



THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND REFERENCE GROUPS ON STUDENTS' DECISIONS TO CHOOSE A VOCATIONAL MAJOR AT SMK NEGERI 1 BATU

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of social media and reference groups on students' decisions to choose a vocational major at SMK Negeri 1 Batu. The study responds to uneven student distribution across the school's four vocational programs and to inconsistent findings in previous studies concerning the relative importance of digital information and social influence in educational choice. A quantitative causal survey was conducted among Grade XI students. From a population of 370 students, 79 respondents were included using a Slovin-based sample calculation and a proportional stratified random sampling plan. Data were collected through a five-point Likert questionnaire consisting of 26 items and analyzed with SPSS using descriptive statistics, instrument testing, classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression, t tests, an F test, and the coefficient of determination. All questionnaire items were valid and the three constructs were reliable. The regression model was significant ($F = 46.659$; $p < .001$) and explained 55.1% of the variance in major-choice decisions ($R^2 = .551$; adjusted $R^2 = .539$). Social media had a positive and significant effect ($B = .658$; $\beta = .590$; $t = 7.153$; $p < .001$) and was the strongest predictor. Reference groups also had a positive and significant effect ($B = .512$; $\beta = .284$; $t = 3.439$; $p = .001$), although its contribution was smaller. The findings indicate that vocational students rely strongly on accessible digital information while using reference-group input more selectively and pragmatically. The study highlights the importance of credible, interactive social-media communication and structured career guidance in vocational education.

Keywords: Social Media, Reference Groups, Major Choice, Vocational Education, Consumer Behavior



INTRODUCTION

Choosing a vocational major is not merely an administrative decision. For students in vocational secondary education, the choice determines the field in which they will spend substantial learning time, the competencies they will develop, and the occupational opportunities they are most likely to pursue after graduation. A poorly aligned choice can weaken learning motivation and may contribute to a mismatch between the competencies developed at school and the student's interests or future work expectations. From a management perspective, educational choice can be understood as a form of consumer decision making in which students evaluate an educational service and select the alternative that appears most suitable for their needs and aspirations (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

The decision environment of adolescents has changed substantially with the expansion of digital communication. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become important channels through which students encounter information about learning experiences, occupational prospects, school facilities, alumni outcomes, and the perceived attractiveness of particular fields. Social media can therefore function simultaneously as an information source, a space for comparison, and a mechanism for constructing perceptions. In contemporary marketing, social media is not only a channel for communication but also an environment in which user-generated content, interaction, and network effects can shape preferences and behavior (Tuten & Solomon, 2017; Appel et al., 2020). In an educational context, repeated exposure to short-form videos, testimonials, and peer-generated content may influence how students interpret the value and status of a vocational program before they make a formal choice.

At the same time, students do not make major-choice decisions independently of their social environment. Reference groups—including friends, family members, teachers, older students, alumni, and other socially meaningful people—can provide information, set expectations, or create a sense of social approval. Consumer-behavior theory identifies reference groups as an important social factor because they may influence attitudes and behavior directly or indirectly (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Sumarwan, 2017). This influence can be informational, utilitarian, or value-expressive. For adolescents, the effect may be particularly relevant because educational choices are often discussed with peers and family members and because the consequences of the decision extend beyond the present school year.



The empirical setting of this study is SMK Negeri 1 Batu, which had 370 Grade XI students distributed across four vocational programs: Hospitality (101 students), Culinary Arts (108), Beauty (70), and Fashion Design and Production (91). The distribution is visibly uneven, suggesting that some programs attract more students than others. The thesis on which this article is based treated this imbalance as an important practical phenomenon because popularity may be associated with the information students encounter online, recommendations from people around them, or perceptions of career prospects. The school context therefore offers a useful setting for examining whether digital information and social influence help explain students' decisions to choose a vocational major.

