Assessing the Influential Factors that Guide Students of the University of Education, Winneba, Toward Choosing Teaching Career Path

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Original Research Article	

ABSTRACT

This study examined the multilayered factors that determined the career selection of students at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), particularly emphasizing the decision-making process for the selection of teaching career paths. The study adopted a concurrent design of the mixed-methods approach. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques (proportional) were utilized to sample 627 level 400 students from six departments. Out of the 627 respondents, 617 submitted completed questionnaires for the study. Purposive sampling technique was also utilized to select 12 students from the sample for interview, two from each department. Frequencies, percentages and regression were used to analyse the quantitative data while qualitative content analysis was used for the qualitative data analysis. The results revealed that avenues for academic progression (n=512, 82.9%), personal attributes (n=488, 79.0%), achievement of career aspiration (n=459, 75.5%), motivated by teachers (n=400, 64.8%) are important influential factors for choosing teaching career path. The findings also revealed that temperament, interest and personal qualities were the personal factors that motivated the students to opt for a teaching career path. It was also

revealed that financial challenges and inability to satisfy admission requirements compelled some students to select teacher education programmes. It was discovered that encouragement from family has a positive coefficient (0.085) with a p-value of 0.030, signifying a significant positive relationship between the predictor and outcome variables. It was recommended that the government, NGOs and universities should launch campaigns to educate parents about the need to respect their children's independence in career decisions.

Keywords: Career; decision-making; teaching; education; University of Education; Winneba.

1. INTRODUCTION

Career choice is a complex decision that has the propensity to aid a person's personal and occupational life and many factors come to play in the process. Teaching is one of the careers that require critical consideration when deciding to choose among professions. The role of educators extends far beyond the confines of a classroom, involving nurturing minds, shaping of future, and developing the critical thinking skills of learners. The complexity of the decision to be a teacher stems from whether to work at a basic, secondary or tertiary level coupled with passion, expectation and purpose.

In recent years, teaching career has gone through significant changes, influenced by evolving educational theories, high-tech innovations, and a changing educational landscape. People's characteristics might be essential for selecting a teaching career [1]. According to Balyer and Özcan, some researchers in the US perceived intrinsic, extrinsic as well as altruistic drives as influential factors for selecting a teaching profession [2]. A study on the prestige of teaching discovered that even though the career is valued in society [3], it is recorded as low when compared with other professions like engineering, law, accounting and medical career [4]. Another study found that the zeal for young people to become teachers continues to decline in many countries. This trend of dwindling interest in the teaching profession and the shortage of motivated and experienced teachers in many schools are attributed to the low prestige the career has been receiving globally [5]. Despite these views, a significant number of tertiary students are often attracted to the teaching profession, and their decision to follow a career in teacher education could be influenced by personal drives and intentions, societal factors, and ambitions. A study revealed that factors such as remunerations, demand for qualified teachers, sense of fulfilment and opportunities for career advancement attract young people to pursue teacher education programmes [6].

There are many programmes in Ghana's tertiary institutions and a significant number of them have been recording low enrolment to the detriment of staff capacity and investments made in such departments. Despite this, many students graduate in teacher education programmes in Ghana every year irrespective of the public outcry about a high number of professional teachers trained in Universities being unemployed. For instance, in the University of Education, Winneba, 13,748 and 21,949 students graduated in the 2017/2018 and 2020/2021 academic years respectively (University of Education, Winneba, 2023). About 90% of these graduates were trained as professional teachers. This study, therefore, examines the influential factors that guide students of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), to choose teaching as their career path. The research question that guided the study is: What factors influence students of the University of Education, Winneba to choose teaching as a career path? The research hypothesis is Null Hypothesis (H$_0$): Social environmental factors (Teacher as a role model, Cultural norms, Social support system, Peer influence, Encouragement from family, Media influence, Career status in society) do not significantly influence UEW students' decisions to pursue a teaching career.

Understanding the factors that influence students' decisions to pursue teaching can have important effects on educational practice and policy. By recognizing these factors, policymakers and educational establishments could provide support systems by developing targeted interventions to attract and keep seasoned teachers. The findings can inform the development of more effectual educator training programmes that support the general improvement of the teaching career. Comprehending the factors determining career selection among UEW learners could contribute to the international discourse on teacher

education. It would offer a comparative understanding of the differences and similarities in the factors compelling individuals to follow teaching as a profession across diverse educational and cultural contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). It was propounded by Gail Hackett, Steven, Robert Lent, and Brown. It is a psychological theory that emphasises the role of cognitive and social dynamics in occupational development. It combines values from social cognitive theory with concepts of career development [7]. The theory stresses the collaborating and dynamic nature of the career development process, focusing on the influence of behavioural, personal, social and environmental factors. Social cognitive theory is characterized by attributes such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations, interests, goals, environmental influences, learning experiences, career choice and performance. Self-efficacy is essential to SCCT. This concept is attributed to an individual's conviction in their capacity to carry out tasks and thrive in a particular position. It plays a central role in influencing occupational selections, goal setting, and resilience in case of difficulties. Another important attribute is outcome expectations. SCCT suggests that people consider the expected setbacks or results of their activities when deciding on a career. Being optimistic about the result of settling on a specific career inevitably brings about anticipated occupation outcomes, which might inspire individuals to follow various career paths [8].

