

## Perception of Management Scholars for Course Specialization Decision in Nepal

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## Abstract

**Background:** The University offers plenty of courses to cultivate academic careers and enhance professionalism among the scholars. Similarly, evolution of modern market with competitive scenario requires competent resources to mitigate diverse challenges. Thus, the adoption of courses by college scholars plays a vital role for driving the future industry and market. Moreover, the course selection decision of college students relies on several dimensions and factors.

**Objectives:** The main aim of this study is to examine the determinants of students' specialization choices. This study adopted independent variables future prospects (FP), family factors (FF), and market trends (MT), and dependent variables as specialization decisions (SD).

**Methods:** The research design embraced in the study consists of descriptive, relational, and causal research designs. To assess the relationship of learners' specialization choices, a survey with a structured questionnaire was used to collect the information. A structural questionnaire was distributed among the respondents to give the responses freely. Thus, the study utilized 102 respondents for analysis. This research utilized frequency, mean, median, mode, correlation, and regression analysis for the statistical segment.

**Results:** The findings of the study revealed a positive and significant influence of prospects on course specialization ( $\beta = 0.336$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, a positive and significant effect of family factors was found on course decisions ( $\beta = 0.245$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, results depicted a positive and significant influence of market opportunity trend on course specialization decision ( $\beta = 0.337$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, the findings of the study revealed that the future prospect, market trend, and family factors positively link with course specialization decision.

**Conclusion:** The findings of the study depicted that the course selection decisions of college students are influenced in favorable ways by the future prospect of the course, market trends, and family factors advocating the significant role of family consultation, requirement of market and future prospects.

**Keywords:** Academic pathway, academic performance, course specialization, student preference

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## Introduction

The higher level of the educational system offers plenty of opportunities to scholars by offering a tremendous structure of courses to shape their academic and job careers. Thus, embracing the most suitable courses in the higher education system is complex and exerts dilemmas among the learners. Therefore, the selection of a specialization course has become a key concern for students in which consultation of parents, the role of the university, and the market scenario are the key factors for determining the course selection decision. Recent studies have emphasized management scholars' perceptions of the challenges they experience in getting jobs, particularly when market demand shifts (Mainga et al., 2022). Higher educational institutions in Nepal have highlighted the importance of undergraduate employability in response to the needs of the business sector (Szabo, et al., 2020). Similarly, course selection is a significant and critical subject for college students. Students with varying levels of academic proficiency drive job opportunities and long-term professional growth. Thus, the course selection process is directly linked with academic achievement and motivation among students (Babad, et al., 2003).

The major complexity for scholars is to determine and establish a career path. One of the most crucial choices a student will ever make in their life is specialization. Thus, the rationale behind the student's decision to pursue management studies is due to its wide horizon and application. Several factors are responsible for selecting the specialization subjects, including market trends and high job opportunities (Waseem & Zarif, 2012). However, the job market is always expecting skilled and competent human capital, but organizations face a scarcity of resources. Thus, the major challenge was to discover highly competent individuals because higher education specialties were sometimes random among students (Andreea et al., 2013). Parents have an important role in advising students about their specialized options. Students benefit from improved guidance from universities and parents. Students' gender, academic performance, and parent education all influence their choice of specialty (Sarwar & Masood, 2015). Moreover, the predictor's future prospects, family factors, and market trends significantly play a vital role in decision-making for the selection of specialization courses in the higher education system.

Moreover, the huge disparity between the availability of competent human resources and the higher demand of the industrial sector exists in reality, creating complexity in the recruitment mechanism. Next, undergraduate students are increasingly accepting less popular majors thanks to the academic advisor's role and instruction on course content and learning objectives. Misra et al. (2017) stated that less well-liked subjects were experiencing a lack of locally skilled and accessible personnel to satisfy industrial demands. Choosing a major is a significant issue for many industries and academic institutions. Graduate students have a lot of options to study and subsequently work in many areas thanks to the degree of education (Rababah et al., 2017). A person's career path may be influenced by their undergraduate major selection, which can be a complex decision. The intended result of selecting a specialist is the range of professional alternatives. Making decisions about specialization is crucial for their future job fulfillment. Chowdhury and Hossain (2019) claimed that societal factors and prospects have an impact on university-level management and social science students. Selecting the appropriate field of expertise may be a very challenging task, especially when there are many options (Ashraf & Abdullah, 2020).

