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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

EXPLORING THE CAREER INTERESTS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE TAMALE METROPOLIS, GHANA

BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPHIL PSYCHOLOGY (COUNSELING) DEGREE.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is conducted by me under the supervision of Dr. Joana Larry-Afutu and Dr. Enoch Teye-Kwadjo. This work has never been submitted to any other institution by anyone for any award. All references cited in this work have been duly acknowledged and I take full responsibility of any shortcomings associated with this work.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father Mr. Dickson Richard Atangongo. You were the major motivator and supporter of my idea to start this academic journey despite the impediments we faced. Unfortunately, you could not live to see what the seed of support and motivation you sowed in me has achieved. Wherever you are, just know that your effort is making gains and I still keep the phrase; “be determined and if you make up your mind to do something, you can do it” you tell me every time very close to my heart.

I say thank you Daddy. You have been missed.

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Thank you, Jehovah, for providing me life, strength and knowledge to read this programme and also conduct this study.

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The effort of Miss Josephine Asare and Miss Justina Adusei towards this work is highly appreciated. May Yahweh replenish all that you lost for my sake.

I ask Yahweh to bless you all and from the bottom of my heart I say, 'npowoya'.

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ABSTRACT

Career interest is vital for students since it becomes the basis for future career choices. Adolescents (such as Senior High School [SHS] students) have career interests that are fluid over time. This indicates the dynamic nature of the career interests of young people that can be influenced by many factors. Therefore, this present study explored the career interests of high school students in the Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. This study was conducted in the Tamale metropolis and it employed a qualitative study design. The total number of SHS students who participated in this study were 31 students. Two participating schools were purposively selected, with a convenience sampling method used in selecting the student respondents. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data in this study through interviewing. Thematic analysis of the data led to the development of the following themes (1. shared similarities of jobs in general and 2. shared similarity of aspects of jobs), (1. motivating influence, 2. agreeable influence, and 3. insistent influence), (1. self-fulfillment pathway and 2. self-efficacy pathway), (1. course(s) serving as a career pathway and 2. course(s) being a means of career insight), and (1. gender role favouring males, 2. job demand for females, 3. students' persistence on their career interests and 4. family acceptance of career interest) to explain the influence between personal experience in jobs, parents or guardians, personal interest, courses (programme) pursued, gender roles, and students career interest respectively. It is worth noting that students' personal interest, personal experience in a job, parents or guardians, gender roles, and courses or programmes pursued greatly informed their career interests.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSSPS - Computerized School Selection and Placement System

ECH – Ethical Committee for Humanities

HEED - Health care, Elementary Education, and the Domestic spheres

ICT – Information Communication Technology

JHS – Junior High School

MMDAs – Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies

PREP – Pre-clerkship Residency Exploration Program

SCCT – Social Cognitive Career Theory

SES – Socioeconomic status

SHS – Senior High School

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

A career is very important in today's world due to the money and the feeling of accomplishment it brings to people. Since a career is important in a person's working life, it requires planning and management from an individual (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011). Moreover, an individual needs to develop an interest in a particular career field before he or she can plan about acquiring the career and subsequently managing himself or herself within the work environment. Career interest may be defined as a person's desire to pursue a job (Wahi, 2022). Career interest is important due to it becoming the basis for future career choices. Adolescents (such as Senior High School [SHS] students) have career interests that are fluid over time. This indicates the dynamic nature of the career interest of young people. Whilst the personal goals for older individuals, closer to entering into a career, may be aligned with their actual career choices, the early life of a student such as those in SHS may be characterized by much broader and abstracted career interests (Wiebe et al., 2018). This indicates the undecidedness, the fluidity of career interest in young people and the possible difficulty in sustaining a career interest that can be witnessed among SHS students due to the numerous factors influencing their career interests.

Despite the difficulties adolescents may face in relation to developing their career identity, the adolescent period, specifically the early years of high school, serves as a transition period in their career development where they tend to examine their interests and aptitudes, and also construct their career related aspirations and goals whiles testing their capabilities with work opportunities available (Hartung et al., 2005). Many factors have been linked to the development

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of career interests and vocational choices of students. For instance, Chinyamurindi et al. (2021) reported that academic experiences, self-efficacy, parents, teachers, and peers had an influence on the career decisions of high school students in South Africa. These findings highlight much of the role our social environment plays in the interest we develop for a career relative to our personal factors.

In addition, a personal factor such as personal interest has been found to influence career choice that students make. To illustrate, among a sample of final year real estate students in universities within Southwestern Nigeria, their personal interest in a career was found to influence their choice of a career (Ayodele, 2019). Personal interest encompasses activities that a person enjoys to engage in (Severt, 2022) and with reference to a career, describes the inner desire for a career which is influence by the joy, perceived capabilities and self-motivation an individual has for a career. Also, even in our social environment, some specific players in relation to career interest and choice tend to exert much influence on students' career interests as compared to others. For example, Mtemeri (2017) found that both nuclear and extended family members had an influence on high school students' choice of careers within the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe and, mothers' and fathers' influence was rated highly as compared to other individuals within the family. While some students' career interests are influenced by their social environment, others are influenced by the self-development opportunities a career will present to them. An example of this is recorded in Edwards and Quinter's (2011) study where career choice was identified to be influenced by the availability of advancement opportunities and learning experiences among high school students at Kisumu, Kenya.

Research in the field of career interest has not gained much prominence in the Ghanaian context. There are some researchers who have conducted studies on career interest and choice

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among senior high school students and university students. Among Ashesi University students, intrinsic value and employability or financial prospect were valued more in career choice decisions as compared to factors such as prestige and desired working conditions (Owusu et al., 2018). At the University of Ghana, intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, and interpersonal factors were identified to affect students' career choices (Woasey, 2015). Comparably, extrinsic factors (societal perceptions, availability of further training, and occupational security) and interpersonal factors (perception of colleague/peer pressure and teachers' influence) were also found to be the factors influencing the career choice among students at a technical high school in Wa (Ampofo, 2020), whereas among senior high school students in Berekum, peers, and parents were identified to be the main influencers on students' career aspirations (Owusu, 2020). Also, a study conducted among university students investigated the psychometric properties of the African Career Interest Inventory in measuring the career interest of individuals in Ghana (Morgan et al., 2021). The available studies in Ghana attempt to measure career interest and have also identified some factors that influence career interest or choice.

Considering the different sociocultural nature of the Tamale metropolis as compared to the other settings of the studies which predominantly happen to be at the southern sector of Ghana, it is, therefore, important to understand what factors influence SHS students' career interests and how these factors affect the career interest of SHS students in Tamale. Moreover, youth from collectivist cultures have been identified to be influenced by family expectations, whiles personal interest is noted to influence career choice in individualistic cultures (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018). With reference to the collectivist cultural orientation in Ghana, it would be useful to examine what factors are influencing the career interests of SHS students in the Tamale

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Metropolis. This present study explored the career interests of high school students in the Tamale Metropolis, Ghana.

1.1.1 Social and cultural life in the Tamale metropolis

The tamale metropolis which forms part of the northern region, finds itself within the northern territory of Ghana. The metropolis is a cosmopolitan city but Dagomba's are the dominant ethnic group in the metropolis (Ghana Statistical Services, 2014). There are other inhabitants who are from ethnic groups like Gonjas, Mamprusi, Akan, Dagaabas, other groups from the Upper East Region and other nationals from Africa and outside Africa (Ghana Statistical Services, 2014). Despite the cosmopolitan nature of the Tamale metropolis, many activities performed by its inhabitants reflect the Dagomba cultural practice. Periodically activities like naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and festivals are performed. The Dagomba culture is described to be heavily influenced by Islamic religion (Youth Home Cultural Group, n.d.) which happens to be the dominant religion in the metropolis with Christians, Spiritualists and Traditionalists reported as the minor religion (Ghana Statistical Services, 2014).

In the dominant ethnic group of the Tamale metropolis, it is reported that the Dagomba's hold strong views about males and females' difference, and due to these views and beliefs different roles and statuses are assigned to males and females (Salifu, 2014). Salifu (2014) added that, the Dagomba people believe that the differences between males and females moves beyond the anatomy of the body to differences in their psychological state, mental abilities and the value of their roles in society. Moreover, it is reported that women in the metropolis may be discriminated against, denied employment opportunities with their services been undervalued on the basis of cultural norms (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 2022). Also, individuals have been observed to

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oppose females occupying positions of leadership of authority in most societies, associations and groups within the Tamale metropolis, and this is strongly influenced by traditional and cultural practices (Segkulu & Gyimah, 2016).

The metropolis was once reported to have majority of its employed population working as service and sales workers, whiles others were craft and related trade workers, professionals, skilled and unskilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (Ghana Statistical Services, 2014). As observed, parenting within the metropolis and other places in Ghana is mostly provided to children by both the father and mother but it could be said that mothers do much more parenting than fathers due to the frequent proximity of children to their mothers. Moreover, fathers are regarded as the superior power in the family and as a result of this, fathers tend to have the final say in matters related to the family (Salifu, 2014). This superior power of the father in the family tends to be heavily influenced by the traditions and religion of people in the metropolis.

1.1.2 The senior high school system in Ghana and subject choices

The education system in Ghana has three sections which include the basic education, secondary cycle and tertiary education (Learn in Ghana, n.d.). The basic education is made up of the kindergarten, primary school and junior high school, whiles the secondary cycle consists of the Senior High School or vocational schools (includes technical Senior High School, Technical and vocational Institutes) and tertiary education which is made up of the universities, training colleges and polytechnics (Learn in Ghana, n.d.). Mostly, programmes read at the SHS level are selected at the junior high school level, currently after writing the final exams (Basic Education Certificate Examination [BECE]) at the junior high school stage. The students at that level are made to choose their SHS programmes together with the possible schools in which they will prefer at the SHS

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level. Each student has the opportunity to select a maximum of five senior high schools likewise five programmes they wish to read at the selected schools. The students are also required to make their school selection from a list of senior high schools categorized from A to D based on the academic performance and academic resources.

The selection of both the schools and their corresponding programmes are all done using a system known as the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). The CSSPS is an automated merit-based computerized system which helps qualified BECE candidates select and get placed into second cycle (Senior High Schools and Technical/Vocational) institutions in Ghana (Babah et al., 2020). Babah et al. (2020) also added that the selection is based on scores of six subjects; taught at the junior high school level. A total of six subjects are used for the selection purposes; this comprises of four core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) and two other best subjects (ICT, religious and moral education, basic design and technology, home economics, Ghanaian language, French and Pre-Technical Skills). In senior high schools, all students take core subjects or courses that include English language, social studies, integrated science and mathematics (RocApply, n.d.). Moreover, there are elective subjects that students take based on their chosen progamme that include, technical, home economics, visual arts, general arts, general science, agriculture and business. At the end of senior high school which last for three years, students receive certificates; like West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) which qualifies them for university.

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

Staying in a satisfying job could promote mental well-being and increase productivity. Nyamwange (2016) argued that one could lead a rewarding life, become motivated at their jobs and attain high productivity when a right career is chosen. An individual's career journey is possibly tied to his or her wellbeing. Therefore, it is always vital for people to develop healthy career interests in a field that will be compatible with their well-being right from adolescents to adulthood. Adolescents have been shown to have difficulty identifying their career interests (Joseph, 2012), and with SHS students who are mostly adolescents, they could be undecided in career interests. Considering SHS students who are now also exploring their career interests, they are likely to be overwhelmed with many factors in developing self-befitting career interests.

Many young people like students in SHS are prone to developing varying career interests which is expected, but this could lead them into choosing wrong vocations based on factors they do not properly understand. Such students are likely to be changing their career interests from one vocation to the other. Also, this development may create a future workforce that is not enthused in their vocation causing reduced productivity and deteriorating mental wellbeing. It, becomes necessary to properly understand what is shaping the career interests of SHS students in Ghana. Interests and choices made during the high school period are said to often become the basis upon which subsequent career-related decisions will depend (Low et al., 2005). Specifically, Rottinghaus et al. (2007) found that career interest in high school predicts an individual's vocation up to 30 years later in the individual's life. With this, high school students are expected to align their career interests with sound evidence that can enable them to make good career choices in the future. In the process of settling on a career, students are said to have many difficulties in relation to their self-awareness and self-evaluation, finding information about their majors, training units,

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and others (Hoa, 2018). These difficulties could provide an avenue for certain factors to easily persuade or modify the career interests of students.

Moreover, other individuals within the social network of these students are likely to influence their career interests and their subsequent career choices. In the Tamale metropolis, the factors that inform the career interest of SHS students are not clear and well understood. For instance, it is not clear whether the career interests of SHS students within the Tamale metropolis are influenced by the academic programme they read in school, since they are directly or indirectly exposed to certain careers when reading the programme. Even though, there has been a change in the perception of gender-specific occupations worldwide, a considerable good number of individuals within the Tamale metropolis seem to strongly hold their gender-structured (the belief that there are activities that males could engage in whiles females also have some set of activities that they participate in) views of society (Salifu, 2014). This makes it unclear to establish whether the career interests of students within the Tamale metropolis are significantly affected by the gender-specific activities (example; females are required to learn how to cook and always cook for other relatives, tasks that require the use of strength is reserve for males and others) ascribed by their society.