The theory recognises the relevance of people's interests in determining career selections. Individuals perceive interest plays a role in career decision-making. SCCT suggests that people usually follow careers that are in line with their interests. The importance of goals in occupational development is the focus of the theory. People set goals according to their interests, outcome anticipations, and self-efficacy principles [8]. Goals influence actions and decision-making in careers as they offer motivation and direction to individuals. People who pursue careers with such guiding principles are not perturbed about hindrances in developing their chosen careers. Such people usually focus on pursuing their occupational dreams. Many young people plan to become teachers and do well to implement such decisions irrespective of discouragements from peers and family. The theory also acknowledges the influence of environmental and social dynamics on occupational development. Individual peers, family, cultural norms and societal expectations, mentors, as well as institutional practices are examples of such factors. Inspiration and social support from these sources might augment self-efficacy and certainly influence career selections [9].

Learning experiences are elements of SCCT which submit that people learn from their experiences and those of others. Learning through observational, modelling and vicarious experiences improves self-efficacy and attainment of knowledge and skills pertinent to occupational pursuits. The vital results of SCCT comprise career selection and performance. The theory suggests that people select careers and undertake activities that they believe will bring about positive outcomes according to their interests, self-efficacy, and outcome anticipations.

2.2 Factors Influencing the Choice of Teaching as a Career Path

Tsakissiris and Grant-Smith argue that a lot of people enter tertiary institutions without going through a career decision-making process limiting their capacity to make appropriate career selections [10]. Students' motivation to pursue a particular career could be leveraged to engage them in career development learning early in their education [11]. A study found that students go to university for several motives, including intrinsic motivation like interest in academics and extrinsic motivation through the desire to follow a given career [12]. Another study that determined what attracted students to study a particular programme in 1997 revealed that students' encouragements, motivations, ambitions and intellectual acumen affect their selection of programmes [13]. Students with strong GPAs have higher career aspirations compared with those having weak GPAs [14]. In Indonesia, a study discovered a career selection framework useful in many cultural settings. The variables in the framework involve culturally motivated factors, the opportunity of having another job, religion, inexpensive fees for teacher education, less competitive entrance, and less duration to complete a degree, compared to other degree-awarding universities [15]. The career ambition of learners was associated with their vested interests, job opportunities, as well as steady employment.

Influence from family on career selections and seeming social assistance are important predictors of life satisfaction and occupational outcome anticipations. Studies indicated that family plays a central role in determining people's decisions on careers, and the level of encouragement received from family members can impact overall life satisfaction [16]. Again, the apparent support from a person's social setting is also recognized as an important factor in determining vocational anticipations and outcomes. A study in South Africa showed that the encouragement of older relatives has a substantial direct association with occupational decision-making [17]. Research conducted in India and the US that assessed the nomological network for the family Influence Scale found that family authority was associated in anticipated ways with family work decisions, responsibility, career arrangement, occupational values, and vocation [18]. Therefore, it was claimed that learners who have good relationships with family members as well as personal factors are more likely to make informed career choices [19].

Personal factors entail self-concept. Self-concept as suggested in vocational development theory by Super, plays a vital role in selecting careers that align with individuals' self-image and is aided by the interaction between the environment and the person [20]. A study conducted in Ghana revealed that the participants were motivated by social and personal utility values to select a teaching career instead of extrinsic utility values [21]. Career ambitions are influenced by an individual's gender, socioeconomic position, enhanced academic performance, parents' employment status and education level as well as their anticipations in the outcomes [22]. A study in Hong Kong showed that the educational and career aspirations and end points of learners were influenced by their family members and parents, while other students accepted guidance from friends, teachers, classmates and social workers [23]. Several studies indicated that gender influences people's career choices. Some jobs are perceived for men while others are for women. For example, teaching at the basic level of education is seen as a job for females.

Besides, perceptions are of great importance when students are confronted with choosing their heart-felt career. Teachers perceive that the status of their careers is low among the general public because of inadequate remunerations. Conversely, most teachers love their profession but they feel uncomfortable recommending it to

people who rely on them in their career decision-making process [24]. Usman, Sawaya, Igarashi, Gayman, and Dixit affirmed that pre-service educators chose teaching as a career because they aspired to shape the upcoming adolescents and children [25]. Previous teaching and learning experiences augment the perceived teaching ability and social equity. A study on teachers' perception of their profession in South Sudan concluded that discontented teachers claim teaching profession dampens creativity, and others indicated that they feel vulnerable in the teaching work [26]. However, in most countries, teachers act as mentors for pupils when it comes to choosing a career. According to Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, and Shamshadet, students typically look up to role models who share their race, and this also applies to career role models who are not family members [27]. Character education is only one area in which teachers can serve as valuable role models in addition to professional decisions. It is common for students to look up to teacher role models who share their race, and this also applies to role models in the workplace [28]. According to Wang and Houston, most participants who studied at Glasgow University were positively attracted to the teaching job, though there seemed to be an apparent incongruity between the demands of, or the returns to teaching [29]. This might be associated with the presence of stereotypes and common myths connected to teaching broadcast in the mass media that are not usually grounded in objectivity. According to Hassan, Luo, Gu, Mushtaque, and Rizwan, the media has a big impact on choosing a career [30]. Research has indicated that job options made by pupils are influenced by various factors, including personal choice, media richness, and family influence. The way occupations are portrayed in the media, including films and television series, can influence people's opinions and spark interest in those fields. Furthermore, media exposure can help students make informed decisions about their future by giving them a better grasp of various professions [27]. The impact of media on students' careers is not only limited to career selection but also, to potential employers. Social networking platforms have revolutionized the hiring process by giving companies access to a larger pool of possible candidates and enabling them to assess their qualifications and skills.