Shrestha and Shrestha (2021) assert that choosing specialty courses is significantly influenced by prior academic achievement. Once the covariate individual component (previous academic achievement) is controlled for, the influence of the social factor and prospect consideration on specialty selections is negligible. Personal, familial, and professional issues impacted the decisions (Liu et al., 2021). Before attending university, students have some information about their major rather than none at all. The professional aspect is the most important element that influences a student's major decision. Observing this evidence, this study aims to discover the influences of family counseling, market trends, and future

prospects on academic course selection during university study. Moreover, the discovery of evidence can develop a reliable conclusion based on the Nepalese perspective that can extend support for the selection of specialization decisions.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Risk Theory**

Babad and Tayeb (2003) examined the three factors of course difficulty, lecturer style, and learning value while choosing a course. They came to the conclusion that pupils used to shun hard labor. Easy courses were shown to be strongly preferred by students over challenging ones. Additionally, they discovered that the aspects of lecturer style and learning value were highly valued by students. Feather (1988) discovered evidence to support the theory that students' self-perceptions of their aptitude for mathematics and English influence the courses they choose to take. Kerin et al. (1975) discovered that colleagues were the most essential source of information when selecting courses, followed by personal interest, course substance, and compatibility with the primary subject. This emphasizes the significance of risk theory in understanding student decision-making processes. Students have varying expectations and recognize that these expectations may not be reached. Numerous studies have focused on students' viewpoints, and more research into risk theory and decision making might help students better comprehend their course choices.

### **Review of Empirical Literature**

Waseem and Zarif (2012) investigated Pakistani students' decision to pursue business administration degrees. The study found that students' preferences for management courses were influenced by factors such as the abundance of schools, market trends, and strong employment prospects. The majority chose management studies based on their interests, and the study suggests the government should focus on boosting economic confidence for the next generation. The study by Andreea et al. (2013) examined the factors influencing Romanian students' decision to specialize in higher education. It aimed to understand the challenges of finding highly skilled individuals in Romania. The study found that personal characteristics, economic factors, and corporate climate significantly influence students' decisions (Shrestha et al., 2024). However, most students choose subjects randomly without understanding their career implications, highlighting the need for better understanding.

Sarwar and Masood (2015) the study analyzed factors influencing business graduates' specialization selection, aiming to improve university counseling and competitiveness. Factors such as gender, academic results, and parents' education and professions were identified. The study aimed to understand the reasons behind students' specialization choices and their influence on their decisions. The study found that academic, social, future prospect, human, market demand, and job prospect factors significantly influence the specialization area of business graduates. No relationship was found between father's education, mother's education, occupation, or family income. Career development and personal abilities were the most influential factors.

Mishra et al. (2017) the study investigates factors influencing undergraduate choice of communication majors in Oman, focusing on the demand for public relations over journalism or digital media due to a shortage of locally trained talent. It examines student perceptions of journalism, public relations, and digital media. The findings depicted and discovered that there is a positive attitude of students towards public relations.

Rababah et al. (2017) The study aimed to identify factors influencing students' choice of business administration as a major at Arab Open University. Factors included past achievements, personal interests, job prospects, family members and peers, media, and publicity. Job prospects, family members,

and media also played significant roles in students' decision-making process. Descriptive and causal research design were used. The research found that parents, friends, and media influence students' major subject choices, with a small sample size of 45 students from AOU's Oman branch. The study was limited to business degree students and focused on personal interests and media influence. The study by Lawati et al. (2017) reveals that Nizwa College of Technology students prefer Human Resources Management and Accounting specializations over Marketing, influenced by factors like self-perception, gender, convenience, and career. However, students lack awareness about marketing specializations.

Chowdhury and Hossain's 2019 study examined the factors influencing business students' perception of specialization selection in Sylhet, Bangladesh, focusing on faculty profile, media, introductory course, referent factors, social media, access to information, and career growth. The study found that faculty members, university content, family, seniority, and friends significantly influence students' choice of specialization and major subject choice. Abdullah and Ashraf (2020) conducted a comparative study on factors influencing the specialization of management and social science students at the university level in Lahore. They identified personal, academic, job opportunities, prospects, and social factors as independent variables, aiming to identify the factors influencing their choice. The study found academic factors significantly influence students' specialization areas in management and social science faculties, with no significant difference between management and science, and no individual reasons for selection.

Shrestha and Shrestha (2021) explored factors influencing management specialization course choices, focusing on future prospects, social factors, and individual factors, including employment opportunities, compensation, and academic performance. The study found that students prepare for future income through specialization courses, influenced by parental, peer, and role model advice, and influenced by academic performance. The study by Liu, Li, Zhu, & Chen (2021) examined the factors influencing the major choice of Nanjing Audit University students in auditing, accounting, and finance. The study found that students at NAU have knowledge about major subjects, with personal, family, and professional factors influencing their specialization selection.

