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Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School Students

Lovely Eugenio Abella
Laguna State Polytechnic University Sta. Cruz Laguna 4009 PHILIPPINES
Email address: julierosemendoza002@gmail.com

Abstract*—This study aimed to examine the relationship between senior high school learners' profiles and characteristics with degree preference and academic behavior among senior high school students in the private schools within the Bay Sub-Office, Laguna. Additionally, understanding these relationships may help educators and school administrators design more effective interventions to support students in making informed academic and career decisions. The study used a quantitative-correlational approach, with 278 high school seniors serving as participants. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that covered variables such as age, sex, and socio-economic status, academic behaviors, and degree preferences. Statistical tools were applied to analyze correlations between these variables such as frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, and Pearson r. The findings revealed the learners' profile in terms of age that the majority of the respondents were between 17 and 18 years old. With regard to sex, a slight majority of the respondents were female, with 53% (148). In terms of socio-economic status, the largest group of learners with 40% (110), belonged to the low-income class. Furthermore, the level of the learners' characteristics, degree preference, and academic behavior were all verbally interpreted to high extent across all indicators. The study concluded that most indicators of learners' profiles and characteristics, such as sex, cognitive abilities, motivation, and academic skills, have a significant relationship with both degree preferences and academic behaviors, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses. The significance of identifying each student's unique characteristics in educational planning is emphasized by these findings. Understanding these relationships can guide the development of more effective, targeted interventions and support systems. By addressing factors that influence motivation and cognitive development, educators and counselors can better support students in making informed academic and career choices while enhancing their overall academic performance. The recommendation suggests that school administrators may enhance financial aid, scholarship access, and career counseling programs, especially for students from low-income backgrounds. Guidance counselors may implement targeted interventions like writing workshops, peer mentoring, and gender-responsive strategies to boost student confidence and motivation. Parents can be engaged through workshops that help them support their children's academic and career decisions. Students are encouraged to strengthen skills in time management, research, and self-regulation by utilizing school resources. Finally, future researchers may explore additional factors such as parental involvement, cultural influences, and educational trends to gain deeper insights into student decision-making.*

***Keywords*—** *Degree preference, academic behavior, learners' profile, learners' characteristics, senior high school students.*

I. Introduction

In contemporary educational settings, selecting an academic program that aligns with one's skills, interests, and career aspirations is a pivotal task for students, especially during the senior high school stage. This decision significantly impacts academic motivation, performance, and long-term satisfaction (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). However, many students experience difficulty in making informed decisions, often resulting in course mismatch, poor academic engagement, and attrition (Almerino et al., 2020; Garcia-Álvarez et al., 2024).

This study investigates the relationship between learners' profiles and characteristics with their degree preferences and academic behaviors. Specifically, it distinguishes "profiles" as demographic and socio-economic attributes (age, sex, socio-economic status) and "characteristics" as psychological and cognitive traits (cognitive abilities, motivation, knowledge, language proficiency, academic skills) (Demetriou et al., 2020). The study also evaluates how these variables influence students' degree preferences defined through five subdimensions: career opportunities, personal interest, academic strength, future aspiration, and institutional prestige (Skatova & Ferguson, 2014) and academic behaviors including integrity, study habits, self-regulation, and self-learning (Zimmerman, 2015).

Despite the availability of career guidance initiatives by the Department of Education (DepEd), students often continue to make educational choices that are inconsistent with their aspirations and abilities (Nazareno et al.,2020). This mismatch is not only a personal dilemma but also an institutional concern, influencing dropout rates and program effectiveness. Understanding these issues can provide critical insights for policymakers, educators, and families (Teal et al., 2023).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Problem/s which were addressed by the research

This study seeks to determine learners' profile and characteristics and their relation with degree preference and academic behavior among senior high school students in Bay, Laguna.

Specifically, the study answered the following questions.

1. What is the profile of the respondents with regards to:
   - 1.1 age;
   - 1.2 sex; and
   - 1.3 socio-economic status?

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2. What is the level of the Learners' Characteristics in terms of:
   2.1 cognitive abilities;
   2.2 motivation;
   2.3 knowledge;
   2.4 language proficiency; and
   2.5 academic skills?
3. What is the level of the Learners' degree preference in terms of:
   3.1 career opportunities;
   3.2 personal interest;
   3.3 academic strength;
   3.4 future aspiration; and
   3.5 institutional prestige?
4 What is the level of the Learners' academic behavior relative to:
   4.1 Integrity;
   4.2 study habits;
   4.3 self-regulation, and
   4.4 self-learning?
5. Is there a significant relationship between learners' profile and characteristic to their degree preference?
6. Is there a significant relationship between learners' profile and characteristic to their academic behavior?

II. Methodology

With 278 senior high school pupils serving as participants, a quantitative correlational study approach was utilized. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that covered variables such as age, sex, and socio-economic status, academic behaviors, and degree preferences. Statistical tools were applied to analyze correlations between these variables such as frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, and Pearson r.

III. Results and Discussion

The data collected to address the sub-problem pertaining to the major topic of this research is presented, analyzed, and interpreted in this section. This part discussed the findings of the study based on the questions.

Learners' Profile

The study analyzed the demographic profile of 278 Senior High School (SHS) students based on their age, sex, and socio-economic status (SES). These characteristics were presented using frequency and percentage distributions and interpreted within the study's theoretical framework.

The following figures showed the status of Learners' Profile such as were revealed in the following figure, which showed the frequency, percentage, and color legend.

The majority of respondents 71% (197 learners) were aged 17 to 18 years old, which corresponds to the typical age bracket for students in Grades 11 and 12 under the K–12 curriculum. This developmental stage aligns with Ginzberg's Career Theory and its contemporary interpretations describe as the "tentative to realistic" phase of career development where adolescents begin aligning their interests with real-world opportunities and personal capabilities (Gott, 2022; Khassanova et al., 2024). The presence of older students aged 19-20 (4 learners) 21 and above (2 learners) revelead delayed school progression or re-enrollment, which can influence maturity and decision-making autonomy in career planning. The relative homogeneity of age within this group revealed a focused cohort at a critical transitional phase. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the importance of age as a factor influencing learners' readiness to make informed academic and career decisions (Wigfield, 2017). Understanding age-related differences in maturity and cognitive development is essential for tailoring educational interventions and guidance services to better support student outcomes.