Further, the situation of young people in emerging countries taking on teaching jobs in preparatory schools and private homes without formal training in teacher education programmes

is an intriguing and complicated feature of the education landscape. This practice is often driven by a combination of economic, personal, and educational factors. Economic necessities force people to seek employment opportunities at a young age. Teaching in preparatory schools and private homes becomes an accessible option for young individuals to solve immediate financial necessities. This is particularly evident during school vacations, where students can utilize their time productively to earn income while concurrently contributing to the education sector [31].

Altback noted that the youth who engage in teaching jobs before higher education may rely on experiences gained to solve their academic inadequacy or use the money earned to pay for their resit examinations [32]. The teaching environment motivates and arouses their interest in the teaching profession. This helps them to get a deeper understanding of the topics they teach. Some individuals who have aspirations for a teaching career engage in informal teaching roles serving as a stepping stone in the direction of enrolling in formal teacher training universities. The firsthand experience gained in these roles can inspire a genuine interest in education, leading young individuals to become professionally trained teachers. Many countries have observed a notable percentage of individuals who, having initially entered teaching informally, later choose to pursue a permanent career in education through formal training [33]. A significant number of young people who primarily take on teaching roles without formal training end up choosing teaching as their permanent career path. This transition reflects the profound impact that early exposure to the education sector can have on shaping career selections. The informal teaching experience may foster a passion for education, prompting individuals to do further professional development and contribute meaningfully to the field [34]. According to Davis, Waah, Beccles, and Ayebi-Arthur, Ghana is among emerging nations that normally offer incentives to attract preservice teachers to train as basic school teachers in Colleges of Education [35].

As individuals grow, they think through things that can improve their lives in terms of personal and career development. Such thoughts influence their choice of programmes as they enter higher education. They arrive on campuses by diverse routes and pursue different occupational pathways within the university [36].

A significant number of students consider economic aspects alongside interest, particularly, in emerging countries where poverty is pervasive. They often have a monetary mindset in career choices. For example, a study in Pakistan discovered that family encouragement, personal advantage and economic concerns have a greater influence on students' career selection [37]. A case study conducted in a private university in Vietnam found that job prospects and future employability play a key role in learners' decisions as most career choices centred on their ability to secure employment and remain in employment at all times [38]. In South Western Bangladesh, research conducted at Khulna University showed that the majority of the learners favour civil service jobs whereas banking work was second in their career preference [39]. According to Sannikova, economic factors such as earnings were statistically more significant than an opportunity to work flexible hours and work in reputable organizations [40]. A survey to investigate postgraduate students' career choices using the Economic Factor model revealed that expected monetary returns, availability of jobs, market trends, quality of life, attractive remunerations, enthusiasm, expectations, inflation rate and unemployment level have a significant influence on their career choice [41]. Despite these views on career choice, a study conducted in Singapore revealed that teachers enjoy a comparatively high prestige, and receive better salaries, yet enthusiasm for people to join the profession is low [42].

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach focusing on concurrent design. Thus, the researcher collected and analysed the data instantaneously, ensuring the triangulation of results across multiple sources and perspectives to establish corroboration and inconsistencies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The design provided complementary perspectives and enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings. Therefore, the adoption of a concurrent design for the study addressed the limitations of using only one methodological approach. Students of the University of Education, Winneba constituted the population of the study. The target population were the Level 400 students of the 2022/2023 academic year and they were 9, 408 students (University of Education, Winneba, 2023). The Level 400 students from Basic education, Early

childhood, Social Studies, Geography, Mathematics, and Home Economics departments constituted the accessible population. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques (proportional) were used to select 627 level 400 students from the six departments in the University. The sample was calculated using the formula:

$$n = [z^2 * p * (1 - p) / e^2] / [1 + (z^2 * p * (1 - p) / (e^2 * N)]$$

Where: z = 1.96 for a confidence level (α) of 95%, p = proportion (expressed as a decimal), N = population size, e = margin of error.
z = 1.96, p = 0.740, N = 9,408, e = 0.032
$n = [1.96^2 * 0.740 * (1 - 0.740) / 0.032^2] / [1 + (1.96^2 * 0.740 * (1 - 0.740) / (0.032^2 * 9,408)]$
n =*(n=627)*

The sample size of respondents is presented in Table 1. All the 627 students responded to the questionnaires. However, 6 did not return theirs while 4 questionnaires were rejected for several reasons. Consequently, data from 617 respondents were analysed during the quantitative phase of the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 12 of the 617 respondents, 2 from each department to participate in the interview. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics (Regression) were used to analyse the quantitative data while qualitative content analysis was adopted to analyse the qualitative data.

