

Behavioral, Environmental and Personal Factors that Influence the Preference of Maritime Students in Choosing College Degree Program

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Abstract - *This study sought to determine the factors that influence the preference of maritime students in choosing the college degree program. Descriptive type of research was utilized with 154 maritime students as respondents of the study from one private maritime institution in the Philippines. Results showed that environmental factor has higher level of influence to the decision process of the students in choosing a college degree followed by behavioral factor. Those from public SHS have significantly higher motivation to pursue the program because of their ambition and they feel more ready to face the challenges of the program than those students from private schools. Those students from private senior high schools have personally chosen maritime as their college degree while those students from public senior high school have decided to choose maritime with their parents and other relatives. The findings of the study provides some insights on the career planning of the maritime students gearing towards the fulfillment of their profession. Advice of the parents is important aspect in developing the career of their children while the personal preference of the children must also be given equal value.*

Keywords: *maritime students, career planning, descriptive research, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

A student preference in major field of study in college is being influenced by some factors that could be considered valuable in the success of their journey towards the completion the chosen degree program. Laguador (2014) mentioned that good career choice sometimes depends on how critical thinkers and keen observers the high school students are and how they really want to pursue a course in college. Most of them are still confused and undecided regarding what is the best course they are going to take and practice after graduation. Selecting a career path starts with the chosen college degree/program. Edmonds (2012) emphasized that the process of choosing a college major can be very convoluted and it is a cause of great anxiety, because for most it will likely be one of the most important life decisions they make. Wright (2018) studied the potential causes and effects of changing college majors at least once or multiple times which is very common behavior to students.

The personal aspect of choosing college degree is also critical in the future success of students' learning experiences towards the success of their future careers. Porter and Umbach (2006) mentioned about the alignment of students' personality, interests, beliefs, and even political views in choosing a college degree

is an essential component in order to have most successful outcomes which is called "Person-Environment Fit". The author believed that students tend to choose areas of study where other students will be similar to them, share their interests and ideas, in turn providing them with a sense of belonging in their academic community. Feeling a lack of this belonging leads to discomfort and in turn dissatisfaction with choice of academic major. Most especially the maritime education where students are trained to be self-reliant and independent because of the nature of their duties and responsibilities away from their families. Personal choice of the maritime program could be a good indication that fulfilling their ambition would be a string foundation of their journey.

Meanwhile, the involvement of environmental factor can also be considered an important aspect in the decision process of the students. Ghosh and Fouad (2016) studied the role of family influence on careers in the context of Asian parent-child dyad which include these factors: acculturation, cultural values, and conflict within the family. Considering the situation of the social environment on how maritime profession contributes to the economic growth of the society and country is essential aspect to explore in the study. Several studies emphasized the importance of

high employability rating and job placement of the graduates in any particular degree program in college so that prospective students would be attracted to take the program (Laguador & Orence, 2013; Ungui et al., 2014; Chavez, Dotong, Camello, & Laguador, 2016; De Castro, Prenda, & Dotong, 2017; Chavez, De Castro, Camello, Dolot, & Laguador, 2016; Aguila et al., 2016; De Catsro et al., 2016; Dotong et al., 2017; Laguador, 2015; Dotong, 2014; Felicen & Borbon, 2017).

The behavioral factor of the students might also influence the decision of students in making choices of their future career through taking the right degree program in college. Walls (2009) emphasized some factors influencing postsecondary students' career choice and how those factors impact college outcomes, including motivation towards, satisfaction with, and achievement in their chosen major field, appear to be more obscure and uneven. Guay et al. (2010) referred motivation as the reasons for underlying behavior and is considered as willingness or volition (On the basis of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Shin and Lee (2017) also noted that intrinsic motivation is formed by an individual's interest or enjoyment. Intrinsic motivation makes individuals energetic and enables them to take actions with high-level self-regulated strategies voluntarily, we infer that having career pessimistic thoughts will make people less active, less excited, and less energetic in engaging in the career decision-making process.