Previous research provides support for both variables, but the findings are not fully consistent. Suarmaja et al. (2023) found that social-media marketing affected decisions to choose a university program, although word of mouth was more effective. Khairani et al. (2022) reported a strong positive role of reference groups in university choice, while Kana Tarsisius (2018) also found reference groups to be an important determinant. In contrast, Anggraini and Sanjaya (2020, 2021) found that social media could be significant while reference-group influence was not consistently significant in a consumer-purchase setting. Research on students' educational choices further suggests that major selection reflects the interaction of internal and external factors rather than a single determinant (Mardiah, 2024). These mixed results imply that the strength of social-media and reference-group effects may depend on the type of decision and on the developmental and institutional context in which the decision is made.

A second gap concerns the research setting. Much of the earlier literature examines university selection, purchase decisions, or general career aspirations. Fewer studies focus on vocational secondary students who must select programs that are closely tied to specific occupational skill domains. Vocational students are younger than university students, are still developing self-knowledge, and face a decision that combines educational preference with early career orientation. Studying this group therefore extends consumer-decision research into a setting where information quality, social influence, and perceived practical benefits are especially salient.

Accordingly, this study analyzes the simultaneous and partial effects of social media and reference groups on students' decisions to choose a vocational major at SMK Negeri 1 Batu. It contributes in three ways. First, it tests a consumer-behavior framework in the context of vocational education. Second, it compares the relative contribution of digital information and reference-group influence in



a population of adolescent students. Third, it provides practical evidence that can be used by schools to improve program communication, career guidance, and the credibility of information available to prospective or current students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Behavior and Educational Choice

Consumer behavior concerns the processes through which individuals or groups search for, evaluate, select, use, and respond to products, services, ideas, or experiences that are expected to satisfy their needs (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasize that consumer decisions are influenced by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. When students choose a vocational major, the “service” being selected is an educational pathway, but the decision still involves recognition of a need, information acquisition, comparison of alternatives, a final choice, and an evaluation of the choice after experience with the program.

The five-stage decision process proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016) provides the principal theoretical structure for this study. Need recognition occurs when students realize that they must select an educational pathway that fits their interests and future plans. Information search follows as students seek program information from personal, institutional, public, and digital sources. During evaluation of alternatives, students compare programs using criteria such as interest, occupational prospects, perceived difficulty, facilities, or advice from others. The choice stage captures the final selection, while post-decision behavior is reflected in confidence, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend the selected program. Social media is expected to be especially influential during information search and evaluation, whereas reference groups can affect information search, evaluation, and the final choice.

Social Media

Social media refers to internet-based platforms that allow users to create, exchange, respond to, and circulate content within connected networks. In marketing and consumer research, social media is important because it combines accessibility, speed, multimedia content, user participation, and social connectivity (Tuten & Solomon, 2017; Appel et al., 2020). The thesis operationalizes social media using five dimensions from Tuten and Solomon (2017): participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. Participation reflects active responses such as liking, commenting, and sharing. Openness concerns ease of access to information and willingness to receive feedback. Conversation captures two-way communication and discussion.



Community reflects a sense of belonging and involvement in groups with shared interests, while connectedness captures the ability to establish links with other users and information sources.

These dimensions are relevant to vocational-major choice because students may not need to communicate directly with a school to be influenced by its digital environment. A student can form a perception of a program simply by observing demonstrations of practical skills, alumni stories, workplace videos, or peer experiences. Recent empirical work supports this mechanism. Budi Susilo and Tri Widayanti (2025) found that short educational content could strengthen confidence in choosing a field of study, while Ermawati et al. (2020) demonstrated the broader influence of social media on individual decision-making. Internationally, studies summarized in the thesis also indicate that digital content can expose young people to occupational role models and shape career-related preferences (Gössling & Rothleitner, 2025; Li et al., 2025; Bodur Güney & Acartürk, 2026).

Reference Groups

A reference group is a group or social category that individuals use as a point of comparison when forming attitudes, values, preferences, or behavior. Sumarwan (2017) distinguishes three forms of influence that are used in this study. Informational influence occurs when a person relies on information, advice, or experience provided by others. Utilitarian influence reflects the consideration of practical consequences and expectations associated with the group. Value-expressive influence occurs when individuals adopt choices that are consistent with a desired identity, lifestyle, or social acceptance.