It is therefore imperative to understand the various factors that influence high school students' career interests in the Tamale metropolis. It is necessary to understand students' views on career interests in order to provide them with appropriate career counselling education and to match their interests to the appropriate courses of study at the high school level. To my knowledge, there is no study that has been conducted to explore the career interests of SHS students in the Tamale metropolis. Thus, this study will add to knowledge in this regard.

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1.3 Relevance of the study

The findings from this study will inform and educate students and their parents or guardians on specific factors that determine the career interests of students in senior high schools. The result of this study could guide school authorities to create a career interest and choice policy or an intervention to help students develop good career interests and also match their interests to academic programmes that align with their career interests. The results would also help to improve career counselling in Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General objective

To explore the factors that influence career interests of SHS students in the Tamale metropolis.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1. To explore how personal interest of students shape their career interests.
2. To explore the influence courses pursued have on the career interests of SHS students.
3. To explore the parents' or guardians' influence on career interests of the students.
4. To explore career interests of SHS students and gender role norms.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Career interest and career choice

Career interest and career choice are sometimes used interchangeably, but, there are differences between them. Spacey (2021) explained career interest as a person's desire to develop professional talents. According to Sam (2013), career choice is the selection of a particular vocation or path in relation to one's career. Since career interest is an expressed desire, there is a tendency that an individual's career interest could become his or her career choice or vice versa. It is imperative to note that career interest and career choice could be stages where an individual could ascend from career interest to choice in a particular vocation or could first make a career choice before developing an interest for that vocation. With reference to the Ghanaian educational system where mostly SHS students are expected to embark on another educational step to the tertiary level before making career choices, SHS students could be said to be harbouring just a career interest. Since it is also expected that SHS students will develop their career interest from selected academic programmes or courses they read at secondary school, then these students may be thought of as being at the stage of developing career interests.

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2.2 Theoretical framework

Situating career interest of SHS students in Ghana into various developed career related theories, the General Theory of Occupational Choice, Super's Developmental Self-Concept Theory, Holland's Personality Theory of Vocational Choice and the Social Cognitive Career Theory are the theories that could guide the current study.

2.2.1 General Theory of Occupational Choice

Ginzberg et al. (1951) developed the General Theory of Occupational Choice. Ginzberg et al. (1951) identified that occupational choice is influenced by four factors; namely the (a) emotional factor, (b) reality factor, (c) individual values, and the (d) influence of the educational process. The theory is based on the idea that occupational choice is a developmental process which occurs over a period of decades or more years and it is not just making a single decision (Ireh, 1999). This theory clearly focuses much on the period of childhood and adolescence as the period of career interest development. This implies that students could develop their career interests at the SHS level. This theory is significant to help us better understand whether SHS students' career interests are developed from their emotional perspective, their current environment, individual values, or their educational journey. Again, in this study, this theory provides an understanding about the development of SHS students' career interests from their childhood to their present age (adolescence).

2.2.2 Super's Developmental Self-Concept Theory

This theory assumes that psychological aspects (such as genetic predisposition), along with geographical aspects (such as country of origin) have an impact on other aspects of career development (like the development of psychological characteristics and the social-economic structure of the environment) and these are all found in a person's self-concept (Super, 1963).

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Here, the self-concept denotes individuals' subjective views of themselves and their society (Ireh, 1999). SHS students can be considered in the domains of this theory, because at this stage (exploration stage) SHS students are assessing themselves, looking at their innate abilities alongside their environment to develop an interest in a career. It should be noted that, from Super's perspective the students self-concept enabled them to go through this assessment. Specifically, this theory guides in exploring the influence of SHS students' environment and personal nature on their career interest development.

2.2.3 Holland's Personality Theory of Vocational Choice

The Personality Theory of Vocational Choice posits that making a career choice stems from the interaction between an individual's specific heredity with various cultural and personal factors such as culture, parents and significant adults, social class, peers, and the physical environment of which the individual is a product (Holland, 1959; Nauta, 2013; Sheldon et al., 2020). This implies that a person prefers an environment that suits his or her capabilities and when this instance occurs then an individual's behaviour is controlled by the environment. Even though, the assumption of this theory lays much emphasis on career choice, the identification of an individual's specific heredity, personality and the interplay of other factors in career choice signify the development of an individual's career interest at the outset of this interaction between the factors. It is therefore not surprising that all the personality types proposed by Holland are explained based on an individuals' interest. If a person has no interest for a vocation then he would not exhibit a personality type for that vocation. SHS students could be observed in the context of this theory since the students at that point have developed some career-related personality, and they see themselves functioning well in an environment that correspond to their career personality.

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2.2.4 Social Cognitive Career Theory

The social cognitive career theory was developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002). It was inspired by Albert Bandura's general social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). From the general social cognitive theory, Bandura believed that there is no absolute control of people by their environments, and that individuals do not also exercise complete free will, therefore, individuals are shaped by their environments, and also impacted by their environment at the same time with behaviour and personal factors interacting (Bandura, 1986). The social cognitive career theory (SCCT) seeks to address issues of genetic endowment, social context, culture, gender and unexpected life events that could interact with and overwrite the effects of career-related choices (Savickas & Lent, 1994). Putting SHS students in the context of interest development within this theory describes how the career interest of SHS students develops from their beliefs in their capabilities and expected benefits from a particular career. This theory aids in understanding SHS students' career interest development through their self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations whiles also considering their environments.

2.3 REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

2.3.1 School courses as drivers of career interest

It is important to note that school courses or subjects pursued in school could determine the career interest SHS students consider. Since courses studied in high school are mostly structured towards a particular career field, a student's career interests may be influenced by his or her exposure to these courses while at school. Other students may also veer from the field of certain subjects they study in school which also can cast doubt on the relationship between pursued courses in school and career interests. To illustrate this, various studies have been conducted to

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establish this relationship. According to Wang's (2012) study conducted among 3,048 sixth-grade students from 12 public schools located in the working and middle-class communities in south-eastern Michigan, United States of America (USA), the researcher aimed at examining the longitudinal associations between classroom characteristics, expectancies-values, high school course enrolment, and career interest in the field of mathematics. The study found that students' math classroom experiences were predictive of their expectancies and values, which, in turn, predicted the number of high school math courses taken and student's career aspirations in mathematics. The data was obtained from a large-scale longitudinal study. The maths experience signifies a pursued subject and its link to career interest. Wang's (2012) study used data from a relatively large number of students which impacts on the reliability of the study's result.

Pianosi et al. (2016) reported undergraduate experience characterized by the curriculum that a sample of medical students used to influence their career decision. The study was aimed at exploring and describing factors in students' decision-making, regardless of their specialty. The study was a qualitative study that recruited 70 fourth year students in the period of 2003, 2006, 2007 and 2008 in a university in Canada. Pianosi et al. (2016) adopted a focus group discussion to attain data from its participants. The above reported study sample seems to be enough for a qualitative study, but much time was spent in conducting the study since data for the study was collected in four different years. Also, among 1,167 individuals from the eastern Galilee region in northern Israel, their high school major read was found as a significant correlate to their chosen career (Sasson, 2020). The participants of the study included twelfth grade students, young adults within the ages of 21–35 years, and adults above the age of 35 years. Sasson, (2020) study was focused on examining the factors that informed STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) career choice. Sasson, (2020) study involved varying individuals within different

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age groups which is good to represent a general view about peoples' career interest at their study settings.

Similarly, among grade 12 STEM students, it was noted that the students enrolled into STEM-related fields due to their alignment with their preferred courses in college (Rafanan et al., 2020). Rafanan and his colleagues study also indicates how the exposure to a previous course can later influence student's preference for STEM careers. This previous study was a qualitative descriptive research which was conducted among 20 grade 12 senior high school students in a public secondary school in Zambales, Philippines. The study sought to explore senior high school students' perspectives on pursuing STEM careers and it used convenience and purposive sampling to select its participants. Rafanan et al.'s (2020) study provides a subjective understanding into the reasons making the students develop aspirations for STEM careers.

In a sample of 1,228 Nigerian university students, a study was conducted to investigate the influence of age, gender, subject background and predisposing factors on the admission choice of undergraduates (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). The results of this study identified a significant relationship between undergraduate's subject background and their career choice (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). This study also adds to the evidence that an individual's pursued subject (courses studied) influence their career interests and choice. Comparably, Quansah et al. (2020) reported similar results in their study that was aimed at assessing school-related factors, home-related factors, and person-related factors and their influence on female SHS students' choice of STEM programmes during their tertiary education in Ghana. They found that the course of study among the female students influenced their interest to select STEM programmes during their tertiary education. Quansah et al.'s (2020) study was a descriptive cross-sectional study that used a multi-stage sampling procedure to obtain data from 1,938 final-year female students in fifteen SHS's in three regions,

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Central, Greater Accra, and Ashanti. It is worth noting that previous studies are reporting courses of study as key factors that determine the career interests of SHS students.

2.3.2 The relationship between the personal interest of students and their career interest

The personal interest of an individual is also relevant in developing an interest in a career and finally making a career choice. Severt (2022) explained personal interest to be the activities an individual enjoys in his or her free time and, these activities include leisure activities, learning pursuits, volunteering, sports, hobbies, artistic expression, personal development cultural activities, spiritual practices, and traditional activities. Furthermore, personal interest in relation to one's career can also be described as the inner desire for a career which is sharpened by the joy, perceived capabilities and self-motivation an individual has for a career. Identifying one's interest is very important because it can lead to selecting certain educational and professional options that help an individual for a future career (Vasilescu et al., 2015). Since personal interest relates with a persons' pleasure for a career, it cannot be overlooked when the influencers of career interests are considered.

For instance, Kang et al. (2018) conducted a study among 401 grade 7 Finnish students between the ages of 13 to 15 years. They aimed at understanding the extent to which the relationships between factors of career perspectives (outcome, personal time, and innovation orientations) and students' science interests (personal value, enjoyment, and cognitive aspect) differed between male and female students. The researchers identified that among the girls, factors of career perspectives in science were significantly related to personal value, whereas, among the boys, only the personal time-oriented factors of career perspectives recorded a significant relationship with the personal value of science. Also, the girls' enjoyment of science was

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significantly related to career perspectives, and, career perspectives and enjoyment recorded no significant relationship among the boys in their study. Kang and his colleagues' (2018) study identified the association between the teenagers' career aspirations and their personal interest. The significant relationship identified among the girls as compared to the non-significant relationships identified among the boys when comparing the factors could be due to relatively higher number of girls (208) as compared to the number of boys (193) included in this study.

In northern California of the United States of America, Robnett and Leaper (2013) assessed the influence of friendship group characteristics, motivation, and gender on adolescents' STEM career interests using a quantitative study approach. Their study used a sample of 468 high school students recruited from five high schools. Among these high school students, it was found that science motivation (science expectancy and science value) was a significant predictor of high school students' STEM career interests. The study of Robnett and Leaper (2013) shows the influence science motivation which could be derived from a person's interest plays on their career interests. Robnett and Leaper (2013) study included students from five senior high schools which would help with the generalization of their results but, majority of these students were from only two schools (74%) and were Asian American/Pacific Islander (66%), which also impacts the potential to generalize the results of the study.

In addition, another study was conducted among 350 undergraduate students from four higher educational institutions in Vehari, Pakistan (Humayon et al., 2018). The study examined the effect of family influence, personal interest, and economic considerations on career choice amongst undergraduate students. The study also employed a cross-sectional study design and used a simple random sampling technique for its data collection through a structured questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that personal interest and career choice were positively correlated

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and it was also found that students who knew their own personal interests well were able to decide on their choice of career (Humayon et al., 2018). Even though this previous study assessed personal interest, it did not explicitly assess the various constructs that makes up their personal interest variable nor did it provide the exact scale used to measure personal interest. This makes it quite difficult to engage in proper comparison of the study's findings.

Similarly, in a study to examine the career preferences of real estate students and the predisposing factors influencing their choice of career, Ayodele (2019) identified personal career interest to influence the career choice of real estate students. This previous study was conducted among 206 final year real estate students in three federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria among whom a questionnaire was self-administered. Again, Umar (2014) also conducted a study among 88 accounting students at Yobe State Univesity in Nigeria. The study employed a survey method and it was aimed at examining the factors that influence career choices among accounting students. The study found that students' self – desire significantly influenced the choice of accounting among the participants. This study had a small sample size and this could affect the generalization of the study's results.