The questionnaire for the study was subjected to a reliability test and Table 2 presents the results.

3.1 Interpretation for Reliability Test

The Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency or reliability of a set of items in a test or questionnaire. There are 19 items in the test and the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.849. This is a measure of how consistently the items in the test measure the same underlying construct or trait. A Cronbach's Alpha value that is closer to 1.0 shows higher internal consistency. Consequently, a value of 0.849 signifies a relatively high level of internal consistency among the 19 items. Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items is 0.844. This is similar to the regular Cronbach's Alpha; however, it is calculated by standardizing the scores on every item. Standardization includes changing the scores on every item to have a standard deviation of 1 and a mean of 0. The insignificant decrease from 0.849 to 0.844 implies that standardizing the items did not have a substantial impact on the internal consistency in the test. The number of Items (N of Items) is 19. In this situation, 19 items contribute to the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha.

Legitimation was ensured in this study. Legitimation in mixed-methods study requires proving the validity and rigour of both quantitative and qualitative findings [43, 44]. Establishing the legitimation of this study, the researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data at the same period and this provided a comprehensive understanding of the study findings [45]. Coupled with this, the convergence and divergence strategy were employed by comparing and contrasting both quantitative and qualitative results obtained to identify findings of congruence or divergence for further probing [46].

Table 1. Sample size of respondents

Field of Study	Accessible Population	Proportional calculations	Sample size
Social Studies	720	720/2,915*627	154.86
Geography	369	369/2,915*627	79.36
Mathematics	457	457/2,915*627	98.29
Basic Education	606	606/2,915*627	130.35
Early Childhood	293	293/2,915*627	63.02
Home Economics	470	470/2,915*627	101.09
Total	**2,915**		**n=627**

Table 2. Reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.849	0.844	19

Throughout the conduct of the study, the researcher assumed the premise of an insider positionality which guarded against researcher biases in the data-gathering process and guaranteed that the results of the study were not skewed toward insider's background influence [47, 48]. As opposed to outsider positionality which maintains the researcher's distance, insider positionality in research refers to the researcher's standing as a member of the community being studied [45]. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba intimated that insider positionality clarifies the research process and results because researchers who share identity, culture, or experience with participants can have an impact on the study findings [49]. In this bid, the researcher kept a reflexive account of her positionality at every stage of the study process by detailing how the respondents and participants were allowed to be independent and not influenced by the researcher's status in the study area. Also, building trust and rapport developed participants' confidence to be involved which upheld the validity of the study.

Ethical issues were addressed as precautionary measures considering the sensitive nature of the study. Regarding informed consent, final-year students involved in the study were briefed on their willingness to participate in the study. The questionnaire and interview guide covered a brief introduction explaining the nature of the study and confirmation that the respondents were at will to complete the questionnaire or interview guide items. The purpose and objectives of the study were clearly explained to the targeted respondents. Concerning confidentiality, respondents' data were separated from any identifiable information that could be linked to them. Consequently, pseudonyms were given to participants involved in the qualitative phase of the study and names used to present their excerpts were not their real names. Finally, secondary materials sourced were acknowledged.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Background Information of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of respondents focused on gender, age, qualifications used to gain admission and the field of study of respondents. The data is presented in Table 3.

The demographic characteristics of respondents indicated that the gender distribution is relatively balanced, with 311 (50.4%) males and 306 (49.6%) females. The majority of the respondents 279 (45.2%) were within the age range of 25-29 while 218 (35.3) were in the age range of 20-24. There were 104 (17.0%) respondents who were aged 30 and above. Only 16 (2.5%) of the respondents were below 20 years old. This suggests that the majority of the respondents were above 18 years old when they decided to pursue teaching as their career path.

The results further showed that a majority of 515 (83.5%) of the students involved in the study hold West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) qualification. This was followed by 50 (8.1%) with a Diploma in Education Certificate. There were 43 (7.0%) who used the Matured Entrance Examination to qualify for admission. Regarding the field of study, respondents pursuing Social Studies Education were 153 (24.8%), Geography Education were 79 (12.8%), Mathematics Education students constituted 95 (15.4%), Basic Education had 129 (20.9%) respondents, students from Home Economics comprised of 100 (16.2%). Respondents offering Early Childhood Education had the lowest representation of 61 (9.9%).

4.2 Factors that Influence Students of the University of Education, Winneba to Choose Teaching as a Career Path

The results of the research question disclosed a complex interaction of personal, social environmental, and economic factors in shaping individuals' decisions to pursue a profession in teaching. The complex nature of these impacts emphasizes the need for a holistic understanding of the varied considerations and motivations which contribute to the selection of a teaching career.

The results are presented in Table 4.