In educational choice, reference groups may include parents, siblings, peers, teachers, alumni, and older students. Their influence can be supportive rather than coercive: they may provide examples, explain practical consequences, or validate a student's preference. Research reported in the thesis generally supports a role for reference groups in educational decisions. Khairani et al. (2022), Kana Tarsisius (2018), and al-Faraqi (2018) found significant effects in choices related to higher education or academic majors. Research on peer context and career intentions also indicates that friends and family form important parts of the social context within which adolescents imagine occupational futures (Adzovie et al., 2025; Böhle et al., 2025; Weldeyesus & Admasu, 2025). However, the effect is not universal across decision types, which makes empirical testing in the vocational-school context necessary.



Major-Choice Decision and Hypotheses

The dependent variable is the decision to choose a vocational major, operationalized through five dimensions: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, choice decision, and post-decision behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This structure treats the decision as a process rather than a single act. It is particularly useful for the present study because social media and reference groups can influence different stages in different ways: social media expands the volume and variety of information available, whereas reference groups can help interpret that information and connect it to practical or social considerations.

Based on consumer-behavior theory and the empirical evidence reviewed above, the study proposes three hypotheses: H1, social media and reference groups simultaneously have a significant effect on the decision to choose a vocational major; H2, social media has a significant positive partial effect on the decision to choose a vocational major; and H3, reference groups have a significant positive partial effect on the decision to choose a vocational major.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative associative design with a causal approach. Data were collected through a cross-sectional survey of Grade XI students at SMK Negeri 1 Batu. The population consisted of 370 students in four vocational programs: Hospitality, Culinary Arts, Beauty, and Fashion Design and Production. Grade XI students were selected because they had already experienced the process of choosing and studying in a vocational program, enabling them to evaluate both the decision process and their post-choice response.

The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, resulting in 79 respondents. The sampling plan used proportional stratified random sampling, with the vocational program treated as the stratum. The planned allocation was 22 Hospitality students, 23 Culinary Arts students, 15 Beauty students, and 19 Fashion Design and Production students. The 79 usable responses ultimately represented all four programs, with the actual distribution reported in Table 2. This coverage-maintained representation across the school's program structure even though the usable-response distribution differed slightly from the initial proportional allocation.

Primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 26 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Social media was



measured with 10 items across five dimensions; reference groups were measured with six items across three dimensions; and the major-choice decision was measured with 10 items across five decision-process dimensions. The operational structure is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Dimensions	Items	Main measurement focus
Social media (X1)	Participation; openness; conversation; community; connectedness	10	Active response, information access, two-way interaction, community involvement, and digital connectivity
Reference groups (X2)	Informational; utilitarian; value-expressive influence	6	Trust in others' information, practical/functional considerations, and social/identity alignment
Major-choice decision (Y)	Need recognition; information search; evaluation of alternatives; choice decision; post-decision behavior	10	Awareness of needs, search activity, comparison, confidence in the final choice, and post-choice satisfaction and advocacy

Source: Adapted from Tuten & Solomon (2017), Sumarwan (2017), and Kotler & Keller (2016) as operationalized in the thesis.

Instrument quality was evaluated before hypothesis testing. Item validity was assessed by comparing item-total correlations with an r-table value of .220 for $N = 79$. All 26 items were valid: correlations ranged from .542 to .773 for social media, .653 to .773 for reference groups, and .657 to .853 for the major-choice decision. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with .60 used as the minimum criterion. The resulting alpha values were .881, .815, and .931, respectively, indicating good to very high internal consistency.

Data analysis was conducted with SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and mean responses. Classical assumptions for multiple linear regression were evaluated using the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality, tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) for multicollinearity, and the Glejser test for heteroscedasticity. Multiple linear regression was then used to estimate the effects of social media and reference groups on the decision to choose a major. The F test evaluated the joint effect of the predictors, t tests evaluated partial effects, and R^2 was used to assess explanatory power. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent profile

The final sample consisted of 79 Grade XI students. Female respondents accounted for 78.5% of the sample and male respondents for 21.5%. Most respondents (78.5%) were 16–17 years old, while 21.5% were older than 17 years. All four vocational programs were represented. The distribution of usable questionnaires is shown in Table 2. The sample therefore reflects the program diversity of the school, although the gender composition is strongly female, which is consistent with the nature of several programs offered in the research setting.