**Table 1**

*Review of empirical studies*

Authors	Major Findings
Waseem and Zarif (2012)	Identified that marketing trend did not have significant impact on students' for selecting management science as study option. Observed the students choose subject with personal interest. Found negative and low correlation between selections of management institutes.
Andreea, Liviu, and Alina (2013)	Identified that family and social image influenced students' decision for course selection.
Sarwar and Masood (2015)	Showed no relationship between father's and mother's education with selection of specialization. Found career development and personal abilities of the business graduates were the most influential factors in the selection of specialization.
Mishra, Ismail, and Hadabi (2017)	Observed that there is a significant and positive relationship between selection of major subjects and family advice, and job opportunities. Identified there is a positive attitude of students towards public relation.

Rababah, Chowdhury, Marzooqi, and Mudhafar (2017)	It Shows that there is no significant relationship between past achievements, job prospects with student's choice of business as major subject. Identified that there is a significant relationship between personal interest, family members, media, and publicity with student's choice of business as major.
Lawati, Kumar, and Subramaniam (2017)	Observed, most of the students suggest juniors choose marketing as their third choice. Identified college orientation has significant influence on student's decision.
Chowdhury and Hossain (2019)	Identified that the choice of specialization was heavily influenced by faculty members and content of the subject offered by the university.
Abdullah and Ashraf (2020)	The economic factors are not associated with the degree gets by students. Identified academic factors influenced the choice of areas of specialization.
Shrestha and Shrestha (2021)	Identified significant effect of social factor, future prospect consideration on specialization choice. Showed significant effect of GPA on selection of course.
Liu, Li, Zhu, and Chen (2021)	Showed students were not completely blind while choosing subject.

The study aimed to identify the relationship between family and professional factors and specialization choice in Kathmandu Valley. It was conducted using a questionnaire with 3-5 options. The study was based on a hypothesis, but it was unable to analyze the impact of specialization choices. Based on the review of literature, the following hypotheses have been developed for the study:

H1: There is a positive effect of future prospect on specialization decisions.

H2: There is a positive effect of market trend on specialization decisions.

H3: There is a positive effect of family factors on specialization decisions.

The study uses a research framework to analyze the relationship between dependent and independent variables, with specialization selection as the dependent variable and future prospect, family factors, and market trends as the dependent variables.

### Figure 1

*Conceptual framework*

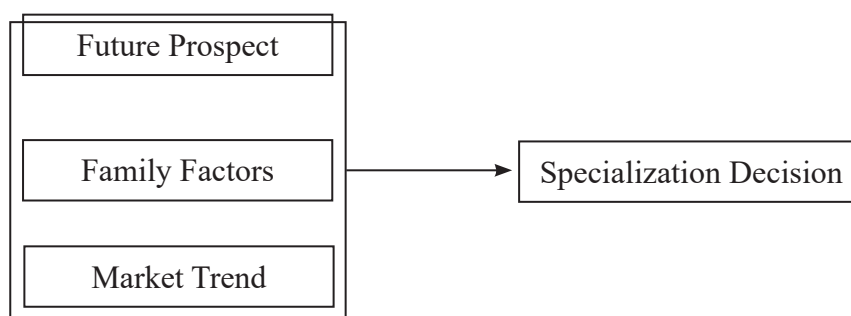


Figure 1 shows the research framework of the study consisting of the future prospect, family factor, market trend and specialization decision as study variables.



## Materials and Methods

The research methodology section describes the actions used to study a research topic and the techniques utilized to comprehend it. It describes the research strategy, population and sample size, type and source of data, variable definitions, analytic methodologies, and the study's limitations. The study employed a quantitative technique to investigate the influence of prospects, family variables, and market trends on specialty selection. Descriptive, casual, and relational research strategies were employed to investigate respondents' beliefs, actions, and characteristics. The 350 structured questionnaires were distributed to target respondents of college students in Kathmandu and received 102 (29.14 percent) useful questionnaires. The study gathered information from respondents using primary data sources such as structured questionnaires. The surveys were classified into two types: classification and research questions. The surveys consisted of Likert scales, multiple choice questions, and single choice questions. The questionnaire was developed to examine future prospects, market trends, and family considerations. The instrument was reliable and valid, based on the findings of the literature research, and it was intended to be completed quickly. The following study model has been formulated:

$$SD = \alpha + \beta_1 FP + \beta_2 MT + \beta_3 FF + e_i \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where,

Y= Specialization Decision

$\alpha$  = Intercept

FP =Future Prospects

MT =Market Trend

FF =Family Factor

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics of demographic responses

**Table 2**

*Demographic characteristics of respondents*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	52	51
Female	50	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>
Education level	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor level	70	68.6
Master level	32	31.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. The study analyzed 120 respondents, with 52 male and 50 female. The majority 51 percent male were male, while the remaining 49 percent were female. The results showed no equal participation in terms of gender, with a smaller female population. Next, bachelor-level instructors comprised 68.6 percent of all participants, while master-level instructors accounted for percent.