The results indicated that a majority of 518 (83.9%) of the students involved in the study believed they were motivated to pursue teacher education through UEW to get the opportunity to teach at the second-circle institutions. The programmes that the majority of the students were offering prepare them for teaching at the second-cycle institutions. This implies a strong

influence of educational programmes on career choices. Except for Basic Education and Early Childhood Education programmes which prepare students for basic and early grade levels respectively, all the other programmes were geared toward the senior high school level. Besides, those offering Basic Education and Early Childhood education who will pursue further studies will get the opportunity to teach at the Colleges of Education and Universities. The career ambition of learners was associated with their vested interests and job opportunities. A significant majority 488 (79.0%) of the respondents indicated that personal attributes play a significant role in their decision to pursue a teaching career. This suggests that individual characteristics and inclinations contribute to the choice of becoming a teacher. A substantial portion 447 (72.4%) viewed teaching as a talent, emphasizing the inherent and intrinsic aspects associated with the teaching profession. During the interview, the participants were asked about the factors they considered before opting for a teaching career. Most of them talked about personal factors such as temperament, interest and personal qualities. The following are some of their views.

Jones, aged 23, a Geography Education student said:

I am not quick-tempered. So I believe I can work with students that is why I want to be a teacher. So, that is my reason (Field data, 2023).

Emily, aged 24 who is pursuing Social Studies Education had this to say:

I am sociable and have good communication and leadership skills and these encouraged me to be a teacher. I'm happy when I talk to people to impart knowledge (Field data, 2023).

Tony, aged 24, a student offering Mathematics Education also stated:

I would say my interest motivated me to choose the University of Education, Winneba for teacher education. I have an interest in teaching so that was one of the factors that motivated me (Field Data, 2023).

The findings conform with a study which found that students go to university for several motives, comprising intrinsic motivation like interest in academics and extrinsic motivation through the desire to follow a given career [12]. A considerable number 459 (74.4%) expressed a dream of becoming lecturers, with a specific university (UEW) perceived as a pathway to achieving this goal. The majority 512 (82.9%) perceived opportunity for academic progression in teacher education, indicating a positive outlook on the educational journey towards becoming a teacher. Some of the participants indicated during the interview that they can easily progress in academia because of their teaching careers. For instance, Dora, aged 21, a Basic Education student stated:

I aspire to be a lecturer in future. So, that's what motivated me to choose teacher education. It is easy to progress in academia if you are a teacher (Field Data, 2023).

Mercy, aged 25, a student of Home Economics collaborated: *I would like to teach at the Senior High School level and invest the money in my education. I want to teach at the university so, I have to continue my education. This programme is a stepping stone.*

This finding is in harmony with the Social Cognitive Career Theory which focuses on the importance of goals in occupational development. People set goals according to their interests, outcome anticipations, and self-efficacy principles [8]. Goals influence actions and decision-making in careers as they offer motivation and direction to individuals. Over half 328 (53.1%) decided to pursue teacher education because of cultural norms and societal expectations. Also, 300(48.6%) considered teaching as an alternative path due to admission challenges, showcasing adaptability and flexibility in career planning. Similar views were expressed during the interview. Kwesi, aged 27, a student from the Department of Social Studies Education had this to say:

When I completed school in 2016, I wanted to pursue law. But then... my results were not so good to enable me to pursue law. You have to get seven "A's" or at least six "A's" and one "B", before you can get admission to read law. I spoke to my Pastor. He advised me that I could go into teaching and use that as a stepping stone.

Dominic shared his experience and indicated that he wanted to do Statistics but had to change the programme.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	311	50.4
	Female	306	49.6
Age	Below 20 years	16	2.5
	20 – 24 years	218	35.3
	25 – 29 years	279	45.2
	30 years and above	104	17.0
Qualification	SSCE	3	0.5
	WASSCE	515	83.5
	Diploma in Education	50	8.1
	HND	6	0.9
	Matured Entrance Examination	43	7.0
Field of Study	Social Studies Education	153	24.8
	Geography Education	79	12.8
	Home Economics Education	100	16.2
	Mathematics Education	95	15.4
	Basic Education	129	20.9
	Early Childhood Education	61	9.9

Source: *Field Data, 2023*

Table 4. Factors that influenced students of the University of Education, Winneba to choose a teaching career path

	Statement	Agree N(%)	Not sure NS(%)	Disagree N(%)
	Personal Factors			
1	I think my attributes influenced my decision to be a teacher.	488 (79.0)	67 (10.9)	62 (10.1)
2	I realized teaching is my talent so I decided to pursue it at the University.	447 (72.4)	86 (13.9)	84 (13.6)
3	It has been my dream to become a lecturer and I see University as the best pathway to achieve such career aspirations.	459 (74.4)	94 (15.2)	64 (10.4)
4	Pursuing teacher education through UEW allows many young graduates to teach at the second circle institutions and this motivated me a lot.	518 (83.9)	58 (9.4)	41 (6.7)
5	It is perceived that teacher education has provision for academic progression.	512 (82.9)	66 (10.7)	39 (6.4)
6	I tried several times to get admission for my career but I could not get the opportunity, hence my decision to become a teacher as the alternative career path.	300 (48.6)	12 (1.9)	305 (49.5)
	Social Environmental Factors			
7	My encounter with several teachers motivated me to choose teaching as my career.	400 (64.8)	90 (14.6)	127 (20.6)
8	I intended to work in other fields but my parents advised that I should pursue teacher education.	315(51.1)	102 (16.5)	200 (32.4)
9	Even though my parents convinced me to choose other programmes, the love I had for teaching influenced my decision to pursue teacher education.	313 (50.7)	96 (15.6)	208 (33.7)
10	Most of my siblings are teachers so they provided me with social support.	156 (25.3)	88 (14.2)	373 (60.5)
11	I decided to pursue teacher education because of cultural norms and societal expectations.	328 (53.1)	3 (0.5)	286 (46.4)
12	I learned from the media that many successful people started as teachers so I decided to become a teacher.	206 (33.4)	131 (21.2)	280 (45.4)
13	My peers encouraged me to choose the teaching profession because it is one of the decent jobs in society.	301 (48.8)	70 (11.3)	246 (39.9)
14	I was practicing as a pupil teacher when I had to better my grades	292 (47.3)	106 (17.2)	219 (35.5)