Table 2.
Profile of the 79 Respondents

Characteristic	Category	n (%)
Gender	Male	17 (21.5%)
Gender	Female	62 (78.5%)
Age	16–17 years	62 (78.5%)
Age	>17 years	17 (21.5%)
Vocational program	Hospitality	23 (29.1%)
Vocational program	Culinary Arts	20 (25.3%)
Vocational program	Beauty	12 (15.2%)
Vocational program	Fashion Design and Production	24 (30.4%)

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

Descriptive Results

The social-media variable had an overall mean of 3.6, indicating a moderately high perception of its role. Openness was the strongest dimension (mean = 4.0), followed by connectedness (3.9). Participation was the lowest dimension (3.3). This pattern is important because it shows that the students were not necessarily highly active creators or discussants on social media; rather, they benefited most from easy access to information and the ability to connect with people and sources. The thesis therefore characterizes many respondents as relatively passive consumers of content whose perceptions may still be strongly shaped by what they repeatedly view.

The reference-group variable produced a lower overall mean of 3.2. Utilitarian influence was highest (3.5), followed by value-expressive influence



(3.4), while informational influence was lowest (2.9). The students therefore appeared selective about advice from others. They were more likely to consider practical benefits—such as functional fit and expected usefulness—than to accept recommendations merely because they came from friends or family. This descriptive result anticipates the regression finding that reference groups matter, but less strongly than social media.

The major-choice decision variable had an overall mean of 3.8, which indicates a high level of decision-process engagement. Information search and the choice-decision dimension each had a mean of 3.9, while need recognition, evaluation of alternatives, and post-decision behavior each had a mean of 3.7. Students thus reported active information seeking and relatively strong confidence in their final choice. The pattern supports the theoretical argument that information access is central to vocational-major choice.

Table 3.
Mean Scores by Construct and Dimension

Construct	Dimension	Mean	Interpretive emphasis
Social media	Participation	3.3	Lowest; students tend to consume rather than actively engage
Social media	Openness	4.0	Highest; information is perceived as easy to obtain
Social media	Conversation	3.5	Moderate two-way discussion
Social media	Community	3.5	Moderate community involvement
Social media	Connectedness	3.9	High ease of connection to people and sources
Social media	Overall	3.6	Moderately high
Reference groups	Informational influence	2.9	Lowest; recommendations are not accepted uncritically
Reference groups	Utilitarian influence	3.5	Highest; practical benefits are salient
Reference groups	Value-expressive influence	3.4	Moderate social/identity alignment
Reference groups	Overall	3.2	Moderate
Major-choice decision	Need recognition	3.7	High
Major-choice decision	Information search	3.9	Joint highest; active search before choosing



Construct	Dimension	Mean	Interpretive emphasis
Major-choice decision	Evaluation of alternatives	3.7	High
Major-choice decision	Choice decision	3.9	Joint highest; strong confidence in the choice
Major-choice decision	Post-decision behavior	3.7	High satisfaction; positive post-choice response
Major-choice decision	Overall	3.8	High

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

Instrument Quality and Classical Assumptions

All measures met the validity and reliability requirements stated in the thesis. In addition, the regression model satisfied the classical assumptions. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test produced an Asymp. Sig. value of .200, indicating that the residuals were normally distributed. Tolerance was .867 and VIF was 1.153 for both predictors, indicating no multicollinearity. The Glejser test produced significance values of .604 for social media and .348 for reference groups, both above .05; therefore, no heteroscedasticity problem was detected. These results support the use of multiple linear regression for hypothesis testing.

Table 4.