**Table 3***Perspective matching between course decisions and job market*

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	30	29.4
Yes	72	70.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 reveals a significant discrepancy in student perspectives on career choices, with 72 respondents confident that their dream job aligns with their field and 30 believe it doesn't.

**Table 4***Introductory course based on aptitude and skill*

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	41	40.2
Yes	61	59.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows that out of 102 respondents, 61 students believe the introductory course aligns with their aptitude and skill, while 41 students believe the course does not match their abilities.

**Table 5***Parents' encouragement on specialization decision*

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	49	48
Yes	53	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 shows that out of 102 respondents, 53 chose their specialization course through parental encouragement, while 49 were not encouraged by their parents to choose their specialization course.

**Table 6***Survey on future prospects*

Statement	Rating					Total responses	Weighted value	Weighted mean
	SDA	DA	N	A	SA			
I expect good income and pay increments with time in this specialization	15	25	32	22	8	102	289	2.833
My dream job matches the job of this field.	11	23	37	24	7	102	299	2.931
I think I can improve the skills through studying the course related to my specialization.	6	13	28	28	27	102	363	3.559
Grand mean								9.324

Table 6 shows the survey on the future prospects of the courses. The majority of respondents believe they can improve their skills through studying courses related to their specialization, with a weighted mean value of 3.559. They also believe their dream job matches the field's job, and they expect a good income and pay increments with time in their specialization. The grand weighted mean value for the independent variable is 9.324.

**Table 7**

*Survey on market trend*

Statement	Rating					Total responses	Weighted value	Weighted mean
	SDA	DA	N	A	SA			
I chose this subject as there is less competition and high scope in this field compared to other field.	6	12	35	41	8	102	339	3.324
I think this field polishes my attitude more than any other discipline because of my interest in the field.	3	14	48	31	6	102	329	3.225
I think I can improve my skills through studying the courses related to my specialization.	6	13	28	28	27	102	363	3.559
Grand mean								10.108

Table 7 shows the results of the survey on market trends. The majority of respondents believe that studying courses related to their specialization can improve their skills and polish their attitude more than any other discipline, with a weighted mean value of 3.559. The grand weighted value for the dependent variable is 10.108, indicating a strong positive correlation between the two factors.

**Table 8**

*Survey on family factors*

Statement	Rating					Total responses	Weighted value	Weighted mean
	SDA	DA	N	A	SA			
My family members influenced me to choose a course.	15	23	29	29	6	102	294	2.882
My family provides me with emotional support to choose my course.	4	15	38	37	8	102	336	3.294
I can study the course that my family can afford.	4	13	34	35	16	102	352	3.451
Grand mean								9.627

Table 8 shows the findings of a survey on family factors for specialization course decision. The majority of respondents agree that they can afford a course, with a weighted mean value of 3.451. They also believe their family provides emotional support and influences them to choose the course, with a weighted mean value of 3.294. The grand weighted value for the dependent variable is 9.627.



**Table 9***Survey on specialization decision*

Statement	Rating					Total responses	Weighted value	Weighted mean
	SDA	DA	N	A	SA			
I am satisfied with my preference of my major.	7	14	30	42	9	102	338	3.314
I will change my major if I don't find it interesting.	4	9	47	31	11	102	342	3.353
I could have chosen a different major if I were informed well about other majors in the first year.	4	27	26	36	9	102	325	3.186
Grand mean								9.853

Table 9 shows the results of a survey on specialization decisions. It shows that the majority of the respondents agreed with the statement I will change my major if I don't find it interesting with a weighted mean of 3.353. Similarly, another statement I am satisfied with my preference of my major with a weighted mean of 3.314. The statement I could have chosen a different major if I had been informed well about other majors in the first year with the weighted mean of 3.186. And the grand weighted mean value for the dependent variable is found to be 9.853.

**Table 10***Descriptive statics for all samples*

Variables/statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Future Prospects	102	3.0556	0.75355	0.568
Market trend		3.3693	0.69874	0.488
Family factors		3.2092	0.69877	0.488
Specialization of choice		3.2843	0.56754	0.322

Table 10 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables under study, including mean, median mode, standard deviation, and variance for all sample respondents. The independent variable, market trend, had the highest mean of 3.366, followed by future prospect at 3.0556, family factor at 3.2092, and specialization at 3.2843.