Figure 1 showed the Learners' profile in terms of Age.

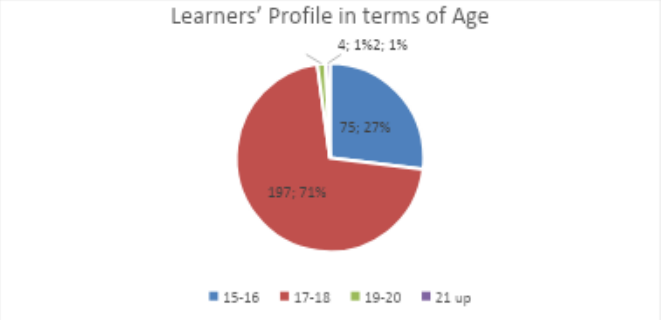

Figure 1. Learners' Profile in terms of Age

Figure 2 showed the Learners' profile in terms of Sex.

The gender distribution among respondents showed a slight majority of females (53%, n=148) compared to males (47%, n=130). Although the difference is modest, this pattern reflects broader national trends in educational participation, where females have shown slightly higher enrollment and completion rates in senior high school, (DepEd, 2021).

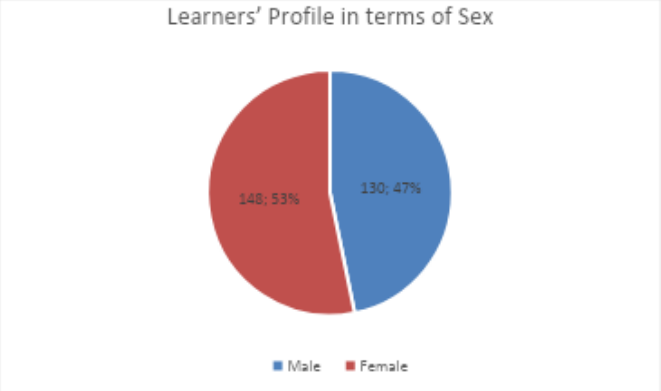

Figure 2. Learners' Profile in terms of Sex

This pattern is consistent with national trends in the Philippines where female students generally exhibit higher enrollment and retention rates in senior high school, particularly in academic strands such as Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) and Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) (DepEd, 2021; Nazareno et al., 2020). Research indicates that males and females often display different preferences for degree programs, with females

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

favoring education, health sciences, and social sciences, while males tend to prefer technical and engineering-related courses (Cvencek et al., 2018; Nazareno et al., 2020). These differences can be attributed to both socialization processes and internalized gender roles, which influence motivation and self-efficacy in various academic domains (Wigfield & Eccles, 2017). Recognizing these sex-based distinctions is critical in designing equitable academic programs and career guidance strategies.

From a theoretical standpoint, this pattern aligns with Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), which emphasizes that gendered beliefs about competence and task value can shape educational decisions (Wigfield et al., 2017). As such, understanding even subtle gender imbalances is important for designing gender-responsive academic guidance and support programs that address differing needs, strengths, and aspirations.

Figure 3 showed the Learners' profile in terms of Socio-Economic Status.

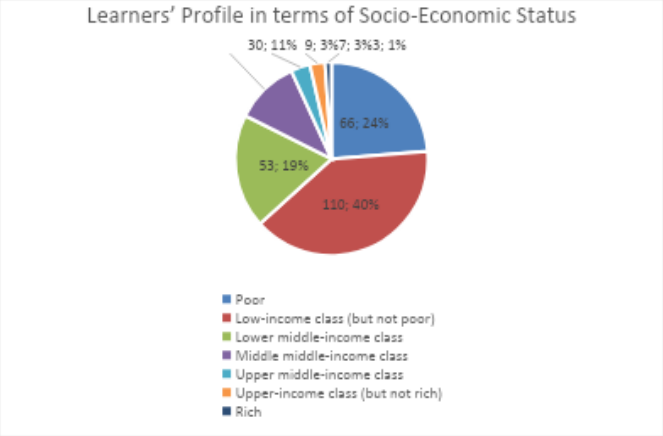

Figure 3. Learners' Profile in terms of Socio-Economic Status

The socio-economic status of learners revealed that the largest group, 40% (110 learners), belonged to the low-income class (but not classified as poor). This was followed by 24% (66 learners) in the poor category, and 19% (53 learners) in the lower middle-income class. The remaining respondents were from other socio-economic brackets. This distribution underscores the economic diversity among the student population and highlights the pressing need for inclusive educational policies that address the financial challenges many learners face.

Financial constraints are well-documented to influence academic behaviors and degree preferences, often leading students from lower SES backgrounds to prioritize programs that offer greater job security and shorter pathways to employment, sometimes at the expense of personal interests or academic strengths (Espinoza et al., 2019; Wigfield et al., 2017). This behavior is consistent with the Expectancy-Value Theory, which posits that individuals' choices reflect a balance between expected success and task value, influenced by their socio-economic realities.

This underscores the necessity for inclusive educational policies that provide scholarships, financial aid, and targeted guidance to ensure equitable academic success across SES groups.

Level of the Learners' Characteristics

In this study, the level of the Learners' Characteristics referred to cognitive abilities, motivation, knowledge, language proficiency, and academic skills.

The level of the Learners' Characteristics was revealed in the following table, which showed the statement, mean, standard deviation, and verbal interpretation.

Table 1 presented the responses of senior high school students on their cognitive abilities, which were a component of the learners' characteristics examined in this study. All five statements yielded a descriptive rating of "Agree," indicating that the learners demonstrated strong cognitive competencies across various areas, including memory recall, evaluation of perspectives, data analysis, problem-solving, and creative thinking.

TABLE 1. Level of the Learners' Characteristics in terms of Cognitive Abilities

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I can easily remember and recall information that I have learned in my classes.	3.45	0.87	Agree
2. I am able to evaluate different perspectives and arguments before forming my own opinion.	3.62	0.98	Agree
3. I am able to analyze data and information. to draw meaningful conclusions.	3.46	0.94	Agree
4. I can effectively solve complex problems by breaking them down into smaller, manageable parts.	3.50	0.89	Agree
5. I often come up with creative solutions to challenges and think of new ideas.	3.56	0.93	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.52 Standard Deviation = 0.92 Verbal Interpretation = High			

The learners' self-assessment of their cognitive abilities yielded an overall mean of 3.52 (SD = 0.92), which is interpreted as high. These included the capacity to retain and apply information, reason logically, approach complex problems systematically, and generate innovative ideas. These abilities served as vital foundations for effective learning and academic achievement.