Focusing on a study conducted in Ghana to assess the influence of job-related and personality factors on the intentions to pursue careers in accounting among Ghanaian accounting students, Mbawuni and Nimako (2015) the researchers employed a descriptive cross-sectional study design among 516 final-year accounting students in a Ghanaian public university. The students' feeling about the accounting profession was found to greatly influence their career intentions about pursuing careers in accounting (Mbawuni & Nimako, 2015). Also, the mathematics interest of 1,263 senior high school students in the Ashanti region, Ghana, was found to be influenced by students' self-motivation in another Ghanaian study (Arthur et al., 2017). The

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Ghanaian studies reported above depict the influence personal interest has on the career interests of students in the form of their feelings about a career and self-motivation. It is therefore appropriate to say that these previous studies establish that there are certain intrinsic factors such as personal interest that can influence students' career interests, which, in turn, may influence their choice of a career.

2.3.3 Parental or guardian influence on young people's career interests

Parental or guardian influence is seen in many aspects of young people's life with the area of career interest of young people having no exception. In a study conducted among 21,444 ninth-grade students from the District of Columbia, USA, Mau and Li (2018) examined the factors influencing STEM career aspirations of a nationally representative sample. The researchers for this study employed a stratified, two-stage random sample design for their data collection and a bivariate analysis. The study found that, students who had an interest in STEM careers reported a significant higher socioeconomic status and parental involvement in their career aspirations, compared with students who had interest in non-STEM careers (Mau & Li, 2018). Comparatively, Roach (2010) identified perceived parental influences to be positively correlated with reported career self-efficacy among 60 undergraduate students within a college in the northeast region of the USA. Roach (2010) also added that as parent supportive behaviour increase, then there was also an increase in students' confidence in assessing and determining their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their confidence in setting career goals. The study of Roach was aimed at aiding a better understanding of the role that parents play in the career development of undergraduate college students. It can be noticed that, the number of participants used in the above

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study is very low and Roach also discloses that the sample used in this study was not representative sample in terms of the gender of the students when the setting of the study is considered.

After conducting a study to determine the factors that affect the choice of career among students at two public universities at Lahore, Pakistan, it was identified that parents influenced the career choices of the students (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Kazi and his colleague's used a mixed-methods approach in their study where they used both interviews and questionnaires to collect their data. They employed a purposive sampling method in their study which was conducted among 432 (quantitative) and 12 (qualitative) participants, respectively. Kazi and Akhlaq's (2017) study is imperative in establishing the influence of parents on the career choice and interests of their children. Moreover, among 1,342 university students in three cities in China (Beijing, Wuhan, and Hong Kong), perceived parental expectations were found to be predictive of career decision-making difficulties (Leung et al., 2011). This study was quantitative in nature and it assessed the effects of cultural-values conflict and parental expectations on the career decision-making difficulties of university students. The larger sample number of this study is very significant in achieving results that are representative of the study population. Leung et al.'s (2011) study used a convenience sampling method which could introduce bias in the characteristics of the study population.

Additionally, Shumba and Naong (2012) conducted a study to determine the factors influencing career choice and aspirations among South African university students. Their study was quantitative in nature and it adopted a purposive sampling technique among its total sample of 133 students. Shumba and Naong's (2012) study identified that family was a significant factor that influenced the career aspirations and choice of students. Also, Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) found parents to influence the choice of psychology as a career among psychology students at the

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University of Venda in South Africa. Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) study employed an Ex post facto research design among 200 students comprising 100 females and 100 males.

In Ghana, Arthur et al. (2017) conducted a study among senior high school students within the Ashanti region. Their study was aimed at exploring the effect of parent's level of education, parent's mathematics interest, and the role parental motivation plays in students' mathematics interest development. The study was a quantitative study that enrolled 1,263 students and it employed 10 senior high schools using the simple random sampling. The results of the study identified that students' interest in mathematics was influenced by parents' educational backgrounds and parents' interest in mathematics. The results of the study could be much reliable and can be generalised among SHS students within the Ashanti region due to the use of ten different schools and the larger sample size. Considering the possibility that an interest in a subject in school may influence the development of student's career interests, Arthur et al. (2017) study provided good evidence between parental influence and subject of interest which could transcend to the development of career interest.

2.3.4 Gender roles and career interest development

Stemming from societal roles that are allocated to individuals in relation to their gender, gender may influence the career interests of an individual. For example, Rossler et al. (2020) investigated the degree to which female and male students differ in their perceptions of barriers to entering a police patrol career. The researchers assessed 640 undergraduate students enrolled in criminal justice programmes in five universities within the USA. The results of their study showed that, female students were less likely to express an interest in a police patrol career as compared to others who did not identify as female. In another study conducted in the USA, the cross-sectional and longitudinal disparities in STEM career interest with reference to gender, race/ethnicity, and

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socioeconomic status (SES) were investigated among a sample of 20,242 high school students. The data of the students were collected from an existing High School Longitudinal Study in which the students were assessed at 9th and 11th grade in high school. The findings of the study depicted that at 9th grade, 14.5% of boys and 8.4% of girls were interested in pursuing a STEM career whiles, at the end of 11th grade, 14.7% of boys and 5.3% of girls were interested in STEM careers which relatively showed that boys had more interest in STEM careers as compared to girls (Saw et al., 2018). These two studies conducted in the USA showed the gender variation in favour of males in developing an interest for STEM careers and policing which could be fueled by society's perception about the gender role norms regarding these jobs.

With reference to a Swedish study in which two surveys were conducted among students in 12 municipalities. A total of 1,188 students who were in their final year preparing to move to high school participated in the first survey and 451 students who were later in high school also participated in the second survey. Tellhed et al. (2018) revealed that girls were more interested in communal careers (careers related to helping others) than the boys, while they observed no gender differences in aspirations relating to agentic careers (careers related to status attainment). The results affirmed gender role impacting on the careers students are interested in pursuing in the area of communal careers, whiles at the same time signifying a change in the perception of society towards agentic careers which was idealized for males. Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) assessed the factors influencing career choice of students at the master's level in Lahore, Pakistan. They used a mixed methods approach among a sample of 432 students from a public university. They identified that gender had a significant impact on student's career interests. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods was appropriate to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors considered.

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De Vries et al. (2010) conducted a study among 876 final-year medical students at all eight South African medical schools They were interested in assessing the career plans and the factors influencing the plans. In establishing the future career interest of the students', it was observed that internal medicine was the leading field of interest for women, surgery was the leading field for men and the second-selected field for women whilst pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology were significantly preferred by women over men. The difference in career interests among the participants in De Vries et al. (2010) study is possibly due to most female participants moving towards a career that matches their gender role. Also, Nwoye and Okeke (2019) found that the majority of females (51%), as compared to males (9%) showed interest in a career in teaching/ education with 34%, 31%, and 22% of males having career aspirations in engineering and technology, applied sciences, and medical sciences, respectively. Nwoye and Okeke (2019) conducted the study among 150 second year mathematics students at a federal college of education in Oyo, Nigeria. The disparity witnessed in Nwoye and Okeke's (2019) study with regards to STEM career interests is understandable, however, the difference seen in teaching or education career interests needs further exploration since one could believe that both genders will share similar interest in that regard.

Moreover, Opoku, (2021) conducted a qualitative study among 48 SHS students at Kumasi, Ghana. He identified that both males and females had a similar interest in geography areas like physical, and human and regional geography but gender difference was recorded in the student's interest in practical geography with males having more interest in practical geography. This similarity and disparity in geography interest possibly could transcend into a difference and similarity in career interests. The various similarity and differences gender bring to the

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development of students' career interests make it relevant to explore the role gender plays in SHS students' career interests.

2.3.5 The link between career interest and job exposure

It is believed that students' career interests and choices could be influenced by the various jobs at their area of residence and their exposure to particular jobs. This idea is supported by studies conducted across different fields. Considering medical students, Haupt et al. (2020) assessed how Pre-clerkship Residency Exploration Program [PREP] (a two-week intensive elective programme developed to provide exposure to twelve specialties, including Radiation Oncology) affected students' self-reported interests in radiation oncology. This study was conducted at Dalhousie University in Canada among medical students with participants 36 and 37 responding to the pre and post-PREP assessment, respectively. After the pre and post-PREP assessment of the students, the students reported increasing interest in radiation oncology (Haupt et al., 2020). This study helps in understanding how exposure to a career field influences an individual's career interest, especially in a specialization career.

Ayar (2015) explored students' experiences, interest in engineering, and their personal narratives while they participated in a robotics summer camp in a metropolitan city in Turkey, using a qualitative study design to collect data through interviews, field notes, and observations in a 12-day camp period. The participants were 27 high school students from both public and private schools. The student's exposure to engineering prior to and after the camp was assessed. The students were then provided various resources during their robotics camp to further expose them to the engineering career.

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Ayar (2015) later tracked 18 participants and found that 16 of the students later chose engineering-related degrees in tertiary school with only two choosing medical science degrees. Among all the 18 students tracked, all were identified to have gained informal engineering experience (clubs, technical service, summer camp, games) and close relationships with engineering professionals during the robotics camp. Ayar (2015) argued that robot design experience and close relationships with various engineering professionals at the camp were factors that nurtured and maintained the students' interest in engineering. Even though Ayar's study cannot be generalized due to its qualitative nature, it is vital to note that the students' first-hand exposure to the engineering career sustained their career interests to the tertiary level.

Individuals' prior healthcare exposure was reported to shape students' choice of career in Singapore, where prior healthcare exposure was seen as a motivator for career choice (Liaw et al., 2016). The respondents of this study were first-year full-time students reading either nursing or health science-related programmes in three tertiary institutions in Singapore. To identify the various factors influencing Singaporean healthcare students career choice and determine their barriers in choosing nursing as a career, Liaw et al. (2016) adopted a qualitative study design. They recruited fifty-nine students through purposively sampling. The study used an interview method to acquire the data of its respondents. Liaw et al. (2016) study provides evidence that, students that venture into health-related careers have experienced the health career themselves to some degree.

Comparably, career exposure has been identified to influence the choice of a career path among accounting students (Ng et al., 2017). Ng and colleagues' study was aimed at investigating factors that influence accounting students' preference toward their career paths. This previous study was quantitative in nature and it used a sample of 306 undergraduate accounting students from a private university in Malaysia. As opined by the researchers, their study cannot be

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generalized among accounting students in Malaysia since it was only conducted in one private university but their results are enough to reflect the link between accounting students' career interests and career exposure in that private university. To continue, another quantitative study was aimed at assessing the low preference for library and information science as a first-choice course of study by undergraduates of Nigerian library schools. The study adopted a quantitative study design among 1,228 students pursuing librarian studies in eight Nigerian universities. It was found that the majority 38.4% of students in the librarian studies course were influenced by their previous library work experience (Issa & Nwalo, 2008).

Also, to assess the factors that influence female SHS students' aspirations in pursuing a career in accounting, a study was conducted among final-year female SHS students offering business as a programme across five schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis. The study used a sample of 132 students and it was a descriptive study. The findings of this quantitative study revealed that students' exposure to other accounting jobs was the second highest job-related factor that influenced female student's interests to pursue a career in accounting (Annan-Kittoe, 2019). The study showed the vital role career exposure can play in the development of career interests and choice of SHS students. Based on the literature reviewed, the current study aims to answer the following research questions.

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2.4 Research Questions

1. What are the career interests of SHS students in the Tamale metropolis?
2. What factors influence the career interests of SHS students in the Tamale metropolis?
3. How do the academic programmes (courses) pursued at the senior high school in the Tamale metropolis shape the career interests of the students?
4. How do parents or guardians influence the career interests of SHS students in the Tamale metropolis?

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study design

This study employed a qualitative study design. A qualitative study is explained to be the study of individuals within their natural setting where a researcher conducts systematic enquiry into meanings or a phenomenon, interprets and understands the phenomenon, and the attributed meanings people ascribe to the phenomena (Polit & Beck, 2010). The processes of a qualitative study provide an in-depth knowledge about a subject area or phenomenon. Considering that this study aims to explore the various factors that influence career interests of SHS students in the Tamale metropolis, then a qualitative study was deemed appropriate to help provide students much opportunity to express their views on their career interests and also to afford the researcher an in-depth understanding about the career interests of SHS students in the Tamale Metropolis.

3.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in the Tamale metropolis. The Tamale metropolis is located at the northern part of Ghana and it can be found in the northern region. The Tamale metropolis forms part of the sixteen Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the Northern Region. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census the population of the metropolis is 374,744 with 185,051 males and 189,693 females. A total of eight government senior high schools are in the metropolis, among which two are single sex schools. The study was conducted in Anbariya Senior High School and Vitting Senior High/Technical School which are all mixed sex schools. At the time of conducting this study, the Vitting Senior High/Technical school was running a shift system and as a result only Form 1 students were present in school whiles, Anbariya

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Senior High School was not running a shift system and all Form 1 and 2 students were in school. The senior level (Form 3) students had completed at the time of this study and were out of school. The programmes offered in Vitting Senior High/Technical included; general agriculture, home economics, general arts, visual arts and technical courses. In Anbariya Senior High School, the programmes offered included; general science, general agriculture, home economics, general arts and business.