The academic institutions have primary role in designing curricular programs that will prepare the maritime students to become competent workforce who will also contribute to the economic development of the country. Manuel (2005) noted that educational objectives of maritime institutions concern the acquisition of skills, knowledge and the development of suitable affective dispositions. Angus (2012) emphasized that schools and other providers of services need to be responsive to market discipline and adopt an enterprising approach in response to the expectations of clients that entrusting their children to them will be a worthwhile investment. The findings of the study will serve as significant input to the counselling process of the maritime students wherever problem exists related to the behavioral, environmental and personal aspects of their learning experiences inside and outside the university.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study sought to determine the factors that influence the preference of maritime students in

choosing the college degree program. Specifically, the aimed to determine the profile of the maritime students in terms of: type of senior high school attended and program preference; to determine the extent of the factors that influence the preference of maritime students in choosing the college degree program in terms of behavioral, environmental and personal aspects; test the difference in the extent of the aforementioned factors when grouped according to profile; and test if there is an association between the type of senior high school and program preference.

METHODS

Descriptive type of research design was utilized in the study. The respondents of the study were 154 randomly selected students currently enrolled in Marine Engineering and Marine Transportation programs during SY 2018-2019 in one private maritime institution in the Philippines. The survey questionnaire utilized in the study was adapted from Ramirez and Dizon (2014). The factors that influence the selection of the program with fifteen (15) statements were divided into three sub-variables: behavioural (1-5), environmental (6-10) and personal factors (11-15). This specific section was pilot-tested to the First year engineering students who were not included in the study to test its reliability obtaining the Cronbach Alpha of 0.85 which falls within the rule of thumb of 'good' which also signifies that the instrument is acceptable and valid for use. The questionnaires were personally administered by the researchers during the 2nd semester to the randomly selected first year students regardless of their enrolled degree program.

They were informed regarding the purpose of the study and only those students who are willing to participate were given the questionnaire. They were also informed regarding their rights to withdraw their participation if they feel not comfortable answering the questionnaire. They were assured that all answers will be treated with utmost confidentiality and results will solely be used for the purpose of the study. Their anonymity as one of the respondents will not be closed to any third party. Names of the respondents were not identified in all questionnaires and any personal and highly confidential data were not included in the survey except for their type of senior high school attended and their program preference. Therefore, data privacy is highly observed in the conduct of this study.

Frequency count, weighted mean, and rank were used as descriptive statistics while t-test was used to test the difference of the respondents when grouped

according to profile. The given scale was used to interpret the result of the survey: 3.50 – 4.00: Strongly Agree (SA); 2.50 – 3.49: Moderately Agree (MA); 1.50 – 2.49: Slightly Disagree (SLD); 1.00 – 1.49: Strongly Disagree (STD).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The maritime students strongly agreed that they are motivated to pursue maritime program because of their ambition (3.64). The result of this also confirmed the finding of Ramirez et al (2014) that engineering students have also high interest towards the program in fulfilling their dreams and aspirations. Meanwhile, they are moderately agreed in terms of their readiness to face the challenges of maritime program no matter how hard it is (3.43) and believing that their personality is appropriate to the maritime program (3.32). On the other hand, they believed that they possess the qualities and character to become successful mariners (3.29) and they are confident that they can handle all the challenges and difficulties of maritime (3.18) with the least weighted mean scores. Laguador and Orence (2013) noted that getting employed is the primary goal of every college graduate who seeks to apply and develop more of his knowledge, skills and values in various work environments that could provide healthy

competition among the members of the organization and wealthy opportunities for professional and personal growth. The composite mean score of 3.37 implies that the maritime students have high behavioral factor in choosing their college degree. Laguador (2013) noted that developing positive mental attitude and behavior of the students in the early years of college would provide them greater opportunity as they step-up to higher year level of studies to broaden the scope of their responsibility and maturity to be more confident and independent.