This reflects learners' confidence in their capacity to recall information, analyze data, evaluate perspectives, and solve problems effectively. Additionally, Pajares (2015) note that cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving are foundational for academic achievement and are closely related to motivation and self-regulated learning. The learners' self-perceived cognitive competence thus likely contributes to their engagement and persistence in academic tasks, facilitating positive academic outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that competence, one of the three basic psychological needs, is vital for fostering intrinsic motivation and engagement (Ryan, 2020). The learners' high perceived cognitive abilities likely contribute to their motivation to participate actively in their education, supporting positive academic behavior.

However, the moderate variability in responses (SDs around 0.9) indicates some differences in students' self-

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

assessed cognitive capacity, signifying that not all learners feel equally confident. This finding aligns with Zimmerman's (2015) observations that self-regulated learners vary in their metacognitive awareness and cognitive skill application, highlighting the need for differentiated support in cognitive skill development.

Table 2 presents the learners' motivation yielded an overall mean of 3.74 (SD = 1.09), which is interpreted as high.

These results reflect the presence of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational tendencies, where students are goal-oriented and resilient in overcoming academic barriers but may not consistently engage in deeper, self-initiated exploration. This aligns with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2017), which explains that motivation operates on a continuum from externally regulated behavior to deeply autonomous, interest-driven learning. Although students in this study report generally high levels of motivation, the lower score in self-initiated exploration may show that their motivation is often structured by external academic requirements rather than internalized interests.

TABLE 2. Level of the Learners' Characteristics in terms of Motivation

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I am highly motivated to learn new things.	4.29	1.01	Strongly Agree
2. I stay focused and committed to my studies despite distractions.	3.77	0.93	Agree
3. I am persistent even when faced with academic challenges.	4.04	1.02	Agree
4. I take initiative in seeking additional learning resources.	3.60	1.01	Agree
5. I explore other topics even when not required.	2.99	1.02	Moderately Agree
Overall Mean = 3.74 Standard Deviation = 1.09 Verbal Interpretation = High			

Furthermore, Linnenbrink-Garcia et al. (2016) emphasize that academic motivation, particularly when intrinsic, is positively associated with persistence and deeper learning. The high ratings in persistence and focus show that these learners have developed task-oriented motivational profiles, which are essential for achieving success in senior high school. However, the discrepancy between required engagement and voluntary exploration points to a potential area for instructional improvement—namely, fostering a learning environment that supports curiosity, autonomy, and academic risk-taking.

The variability in the responses (as shown by SDs around 1.0) also signals individual differences in motivational levels, which may be influenced by students' socio-economic status, strand, or access to academic support systems. This reinforces the importance of differentiated guidance and support that considers learners' backgrounds and motivational profiles.

As shown in Table 3, the learners demonstrated a high level of academic knowledge with an overall mean of 3.64 (SD = 0.91)**.** These results affirmed that learners are not only retaining academic content but are also capable of transferring and integrating knowledge across domains.

This make even with Pajares and Schunk (2015), who emphasized that knowledge acquisition particularly the ability to build on existing cognitive frameworks is essential for meaningful learning and academic performance. Learners' beliefs in their academic capabilities, shaped by their knowledge base, strongly influence their self-efficacy and overall academic engagement. When students feel confident in the depth and usability of their knowledge, they are more likely to persist through complex learning tasks and develop stronger academic behaviors.

TABLE 3. Level of the Learners' Characteristics in terms of Knowledge

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I have a strong foundation in subjects relevant to my course.	3.71	0.96	Agree
2. I can easily connect new information with what I already know.	3.81	0.96	Agree
3. I can recall and apply previously learned concepts in new contexts.	3.64	0.83	Agree
4. I can relate different topics across various subjects.	3.42	0.83	Agree
5. I actively seek deeper understanding beyond the basics.	3.63	0.93	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.64 Standard Deviation = 0.91 Verbal Interpretation = High			

Moreover, the ability to connect and transfer information demonstrated by the moderate to high means across all indicators reflects the learners' preparedness for higher-order thinking tasks often required in tertiary education. This is especially significant for senior high school students preparing to transition to college or vocational tracks. The Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield et al., 2017) also supports this interpretation, signifying that students who perceive themselves as knowledgeable are more likely to value academic tasks and invest effort in them.

The standard deviations, which range from 0.83 to 0.96, indicate relatively consistent responses across the student sample, but still reflect some individual variation. These differences may be influenced by factors such as strand specialization, teacher quality, or prior academic exposure. For example, students in the STEM strand may report higher perceived knowledge in analytical subjects, while HUMSS students may feel more confident in areas such as reading comprehension and humanities-related content.

With this, the high self-assessment of knowledge among learners supports the idea that they are not merely memorizing content but are developing the cognitive structures needed for academic progression an encouraging finding for both teachers and academic advisors designing curriculum and support programs.

Table 4 shows that the learners reported a high level of language proficiency, with an overall mean of 3.46 (SD = 0.99). These results exhibited that while most students feel competent in receptive and written English skills, they are less confident in expressive and spoken communication. This distinction is consistent with Cummins' (2017) framework on Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which posits that students often acquire reading and listening skills

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

more quickly than the higher-order expressive skills required for academic discourse. In the Philippine context, this gap may also reflect the educational environment where English is the medium of instruction but may not be the students' primary spoken language, especially outside formal classroom settings.

TABLE 4. Level of the Learners' Characteristics in terms of Language Proficiency

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I have good listening skills and understand spoken English well.	3.62	0.98	Agree
2. I can comprehend and analyze academic texts accurately.	3.61	0.87	Agree
3. I can write clear and well-structured essays and reports.	3.51	1.03	Agree
4. I can effectively communicate my thoughts and ideas in English.	3.36	0.99	Moderately Agree
5. I use English confidently in discussions when expressing my opinions.	3.17	1.02	Moderately Agree
Overall Mean = 3.46			
Standard Deviation = 0.99			
Verbal Interpretation = High			

Language proficiency plays a key role in shaping learners' self-efficacy. Students who struggle with speaking or writing in English may experience anxiety or reduced confidence, which can affect classroom participation and academic performance.