3.3 Study population

The study's participants were senior high school students within the Tamale metropolis. The participants were made up of both males and females, with participants from each programme offered in the school. At Anbariya Senior High School the participants were from both Form 1 and 2 whiles at Vitting Senior High/Technical the participants were from only Form 1. The Form 2 students at Vitting Senior High/Technical were on vacations at time of the data collection for this study, hence they were excluded.

3.4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

A student was included in this study if he or she; attended either Anbariya Senior High School or Vitting Senior High/Technical SHS in the Tamale metropolis, was present at the time of data collection and also assented or consented to participate in this study. On the other hand, students below age 15 were all exempted from participating in this study. Students below the age of 15 were excluded because, they fell below the average age of 15 years (Ministry of Education, 2018) for completing a junior high school in Ghana.

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3.5 Sample size

The sample size for this study was 31 students with 10 from Vitting Senior High/Technical School and 11 from Anbariya Senior High School. The number of students for this study was reached based on saturation of data where the information provided by the students became repetitive.

3.6 Sampling method

Data for this study were collected from only Vitting Senior High/Technical and Anbariya Senior High School. These two schools were selected from a list of six schools excluding two single sex schools within the Tamale Metropolis based on the diversity and characteristics of the student population. The two schools used in this study were purposively selected due to availability of adequate students on campus at the period of data collection and willingness of school authorities to grant entry into these two schools. Moreover, only two schools were used because, they were enough to provide the study with diverse students characteristic and students from these two schools were also adequate to provide data saturation in the study.

At Vitting Senior High/Technical school, the participants were included based on their programmes. All programmes offered in the school among the students (Form 1) were included in the study. A list of all the classes in the school was obtained. Programmes with only one class in the school which included general agriculture were automatically included. Focussing on the rest of the programmes with two or more classes, one class each was used to represent the programme. In each of the included class, students seated within the third column arrangement in the class third class were targeted. Among them, a minimum of two students (a male and a female) who were willing to participate in the study were given the opportunity to do so. At Vitting Senior

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High/Technical school, a total of 10 students were included (thus two students each from these programmes; Agricultural science, General arts, Home economics, General science, Technical and Visual arts) in the study.

Within the Anbariya Senior High School all programmes offered in the school among the students (Form 2 and Form 1) were included in the study. The list of all the classes in the school were obtained and a class each was selected to represent a programme among the Form 1 and Form 2. To select these classes, programmes with more than one class was subjected to balloting to use only one whiles programmes which had only one class available like the visual arts class, business and agricultural science class were automatically selected because they had only class each. Students seated within the third column seat arrangement of each class were considered. Among the students who found themselves within the third column per their class arrangement, a minimum of two students; a male and a female who opted to participate in the study were included. At Anbariya Senior High School, a total of 11 students from these programmes; Agricultural science, Business, General arts, Home economics and General science were involved.

3.7 Data collection tool

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data in this study. The interview guide was developed by the researcher and guided by supervisors to reflect the research questions of this study. The interview guide was developed to contain sentences that will be appropriate, understandable and easy for students at the SHS level to respond to. The researcher pilot-tested the interview guide among two students attending a senior high school in both schools, where the data would be collected, and the feedback from the pilot study was used in amending the interview

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guide before the start of the main study. After the pilot study, the following questions were modified due to the difficulty it presented the students in understanding the question;

‘‘How does your personal interest fit into your career interest?’’ was changed to ‘‘How does your personal interest match with your career interest?’’,

‘‘How do the courses you are pursuing currently fit into your career interest?’’ was changed to ‘‘How do the courses you are pursuing currently match with your career interest?’’,

‘‘How have perceived gender roles in your community affected the determination of your career interest?’’ was modified to ‘‘How do you think gender roles in your community affected the determination of your career interest?’’ and

‘‘What are some of the challenges you perceive to face in attaining your career interest?’’ was modified to ‘‘What are some of the challenges you foresee to prevent you from attaining your career interest?’’.

The interview guide contained opened ended questions that obtained information on students’ demographics like; ‘Can you please tell me about yourself?’ “probes; gender, age, ethnicity, religion education level”, ‘Could you give me some details about your family?’ “Probes; number in the family, nature of family, living conditions of the family”, ‘How would you describe your family in terms of their financial status?’ and others. Whiles being guided by likely areas to derived questions from in previous studies on career, the interview guide had questions that elicited response on the influence of personal interest, courses pursued, parents’ or guardians’, gender role norms and students’ career interest respectively. Sample questions that assessed the various areas were, personal interest; (How does your personal interest match with your career interest? “Probes; if there is no link, find out why’’), courses pursued; (How do the courses you are pursuing currently match with your career interest?), parents’ or guardians’; (To what extent do your parents give you

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some freedom to make decisions on your career interest? “Probes; if parents/guardian are forcing it on you, why’’) and, gender role norms; (How do you think gender roles in your community affected the determination of your career interest?).

3.8 Data collection procedure

On engaging a student, the aim of this study was explained to them and, they were afforded the opportunity to deny participation, consent or assent in this study. All students who agreed to participate in this study provided written consent or assent. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect data in this study. The data from participants were collected through in-depth interviewing. The student researcher conducted all the interviews among participants in this current study. Every interview with a participant was recorded using a phone. The various questions found in the semi-structured interview guide were inquired from the participants and they also responded. At a period where the student researcher required much understanding from participants with regard to their responses during the interview, the student researcher asked follow-up questions for clarity.

All the interviews were conducted in the English language. The interviews conducted among the participants ranged between 18 to 35 minutes. In each school, the interviewing of the participants continued as the students were sharing new information. The interviews continued until the student researcher realized that, the students were no more sharing new information or perspective (data saturation) about the idea of interest. This marked the period where the researcher ended the interviews.

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3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for this study was sought and obtained from the Ethics Committee for the Humanities of the University of Ghana (Protocol reference Number: ECH 029/ 22-23). The Ghana Education Services authorities for Tamale Metropolis and the Head Teachers for each selected school granted permission for this study. The participants were educated on what the study entailed, the relevance of this study and what the results of the study would be used for. A written informed consent and assent was sought from participants. Due to practical reasons, the head teachers of both schools, acting *in loco parentis*, provided Parental Consent for participants under 18 years of age. The anticipated risk of this study was the time participants spent to partake in this study. There was no compensation for participants in this study. Anonymity of data obtained from participants was ensured by assigning codes and numbers to study subjects instead of using their names. Respondents were made aware that, participation in this research was completely voluntary. Data obtained from participants were stored electronically and only the principal investigator had access to it.

3.9 Data Analysis

This study's analysis was informed by the realist paradigm of epistemology. Realists have the notion that, what you see is what you get (Saunders et al., 2012). This implies that the analysis focused on what the students experienced without being guided by a phenomenon or an idea. The reflexive thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) used in this study is compatible with the realist paradigm. Moreover, the study also adopted the inductive thematic analysis approach, which Patton (1990) explained that, the themes used in inductive approach are strongly linked to the data obtained. The inductive thematic analysis approach was used to enable the researcher

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obtain results that are solely related to the data the students provided. To make meaning of the data provided by the students, the semantic approach was used to identify themes in the analysis. The semantic approach demands that themes are identified based on the explicit or surface meanings of the data, without looking for anything beyond what your respondents said or wrote (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Specifically, the data collected from the students was analyzed in Nvivo 12 using the thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the thematic analysis focuses on identifying, analysing and noting patterns referred to as themes within data, and it can be conducted in six phases; familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. After obtaining data from the participants which were all recorded, the researcher transcribed all the recordings. Each transcript was again examined for accuracy by listening to the recordings and comparing them to the transcripts. The student researcher and a colleague all with a background in psychology read the transcripts of the students thoroughly to ensure they had good knowledge about what the students reported. The student researcher and his colleague independently generated codes for this study. A code here was a statement, sentence or a phrase on a transcript that described an idea related to the research questions. After they generated initial codes for the study, they met to compare and discuss the codes they had both generated. In an instance where the two individuals that coded the transcripts had varying views about the suitability of a code, the two thoroughly discussed that code until they arrived at a consensus about dropping such code or maintaining it. For example, codes found to be associated to the career interest and gender role relationship were; no gender controversy, supporting males, not affecting males, unconcerned, decision not affected, ladies needed and family acceptance.

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The student researcher and his colleague then re-organised the codes generated into sub-themes. A theme is a word or words that captures vital information about the data which is related to the research question and also shows some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The sub-themes were then also categorised into main themes for each research question. In the process of categorising the codes into sub-themes and sub-themes into themes, any disagreement that rose about a particular code, sub-theme or theme was noted and the research supervisors who have a background in qualitative research in psychology were informed of the disagreements. The student researcher, his colleague and supervisors discuss the disagreements about the code, sub-theme or theme to resolve it either by arriving at a consensus later or adhering to what has been advised by the supervisors. At the end of the thematic analysis, seven main themes were identified for the aspect of factors influencing career interest, two main themes for the aspect of personal interest influencing career interest, two main themes again for how courses or programmed pursued shape career interest, three main themes for how parents or guardian influence career interest, four main themes for the aspect of gender roles influencing career interest and two main themes identified for how previous job exposed to shapes career interest.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

A total of thirty (31) participants were involved in this study. The ages of the respondents ranged from 15 to 23 years (see Table 1). Among the respondents sixteen (16) were females and fifteen (15) were males. Out of the 31 participants, twenty-one (21) were in year 1 (form 1) and ten were in year two (form 2). Only six (6) of the participants described themselves as Christians with the rest being Muslims. The programmes studied by the participants included, agricultural science, general science, general arts, visual arts, home economics, technical and business courses with at least two of the participants reading a technical or business programme. Most of the respondents (22) described their area of residence as an urban area (see Table 1).

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Table 1

Demographic characteristics and career interests of participants

Participants	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Religion	Level in school	Programme	Nature of residence area	Career interest/s
Student 1	Male	17	Dagomba	Muslim	Form1	Agricultural science	Urban	Agricultural extension officer, poultry farmer
Student 2	Male	18	Dagomba	Muslim	Form1	Business	Rural	Business owner, accountant
Student 3	Female	18	Dagomba	Muslim	Form1	General arts	Urban	Journalist, pilot
Student 4	Female	17	Baasare	Muslim	Form1	Agricultural science	Urban	Poultry farmer, nurse
Student 5	Female	19	Ewe	Christian	Form1	Business	Urban	Chartered accountant, bank manager
Student 6	Female	17	Dagomba	Muslim	Form1	Home economics	Urban	Journalist, nurse, teacher
Student 7	Female	17	Dagomba	Muslim	Form1	General science	Rural	Doctor, pharmacist, nurse
Student 8	Female	17	Gonja	Muslim	Form1	Business	Urban	Chartered accountant, bank manager
Student 9	Male	22	Dagomba	Muslim	Form1	General arts	Rural	Nurse, teacher
Student 10	Male	19	Dagomba	Muslim	Form1	Business	Rural	Accountant, auditor
Student 11	Male	18	Kusasi	Muslim	Form1	General science	Urban	Medical doctor, laboratory technician, nurse
Student 12	Male	20	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	Business	Urban	Bank/business manager, accountant, soldier
Student 13	Male	20	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	Home economics	Urban	Medical doctor, nurse, teacher
Student 14	Female	20	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	Agricultural science	Rural	Agricultural extension officer
Student 15	Female	18	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	Business	Urban	Bank manager, accountant

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Student 16	Female	18	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	General science	Urban	Medical doctor
Student 17	Female	19	Gonja	Muslim	Form 2	General arts	Urban	Nurse
Student 18	Female	17	Asante	Muslim	Form 2	Home economics	Urban	Teacher, football team manager
Student 19	Male	23	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	General arts	Urban	Pilot, politician
Student 20	Male	19	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	Agricultural science	Rural	Farmer (crop and animal), agricultural extension officer
Student 21	Male	19	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 2	General science	Urban	Medical doctor
Student 22	Male	16	Fante	Christian	Form 1	General arts	Urban	Musician
Student 23	Male	16	Chorkorsi	Christian	Form 1	Agricultural science	Urban	Veterinary officer, nurse, extension officer, farmer
Student 24	Male	15	Gonja	Muslim	Form 1	Home economics	Urban	Medical doctor, business man, nurse
Student 25	Male	17	Gonja	Muslim	Form 1	Technical	Rural	Soldier, building contractor, architect
Student 26	Male	19	Ewe	Christian	Form 1	Visual arts	Urban	Interior designer, architect, movie editor, musician
Student 27	Female	18	Chumbru	Christian	Form 1	General arts	Urban	Nurse, police
Student 28	Female	18	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 1	Agricultural science	Rural	Soldier
Student 29	Female	17	Gurune	Christian	Form 1	Home economics	Rural	Fashion designer, nutritionist
Student 30	Female	18	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 1	Technical	Urban	Engineer
Student 31	Female	17	Dagomba	Muslim	Form 1	Visual arts	Urban	Artist (drawing), teacher

Source: Data from fieldwork (2022)

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4.2 Organization of Themes

The themes from the data analysis per each objective of focus have been organized below (see Table 2). The students also reported varying career interests which fall within a broad category of careers including; health profession, business and finance profession, educational profession, construction and engineering profession, agricultural profession, security profession, media profession, profession in creative arts, political job and transport sector job (see Table 3).