	Statement	Agree N(%)	Not sure NS(%)	Disagree N(%)
	and this influenced my decision to opt for teacher education at the University.			
15	I developed an interest in teaching when I had the opportunity to attend career and leadership seminars.	224 (36.3)	101 (16.4)	292 (47.3)
	Economic Factors			
16	I decided to choose teacher education because my parents could not afford the programme I initially planned to do.	238 (38.6)	134 (21.7)	245 (39.7)
17	It was manageable for me to choose teacher education because I take care of myself.	364 (59.0)	97 (15.7)	156 (25.3)
18	I chose to become a teacher because I can have the opportunity to do my private business as well.	335 (54.3)	97 (15.7)	185 (30.0)
19	My only reason for choosing a teaching career was that I would easily get a job after successful completion of the programme.	489 (79.3)	65 (10.5)	63 (10.2)

Key: A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, %=Percentage
Source: Field Data, 2023

Dominic, age 26 who is offering Mathematics Education said:

I wanted to go to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) to pursue Statistics. I first bought a form when I completed secondary school but my father had an accident so, I couldn't go to the University. The following year, I bought another form but my father died. I went into teaching because life became very difficult for my family. I was teaching in a private school and that's when I developed an interest in pursuing teacher education. So, the circumstances compelled me to opt for teacher education (Field data, 2023).

The results showed that a significant percentage of 400 (64.8%) were motivated by their interactions with teachers, underlining the impact of mentorship and role models. During the interview, some of the participants talked about their engagement with some teachers which motivated them. For example, Stephen, aged 29 who is offering Basic Education said: *When I was in Junior High School and Senior High School, most of my favourite teachers were all products of the University of Education, Winneba. So, I thought it was good for me to also come here and offer this programme. So, I was encouraged by the way my favourite teachers worked.*

Jane, aged 25, a Home Economics student stated: *Some of the teachers I have encountered encouraged me to choose a teacher education programme.*

The results also indicated that the majority 315(51.1%) acknowledged that their parents suggested that they pursue teacher education, and almost the same number 313(50.7%) chose teaching despite parental suggestions that they should opt for other careers, highlighting the balance between family influence and individual choice. A minority 156(25.3%) have siblings who are teachers providing them with a social support system. Although the minority supported this assertion, the interview responses revealed that some of the participants got support from their siblings. The following were the views expressed by the participants during the interview.

Agnes, aged 30, a student of the Early Childhood Education programme stated: *My family members encouraged me to choose teaching as my career. My parents and my siblings encouraged me. My mother believes teaching is good because when you are trained, you get a job. Even if you don't get a government job, at least you can get a private school to teach and get paid.*

Araba, aged 21, a student from the Geography Department said: *My father and my sister advised me to choose a teaching career. From the discussions they had with me and the advice, yeah, it influenced my thinking which is why I decided to choose the teaching profession.*

This finding indicates the role of familial ties in career decisions suggesting a congruence with findings in several studies indicating that family plays a central role in determining people's decisions on career, and the level of support received from family members can impact overall life satisfaction [15]. This complies with a study in South Africa which showed that the encouragement of older relatives has a direct association with occupational decision-making [17]. One-third (33.4%) indicated that they got inspiration from successful individuals portrayed by the media as people who started as teachers, highlighting the influence of success stories on career aspirations. It was further revealed that 301(48.8%) were encouraged by their peers to choose the teaching profession because it is one of the decent jobs in society, emphasizing the respect people have for decent jobs. A study in Hong Kong indicated that the educational and career aspirations and end points of learners were influenced by their family members, while other students accepted guidance from friends, teachers, and social workers [23]. A considerable number of 292 (47.3%) were influenced by their experience as pupil teachers, indicating the impact of practical experiences on career choices. The interview data revealed that some of the participants engaged in teaching in private schools before their admission into the University. For instance,

Eric, aged 23, a student of Early Childhood Education stated: *I taught in private school before coming to the University. I taught for one year after completing senior high school. I wanted to stay for one year before deciding what to do.*

Stephen, aged 29 who is offering Basic Education said: *When I completed Senior High School, I taught in private school for 3 to 4 years before coming to the University.*

This finding aligns with the view that in many countries people who initially entered teaching informally, later select a permanent career in education through formal training [33]. The informal teaching experience may arouse

passion for education which leads to further professional development and meaningful contribution to the field [34]. Some respondents 238(38.6%) cited financial constraints as a factor leading them to choose teacher education, indicating the influence of economic considerations on career choice. The findings from the interview were inconclusive on this. Some of the participants said financial challenges associated with certain programmes compelled them to offer teacher education programmes. For example,

Kwesi, aged 27, a student from the Social Studies Department shared his experience and stated:

I wanted to go to a teacher training college because of the financial assistance the government provide. However, my Pastor advised me that going to the teacher training college at that time would mean I would remain in the teaching field in future. So, I would rather go to the university to pursue teacher education, it is not all that expensive. He told me that if I complete, I can move to other fields because at that level trained teachers are not obliged to be in the teaching profession.