Additionally, effective communication is integral not only to academic tasks but also to group work, oral presentations, and college entrance examinations. The relatively lower scores in expressive language indicators shows that while learners are prepared for passive language tasks (listening, reading), they may need targeted support in developing confidence and fluency in oral communication particularly in English-medium academic environments.

The standard deviations ranging from 0.87 to 1.03 reflect notable variability in responses, which may be attributed to differences in strand, prior English instruction quality, or the frequency of English usage at home. As noted by Pajares and Schunk (2015), these disparities in language proficiency could impact students' access to content across subjects, thereby indirectly influencing academic behavior and degree preference.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening expressive language skills, particularly oral communication, to support learners' full participation in academic and future professional settings. Addressing these gaps will require context-specific interventions that consider the multilingual realities of Filipino senior high school students.

The data in Table 5 indicate that learners perceived their academic skills to be high, with an overall mean of 3.49 (SD = 0.94).

Pajares and Schunk (2015) declared that academic skills such as time management, note-taking, and independent learning behaviors are crucial components of students' academic self-efficacy. Learners who believe in their ability to complete academic tasks efficiently are more likely to engage in sustained effort and self-directed learning. This is especially relevant for senior high school students preparing for college or technical-vocational pathways where independent task execution becomes more pronounced.

TABLE 5. Level of the Learners' Characteristics in terms of Academic Skills

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I can take organized and effective notes during lectures.	3.58	0.96	Agree
2. I can effectively prepare for and perform well in assessments.	3.47	0.94	Agree
3. I can efficiently manage my academic workloads and deadlines.	3.56	0.93	Agree
4. I can conduct research and evaluate reliable sources.	3.37	0.91	Agree
5. I can work independently on academic tasks with minimal supervision.	3.47	0.96	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.49			
Standard Deviation = 0.94			
Verbal Interpretation = High			

Although students reported overall competence, the slightly lower score in research and source evaluation (M = 3.37, SD = 0.91) signals a need for strengthening information literacy. In the context of the Philippine education system, where many students have limited access to well-equipped libraries or digital research tools, this gap may reflect systemic constraints more than individual deficiencies.

The consistency of standard deviations (ranging from 0.91 to 0.96) reflects relatively stable perceptions across the learner population, though some variation still exists. These differences may reflect strand-specific demands for example, students in STEM tracks may require more rigorous note-taking and research skills compared to those in TVL or HUMSS.

For instance, the learners appear well-equipped with the foundational academic skills required for senior high school and beyond. However, targeted interventions, especially in academic research and source validation, would further strengthen their readiness for higher education or employment.

Level of Degree Preference

In this study, the level of the Learners' Degree Preference included career opportunities, personal interest, academic strength, future aspiration, and institutional prestige. Research had consistently shown that degree preferences were influenced by a complex interplay of various factors. These factors were considered key determinants in shaping students' choices regarding their future academic paths.

The level of the Learners' Degree Preference was revealed in the following table, which showed the statement, mean, standard deviation, and verbal interpretation.

Table 6 presented the senior high school learners' degree preferences concerning career opportunities. The data indicated that career opportunities were a salient factor in students' degree preferences, as shown by the overall mean score of 3.67. All five statements related to career opportunities received a verbal interpretation of "Agree," demonstrating a consistent emphasis on these considerations in their choices. Specifically, learners expressed the strongest agreement with the importance of the stability and security of available jobs and the potential salary and financial benefits of related careers.

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

TABLE 6. Level of Degree Preference in terms of Career Opportunities

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I choose my degree program based on the demand for professionals in that field in the future job market.	3.64	1.00	Agree
2. I consider the stability and security of jobs available in the career paths related to my chosen degree program.	3.82	0.93	Agree
3. The potential salary and financial benefits of careers related to my degree program are important factors in my decision.	3.80	1.01	Agree
4. Opportunities for career growth and advancement in the field influence my choice of degree program.	3.75	1.00	Agree
5. I keep up with industry trends and choose my degree program based on emerging career opportunities and innovations.	3.32	1.10	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.67 Standard Deviation = 1.02 Verbal Interpretation = High			

The findings underscore the pragmatic orientation of many senior high school students in their degree selection focusing on economic viability and job security.

This mirrors the expectations of Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield et al., 2017), which posits that individuals are more likely to invest in tasks they believe will produce valuable outcomes. In this context, students' choices reflect a utilitarian mindset, likely shaped by both personal aspirations and socio-economic realities. Degree preferences are significantly shaped by students' perceptions of employability and income potential, particularly among those from lower-income households.

The variability in responses (as indicated by SDs around or above 1.00) affirmed differing levels of awareness and access to career guidance. Some students may have clear employment goals and resources, while others may be basing choices on generalized beliefs or external pressures. This variation supports findings by Chen et al. (2021), who noted that while many students prioritize career outcomes, the accuracy and depth of their labor market knowledge can differ widely depending on school support systems and personal background.

Learners' degree preferences are strongly influenced by career-related considerations, particularly job stability, financial return, and advancement potential. However, there is a noticeable gap in how frequently students base their choices on emerging trends or innovations, highlighting the importance of enhancing career guidance services and integrating labor market awareness into senior high school curricula.

As presented in Table 7, learners showed a high level of agreement that personal interest significantly influences their degree choices**,** with an overall mean of 3.97 (SD = 1.04)**.** These findings affirm the centrality of intrinsic motivation in academic decision-making.

Renninger and Hidi (2016) and Krapp (2017) stated, interest plays a pivotal role in initiating and sustaining engagement in academic pursuits. From a theoretical standpoint, these patterns are in line with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the importance of autonomy and interest in fostering self-motivated behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2017). When students feel that their choices reflect their own interests and values, they are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, a predictor of both academic success and well-being.