Table 2

Organization of Themes

Research objectives	Themes	Sub-themes
Reasons informing interest in careers	Financial benefit	Personal monetary gain
		Making easy income
	Perceived competence in job	Capable to perform job
	Inadequate professionals in a career	Professionals' insufficiency
	Nature of job	Job prestige
		Job demand
	Resources and job availability	Job availability
		Pathway to other jobs
		Resource availability
	Personal benefit	Self-development
		Likeness of job
	Societal benefit	Helping people
Personal interest and career interests of SHS students	Self-fulfilment pathway	Self-affinity for job
		Job providing joy
	Self-efficacy pathway	Capability in job
		Personal development
Relationship between courses (programme) pursued and career interest of senior	Course as a career pathway	Career attainment opportunity
		Courses or programme likeness to career
		Career route
	Course as a means of career insight	Acquisition of career related information and knowledge
		Acquisition of career skills

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high school students		
Parental or guardian influence on the career interest of SHS students	Motivating influence	Advise from parents or guardians Pushed to do more Receiving motivating words
	Agreeable influence	Direct guardian or parent acceptance of career Indirect guardian or parent acceptance of career
	Insistent influence	Guardian or parent insisting on a career
Gender roles and career interest of SHS students	Gender role favouring males	Supported by gender related ideas Career interest free from gender controversies
	Students' persistence on their career interest	Unconcerned of opinions Standing by career interest
	Family acceptance of career interest	Career accepted by relatives
	Job demand for females	Job for females
Personal experience in a job and its link on the career interest of SHS students	Shared similarity of aspects of jobs	Skills enhancement facet Help provision facet Across jobs knowledge transfer facet
	Shared similarities of the jobs in general	Jobs requiring similar activities Ability to practice job of interest Jobs being similar

Table 3

Career interest of students

Theme	Sub-theme
Career interest	Health profession Business and finance profession Educational profession Construction and engineering profession Agricultural profession Security profession Media profession Profession in creative arts Political job Transport sector job

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4.3 Factors influencing career interests

The students' interest in various careers was based on varying factors. From the various interviews, the following themes were derived; financial benefit, perceived competence in job, inadequate professionals in a career, nature of job, resources and job availability, personal benefit and societal benefit, which all explain the students' reasons with regard to their career interests.

4.3.1 Financial benefit

Financial benefit was one of the issues students considered in developing their interests in a particular career. Financial benefit theme here referred to students focusing on the income or money they will gain from a particular their career before determining their interest in a career. Some participants' career interests focused on the possibility of deriving quick income from a job. For instance, one respondent stated that " … *You easily make income from it (fashion designing) unlike the nutritionist where you have to work under somebody and you wait for a month's salary*" (Student #29).

Acquiring money to solve one's financial problem in future was also a motivation for respondents' interest in careers. The students hope for a financial remedy through their career interests was also associated with the desire to help their families with the finances. One student who had an interest in journalism had this to say; "…S*o when I become a journalist my salary will be huge so that I will be able to help my siblings and maybe even help my parents*" (Student #3). Similarly, for another student, financial gain from her future career influenced her; "…*It can help me in terms of financial problem because in my family I'm the only one who is in SHS and my sisters are in primary and I can help them in terms of their education and help my family too*" (Student #21). Moreover, a student's interest in one career was sustained by the idea of obtaining

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money from that career and also aiding him to do other works; " …*If you become the agricultural extension officer you can just get small money and start your poultry farm small, small*"(Student #1). It can be noted that some students' interest in careers were mainly focused on the income that they will attain from that specific career of interest.

4.3.2 Perceived competence in job

Perceived competence in job denotes students assessing their subjective capability in a career and making their career interest based on their self-capability evaluation in a career. Students also demonstrated a reason for a specific career interest based on their perceived ability in the career of interest. They believed they already have the competence to function in their career of interest. As explained, one participant pointed this out; "*It's just that I'm good in drawing and things involving art that is why I know I can do it*… (Student #31). Similarly, a respondent also demonstrated his capability in his career interest as the reason for his interest and opined that; "*Because we have land and I have also been practicing on it, so I can just use beans, rice or groundnut to farm so that when it gets to the harvest time I can harvest it* … (Student #20). The students had developed these career interests based on their perceptions of having some form of mastery over their career interests.

4.3.3 Inadequate professionals in a career

Students were also influenced by the inadequacy of certain professionals in certain professions to develop their career interests. The inadequate professionals in a career theme focused on a career interest that was influenced by students missed encounter with professionals

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which was seen a limited professionals or unavailability of professionals in specific careers. It is important to note that, the professionals' inadequacy in this regard was related to health professionals. Students' demonstrated an influence on their career interest emanating from their encounter with these professionals. To illustrate one student had this to say; "*I have ever experienced a situation where I went through surgery and at my place when I went to the hospital, at the time there wasn't any medical doctor to attend to us. The doctor came a day after. So that was when I developed an interest to become a doctor. This explains why I am the prefect in charge of health for this school*" (Student #13). Comparably, another participant's career interest as a doctor was based on the experience of inadequacy in the profession. Concerning this issue, one of the participants said; "*In our hometown, there's no hospital. If you want to give birth, you'll have to go to another village and it's behind us. I want to help sick people in this village to recover*" (Student #24).

4.3.4 Nature of job

The nature of job theme relates to students considering the status and respect society afford to careers to determine their own career interest. The nature of jobs as expressed by students influenced their career interests through what the career demands and opportunities related to the career are. One student who hopes to be a medical doctor had this say with regards to the opportunities that could be derived: "*Because when you are a doctor you get to do a lot of good things*" (Student #16). Focusing on tasks that a career involved, some students' reasons for their career interests were informed by what the career demands. To explain this, a student whose interest is to be a bank manager opined that: "*For the manager, sometimes it requires you to think or … you can develop some views that can make an organization to be successful*" (Student #12).

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To add up, another participant who had the interest to become a bank manager developed the interest due to this reason: "*Because I want to be managing and telling people to do their right duties, so I will be commanding people*" (Student #15).

4.3.5 Resources and job availability

Resources and job availability was characterized by students considering the presence of resources to propel them into a career and the presence of much working position in a career to develop an interest in a career. The findings indicated that the participants also based on the availability of resources to develop an interest in a career. In this regard one student who is interested in being a farmer stated that: "*We have land and I have also been practicing on it, so I can just use beans, rice or groundnut to farm*" (Student #20). Moreover, acquiring a job also influenced the respondents' development of career interest and this was expressed by one student as: "*Now it's difficult to get yourself a job so in that field (fashion designing) you have your own private job*" (Student #31). Another student whose career interest was focused on accessing a profession of interest explained the reason for her interest to be: "*After here (SHS) I don't want to waste time I just want to continue to training college and then become a teacher*... (Student #18). These participants mainly focused on the availability of resources for their career interest and the availability of their career interest itself.

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4.3.6 Personal benefit

The students also demonstrated interest in careers based on the benefit they will be deriving at the individual level. Here, personal benefit involves students focusing on avenues a career will provide them to attain some satisfaction in their life whiles looking at this to determine their career interest. One student's career interest to be a journalist was based on the self-improvement she could attain from the job when she practices it, which she explained as: " … *Like when a population is somewhere and they tell me to talk there, I can't talk so I just want to practice it*" (Student #6). In addition, fulfillment of students' desire to work in certain careers was also identified to be a factor for students' career interests. A student interested in interior designer career made this expression: "*I love designing and when I'm doing all those things it makes me happy*" (Student #26). Another student who is interested in pursuing a career as a musician uttered this: "*I like it, I enjoy singing and I think when I'm in it [music profession], it would help me and I'll benefit from it*" (Student #22). Similarly, a student who has engineering as a career interest also stated that: "*I love it (being an engineer) and I just like the way they are*" (Student #30). Here, the reasons informing students preferred career interest was mainly the personal gain.

4.3.7 Societal benefit

Societal benefit theme in this context was related to students considering the good that a career will provide to people, then deciding to pursue it in future. Other respondents' reasons for their career interests were based on the benefit other individuals in the society could get. These students career interest was shaped by focusing on the help they could provide to other people. To illustrate, a student who has an interest to be a medical doctor explained her reason to be: "*Because I want to save people's lives*…" (Student #21). A student with a career interest in nursing also

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expressed this: "*I want to be a nurse so I can save people's lives in my community*" (Student #9). Comparably, another student who also focused much on the help and benefit his society could gain from him as an agricultural extension officer stated that: "*There're some problems my community is facing in terms of agriculture, so I want to become an extension officer so that I can educate them*" (Student #14). This indicates that students' career interests are also influenced by the benefit society could gain from them.

4.4 Personal interest and career interests of SHS students

Two themes on personal interest were identified. Focusing on only the aspect of a positive connection between a students' personal interest and their career interest, the themes identified include; self-fulfilment pathway and self-efficacy pathway.

4.4.1 Self-efficacy pathway

The self-efficacy pathway theme describes students' individual likeness for a career and how that career likeness will provide them self-improvement. In the self-efficacy pathway, students linked their individual interest of self-development and capabilities to their career interests. Students indicated how their interest in activities could make them capable in their career of interest. With regard to this view, one student with a career interest in livestock farming stated this: "*If I read books, I can learn more about how to handle the poultry and even how to know more about the meal for it*" (Student #4). A student interested in interacting with people identified her personal interest to be linked to her career interests (journalism) since it could help her in her interactions. This student expressed this: "*My interest is in journalism. Journalism may fit me because it helps to communicate and interact with people*" (Student #7).

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This self-efficacy pathway of personal interest and career interest connection was also demonstrated in student's capability in the career of interest. A student who has a personal interest in drawing and hoping to be an artist-drawing opined that: "*Okay, so as I said, I can draw very well and when you're an artist you need to know how to draw. And you have to know more about the art side. I'm also learning something from it so yeah, it's a good fit for me*" (Student #31). In summary, students demonstrated how, for instance, their individual interests such as reading books, interacting with people and drawing affects their career of interests.

4.4.2 Self-fulfilment pathway (intrinsic motivation)

The self-fulfillment pathway of the personal interest and career interest connection dwelled on how the students possessed the affinity for an activity which also grants them fulfilment. In demonstrating this one student interested in animal farming and in veterinary officer career stated that: "…*I like being with animals, rearing animals. You see, veterinary officers deal with animals, so if you're rearing them, you have some interest in them*" (Student #23). Again, in explaining how a student's personal interest affects her career interests, the student indicated that "*Yes, they said journalism is like you will be given news and other things but I'm interested in the news giving*" (Student #3). Also, a student interested in drawing and cars, and had an interest in interior designing career described how his drawing and cars interest, which matches with interior designing provided him joy. The student had this to say: "*So if I become an interior designer, I'll always be working around cars, aircraft, etc. and that gives me joy because I'll have the chance to learn a lot about them*" (Student #26). It could be noted that, as side from students describing how activities of their likeness affect their career interests, they ultimately demonstrated how these activities ignite their self-fulfillment and, in turn, affect their career interests.

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4.5 Relationship between courses (programme) pursued and career interest of senior high school students

As expected, the courses studied by the students had a relationship with their career interests. This relationship was determined by two themes during the analysis which are; (a) the course(s) serving as a career pathway and (b) the course(s) being a means of career insight. The themes identified to determine the relationship between courses pursued and career interest also highlight evidence that students within the career pathway category seem to have some prior knowledge already about their career interests and are only focusing on a route that would lead them to their career of interest whiles students within the career insight route category are now actively acquiring much information about their career interest through their courses or programme of study.

4.5.1 Academic programme (course) as a career pathway

This theme describes students developing an interest in a career due to them viewing the programme or courses they pursue in school as a means to attaining their career interest. Courses pursued by students were identified to determine their career interests. The course pursued and career interest relationship was determined by students viewing their courses as a route to attaining their career of interest. To illustrate this relationship, a student reading agricultural science and, interested in being an agricultural extension officer and a poultry farmer explained how his courses of study had a link with his career interest: the student explained that "*It fit into the career interest that I mentioned because there are some electives in my course like general agricultural and*

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animal husbandry, If you do it you can become the poultry farmer and the extension officer that I mentioned" (Student #1).