This finding conforms with a study in Pakistan which discovered that economic concerns, personal advantage and family encouragement have a greater influence on students' career selection [37]. Other participants said their parents could have afforded the cost of other programmes but they wanted to be teachers.

Dora, aged 21, a student offering Basic Education said: *I want to be a lecturer, so, it's not because of financial challenge that I decided to be a teacher.*

Eric, aged 23, a student of Early Childhood Education stated: *It is not because of financial challenges. My parents and siblings can support me. They would have been able to support me if I had opted for other programmes.*

The study revealed that 224 (36.3%) of the students developed interest through career and leadership seminars, highlighting the role of educational events in shaping career perspectives. A majority 364 (59.0%) revealed that teaching is a means of self-sustainability, suggesting that individuals view teaching as a stable and self-sufficient career option. For instance, Jones, aged 23, a student pursuing Geography Education stated: *Even though I'm pursuing this programme because of my personality, I also considered the economic gains. Before applying for this programme, I was searching for job prospects and realized that after University I would be employed as a Geography teacher at senior high school. So, I considered the employment situation and the salary.*

This finding is in support of the Social Cognitive Career Theory which stipulates that being optimistic about the result of a specific career inevitably brings about anticipated occupation outcomes that inspire individuals to follow particular career paths [8]. A case study conducted in Vietnam found that job prospects and future employability play a key role in learners' career decisions [38]. Over half 335 (54.3%) were influenced by the opportunity for private business, indicating a consideration of entrepreneurship within the teaching profession. The majority 489(79.3%) chose teaching for its perceived job security after successful completion, focusing on the importance of stability in career decision-making. This assertion supports the results of a survey that investigates postgraduate students' career choices. It was revealed that the availability of jobs, market trends, quality of life, attractive remunerations, enthusiasm, expectations, inflation rate and unemployment level have significant influence on their career choice [41].

4.3 Research Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H_0): Social environmental factors (Teacher as role model, Cultural norms, Social support system, peer influence, Encouragement from family, Media influence, Career status in society) do not significantly influence UEW students' decisions to pursue a teaching career.

The study tested whether social environmental factors influence UEW students' decisions to pursue teaching as their career path. Multiple linear regression was used to determine factors that influence the choice of teaching as a career. Table 5 characterized the model summary whereas Table 6 presented the regression results.

The regression analysis results on factors influencing the choice of teaching as a career revealed that the model is statistically significant with an F statistic of 0.000. The R-square, however, is 0.301, implying that 30.1% of the variability in the choice of teaching as a career is explained and accounted for by the independent

variables (predictors). The predictors characterize Teacher as role model, Social support system, Cultural norms, Encouragement from family, Peer influence, Media influence, and Career status in society. With a Durbin Watson statistic of 1.928, it falls between 1.5 and 2.5 which is an acceptable autocorrelation range.

From Table 6, Teacher as role model has a positive coefficient of 0.091 with a p-value of 0.006, suggesting a significant positive association. Thus, a unit increase in the rate of Teacher as role model result in a corresponding 0.091 increase in students' choice of teaching as a career. This implies that the more students take teachers as role models, the higher the probability of selecting teaching as a career. The result is in congruence with the view that in most countries, teachers act as mentors for students when it comes to choosing a career. Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, and Shamshad [27] noted that students typically look up to role models and this also applies to non-family career role models. It is common for students to look up to teacher role models who share their race, and this also applies to role models in the workplace [28].

The results also show a positive coefficient (0.063) with a p-value of 0.049 for Cultural norms, indicating a significant positive association. Cultural norms have a positive influence on the choice of teaching as career as a unit increase in cultural norms will result in a 0.063 increase in students' choice of teaching as a career. This implies that with an increase in the extensiveness of cultural norms, students' choice of teaching as a career increase by 0.063. According to Sharif, Ahmad and Sarwar, the rigorous process of choosing a career characterizes many relevant considerations for which cultural norms and societal expectations are basic components [50].

There is a strong positive coefficient (0.450) with a very low p-value (0.001), for social support system, explaining a highly significant positive relationship. A compassionate social environment strongly impacts the selection of teaching as a profession positively as a unit increase in social support system will result in a corresponding 0.450 increase in students' choice of teaching as a career.