Instrument Reliability and Regression Assumption Checks

Assessment	Variable / statistic	Result	Decision
Reliability	Social media	Cronbach's $\alpha = .881$	Reliable
Reliability	Reference groups	Cronbach's $\alpha = .815$	Reliable
Reliability	Major-choice decision	Cronbach's $\alpha = .931$	Reliable
Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Asymp. Sig. = .200	Normal residuals
Multicollinearity	Social media	Tolerance = .867; VIF = 1.153	No multicollinearity
Multicollinearity	Reference groups	Tolerance = .867; VIF = 1.153	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity (Glejser)	Social media	p = .604	No heteroscedasticity
Heteroscedasticity (Glejser)	Reference groups	p = .348	No heteroscedasticity

Source: Primary data processed (2026)



Multiple Regression and Hypothesis Testing

The estimated regression equation was $Y = 3.629 + 0.658X_1 + 0.512X_2 + e$, where Y is the decision to choose a vocational major, X_1 is social media, and X_2 is reference-group influence. Both regression coefficients are positive. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 76) = 46.659$, $p < .001$, supporting H1. The correlation coefficient was $R = .742$, and $R^2 = .551$ with an adjusted R^2 of .539. Thus, social media and reference groups jointly explained 55.1% of the variance in the students' major-choice decisions, while 44.9% was associated with factors outside the model, such as personal interests and abilities, family circumstances, education costs, school reputation, and other psychological or contextual factors identified in the thesis.

Table 5.
Multiple Regression and Hypothesis Test Results

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	Conclusion
Constant	3.629	3.580	—	1.014	.314	—
Social media (X1)	.658	.092	.590	7.153	<.001	H2 supported
Reference groups (X2)	.512	.149	.284	3.439	.001	H3 supported

Source: Primary data processed (2026). Model statistics: $F = 46.659$, $p < .001$; $R = .742$; $R^2 = .551$; adjusted $R^2 = .539$; $SEE = 4.402$.

Joint Influence of Social Media and Reference Groups

The significant F test confirms that major-choice decisions are better understood as the result of combined information and social processes than as the result of a single source of influence. This finding is consistent with the consumer-behavior view that individuals form preferences through the interaction of information exposure, social context, and personal evaluation (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the five-stage decision process, social media can expand the information available during search and alternative evaluation, while reference groups can provide interpretation, endorsement, or practical judgments that influence evaluation and the final decision. The strong positive multiple correlation ($R = .742$) supports the idea that these sources operate together in students' decision environments.

The finding is also consistent with studies of career and educational choice that emphasize the combined role of peers, parents, role models, and media. Adzovie et al. (2025) found that peers and social media were relevant to students' career choices and aspirations, while Böhle et al. (2025) and Weldeyesus and Admasu (2025) emphasized the importance of social context and role models in



occupational aspirations. The vocational-school setting adds an applied dimension to this literature: students are not only imagining a career but are selecting a concrete educational specialization linked to skill development and employment.

Effect of social media on the decision to choose a vocational major

Social media had a positive and statistically significant partial effect, with the largest standardized coefficient in the model ($\beta = .590$). This makes social media the dominant predictor among the two variables examined. The descriptive results help explain why. Openness and connectedness were the strongest dimensions of social media, indicating that students value the ease with which they can obtain information and connect to relevant people or sources. By contrast, participation was relatively low. This means the influence of social media does not depend on students being highly active commenters or content creators. A student may be influenced simply through repeated observation of program-related content, alumni experiences, occupational demonstrations, or peer stories.

This result supports the role of digital content as an information environment that shapes perception before a decision is made. Tuten and Solomon (2017) emphasize the capacity of social media to support exchange, connectedness, and user-generated information, while Appel et al. (2020) describe the increasingly central role of social media in consumer decision environments. The finding also aligns with Suarmaja et al. (2023), who found social-media marketing relevant to program choice, and with Budi Susilo and Tri Widayanti (2025), who reported that short educational content can influence confidence in selecting a field of study. The stronger effect observed in the present study may reflect the digital-native characteristics of vocational students, for whom social media is a convenient and continuously available source of educational information.

The result has a direct managerial implication for schools. If social media shapes choice largely through openness and access rather than through active participation, schools should not rely solely on promotional posts. They should build an information architecture that students can easily search and compare: clear descriptions of curriculum content, realistic practical-learning footage, facilities, occupational pathways, alumni outcomes, and frequently asked questions. At the same time, because participation is comparatively weak, interactive formats such as polls, question-and-answer sessions, student ambassadors, live demonstrations, or short challenges could move students from passive exposure toward active clarification and more informed choice.