One student offering a business programme and with an interest in becoming a bank manager described his economics, business management and financial accounting courses as a path he is following to create his own business, and the student indicated that: "*So I'm doing financial accounting and at the same time doing economics which is the management of our scarce resources and even sometimes, I do business management at the same time which I can also make a business out of. For me my courses fit into my career choice*" (Student #12). In addition, a home economics student hoping to become a nurse or a nutritionist had this to say about the course as a pathway between career interests and courses pursued: "*For home economics, when you study it, you can become a nurse, you can become a nutritionist, and they're all occupations found in the healthcare industry and that is what I want, I want to work in a hospital*" (Student #13), whiles a science student with an interest in being a medical doctor also indicated that: "… *Like biology, it deals with people's and animals, biology deals with the study of livings things so for that one it's in line with the medical doctor*" (Student #16).

From the perspectives of visual arts and technical students, some students established a relationship between the courses they pursued and their career interests. A visual arts student with an interest to become an artist or a teacher explained the career pathway relationship by saying "*Like when you do the picture making you can end up becoming an art teacher and even for our elective, sculpture you can become a sculptor, even if you do graphic design you can also become a graphic designer, a cinematographer and also a tattoo artist*" (Student #31). Similarly, a student reading a technical programme acknowledged the courses pursued and career interest relationship as a route to a career attainment and stated that: "*Well building construction and my aim in future*

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is similar. I can see they are all the same because they are about construction" (Student #25). These findings indicate that mostly the students had career interests that conform to the courses they were reading. These findings also highlight how students see their courses of study to be a route to their career interests.

4.5.2 Academic programmes (courses) as a means of career insight

The academic programmes (courses) as a means of career insight theme describes students having an interest in a career based on the idea that the programme or courses, they are reading helps them attain better understanding of their career interest. Students who demonstrated the insight connection derived from the courses pursued and career interest relationship mainly focussed on the means of understanding their career of interest or the learning opportunity about their career of interest that their courses of study have provided them. An agricultural science student with an interest in becoming a veterinary officer had this to say in explaining the relationship between his courses of study and his career interest: "*Oh, in a course like animal husbandry, they teach us the parts of animals and if an animal is weak or other things, they teach us all kinds of things that we can use, food preparation and other things to protect the animals*" (Student #23).

Furthermore, one business student equally demonstrated the career insight factor derived from the course of study and career interest relationship, through the opportunity of learning about his accounting career interest that is being rendered to him by his courses of study. The student gave this description: "*Like financial accounting, if you are a manager you will need to take some transactions and you will have to put them in consideration. For business management they have been telling us how a manager should be, you have to be active, you can talk in public and other*

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things" (Student #15). Likewise, some general science students who are interested in being medical doctors also saw their course of study like biology to be related to their career of interest through the insight about the medical profession their courses were providing them. In the words of one student, she describes the relationship to be "…*Because it involves our general body parts and being a doctor is all about care and treatment, so it will help me to know all these things*" (Student #7) and another student added that "*We do biology in our class, and as a doctor-to-be, I've to know a lot about living things; that'll help me in the career that I want to pursue*" (Student #11).

4.6 Parental or guardian influence on the career interest of SHS students

Parents and guardians are pivotal in the life of students. A significant section of students had discussed their career interest with their parents or guardians and the parental or guardian influence on career interest was explained through; motivating influence, agreeable influence and insistent influence. Some students in this study had not initiated a conversation with their guardians or parents about their career interests. Those who had not discussed their career interests with their guardians or parents, believe their guardians or parents are illiterates and they were of the view that these illiterate parents or guardians would not understand them. Some students also discussed their career interests with other family relatives.

4.6.1 Motivating influence

Motivating influence was observed when parents or guardians provided students with encouraging words towards their career interest that suggested to students that their parents or guardians requires them to proceed with their career interest. Parents or guardians influence on

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students' career interests through this means appeared as a way of encouraging the students which tends to empower them to pursue their career interests. According to one student who hopes to be an engineer, she gets to be motivated in pursuing her career interest by her parents: "*Whenever I go home from here [school] they always ask me what I'm learning and whether I am still interested in doing the engineering. They always motivate me to work hard so that I can achieve my aim*" (Student #30). Likewise, one student who prefers to be a musician also get some motivation from his parents and this serves as an incentive for him to pursue his musical career interest. In describing what he experiences from his parents when they discuss his career interests, the student reported this: "*For my father, he always tells me to continue to learn towards that career. They always encourage me to learn hard, so that I can achieve my career goals*" (Student #22).

With influencing students' career interests through motivation, another student with a career preference in being an artist (drawing) explained this when she was engaged in a discussion related to her career interest with her sister: "*The work (drawing) that I've been doing in the house, she told me that I should keep on doing it, just keep practising what you're doing, she motivates me*" (Student #31). This motivation provided to students by their parents or guardians with regards to their career interests provides a sense of endorsement to the students' about their career interests, even though, the guardians or parents may not necessarily like the students to pursue that career. The motivation still serves a purpose of influencing the students to continue pursuing their career interests through the encouragement.

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4.6.2 Agreeable influence

Agreeable influence occurred when the behaviour or action parents or guardians appeared to students as a source of endorsement of their career interest without the parents or guardian necessary telling them to pursue a career. This study's findings also identified agreeable influence as a means for parents or guardians influencing students when it comes to their career interest. The agreeable influence was mainly noted when parents or guardians provided students with some sense of acceptance about the career interest they have reported. To demonstrate this acceptance that provides students with some form of endorsement of their career interests and impacts on the students to continue pursuing their career interests, a student had this to say: "*Okay, so I remember last time I was doing my usual thing, bringing something (drawing) up then my uncle was like it's nice you can be this in future and he asked me what course I was to do and I said visual arts and he said it's the right choice because when I do it I will be able to do a lot of things and that gave me the determination, finally settling with interior designing*" (Student, #26).

Comparably, a student who wants to be a medical doctor also demonstrated how the acceptance of his career interest by his parents is influencing him to learn hard to attain his career interest. This student explained that: "*At times when me and my parents are sitting. They would be saying I should learn hard, I should learn hard and I say they should not worry. I would be a doctor and they say okay, if I want to be a doctor, what can I do to become a doctor and I say I would learn hard…"* (Student #24). Moreover, the acceptance of a common career interest between a student and his brother which is to become a business manager has also influenced a student to take initiative to work had towards his career of interest: "*You know my brother sometimes say he wants me to become a manager, even sometimes I practice it small, small which I help my brother with his business*" (Student #12). What the theme of agreeable influence has

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resulted into is to propel students in their activities and endeavours to attain their career interests through the acceptance by their guardians or parents.

4.6.3 Insistent influence (given career interests)

Insistent influence was seen when parents or guardians provided students with a career which they prefer for the student and they were also persistent on the students developing an interest in their preferred careers. Based on the differences in preferences for careers, it emerged that some students' career interests differed from what their parents or guardians were interested in. These variations in career interests caused some parents or guardians to persistently remind students of their preferred careers the students should be pursuing. The constant persistence on careers to students created some influence on students and they tended to consider the career choices of their guardians or parents, but may not have radically made a switch to the preferred career interests of their parents or guardians. A student who wished to become a footballer had this to say about the constant push by his father for him to rather develop an interest in the teaching profession: "*One day it was a career day in our school and my father asked me what I wanted to become. I told him I wanted to play football. So, he said, why don't I become a teacher? My father is just on the side of the teacher, teacher and I don't understand…*" (Student #11).

Also, another student whose career preference is to become an agricultural extension officer described this influence she faced from a brother: "*My brother, he said after SHS I should go to nursing training college and become a nurse but I told him I won't give up my dream*" (Student #14). Similarly, in trying to escape the influence from parents, a student who desires to be a teacher which is contrary to the preference of her parents has resulted in discussing her career interests with a more accommodating relative: "*I used to discuss my career interest with my*

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relative instead. As for my parents, they wanted me to become a physician assistant but I'm not interested in that so I don't discuss it with them anymore. Sometimes my mother tells me that teachers don't earn enough money and that leaves me annoyed" (Student #18). It can be noted that, the influence of insisting on a career interest by parents or guardians to students creates some sense of the students adopting the career choice of their parents or guardians. Even though, it cannot be said to have directly resulted in student switching career interests, it causes some inner tension to students to switch their career interest.

4.7 Gender roles and career interest of SHS students

The students in this present study demonstrated that gender roles informed their career interest through varying ways. The reasons for gender roles impacting students career interests were explained in four themes which were, gender role favouring males, job demand for females, students' persistence on their career interests and family acceptance of career interest. Also, both male and female students reported various career interests with some similarities seen in the career interest expressed by the male and female students. Details of the career interest reported by both genders is presented in Table 4.

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Table 4

Career interest of males and females

Gender	Career interest/s
Male	• Business owner • Accountant • Auditor • Bank/business manager • Business man • Medical doctor • Nurse • Laboratory technician • Teacher • Agricultural extension officer • Veterinary officer • Farmer (crop and animal) • Agricultural extension officer • Pilot • Politician • Soldier • Building contractor • Architect • Interior designer • Movie editor • Musician
Female	• Journalist • Pilot • Poultry farmer • Nurse • Pharmacist • Medical doctor • Nutritionist • Bank manager • Accountant • Agricultural extension officer • Chartered accountant • Teacher • Football team manager • Artist (drawing) • Fashion designer • Engineer • Soldier • Police

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4.7.1 Gender role favouring males (patriarchal norms)

This denotes societal norms that provides males with much advantage over females and how it shapes career interest. A section of students who were male participants reported that gender roles within their communities favoured males and since they were males the gender roles within their communities supported them in determining their career interests. This idea was narrated by one student who believed gender roles had no effect on his career interest but only affect female and that he was free to pursue a career of his interest: "*For me, it didn't affect me in any way because, since I'm a man even the gender roles support me, it's only affecting ladies at my place… For instance, for me I can do anything that I like, I can go out and work but for the ladies they always keep them at home to do the house chores and those things*" (Student #13).

Again, another student explained how gender roles were to his advantage in determining his construction career interest due to his male physique which females lack: " *No, so I can say we the males like this, it doesn't affect us much because let's say for farming activities like this and then let's say the construction, work they are all the same because if you go to the farm you need to bend down and work and even the worksite you bend down and lift blocks and the rest so I don't see much effect on it. Mostly I would say it is only the female part that it will have an effect on because they are not strong like the males are, so for them doing farming activities or building activities it can affect their future*" (Student #25). To add up, one male student who had an interest in an agriculture-related profession also seemed to have been favoured by his societal gender roles with regards to his career interests due to his masculinity reported that: "*As for me it has not affected me because I chose agric and that one no one talks about it and I am a male. So, no one talks about it that I have done a mistake*" (Student #23). It is important to note that the students

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identified that their community gender roles favoured males mostly when determining a career interest.

4.7.2 Students' persistence on their career interest

Students' persistence on their career interest theme describes how students have to firmly uphold their career interests when other individuals make efforts to persuade them to develop different career interests based on gender ideologies. Students also demonstrated that their gender roles shaped their career interests due to them insisting on their careers of interests. A female student described how individuals made comment about her career interest based on her being a female when she initially told them about it but was not still affected by the gender role description about her engineering career interest: "*My decision has not been affected but it just worries me when I said I wanted to become an engineer, most people were telling me that the course is for men…*" (Student #30). Relatedly, a female student also explained how individuals based on gender roles talked her out of her career interest of being a soldier previously: "*So they keep telling me being a soldier is not a girl's work but a boy's and that girls are supposed to be teachers and the others. I used to be discouraged by my mom when I told her I wanted to become a soldier*" (Student #28). It must be noted that, these students have maintained their career interests despite a different preferred career suggestion brought by individuals around them, and this indicates their persistence in the face of discriminating gender norms within their communities.

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4.7.3 Family acceptance of career interests

The idea that a students' family members have accepted his or her career interest without considering any gender ideology described the family acceptance of career interests' theme. This is another pathway that described the connection between gender roles and determination of students' career interest. In explaining how gender roles shaped their determination of career interests, a student reported that: "*That roles have never affected me in my life because my parents understand me in whatever I want to do so they don't bother me with those things*" (Student #21). It is clear in this sense that, the support by the students' family about her career interest has hindered the possibility of societal gender roles influencing his preferred career of interest.

4.7.4 Job demand for females

The job demand for females' theme evolved from students believing that there are certain jobs that society or individuals require females to occupy. This theme was also expressed as one of the ways gender roles influence the career interests of students. One student provided this explanation to describe why a female will be needed in journalism as her career of interest: "*No, Sir like if they say only men should do journalism but sometimes, they may need some help from ladies, so they have to employ us all*" (Student #3). This student was not affected by gender roles in determining her career interests because she believes that in her career of interest females will definitely be required for employment.