TABLE 7. Level of Degree Preference in terms of Personal Interest

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. The topics covered in the degree align well with what I enjoy learning about.	3.91	0.98	Agree
2. I feel enthusiastic about the subjects I will study in my chosen degree program.	3.83	1.00	Agree
3. My personal interests strongly guide my choice of degree.	4.01	1.06	Agree
4. I am more inclined to pursue a degree in a field I find engaging and enjoyable.	4.03	1.10	Agree
5. I believe my degree should reflect my personal values and interests.	4.07	1.03	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.97 Standard Deviation = 1.04 Verbal Interpretation = High			

However, the relatively high standard deviations across all items (ranging from 0.98 to 1.10) revelead some variation in how consistently personal interest factors into students' decisions. This may reflect external influences such as parental expectations or financial concerns that override or compete with individual preferences. As stated by Azu et al. (2018), some learners, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, may struggle to prioritize interest over perceived practicality. Despite these possible tensions, the data reveal that for most students, personal interest remains a dominant influence possibly even stronger than extrinsic motivators such as job availability or salary, which were emphasized in the previous section. This underlines the need for educational stakeholders to create pathways that align student interests with viable career options, rather than forcing students to choose between passion and practicality.

With this, learners place considerable weight on personal interest in their degree selection, highlighting the importance of individualized academic advising and interest-based exploration during senior high school.

As seen in Table 8, learners indicated a high level of agreement that their academic strengths influenced their degree preferences, with an overall mean of 3.80 (SD = 1.03). These findings highlight how academic self-efficacy students' belief in their own academic capabilities serves as a decisive factor in shaping educational pathways.

As implied by Pajares and Schunk (2015), individuals tend to choose tasks and settings where they feel competent, and avoid those where they expect failure. In the context of degree preference, this means that students gravitate toward courses that align with their proven or perceived abilities, hoping to replicate past academic success.

These findings highlight how academic self-efficacy students' belief in their own academic capabilities serves as a decisive factor in shaping educational pathways. As noted by Pajares and Schunk (2015), individuals tend to choose tasks and settings where they feel competent, and avoid those where they expect failure. In the context of degree preference, this means that students gravitate toward courses that align with

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

their proven or perceived abilities, hoping to replicate past academic success.

TABLE 8. Level of Degree Preference in terms of Academic Strength

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I chose my degree based on subjects where I have excelled in high school.	3.60	1.08	Agree
2. My past academic achievements have influenced my decision regarding which degree to pursue.	3.68	1.03	Agree
3. I selected this degree because it matches my academic skills and strengths.	3.88	1.02	Agree
4. I believe I will perform well in the courses required for my chosen degree.	3.90	0.97	Agree
5. I feel confident in my ability to tackle the coursework for this degree.	3.95	1.04	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.80 Standard Deviation = 1.03 Verbal Interpretation = High			

The high agreement levels across all five items also reflect the expectancy component of Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), which asserts that students are more likely to invest in educational goals when they believe they can succeed (Wigfield et al., 2017). The data implies that students are not merely choosing degrees based on external rewards or personal interest, but also through a rational assessment of their academic capacities.

However, the relatively high standard deviations (ranging from 0.97 to 1.08) indicate a spread in students' confidence levels. This may reflect disparities in academic preparation across different schools, tracks, or socio-economic backgrounds factors identified as contributing to unequal academic self-perception among Filipino learners.

The findings emphasize that learners' academic strength both actual and perceived is a key factor in their degree choice. Recognizing this, educational institutions should consider providing targeted feedback and skill assessments to help students accurately gauge their strengths and align them with appropriate academic and career paths.

Table 9 shows that learners demonstrated a high degree of alignment between their degree choices and future aspirations, with an overall mean of 4.06 (SD = 1.00). These findings indicate that senior high school students are not making random or reactive academic choices, but are instead engaging in forward-looking planning informed by long-term goals.

As established by Hofer et al. (2018) and Seginer (2019) emphasize that adolescents' educational decisions are increasingly influenced by their capacity to anticipate future roles and construct trajectories aligned with their envisioned careers. The emphasis on long-term alignment showed that students are employing future-oriented thinking, which reflects a mature and strategic approach to educational planning. Teal et al. (2023) implied that aspirations and goals serve as motivational anchors that guide students' academic pathways. When individuals perceive a clear link between their current educational decisions and future outcomes, they are more likely to remain engaged, persist through obstacles, and make deliberate choices. The students' strong agreement with statements about goal alignment revealed that they are selecting programs not only for present interests or external rewards but as intentional steps toward envisioned futures.

TABLE 9. Level of Degree Preference in terms of Future Aspiration

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. My desired career goals have a significant impact on my degree choice.	3.96	1.03	Agree
2. I think about how my degree will help me reach my long-term goals.	4.01	0.99	Agree
3. I envision my degree as a necessary step toward achieving my future professional aspirations.	4.14	0.97	Agree
4. I am choosing a degree that will support my ambitions for higher education after college.	4.02	1.01	Agree
5. The degree I choose should facilitate my aspirations for a successful career.	4.18	0.99	Agree
Overall Mean = 4.06 Standard Deviation = 1.00 Verbal Interpretation = High			

Despite the uniformly high mean scores, the standard deviations around 1.00 indicate that some variation still exists, likely reflecting differences in clarity and specificity of students' aspirations. As noted in Krogerus et al. (2018), the development of future aspirations is uneven across socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. Some students may have well-defined ambitions shaped by early exposure to career options or strong family support, while others may lack the resources or guidance to form concrete plans.

In the Philippine context, where guidance services in many schools remain limited, the importance of strengthening career education becomes even more evident. While students appear to value future alignment, ensuring that these aspirations are realistic, informed, and actionable remains a crucial challenge for educators and policy makers.

Students place strong emphasis on the role of their degree in fulfilling long-term goals, affirming that future aspiration is not only a motivational factor but also a structural guide in academic decision-making. This emphasizes that SHS programs should go beyond offering options they must also scaffold students' ability to plan and pursue purposeful futures.

Table 10 reveals that learners exhibit a high regard for institutional prestige in their degree preferences, with an overall mean of 3.85 (SD = 0.97).