Respondents strongly believed that graduates of maritime program have more chances of working abroad (3.83) and it offers many career opportunities (3.73) because they have higher probability to work on international shipping vessels that can explore different parts of the world. They also strongly agreed that they want to work with companies related to maritime that can offer competitive salary (3.68). Meanwhile, they are moderately agreed that maritime is their relatives'/parent's choice (3.32) and slightly disagreed that most of their friends/relative are enrolled in maritime (2.45). The composite mean score of 3.40 implies that there is high level of environmental factor that influence the preference of maritime students in choosing their college degree.

Table 1. Factors that Influence the Preference of Maritime Students

Behavioral Factor	WM	VI	Rank
1. I feel that I'm ready to face the challenges of maritime program no matter how hard it is.	3.43	MA	2
2. I believe that my personality is appropriate to maritime.	3.32	MA	3
3. I'm confident that I can handle all the challenges and difficulties of maritime.	3.18	MA	5
4. I'm motivated to pursue maritime because of my ambition.	3.64	SA	1
5. I believe that I possess the qualities and character to become a successful mariner	3.29	MA	4
Composite Mean	3.37	MA	
Environmental factor			
6. Maritime is my relatives'/parent's choice	3.32	MA	4
7. Maritime offers many career opportunities	3.73	SA	2
8. Most of my friends/relative are enrolled in maritime	2.45	SLD	5
9. I believe that graduates of maritime have more chances of working abroad	3.83	SA	1
10. I want to work with companies related to maritime that can offer competitive salary	3.68	SA	3
Composite Mean	3.40	MA	
Personal Factor			
11. Maritime is my personal choice	3.45	MA	2
12. This is my childhood dream to work as marine professional.	3.05	MA	5
13. I want to develop my knowledge and skills in maritime	3.52	SA	1
14. I believe that I can finish maritime program	3.21	MA	3
15. I believe that my intellectual capacity can handle the challenges of maritime program.	3.19	MA	4
Composite Mean	3.28	MA	

Maritime students strongly agreed that they wanted to develop their knowledge and skills in maritime (3.52). This signifies that they have high level of interest in choosing maritime program because of their eagerness to enhance their technical skills in the profession. They are moderately agreed that maritime is their personal choice (3.45) and they believed that they can finish the maritime program (3.21). They believed that their intellectual capacity can handle the challenges of maritime program (3.19) and moderately agreed that this is their childhood dream to work as

marine professional (3.05) with the least mean scores. The computed composite mean score of 3.28 implies that there is high level of personal factor that influence the preference of maritime students. Malgwi et al. (2005) found out that interest in the subject was the most important factor for incoming freshmen. In addition, male first year students were significantly more influenced by the major's potential for career advancement and job opportunities and the level of compensation in the field than female.