4.8 Personal experience in a job and its link on the career interest of SHS students

Most of the students assessed reported that they have previously engaged in some form of job-related activity and still go back to these jobs when they are on school break. A significant

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number of the students' indicated no relationship between the jobs they engage in or have previously engaged in and their career of interest. They explained this to be due to the disparity in the jobs they engage in and careers of their interest. One the other hand, some students reported a relationship between the jobs they have acquired experience in and their career of interest. This relationship was explained by two themes which are shared similarities of the jobs in general and shared similarity of aspects of jobs.

4.8.1 Shared similarity of aspects of jobs

Shared similarity of aspects of jobs implies that, the students' prior exposure to a job influenced their career interest when they focused on only certain aspects that both their career of interest and previous job have in common. The students explained this relationship by focusing on certain aspects of the jobs they have been engaging in whiles relating it to their careers of interest. They believe some aspects of the jobs they are engaged in had some relations with the careers they want to pursue. In illustrating this relation, one student who wants to become a chartered accountant or a bank manager and has been engaged in the sales of water explained the relationship between her career interests and the job she engages in, which she reported: "*The link is about the counting of the money*" (Student #8). This student only focused on the monetary aspect of her water sales job and related it to the chartered accountant or a bank manager.

Moreover, another student exposed to communicating with customers in business and with the hope of becoming a fashion designer had this to share about how aspects of her career interest and the business communication job are related: "*With fashion and designing I have to know how to talk to customers and how to receive them and treat them*" (Student #31). This also indicates the focus on specific aspects of a students' career interest (like money counting and

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communicating with customers) and jobs in which the students have acquired experience to establish a relationship. Again, another student with an interest in being a medical doctor and who has also been assisting people to carry their loads at the market for money described the element of help provision to explain the connection between his career interest and his prior work of assisting people at the market. The student whose prior work to assist people indicated that: *"When I also become a doctor, I will be helping people so that is it"* (Student #11). A student aiming to become an extension officer and has been working on the farm, believed both the extension officer and farmers share some similarities through the use of knowledge within the two fields. The student explained that; "… *They (extension officer and farmers) are one, the extension officers they advise farmers on how to sow, so if I become the extension officer, I can advise the farmers and also I can do mine (farming) well*" (Student #1). This student only linked the knowledge that is being transferred across the two career fields.

4.8.2 Shared similarities of the jobs in general

Shared similarities of the jobs in general means, the students considered their previous jobs and their career of interest to be similar in their entirety, and due to this their career interest was informed by the its similarity to the entire previous job. This relationship between personal experience in a job and its link on the career interest of SHS students focused on students considering the similarities that exist between their career interest and their previous job experience. They took the generality of these jobs into consideration and the contributions required in both jobs. In expressing this view, a student who had been engaging in construction of buildings and has a career interest to become a contractor explained the relation between these jobs: "*Well the building activities and the constructor I can say they are similar or they are connected just*

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because what we do in school and what I have observed in my area are all similar and it is just some few things that are different" (Student #25).

A student who has been engaged in farming and had an interest to pursue either of these careers; extension officer, farmer- crop production and animal keeper had this to say about his career interests and the farming he engages in: "*We can connect it together. Since you are an extension officer or an animal keeper, you can be rearing animals and … the crops unproductive material can be used as feed for the animals. So, you can use animals' droppings for your crops…"* (Student #20). With another student who aims to be a bank manager and also attains the opportunity to manage his brother's business, she felt being a bank manager and managing his brother's business were the same possibly due the idea of overseeing the proper administration of activities required in both jobs. The student reported that: "*But all the businesses you are managing it yourself, so if you are practicing it here and if you get to the level (being a business manager) that you want you will be able to"* (Student #15). These students indicated how the generality of their career interests and other jobs that they engage in are shaping each other.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of results

The study explored factors that influence career interests of SHS students in the Tamale metropolis. The relationship between career interest and, personal interest, courses pursued, parents' or guardians influence on students and gender role was also explored. The factors found to inform students career interest were financial benefit, perceived competence in job, inadequate professionals in a career, nature of job, resources and job availability, personal benefit and societal benefit. Again, the themes; self-fulfilment pathway and self-efficacy pathway were also identified to describe the connection between a students' personal interest and their career interest.

Courses studied by the students was related to their career interests which was determined by the themes; the course(s) serving as a career pathway and the course(s) being a means of career insight. Parents and guardians were pivotal in the career interest determination of students, and the parental or guardian influence on career interest was explained through; motivating influence, agreeable influence and insistent influence. Also, the themes; gender role favouring males, job demand for females, students' persistence on their career interests and family acceptance of career interest explained the influence of gender roles on students' career interest. The students also reported a relationship between their personal experience in a job and their career of interest, which was explained by the themes; shared similarities of the jobs in general and shared similarity of aspects of jobs.

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5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Personal interest and career interests of SHS students

The current study identified that students' personal interest was linked to their career interests through the innate self-fulfillment they hope to gain from their desired career and the perceived self-efficacy in their career of interest. Comparably, among a sample of final-year accounting students in a Ghanaian public university, Mbawuni and Nimako (2015) found the students' feelings about the accounting profession to be greatly influenced by their intentions of pursuing careers in accounting. Likewise, Arthur et al. (2017) identified SHS students in the Ashanti region of Ghana to have developed mathematics interest that is influenced by their self-motivation. The similar findings found between these previous reported Ghanaian studies and this current study with regard to personal interest and career interest could be due to the presence of some freedom accorded students by their parents or guardians to develop their own interests in a career and pursue it without the parents or guardians necessarily imposing a career on them.

In Nigeria, Umar (2014) identified students' self – desire to significantly influence their choice of accounting, whiles Ayodele (2019) also identified personal career interest to influence the career choice of real estate students in a university. Among a sample of university students in Vehari of Pakistan, it was found that personal interest had a positive correlation with career choice (Humayon et al., 2018). Relatedly, these studies also affirmed the result of this present study on the influence students' personal interest have on their career interests, which may be suggestive of students prioritizing their personal interest when considering a career of interest. Also, with reference to this current study identifying self-efficacy to influence the personal interest and career interest relation, this could be possibly happening due to an innate feeling of having mastery over certain careers which translates into the personal interest of students. The innate feeling described

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to be present among the students in this present study is equivalent to the psychological aspects like genetic predisposition of an individual explained by Super (1963) to create subjective feelings that impact a person's career development.

Moreover, in Kang et al. (2018) study conducted among grade 7 Finnish teenage students, it was identified that among females, factors of career perspectives (outcome, personal time, and innovation orientations) in science were found to be significantly associated with personal value but, among the males, only the personal time as a career perspectives factor recorded a significant relationship with their personal value of science. Considering Kang et al. (2018) study to share similar findings with this current study in how personal interest of students affect their career interest, Kang et al. (2018) study focused much on personal value of a career which is akin to the self-fulfilment factor recorded in this present study to explain the personal interest and career interest link since their self-fulfilment for a career also connotes with their value of a career. It must be noted that the self-fulfilment factor affecting the personal interest and career interest relation may have been embedded in the students through the value society place on career fields.

Proyer et al. (2012) also found adolescents' intellectual strengths to be associated with investigative, artistic, enterprising and conventional career interests; their leadership strengths were associated with enterprising, social and artistic career interests, their temperance strengths were associated investigative career interest, whilst their transcendence strengths were related to their social and artistic career interests among 13 to 18 years-olds in greater Zurich, Switzerland. This previous study shows elements of students' personal interest facets influencing their aspirations in certain careers just as the findings of this current study established. Specifically, the self-efficacy factor that underlines the personal interest and career interest link in this present study and the previous studies are likely to be due to the students matching their capabilities to careers

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in which they believe could be a good pair, thus giving them the sense of being capable in those career fields. The matching of students' capabilities with befitting career fields also portrays the description of vocational choice where Holland (1959) posits that it is an interaction between a person heredity and other factors like culture and the environment.

Again, in a study conducted by Wiebe et al. (2018) that examined the relationship between science, engineering/technology and 21st century skills attitudes and STEM career interest, they found attitude to involve the self-efficacy beliefs of an individual which are viewed in terms of their success expectancies, and they identified that science, engineering/technology and 21st century skills attitudes where significantly related to the STEM career interest of primary and secondary school students in North Carolina, USA. High school students, motivation for science (science expectancy and science value) have also been found to be a significant predictor of their STEM career interests in northern California, USA (Robnett & Leaper, 2013). These similarities in findings identified between this current study and the previous ones could be explained by an intrinsic drive for specific features or things which influence an individual's personal interest and in-turn influence the desire for a career.

Consistent with the results of this study, in a tertiary institution within Australia, Tsakissiris (2015) identified information communication and technology (ICT) student's self-interest to be strongly influenced by their desire to pursue a career in the ICT industry. With reference to Patrick et al. (2011) study, conducted among secondary school students in Australia, it was found that male students recorded higher self-efficacy scores in realistic career area whereas females obtained their higher scores in the social career area (Patrick et al., 2011). These indicates the important influence student's personal interest can play in career interest development and also help them move across different career fields. Students from this present study were observed to rely on their

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personal interests to determined their career interest probably due to some knowledge they may have acquired about career selection which may be directing them to develop career interest based on their own personal preference and capabilities.

5.2.2 Courses (programmes) pursued and career interest of senior high school students

The present study identified an influence between students' courses or programmes of study and career interest which was explained by the course(s) serving as a career pathway and being a means of career insight. Quansah et al.'s (2020) study conducted among final-year female students in Ghanaian high schools also identified that their courses of study influenced their interest to select STEM programmes during their tertiary education. The similarity in these findings with regards to the courses pursued and career interest of students could be stemming from the student's idea that, the courses been read should follow a particular career trajectory as identified in this current study.

In addition, Issa and Nwalo (2008) found a positive relationship between undergraduate's subject backgrounds and their career choice among a sample of university students in Nigeria. Issa and Nwalo's (2008) study results can be compared with the results from this current study on the perspective of a course influencing students to make some decisions about a career which could have developed initially as a career interest. Again, Rafanan et al.'s (2020) study among high school STEM students in Zambales, Philippines, found that when students were moving to tertiary schools, they enrolled into STEM related fields due to its alignment to their preferred course in college. This finding indicates the major role courses studied in high school play in developing a career interest which later enables students to move into their preferred career fields. It is worth noting that, the general traditional notion of some career pathways being strictly linked to the

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courses students pursue in high school could be a reason for students' career interest in this current study being affected by their high school courses or programmes.

Wang's (2012) study conducted among sixth-grade students in the Michigan, USA also supported the findings of this present study on the link between courses or programmes studied and career interest. Wang (2012) found that students' math classroom experiences predicted their expectancies and values, which, in turn, predicted the number of high school math courses taken and the student's career aspirations in mathematics. The math classroom experiences reported by Wang (2012) is equivalent to the career insight factor that explained the courses pursue and the career interest link in this current study, since an experience in a subject can result to an insight in a course. The students' career interest in this present study might be affected by their courses pursued as a result of teachers of their study courses providing them information about careers related to their courses and programmes in the process of their tuition.

Again, in examining the impact of STEM summer programmme provided to high school students from the USA, Kitchen et al. (2018) found that students who participated in the STEM summer programme were 1.4 times interested in pursuing a STEM career. Similarly, the engagement of high school students in out-of-school time science activities were found to significantly influence their university career interest in STEM (Dabney et al., 2012). The findings of this present study and previous studies establish some viable connection between the courses students read and their career aspirations. Therefore, it is worth noting here that depending on the programme or courses high school students are exposed to, they might develop their career interest around career fields of their courses. It is also possible that in this present study students' courses of study are shaping their career interest due to the continuous exposure of specific career fields to these students due to them frequently learning specific courses and programmes over the period.

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5.2.3 Parental or guardian influence on the career interest of SHS students

Parents and guardians of students in this current study influenced their career interest through motivating influence, insistent influence and agreeable influence. This finding is consistent with Afful (2019) study conducted among SHS students at Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District in Ghana and Bedu-Addo et al.'s (2022) study conducted among students in an all-female SHS in Ho, Ghana which all found parents or guardians of SHS students to have a great influence on their career of interest. Additionally, parental, siblings and other extended family members were identified to influence the career trajectories of SHS students in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe (Mtemeri, 2019). Also, in South Africa, family was found to be a significant factor that influenced the career aspirations of university students (Shumba & Naong, 2012) and among psychology students at a university, parents were found to influence their choice of psychology as a career (Mudhovozi & Chireshe, 2012). Even though, this current study and some previous studies were conducted among high school students and university students, they all reported similar findings on the influence of parents or guardians on students' career interests. The similarity in finding could be related to dependence of some of these students on their parents or guardians at that period in their life. Specifically, with regard to the students in this present study, their parents might be influencing their career interest because of the culture of respecting elders (parents or guardians) views which includes their opinions on one's career interest.