TABLE 10. Level of Degree Preference in terms of Institutional Prestige

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I consider the reputation of the university when deciding on my degree program.	3.65	1.01	Agree
2. Attending a well-respected institution important to me in my degree selection.	3.97	0.95	Agree
3. I believe graduating from a prestigious university will benefit my career opportunities.	3.94	0.97	Agree
4. The quality and recognition of my chosen institution influence my degree preference.	3.87	0.90	Agree
5. I am drawn to programs that are known for their excellence in my field of interest.	3.83	0.96	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.85 Standard Deviation = 0.97 Verbal Interpretation = High			

These findings reflect where Mihut (2021) and Zhang et al. (2022) discussed how institutional reputation acts as a signal of academic quality and social capital, influencing students' educational decisions. The emphasis on institutional prestige reflects the practical and symbolic value students and their

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

families attach to recognized universities, particularly in contexts where graduates from well-known institutions are perceived to have better employment prospects and social status.

In the Philippine setting, institutional prestige often carries significant weight due to societal and familial expectations, as well as the highly competitive job market. Given the prominence of prestigious universities in urban centers, students' preference for such institutions may also be tied to aspirations for upward social mobility and network advantages, a phenomenon noted in Way et al. (2019). This is consistent with Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield et al., 2017), where the perceived value of the educational outcome influences the choice process.

Nevertheless, the standard deviation close to 1.00 indicates moderate variation in how much students prioritize prestige. This variation may be due to differences in access and affordability; for some students, the financial and geographic constraints may limit the feasibility of enrolling in prestigious universities despite their preferences. Furthermore, some students prioritize program content or career alignment over institutional reputation, signifying a complex decision matrix.

While institutional prestige is an important consideration for many senior high school students in degree preference, it operates within a broader set of factors including personal interest, career opportunities, and academic strength. Educational stakeholders should recognize the nuanced role of prestige, balancing its symbolic value with the practical realities faced by diverse learners.

Level of Academic Behavior

In this study, the level of the Learners' Academic Behavior comprised integrity, study habits, self-regulation, and self-learning.

The level of the Learners' Academic Behavior was revealed in the following table, which showed the statement, mean, standard deviation, and verbal interpretation.

Table 11 presented the senior high school learners' academic behavior concerning integrity. The data indicated that integrity was a prominent aspect of their academic conduct, as demonstrated by the high overall mean score of 4.06. Notably, all five statements related to academic integrity received 'Agree' ratings, underscoring the consistent importance students attributed to ethical behavior in their studies.

TABLE 11. Level of Academic Behavior in terms of Integrity

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I adhere to academic honesty policies.	4.17	1.00	Agree
2. I submit original work and avoid plagiarism.	4.01	0.99	Agree
3. I properly cite sources when using external information.	3.94	1.01	Agree
4. I take responsibility for my academic.	4.01	1.01	Agree
5. I prioritize honest academic work even when faced with challenges.	4.17	1.02	Agree
Overall Mean = 4.06			
Standard Deviation = 1.01			
Verbal Interpretation = High			

These results revealed that academic integrity was considered a fundamental value. Their response indicated a genuine commitment to integrity and responsibility in academic work. The prioritization of ethical conduct, even amidst challenges, was particularly significant, signifying a strong moral framework for their learning.

Table 11 demonstrates that learners exhibit a high level of academic integrity, reflected by an overall mean of 4.06 (SD = 1.01). These findings line up with the literature emphasizing the critical role of integrity as a foundation for a credible academic environment (Bertram Gallant, 2016; East, 2016). Academic integrity behaviors such as honesty, proper citation, and responsibility foster trustworthiness and fairness, which are essential for valid learning outcomes and ethical scholarship.

The high mean values indicate that learners internalize and practice these ethical standards consistently. This corresponds with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which links intrinsic motivation and personal commitment to ethical conduct. Students who endorse autonomous motivation are more likely to uphold academic integrity because it aligns with their internal values and sense of responsibility.

The standard deviation of approximately 1.00 reflects some variability, indicating that while most learners maintain high integrity, a subset may experience challenges adhering to ethical standards under pressure. This observation parallels research which notes that academic integrity is influenced by individual and environmental factors, including peer culture and academic stress.

Academic integrity is a well-established and embraced aspect of learners' academic behavior, underscoring the importance of continued reinforcement of ethical practices through school policies, guidance programs, and curricular integration.

The data presented in Table 12 show that learners possess a high level of effective study habits, reflected by an overall mean of 3.70 (SD = 1.10). Effective study routines such as regular review, note-taking, and time management facilitate deeper learning and higher retention. This consistency is central to the concept of self-regulated learning, where learners proactively manage their cognitive resources and learning environments to meet academic demands (Zimmerman, 2015).

TABLE 12. Level of Academic Behavior in terms of Study Habits

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I review my lessons regularly to reinforce learning.	3.73	0.99	Agree
2. I follow a consistent study schedule.	3.71	1.08	Agree
3. I create summaries or notes to help retain key concepts.	3.71	1.08	Agree
4. I use effective study techniques such as outlining, mind mapping, or flashcards.	3.62	1.12	Agree
5. I allocate enough time to complete assignments before deadlines.	3.74	1.24	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.70			
Standard Deviation = 1.10			
Verbal Interpretation = High			

The relatively high standard deviation (1.10) indicates some variability in the consistency and application of these

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

habits among learners. This variation could be attributed to differences in individual motivation levels or external factors such as family support and school resources, as discussed in the literature (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2016).

Overall, the results reflect that while most learners engage in effective study habits, targeted interventions could further enhance consistency and adoption of diverse study strategies, ultimately improving academic outcomes.

As reflected in Table 13, the respondents demonstrated a high level of academic behavior in terms of self-regulation, with an overall mean of 4.11. All statements received positive ratings, emphasizing that most students agree they exhibit behaviors associated with self-regulation. The highest rated behavior was showing respect toward teachers and classmates (M = 4.37), while the lowest was managing time effectively during class activities (M = 3.94).

TABLE 13. Level of Academic Behavior in terms of Self-Regulation

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I follow classroom rules and guidelines.	4.17	1.08	Agree
2. I show respect toward my teachers and classmates.	4.37	1.00	Agree
3. I stay attentive and avoid distractions during lessons.	3.96	1.04	Agree
4. I manage my time effectively during class activities.	3.94	1.04	Agree
5. I participate actively in class discussions and activities as needed.	4.09	0.99	Agree
Overall Mean = 4.11 Standard Deviation = 1.04 Verbal Interpretation = High			

Zimmerman (2015) declared that self-regulation includes the ability to plan, monitor, and adapt one's learning processes in order to achieve academic goals. This is evident in the students' agreement with statements related to focus, participation, and following classroom rules—behaviors that indicate control over one's academic conduct.