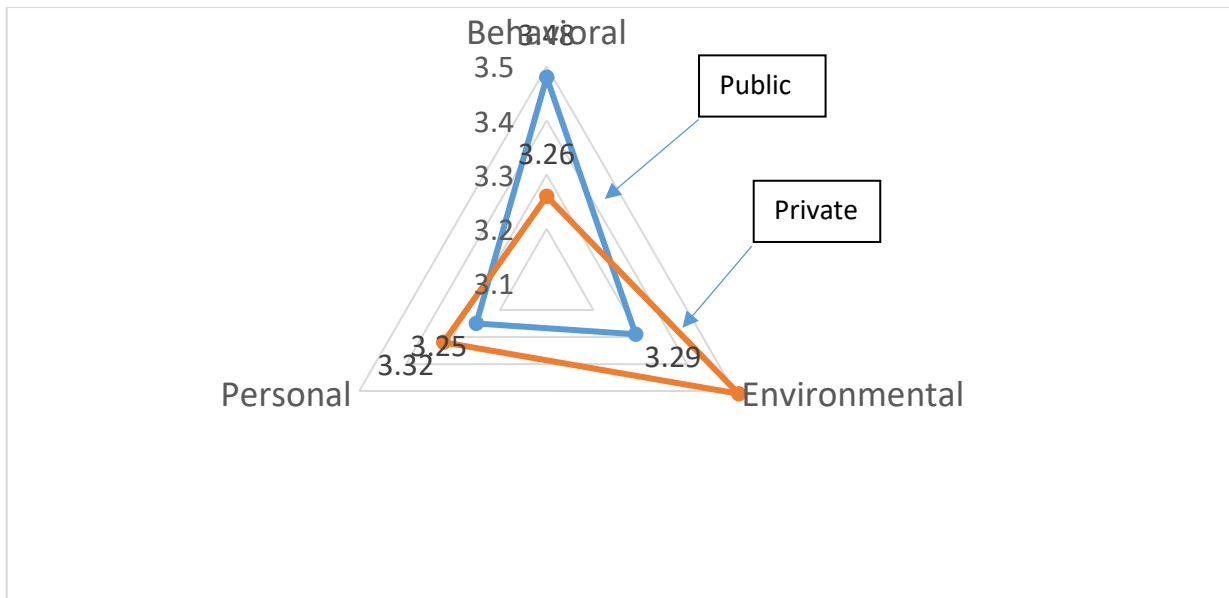


Figure 1. Type of Senior High School Attended and the Factors that Influence the Preference

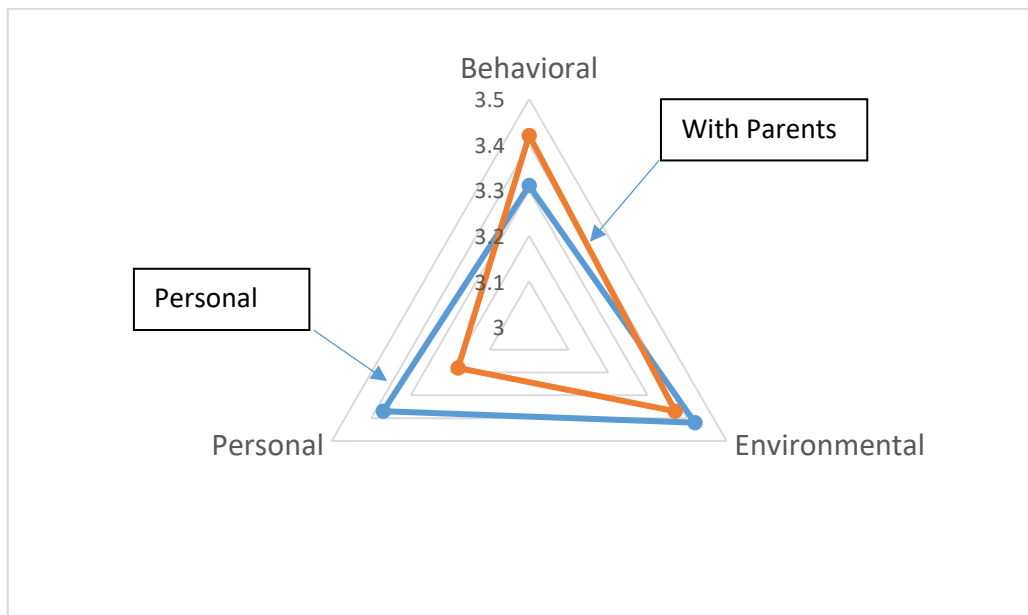


Figure 2. Program Preference and the Factors that Influence the Preference

Table 2. Significant Difference on the Factors that Influence the Choice of Maritime Students when grouped according to profile

Type of SHS Attended	t-value	p-value
Behavioral	6.218*	0.012
Environmental	5.745*	0.021
Personal	0.945	0.544
Preference		
Behavioral	1.211	0.519
Environmental	1.429	0.618
Personal	5.814*	0.036

*Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

Table 2 reveals the significant difference on the factors that influence the preference of maritime students when grouped according to profile. Results showed that there is a significant difference on the behavioral factor that influence the preference of maritime students as denoted by the computed p-value of 0.012 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. This signifies that those students from public senior high schools have significantly higher behavioral factor that influence in choosing maritime program than those from private as shown in Figure 1. Those from public SHS have significantly higher motivation to pursue the program because of their ambition and they feel more ready to face the challenges of the program than those students from private schools.