**Table 11***Correlation analysis*

Variables	Specialization Decision
Future Prospect	.446**
Market Trend	.301**
Family Factor	.414**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11 shows the correlation results. The study found a positive correlation between future prospects and specialization of choice, with a significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), indicating a positive relationship between these variables. Moreover, the study reveals a positive correlation between

market trends and specialization of choice, as shown in the result. Finally, the study reveals a positive correlation between family factors and specialization of choice.

**Table 12**

*Regression coefficient*

Variables	Intercept	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	F	Adj. R_Sq	SEE
		B	Std. Error	Beta					
FP	2.257	0.336	.067	.446	4.987	0.0	24.872	0.191	0.51042
MT	2.46	0.245	0.077	0.301	3.16	0.00	9.986	0.082	0.54387
FF	2.204	0.337	0.074	0.414	4.554	0.00	20.741	0.163	0.51908

a. Dependent Variable: specialization of choice

Note: FP = Future prospect, MT = Market trends, FF = Family factor, and SD = Specialization decision

Table 12 reveals a significant positive effect of future prospects on specialization choice, with shopping future prospects as independent and specialization choice as dependent. The coefficient with 0.336 indicates that an increase in future prospects leads to an increase in specialization choice at a 99% confidence level. Moreover, a significant positive effect of market trends on specialization choice, with market trends being independent and specialization choice dependent. The effect is positive and significant at a 99% confidence level, with a coefficient of 0.245 indicating that an increase in market trends leads to an increase in specialization choice. Finally, the study reveals a significant positive effect of family factors on specialization choice, with family factors acting as independent variables and specialization choices as dependent ones. The market trend also positively influences specialization choice, with a coefficient of 0.337 indicating an increase in family factors.

**Table 13**

*Summary of hypotheses*

Hypothesis	Results
H1: There is a positive effect of future prospect on specialization decision	Accepted
H2: There is a positive effect of market trend on specialization decision	Accepted
H3: There is a positive effect of family factors on specialization decision	Accepted

Table 13 shows the summary of the hypotheses. Hypothesis H1: There is a positive effect of future prospects on specialization decision was accepted as the study found significant. Next, the second hypothesis H2: There is a positive effect of market trend on specialization decision was also accepted. Finally, H3: There is a positive effect of family factors on specialization decision was also accepted.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

The objective of the study was to assess the factors influencing prospects, market trends, and family suggestions on the specialization decisions of scholars. This study adopted descriptive, correlational, and causal research designs, and the primary data was used for the analysis, in order to assess the differences, investigate the relationship, and analyze the role of the independent variables: prospects, market trend, family factor, and the dependent variable on specialization choice among the students in the Kathmandu Valley. The data was collected through the structured questionnaire that was personally administered to the respondents of Kathmandu Valley. The study was conducted in 102 respondents constituted the sample size. In this study, data was evaluated using mean, median, mode, standard deviation, variance,

and correlation and regression analysis.

The link between specialization and its drivers as a prospect, market trend, and family factors was revealed. This can be concluded that the selection decision of specialized courses of scholars is influenced by several factors in which academic institutions should concentrate while offering academic courses. Moreover, it was found that the choice of specialization is positively and significantly correlated with market trends, prospects, and family factors. The overall fit of the linear regression model is evident from the test results. It demonstrates that, on one level of significance, the influence of family, prospects, and market trends is substantial. The study's goal was to have a better understanding of the best strategy to choose a specialism.

The decision to specialize is influenced by several variables. The main factors influencing the decision to specialize are the subject of this study. It is imperative that students assess every factor that influences their choice of specialization, whether directly or indirectly. The findings of this study will have significant ramifications and are thought to be beneficial for students, college students, etc. Understanding their children's priorities in the specialization course selection can help parents and students make decisions on their specializations. As a result, future research can include additional factors, longitudinal studies, larger sample sizes, and more leading variables that span various geographic locations.

#### **Author contribution statement**

**Basu Dev Lamichhane:** Conceptualization, methodology, data analysis and writing; **Padam Bahadur Lama:** Conceptualization, methodology, data analysis and writing; **Prerna Pandey:** Conceptualization, methodology, data analysis and writing; **Saujan Lamichhane:** Conceptualization, methodology, data analysis and writing; **Sweta PC:** Data collection. All author(s) involved in addressing the comments, revision of the paper and finalization of manuscript.

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