The relatively lower score in time management submits a need for improvement in organizing tasks and responsibilities. As Torres and Paredes (2020) pointed out, many Filipino SHS students struggle with the transition to more autonomous learning due to lack of training in metacognitive strategies. This may contribute to their difficulty in fully managing time during academic activities.

In addition, Panadero (2017) emphasized that self-regulated learners are more proactive and adaptive. The consistent agreement across items indicates that the respondents generally possess these qualities, but may benefit from explicit instruction or workshops on how to enhance time management, a key aspect of self-regulation.

Lastly, environmental and contextual limitations such as lack of guidance or supportive study environments may impact students' self-regulatory skills, especially for those from lower-income families, as observed by Bernardo (2017). Therefore, targeted interventions should be implemented to develop these essential skills further.

Table 14 presents the level of academic behavior in terms of self-learning, which received an overall mean of 3.86 and a verbal interpretation of "High." This showed that students frequently demonstrate initiative and autonomy in extending their learning beyond classroom requirements.

This behavior aligns with the concept of self-learning as discussed by Benson (2016), which involves proactive and independent efforts to acquire knowledge. The tendency of students to use supplementary resources and apply learning to real-life situations indicates a strong level of engagement, though there is still room to strengthen initiative in learning outside of class content.

TABLE 14. Level of Academic Behavior in terms of Self-Learning.

Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I use additional resources (e.g., online courses, books) for learning.	3.85	1.03	Agree
2. I seek clarification from teachers or peers when I do not understand a topic.	4.04	1.08	Agree
3. I take the initiative to learn beyond what is taught in class.	3.68	1.09	Agree
4. I stay updated with current trends and developments related to my field of study.	3.76	1.08	Agree
5. I apply what I learn to real-life situations to deepen understanding.	3.96	1.04	Agree
Overall Mean = 3.86 Standard Deviation = 1.07 Verbal Interpretation = High			

In line with Ryan and Deci's (2020) Self-Determination Theory, students are more likely to pursue self-learning when they feel autonomous and competent. The generally high ratings imply that many of the learners in the study feel empowered in their learning environment, which fosters a willingness to go beyond what is required.

However, the relatively lower mean for items related to independent learning initiative may reflect constraints such as access to resources, limited confidence, or traditional classroom cultures that discourage independent exploration. As noted by Manlangit (2018), many Philippine private schools vary in how much they support self-learning through digital tools or project-based activities, which may affect student initiative.

Furthermore, Velasco et al. (2019) emphasized that self-learning thrives in environments where students are encouraged to explore ideas and apply knowledge independently. Hence, strengthening these opportunities—such as providing research-based tasks or integration of blended learning—could enhance students' self-learning behaviors.

Finally, while students rated their self-learning behaviors positively, Bernardo (2017) warned that socio-economic barriers may limit access to additional resources, especially in contexts where technology or study support is unevenly distributed. Schools must therefore ensure equitable access to tools that support independent learning.

This table 15 presents the correlation coefficients (r-values) and p-values between the learners' profiles and characteristics with five dimensions of degree preference: career opportunities, personal interest, academic strength, future aspiration, and institutional prestige.

Age showed no significant relationship with any dimension of degree preference ($p > 0.05$). This shows that developmental maturity as indicated by age does not strongly

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

influence students' preferences for degree programs. This finding supports Ginzberg's Career Development Theory as interpreted by Khassanova et al. (2024), which posits that while age marks the transition to the realistic phase of career choice, it is not the sole predictor of career decision outcomes.

In contrast, sex revealed statistically significant correlations with all five dimensions, particularly future aspiration (r = 0.279, p = 0.000). These results confirm that gender differences influence degree choices. Nazareno et al. (2020), reported that Filipino female students tend to prefer fields such as health sciences and education, while male students lean toward technical or engineering programs. These patterns may reflect sociocultural expectations and internalized gender roles.

Socio-Economic Status (SES) showed limited significance, with a notable correlation only with institutional prestige (r = 0.119, p = 0.048). This reflects that students from higher SES backgrounds may place greater value on the reputation or brand of academic institutions. As discussed by Caballes et al. (2022), SES influences access to information, preparation, and exposure to competitive institutions, possibly shaping students' perception of prestige.

All five characteristics: cognitive abilities, motivation, knowledge, language proficiency, and academic skills showed strong and significant positive correlations (r = 0.360 to 0.621, p = 0.000) with all five dimensions of degree preference.

TABLE 15. Significant Relationship Between Learners' Profile and Characteristic to their Degree Preference

Learners' Profile and Characteristic			**Learners' Degree Preference**				
			Career Opportunities	Personal Interest;	Academic Strength;	Future Aspiration;	Institutional Prestige
Learners' Profile	Age	r-value	0.010	0.078	0.044	0.089	0.039
		p-value	0.873	0.194	0.467	0.138	0.514
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Sex	r-value	0.179*	0.198*	0.150*	0.279*	0.164*
		p-value	0.003	0.001	0.012	0.000	0.006
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Socio Economic	r-value	0.078	0.054	0.026	0.073	0.119*
		p-value	0.195	0.366	0.669	0.223	0.048
		N	278	278	278	278	278
Learners' Characteristics	Cognitive Abilities	r-value	0.450*	0.554*	0.493*	0.517*	0.450*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Motivation	r-value	0.506*	0.621*	0.564*	0.595*	0.474*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Knowledge	r-value	0.499*	0.576*	0.488*	0.530*	0.444*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Laguage Proficiency	r-value	0.467*	0.476*	0.425*	0.426*	0.360*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278
	Academic Skills	r-value	0.551*	0.590*	0.535*	0.512*	0.449*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278	278

* Significant correlation

Motivation had the strongest correlation with personal interest (r = 0.621) and future aspiration (r = 0.595). This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which emphasized that motivated learners are more likely to pursue programs aligned with intrinsic interests and long-term goals.

Academic skills and cognitive abilities also showed high correlations, particularly with career opportunities and academic strength. Wigfield et al. (2017) showed that students tend to select academic programs where they feel most competent and capable demonstrating the role of expectancy in Expectancy-Value Theory.