Meanwhile, there is also a significant difference on the environmental factor that influence the choice of students between public and private as denoted by the computed p-value of 0.021 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. This signifies that those students from private SHS have influenced significantly higher by environmental factor than those students from public senior high school.

There is also significant difference on the program preference between personal choice and with parents in terms of personal factor as denoted by the computed p-value of 0.036 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. As shown in Figure 2, those students who personally chose the maritime program have significantly higher personal factor that influence their choice as expected

while those other factors do not significantly differ its influence to the choice of maritime students. Edmonds (2012) cited that personal interests of each student is an integral part of deciding what major to choose, however it is important to keep in mind how students' interests are formed and how their personalities are developed.

Table 3 presents the significant association between the type of senior high school and program preference as denoted by the computed chi-square value of 10.3714 and p-value of 0.00128 which is less than 0.01 alpha level. This signifies that those students from private senior high schools have personally chosen maritime as their college degree while those students from public senior high school have decided to choose maritime with their parents and other relatives. The study of Ghosh and Fouad (2016) yielded non-significant findings on family influence which is in contrary to the present findings. According to Ghosh and Fouad that it is important to think critically about how the relational contexts of Asian American college students and their parents are influenced by one another in the overall career decision-making process.

Laguador (2014) claimed that some environmental factors really influence the choice of career of the students, mostly especially their parents. It is already a part of the culture of Filipinos to ask the parents regarding this decision because they are the ones who will provide financial support for the education of their children. The voice and opinion of parents in this matter are really powerful. But, it is still a part of the question of the present study whether the students are still following what their parents want them to be even if it is not their choice or they are the ones deciding for themselves.

In the Philippine context, most students who can afford to study in private schools belong to average or above average family income level. Based on the result, children are being given the freedom to decide what degree program they wanted to pursue in college and they were not being influenced directly by their parents.

Table 3. Association between the type of senior high school and program preference

	Public		Private		Total		X ² value	P-value
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Personal	29	18.8	50	32.5	79	51.30	10.3714	.00128
With Parents	47	30.5	28	18.2	75	48.70		
Total	76	49.4	78	50.6	154			

*significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.01$

But according to them, they were also influenced by their parents because some of their fathers are also mariners and seafarers, therefore, without giving them the advise what to take in college, they decided to pursue the same profession. However, the choices of the students from public schools are being influenced by either family members or relatives who gave them the idea on what to take in college. Even they do not really wanted to take Maritime related program, they were obliged to take the program because of the perceived abundance and wealth it might bring to the family once completed the maritime program.

CONCLUSION

Maritime students have very high level of behavioral factor that influence in choosing college degree program in terms of being motivated to pursue the program because of their ambition. The environmental factor has also contributed to their choice in terms of having more chances of the maritime program to work abroad. The opportunities that the situation in the work environment gave them the ideas on what to consider as a degree to pursue in college. Meanwhile, developing their technical skills towards maritime profession help them decide using personal factor.

Behavioral factor has significantly higher influence on the choice of maritime program among students from public senior high school while environmental factor is significantly higher among students from private. Meanwhile, no significant difference exists between public and private on personal factor.

In terms of preference, personal factor has significantly higher influence on the choice of maritime program as college degree among students whose preference is personal choice compared to those with parents. Meanwhile, no significant difference exists between personal choice and with parents in terms of behavioral and environmental factors.

Those students from private senior high schools have personally chosen maritime as their college degree while those students from public senior high school have decided to choose maritime with their parents and other relatives.

This study was only limited to one academic institution in the Philippines and the number is not a representative of the entire country. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the population. A large population may be considered by the future researchers to confirm or contrast the result of this study. Other variables may be considered for future

investigation like social, economic, political and technological aspect of choosing a college degree. Future studies may also be conducted for those students who are apparently changing degree programs due to some aspects of academic performance, health, financial and family problems.

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