Peer influence recorded a positive coefficient (0.087) with a p-value of 0.023, suggesting a significant positive correlation. This implies that a unit increase in peer influence will result in a corresponding increase in students' choice of teaching as a career by 0.087. This result is in agreement with a previous study conducted in Zimbabwe which revealed that students' career decisions are influenced by peers through advice, encouragement and education [52]. Besides, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) acknowledges the influence of environmental and social dynamics on occupational development. Individuals, peers, family, societal expectations, mentors and institutional practices are examples of social environmental factors [7].

Encouragement from family has a positive coefficient (0.085) with a p-value of 0.030, signifying a significant positive relationship, implying that a unit increase in encouragement from the family will result in increase in students' choice of teaching as a career by 0.085. Inspiration from family increases the likelihood of individuals in choosing teaching job. This aligns with literature indicating that family plays a central role in determining people's decisions on career, and the level of support or encouragement received from family members can impact overall life satisfaction [15].

This study tested Media Influence on career choice. This recorded Negative coefficient(-0.050) with a p-value of 0.183, signifying a non-significant association. Media impact does not significantly influence the choice of teaching as a career in this model. This result contradicts the idea that media has a big impact on choosing a career. Previous research indicated that job options made by pupils were influenced by various factors, including personal choice, media richness, and family influence [30].

Career status in society has a positive coefficient (0.129) with a very low p-value (0.001), indicating a highly substantial positive association. This implies that a unit increase in the career status in society tends to result in a corresponding 0.129 increase in students' choice of teaching as a career. Higher perceived occupational status in society is related to a higher possibility of selecting teaching as a profession. This may be the reason for the increase in enrolment of students opting for teaching career paths in the Universities despite the perceived low remunerations for teachers, suggesting that there are other factors that enhance career status. This result contradicts the literature which indicates that perception of teacher's status in the general public is low because discontented teachers claim teaching profession dampens creativity and they feel vulnerable [26].

Table 5. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	0.549	0.301	0.293	0.9493	0.301	37.438	7	609	0.000	1.928

a. Predictors: (Constant) Teacher as role model, Cultural norms, Social support system,
b. Peer influence, Encouragement from family, Media influence, Career status in society
Dependent Variable: Choice of teaching as a career

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 6. Regression results

Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	0.426	0.201		2.115	0.035	-0.204	0.369
Teacher as role model	0.091	0.033	0.112	2.751	0.006	0.026	0.156
Cultural norms	0.063	0.032	0.079	1.974	0.049	0.000	0.125
Social support system	0.450	0.040	0.408	11.232	0.001	0.371	0.529
Peer influence	0.087	0.038	0.085	2.276	0.023	0.012	0.163
Encouragement from family	0.085	0.039	0.086	2.176	0.030	0.008	0.162
Media influence	-0.050	0.038	-0.053	-1.332	0.183	-0.124	0.024
Career status in society	0.129	0.039	0.119	3.300	0.001	0.052	0.206

Dependent Variable: Choice of teaching as a career

Source: Field Data, 2023

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Personal, social environmental, and economic factors interact and shape people's decisions to choose the teaching profession. Interests, talents, preferences, personal traits and aspirations contribute to students' desire to choose teaching as a career. However, some students are compelled to choose teaching as a profession due to their inability to attain the requisite requirements for their initial desired careers. Students pursuing teaching navigate a multifaceted landscape of influences including personal aspirations, environmental interactions, and financial reflections. Even though personal factors have strong effects on students' career choices, other socio-environmental and economic factors collectively contribute to students' choice of teaching as a career. Social environmental factors, guided by social cognitive theory, emerge as powerful determinants in an individual's career decisions. Mentorship, role models, and interactions with teachers motivate students to pursue teaching. Family impact is apparent, with parental recommendations influencing career selections, even though some students balance between individual career plans and family influence. Social support, and involvement in career experiences such as pupil teaching, leadership and career seminars enhance career perspectives. Economic considerations, including financial constraints and the perception of teaching as a means of self-sustainability, emphasize the impact of financial factors on occupation choices. Job security is a major motivator supporting the impact of factors such as market trends and job availability on career choices.

The regression model is considered statistically significant, signifying a substantial percentage (approximately 30.1%) of the variability in the choice of teaching as a profession. Positive coefficients for variables like Cultural norms, Teacher as a role model, Social support system, Encouragement from family and Peer influence suggest a significant positive relationship which supports existing literature and theories, such as the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The negative coefficient for Media Influence shows a non-significant relationship between media impact and the choice of teaching as a profession. This deviates from the positive influences observed for other factors. Career status in society underlines the important positive association between the perceived occupational status of teaching in society and the possibility of individuals selecting it as a profession.

It is recommended that Universities should consider their admission requirement to accommodate students who have interest in various programmes to enable them choose their desired career instead of opting for teaching. The government, NGOs and universities should launch campaigns to educate parents about the need to respect their children's independence in occupational decisions. Entities working with media outlets should portray teaching as a satisfying and respected career and showcase the success stories of educationalists. The government should inspire continuing research to comprehend evolving opportunities and challenges within the teaching career and create more employment for teachers. Government, non-governmental and parastatal entities and other stakeholders should target and advocate for policies that augment job security and uplift the status of teachers in society. Government and NGOs should design and provide perpetual professional development opportunities for educators and show the areas of potential growth and advancement within the teaching career.

CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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