Language proficiency had the lowest but still significant correlations across all degree preference dimensions. This may reflect its indirect role as a tool supporting confidence and communication in degree-related subjects, especially in English-instructed contexts, as emphasized by Tomoschuk et al. (2018).

The data reveal that internal learner characteristics especially motivation and academic skills play a more substantial role in shaping degree preferences than demographic profiles like age or SES. This supports the theoretical foundation drawn from SDT and EVT, reinforcing the importance of addressing students' internal capacities in career guidance programs.

This table 16 displays the correlation between the learners' profiles and characteristics with four aspects of academic behavior: integrity, study habits, self-regulation, and self-learning.

Age does not show any significant relationship with the four academic behavior indicators (p > 0.05). This finding implies that chronological age alone does not predict how students behave academically, which supports Ginzberg's

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

Career Development Theory as interpreted by Khassanova et al. (2024), while age reflects readiness, it may not directly determine behaviors such as honesty or study discipline.

Sex was significantly correlated with all four aspects of academic behavior (e.g., r = 0.291 for self-learning, p = 0.000), showed that male and female students differ in how they approach academic tasks. As discussed by Nazareno et al. (2020), gender expectations and educational experiences shape different study patterns such as higher self-discipline among females in local studies. This supports the idea that gender-responsive teaching and guidance is needed to address differing learning styles and behavioral tendencies.

TABLE 16. Significant Relationship Between Learners' Profile and Characteristic to their Academic Behavior

Learners' Profile and Characteristic			**Learners' Academic Behavior**			
			Integrity	Study Habits	Self-Regulation	Self-Learning
Learners' Profile	Age	r-value	0.070	0.044	0.033	0.033
		p-value	0.246	0.464	0.580	0.582
		N	278	278	278	278
	Sex	r-value	0.281*	0.281*	0.257*	0.291*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278
	Socio Economic	r-value	0.009	0.095	0.015	0.050
		p-value	0.882	0.115	0.806	0.403
		N	278	278	278	278
Learners Characteristics	Cognitive Abilities	r-value	0.589*	0.547*	0.566*	0.568*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278
	Motivation	r-value	0.613*	0.658*	0.659*	0.657*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278
	Knowledge	r-value	0.553*	0.483*	0.534*	0.551*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278
	Laguage Proficiency	r-value	0.485*	0.406*	0.418*	0.433*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278
	Academic Skills	r-value	0.578*	0.575*	0.566*	0.567*
		p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
		N	278	278	278	278

* significant correlation

Socio-Economic Status (SES) showed no significant relationships with any academic behavior variable. While this may seem surprising, it aligns with the view of Bernardo (2017), who stated that SES alone does not predict academic behavior unless mediated by factors like family support or access to resources. This may also reflect the relatively uniform access to learning resources among students in the private school setting covered by this study.

All five learner characteristics showed strong and statistically significant positive correlations with the four aspects of academic behavior (p = 0.000), with motivation having the strongest relationship across the board.

Motivation yielded the highest correlation with self-regulation (r = 0.659) and self-learning (r = 0.657). As stated with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in self-directed learning, persist through challenges, and regulate their learning behaviors more effectively. This supports the idea that motivated students don't just perform well they manage themselves well.

Cognitive abilities also had strong correlations, especially with self-learning (r = 0.568) and self-regulation (r = 0.566). These findings reinforce cognitive processes like reasoning and memory are directly tied to how well students manage their own learning and sustain focus.

Knowledge and academic skills demonstrated consistent and moderate-to-strong correlations with all four behaviors. These results emphasized that having domain-specific knowledge and study strategies helps students act with more academic integrity and discipline, consistent with Zimmerman (2015) and Panadero (2017), both of whom highlight the role of metacognition and skill-building in academic performance.

Language proficiency, while slightly lower in r-values, was still significantly correlated with all behaviors. This reflects the idea discussed by Tomoschuk et al. (2018), that language barriers can limit students' ability to fully engage in learning tasks, communicate effectively, and complete assignments independently and ethically.

The results from Table 16 reinforce that psychological and academic characteristics particularly motivation, cognitive ability, and academic skills are the strongest predictors of academic behavior among SHS students. This supports this research paper that internal learner traits play a more decisive role than demographic profiles in shaping how students behave and engage academically.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Almost all the indicator of learners' profiles and characteristics had a significant relationship on learners'

Lovely Eugenio Abella, "Learners' Profiles and Characteristics: Their Relationship with Course Preference and Academic Behavior Among Senior High School," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications (IJMRAP)*, Volume 8, Issue 1, pp. 616-628, 2025.

degree preference, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. This conclude that understanding these relationships can inform the design of more effective interventions and support systems within educational institutions. By recognizing the influence of factors such as sex, cognitive abilities, motivation, and academic skills, educators and counselors can potentially tailor their approaches to better meet the diverse needs of students.

Most of the indicator of learners' profiles and characteritics had a significant relationship to learners' academic behavior leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, these results undersore the necessity for educational institutions to implement targeted interventions that enhace motivation and cognitive development, ensuring that learners receive the necessary suppot to optimize their academic performance.

Based on the drawn conclusions resulted to the following recommendations:

School Administrators may expand financial assistance programs, scholarship opportunities, and career counseling initiatives to support students, especially those from low-income backgrounds, in making informed educational and career decisions.

Guidance Counselors may implement targeted interventions, such as writing workshops, public speaking training, and peer mentoring programs, to help senior high school students improve their confidence in written and oral communication. They may adopt gender-responsive teaching approaches that consider diverse learning styles and motivations, ensuring that both male and female learners receive appropriate academic and career guidance.

Parental involvement may be strengthened through school-led workshops that explain factors influencing students' academic and career decisions. Encouraging open, student-centered discussions at home and fostering a supportive study environment could help align family support with learners' needs and aspirations.

Students may actively work on enhancing their academic skills, particularly time management, note-taking, research, and self-regulation. Seek resources and workshops offered by the school to improve in these areas.

Future Researchers may explore additional factors influencing degree preferences and academic behaviors, such as parental involvement, cultural influences, and emerging trends in higher education and employment, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' decision-making processes.

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