting equity and access in career development. Parental and family influence remains a significant factor, consistent with studies conducted in collectivist societies. The findings align with Putri and Anggraeni (2022), who emphasized the strong role of parental support in shaping career choices. Similarly, Söner and Gultekin (2020) found that alignment between parental expectations and student aspirations enhances decision-making confidence. However, the present study reveals a more complex dynamic where students balance family expectations with personal aspirations. This reflects a process of negotiated autonomy, where students consider family financial capacity while also exercising independent judgment. Community influence, while still significant, was found to be slightly less impactful compared to

peers and teachers. This may be explained by the level of relational proximity, where individuals who interact regularly, such as peers and teachers, exert greater influence than broader community structures.

Contribution to Theory

The findings on career decision-making skills further deepen the interpretation of results. The high level of self-awareness among students supports Super's Developmental Career Theory, which posits that adolescents in the exploration stage actively assess their interests, values, and abilities. This is consistent with Ilagan and Pesigan (2021), who emphasized the importance of self-awareness in career planning. However, the relatively lower level of decision-making confidence suggests that students may struggle with translating self-knowledge into action. The findings on information-seeking behavior align with the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) Theory, which emphasizes the importance of acquiring knowledge and using systematic processes in decision-making. From a theoretical perspective, this study both supports and extends existing frameworks. It supports Super's Developmental Career Theory by demonstrating that career decision-making is a continuous process influenced by self-concept and environmental factors. It also supports the Social Cognitive Career Theory by confirming the role of social relationships in shaping self-efficacy and career behavior. Furthermore, it reinforces Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory by illustrating how multiple environmental systems interact to influence development. However, the study extends these theories by highlighting the compensatory role of social relationships in mitigating socioeconomic constraints. In addition, the study challenges traditional assumptions that prioritize socioeconomic status as the primary determinant of career outcomes.

Implications of the Study

The implications of this study are significant across multiple domains. From an educational perspective, the findings highlight the need to integrate career guidance into the curriculum and utilize peer influence as a positive force. Schools should implement collaborative activities such as peer mentoring and career discussions to enhance student engagement and learning. From a policy perspective, the study underscores the importance of reducing socioeconomic disparities by providing financial support, scholarships, and access to educational resources. Policymakers should prioritize programs that promote equal opportunities for career development. At the institutional level, schools must strengthen their role as equalizing environments by providing access to technology, information, and guidance services. Establishing career resource centers, improving internet access, and training teachers in career counseling are essential steps in supporting students. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest the need for comprehensive interventions that involve students, families, and communities. Programs that promote parental involvement, mentorship, and financial literacy can enhance the overall support system for students. In synthesis, the findings of this study demonstrate that career decision-making among Grade 9 students is shaped by a complex interaction of socioeconomic and social factors. While financial constraints influence the feasibility of choices, social relationships play a more significant role in shaping aspirations and confidence. Students exhibit high levels of self-awareness and proactive information-seeking behavior, indicating readiness for career planning when supported by appropriate interventions. In conclusion, this study highlights that while socioeconomic status influences career decision-making, social relationships serve as the primary drivers of student aspirations and confidence. By leveraging social support systems and addressing financial barriers, schools and policymakers can create a more inclusive and effective career guidance system.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how socioeconomic status influences the career decision-making of Grade 9 students, including the role of social relationships and individual career decision-making skills. The findings revealed that most students come from low-income households, with limited exposure to diverse career opportunities due to parents primarily working in private or government sectors and having varying access to educational resources at home. Social relationships particularly peers, followed by teachers, family, and the community were found to significantly influence students' career choices by providing motivation, guidance, support, and exposure to opportunities, demonstrating that career decision-making is shaped not only by individual factors but also by environmental influences. Despite these challenges, students demonstrated a high

to strong level of career decision-making skills, including self-awareness, information-seeking, and confidence, although some still experience difficulties in accessing sufficient and reliable career information. The study also confirmed that socioeconomic status partially affects career decision-making, with family income having a significant influence, while parental occupation and educational resources did not show significant effects; however, social influences were found to have a stronger overall impact on students' decisions. These findings directly answer the research questions by establishing that students' socioeconomic conditions, social relationships, and individual competencies all contribute to their career decision-making. Furthermore, the study contributes to the field of education and career development by emphasizing the importance of early career guidance and demonstrating that career choices are shaped by both socioeconomic and environmental factors. In terms of policy, the study highlights the need for schools to strengthen and institutionalize structured career guidance programs, provide comprehensive counseling services, ensure access to updated career information, and promote collaboration among schools, families, and communities to support students' career development. Practically, the findings imply that school administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and community stakeholders should actively support students through career guidance activities, open communication, mentorship, and exposure to various opportunities, while the proposed Career Assessment and Counseling Program may serve as an effective intervention to help students make informed and meaningful career decisions despite socioeconomic barriers.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. In terms of sampling, the respondents were limited to Grade 9 students from a specific group, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other populations or educational contexts. The findings may not fully represent students from different grade levels, schools, or socioeconomic backgrounds. In terms of data, the study relied on self-reported responses from students. This may introduce potential biases, such as inaccurate reporting or the tendency of respondents to provide socially desirable answers. As a result, the data may not fully reflect the actual experiences and perspectives of the students. Methodologically, the study used a quantitative research design, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis. While this approach provides measurable and objective results, it may not capture the deeper and more complex aspects of students' career decision-making processes. Personal experiences, emotions, and contextual influences may not be fully explored through quantitative methods alone.

Recommendations

Future research may explore other factors that influence career decision-making among students, such as personality traits, academic performance, cultural influences, and access to digital career resources. Examining these variables may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how students make career choices. Researchers may also conduct comparative studies across different schools, regions, or socioeconomic groups to identify variations in career decision-making patterns and challenges. This can help in developing more targeted and effective interventions. In addition, future studies may use qualitative or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into students' experiences, motivations, and perspectives regarding career decision-making. These approaches can provide a more detailed understanding of the factors influencing students' choices. Longitudinal studies may also be conducted to examine how career decision-making develops over time and how early career interventions influence students' future educational and career outcomes.

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