**Effect of reference groups on the decision to choose a vocational major**

Reference groups also had a positive and significant partial effect, but the standardized coefficient was smaller ($\beta = .284$). The finding confirms that students remain socially embedded when making educational choices, even when digital information is more influential. Importantly, the descriptive pattern suggests that the mechanism is more practical than conformist. Utilitarian influence was the strongest reference-group dimension, whereas informational influence was the weakest. Students therefore appear to use advice from others selectively, especially when that advice helps them assess practical benefits, functional fit, skill relevance, or occupational prospects.

This result is consistent with studies that identify reference groups as significant in educational choice (Khairani et al., 2022; Kana Tarsisius, 2018; al-Faraqi, 2018). It also helps explain why some consumer-purchase studies have obtained weaker or non-significant results for reference groups (Anggraini & Sanjaya, 2020, 2021). Choosing a vocational major is a high-consequence, long-term decision rather than a short-term purchase. Students may therefore listen to parents, peers, teachers, and alumni, but they are less likely to accept recommendations without evaluating their relevance. The comparatively low informational-influence mean is consistent with this selective response.

For practice, the school should strengthen the credibility rather than merely the volume of reference-group input. Career days, program expos, alumni sharing sessions, parent briefings, and counselor-led discussions can provide students with socially delivered information that is accurate, current, and tied to real occupational outcomes. These activities can complement social media by giving students opportunities to test digital impressions against trusted people with direct experience.

Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, the findings extend consumer-behavior logic into vocational education. The stronger effect of social media compared with reference groups suggests that the relative weight of external influences may be shifting in digitally intensive adolescent environments. Classical consumer theory continues to be useful, but the information-search stage now occurs within a highly accessible, visually rich, and algorithmically repeated digital environment. The study also suggests that the effectiveness of external influence depends on perceived relevance: openness and connectedness make social-media information useful, while utilitarian value makes reference-group advice persuasive.



Practically, the school should integrate digital communication with structured career guidance. Social media should provide accurate, attractive, and current information about each program, while counselors, teachers, parents, alumni, and industry practitioners should help students interpret that information in relation to interests, abilities, and occupational realities. The comparatively lower mean for need recognition indicates a further priority: students should receive interest-and-aptitude exploration early, ideally before the major-selection point. Visits to industry, introductory workshops, short practical experiences, and individual counseling can help students understand their own needs before they compare alternatives. Post-choice monitoring is also relevant because students' satisfaction and willingness to recommend their program form part of the decision process and can become a credible source of information for younger students.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social media and reference groups jointly and individually influence students' decisions to choose a vocational major at SMK Negeri 1 Batu. The model explains 55.1% of the variance in major-choice decisions and shows a strong overall relationship between the two external predictors and the decision outcome. Social media is the more influential predictor, indicating that easy access to diverse digital information has become a central part of how vocational students build preferences and confidence. Reference groups remain significant, but students respond to them more selectively, especially when advice is connected to practical and functional benefits.

The descriptive evidence adds nuance to the regression results. Students experience social media primarily as an open and connected information source rather than as a space in which they participate intensively. In contrast, reference-group influence is strongest when it provides utilitarian value and weakest when it simply asks students to trust recommendations from others. Major-choice decisions themselves show high levels of information search and confidence. Together, these patterns suggest that students are active evaluators of available information even when much of that information is received passively through digital media.

For SMK Negeri 1 Batu, the findings support three priorities: develop credible and interactive social-media content for every vocational program; strengthen career guidance through counselors, parents, alumni, and industry practitioners; and begin interest, aptitude, and career exploration earlier so that students recognize their needs before making a final choice. The school should



also monitor post-choice satisfaction and use positive student experiences as authentic information for future cohorts.

The empirical scope is limited to one vocational school, 79 Grade XI respondents, a cross-sectional survey design, and two external predictors. The remaining 44.9% of unexplained variance indicates that future studies should incorporate factors such as personal interests and abilities, family economic conditions, school reputation, perceived career prospects, and psychological variables. Comparative studies across vocational schools or longitudinal research following students before and after major selection would provide a broader understanding of how digital and social influences interact over time.

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