Similarly, perceived parental expectations were found to be predictive of career decision-making difficulties among a sample of university students in Beijing, Wuhan, and Hong Kong cities of China (Leung et al., 2011). In addition, among a sample of students at some public universities at Lahore of Pakistan, parents were identified to influence the career choice of their wards (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Also, families, like parents and guardians, have been found to

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greatly influence the career aspirations of senior high school students in the Philippines (Rafanan & De Guzman, 2020; Quiño, 2022). These results show an imperative influence that parents have on students not only at the high school level but also at the tertiary level where students are mostly perceived to be matured. In collectivist society such as places reported by the above previous studies and in this current study, parents or guardians could be said to be influencing the career interest of students because, the students are within a collectivist society where decisions including career choices regarding an individuals' life is mostly made together with the individual involved without the fellow been given a sole control to determine their career path.

On the other hand, Bernardino's (2019) study conducted among junior high school leavers who were transitioning into a senior high school in Urdaneta City of Philippines identified a minimal parental influence on students' choices of study fields which were related to their career interest. A variation in findings about the influence parents have on students' career interests could be suggestive of parents' decision on career interests not being considered, and also students possibly gaining some form or independence and autonomy to make their own decisions regarding their career aspirations. In the District of Columbia, USA it was found that, ninth-grade students who had an interest in STEM careers had a significantly higher parental involvement in their career aspiration with reference to students who had interest in non-STEM careers (Mau & Li, 2018). Again, in the northeast region of the USA, perceived parental influence was found to positively correlate with reported career self-efficacy among undergraduate students within a college (Roach, 2010). To add up, in a study conducted in Italy, family support was identified to directly influence the career choice of students in the southern part of the country whiles, in the northern part, family support was found to influence career decidedness of students in middle school (Howard et al., 2009). This similarity in findings between the previous studies and this current study was not

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expected, considering that Mau and Li (2018), Roach (2010) and Howard et al.'s (2009) studies were conducted in a setting described as an individualistic society and this present study conducted in a collectivist society. This implies that parents still play an important role on students' career aspirations even in settings that are expected to provide independence to students in deciding on a career interest.

5.2.4 Gender roles and career interest of SHS students

Gender roles shaped the career interests of students in this current study. Comparably, Opoku's (2021) study also identified that both males and females' students in high schools at Kumasi, Ghana had similar interests in geography areas like physical, and human and regional geography. There was a difference in gender with regards to student's interest in practical geography where males had more interest in the practical geography area. Also, gender was found to have no influence on students' interest in careers as recorded in a study among high school students in Midlands Province of Zimbabwe (Mtemeri, 2017). There is a possibility of the no gender or gender role influence on career or course interest in previous studies occurring as a result of the capabilities students ascribe to themselves with reference to a career or course of interest. The influence of gender roles seen in this current study could be due to the students been harbouring some cultural gender- discriminating ideas.

Again, among a sample of medical students in South Africa, it was found that internal medicine was the most preferred field of interest for females, surgery was the leading field for males and the second leading field for females whilst pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology were significantly preferred by females over males (De Vries et al., 2010). Nwoye and Okeke (2019) also found most females as compared to males to show interest in a career in teaching or education

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with more males having interest in pursuing careers in engineering and technology, applied sciences, and medical sciences in a study conducted among mathematics students at a college in Oyo, Nigeria. With reference to the findings of these previous studies and that of this present study, the similarity in the influence between gender role and career interest could be due to students in the previous studies and current study considering a career field that is more aligned with their already gender ascribed duties and gendered perceptions. The students in this current study career interest may be shaped by their gender roles as result of some societal gender discriminating ideas which may have been inherent in the students.

Similar to the findings of this present study which saw gender role to shape students' career interest, Kazi and Akhlaq's (2017) study identified gender to have a significant impact on master's level student's career interests in Lahore, Pakistan. Also, girls have been identified to have lower levels of science-career pursuit as compared to boys when a sample of 15-year-old students from South Korea were examined (Shin et al., 2015). This congruence in results presented by this current and previous studies, could be said to have also evolved from both males and females naturally being more inclined to certain career fields than the other.

Furthermore, in examining the influences of students' interest in taking up STEM majors and, Health care, Elementary Education, and the Domestic spheres (HEED) majors among Swedish high school students, Tellhed et al. (2017) found difference in gender regarding their interest in a STEM major, which was related to females lower self-efficacy for STEM careers and females lower social belongingness expectations among the students in relation to STEM majors, whiles social belongingness expectations were also partly responsible for males lower interest in HEED majors. Comparable to the results found in Tellhed et al. (2017) study and in this present study, they highlight the possibility of a social factor that could work as an influencer or none-

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influencer within the gender role and career interest relationship, and this factor was presented as social belongingness expectations and family acceptance of career interest respectively in both studies. Additionally, the gender role and career interest relationship reported in this study which was for instance shaped by the theme; job demand for females, may be fueled by the persistent provision of specific job to females which may appear as that specific career is a female career.

With regards to this study identifying gender role to shape students career interest, in Asturias of Spain, girls and boys were found not to differ significantly when the influence of gender-role attitudes on technological career interest was examined among high school students (Rodríguez et al., 2016). The gender neutrality idea projected by some individuals in the area of career interest could be responsible for the non-significant difference in technological career interest seen in the reported previous study whiles participants in this current study may not be experiencing much gender neutrality. Moreover, the variation witnessed in these studies may be due to this current study focusing on general career interest whiles Rodríguez et al. (2016) study only assessed technological career interest.

Cvencek et al. (2011) identified that among a sample of first and second graders from the USA, girls were less likely to associate mathematics with their own gender as compared to males. Cvencek et al.'s (2011) study provides finding that is akin to this present study with regard to the association of a gender factor to a study field of interest and it also serves as evidence that the segregation of certain careers or fields by society starts early before high school level which has the potential to influence the career interest of students as they progress. Moreover, Rossler et al. (2020) found female undergraduate students enrolled in criminal justice programmes to be less likely to express an interest in a police patrol career as compared to others who did not identify as female in the USA. Additionally, among ninth and eleventh graders in high school in the USA,

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boys had more interest in STEM careers as compared to girls (Saw et al., 2018). Rossler et al. (2020) and Saw et al.'s (2018) studies also report the variation in findings in relation to gender factors and career interest. This congruence in finding could be due to the societal perceptions concerning gender roles or gender and career interest of students that forms part of people traditions. The number of a specific gender already in a career field could make a particular gender dominate a career field that in turn makes it look like a career for a specific gender. This phenomenon may also be another reason why some students in this current study will be persistent on their career interest and also feel some jobs demand females.

5.2.5 Personal experience in a job and its link on the career interest of SHS students

Exposures to jobs were found to have an influence with students' career interest in this present study. Likewise, Annan-Kittoe (2019) conducted a study in Ghana and found the exposure of secondary school female students to accounting jobs to influence their interest in pursuing a career in accounting. Again, among a sample of students reading librarian studies in Nigerian universities it was identified that the majority of students in the librarian studies course were influenced to study librarianship by their previous library work experience (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). Ayodele (2019) also affirms this finding in his study where final year real estate students in universities within Nigeria choice of real estate career were identified to be significantly influenced by their career exposure. It could be noted that there is variation in the participants used in the present and previous studies. They all arrived at a similar conclusion on how experience in a job can influence an individual's career interest. These also indicate that obtaining an experience in a job does not only affect career interest of high school students as seen in this present study and Annan-Kittoe's (2019) study but it equally affects the career interest of tertiary students as well.

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The students in this current study's' personal experience in a job influencing their career interest through their idea that, the jobs they have acquired experience in generally share some similarity with their career interest could stem from students developing an interest in the same job they have acquired experience in or developing an interest in a career that varies a little from the previous one they acquired experienced in.

Relatedly, career exposure was found to influence the choice of a career path among undergraduate accounting students in Malaysia (Ng et al., 2017). Additionally, among a sample of university accounting students also in Malaysia, Ghani et al. (2008) highlighted that the exposure of some students to the accounting profession whiles in secondary school had an influence on their interest in the accounting profession. In Japan, preclinical experience related to a specialty of preference has been found to influence medical students' preference for a specialty (Saigal et al., 2007). These previous studies results are consistent with that of this present study that found students' experience in a job to influence their career interest. This similarity among students could be occurring due to some form of motivation to pursue a career that the individuals obtain when they get the opportunity to experience the career.

Moreover, in a study conducted among a sample of high school students from Turkey who were exposed to an engineering programme camp, a significant number of the participants were found to later choose engineering-related degrees in tertiary (Ayar, 2015). Similarly, after exposing a group of tertiary students from the southeastern part of the USA to a bioproduct or bioenergy internship programme, it was noted that the students expressed much interest in pursuing bioproduct/bioenergy-related careers (McAlexander et al., 2022). Furthermore, medical students from Canada also reported an increase in their interest in pursuing radiation oncology specialty after they were engaged in a residency exploration programme that had an aspect in radiation

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oncology. These previous studies also affirm the influence exposure to a career can have on the career interest of students just as identified in this present study. Despite this current study not focussing on a specific career of interest as these previous studies, it is evident that the influence job experience has on career interest of students transcends specific career fields. Again, in making reference to the job exposure and career interest relationship found in this current study, the participants in this study may have been informed by the idea that, they already have some skills in the job they were exposed to which will be easier for them to transfer to a career which shares general features or share features with aspects of the job they have already been exposed to.

5.3 Implications of the study

5.3.1 Implications for career counselling

Since the programmes and courses read in senior high school tend to put students on a career path, it will be appropriate to start career counselling early at the junior high school (JHS) level, specifically at their final year in JHS. This is needed to adequately explore the career needs of students before they move or are pushed into programmes at the SHS level which may alter their career trajectory for a long time. Career counselling for students should always consider other influencing sources like parents or guardians, gender roles, financial constraints aside from the students own personal interest for a career since one factor cannot exist in isolation. In a situation where an undesirable factor is driving the career interest of a student, a strategic career plan could be designed with students to help them take the immediate career but also use this immediate career as a process to attain the ultimate preferred career.

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5.3.2 Implications for career research

This current study's findings cannot be generalized among students in the Tamale metropolis although it provides an in-depth knowledge about some factors that influence students' career interests. Therefore, it will be useful to conduct a quantitative study to assess the factors influencing SHS student's career interests to identify the impact these factors have on the students' career interest within the Tamale metropolis. There is also the need to explore how illiterate parents or guardians serve as a source of career information to their children as compared to literate parents or guardians since parents or guardians influence the career interests of students. A study examining whether career interest at early school age actually becomes career choice later in life will be beneficial, as it can assess the fluidity of students' career interest. It will also be useful to examine the career personality of students within the Tamale metropolis and compare it to their career interest to determine their congruence or variation.

5.3.3 Policy Implications

Since students within the Ghanaian education system are required to select programmes they prefer to study at the junior high school level before starting their senior high school education, it will be appropriate for start career counselling and education early at the upper primary level or junior high school to afford students the time to understand their career trajectory and make informed programme choices when selecting programmes to pursue at the senior high school level. At the junior and high school levels, career counselling should me compulsory to all students. Establishing that students' career interests are affected by many factors, the government should add a career assessment component to the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS) that junior high school students are required to use in selecting public senior high

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schools and programmes. This career assessment component should be mandatory for all students accessing the CSSPS which will help provide students with programme options based on certain assessed factors after completing the career assessment and ultimately enhance appropriate school programme selection.

With the knowledge that students' courses and programmes studied at the high school level have an influence on their career interest, the education ministry, Ghana education service and other stake holders needs to implement a policy to introduce career education into the curriculum of students at the upper primary level to the tertiary level to help students acquire the relevant career knowledge. Also, career development programmes for students should be introduced into the extracurricular activities of both junior and senior high schools to further improve students career development. The career development programmes for students that will be introduced into the extracurricular activities of both junior and senior high schools' students must also include the practical exposure of these students to various careers where they actually visit various work professionals to interact with them and get the sense of what they want do in their careers. This is vital because the jobs students are exposed to have been found to influence their career interest and as such, students need to experience many careers before developing an interest for one. Considering the fact that students career interest is influenced by varying factors, there is the need to develop a guideline to follow in creating a career profiling and portfolio system for every student based on the unique factors influencing the career interest determination of students. This career profiling and portfolio system creation for every student should be included in the duties of professionals providing career counselling services for students.

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5.4 Limitations of study

At the period of data collection for this study one of the selected schools had only its Form 1 students available in school and, other had Form 1 and Form 2 students available with Form 3 students from all the schools graduating at that time. As a result, majority of the participants for this study were Form 1 students, therefore the findings found in this study may be reflective of the views of much Form 1 students. As expected, most of the respondents were Muslims considering the fact that Islam is the commonest religion practiced in the study area. This may have affected some students views especially on gender roles, which could make the results of this study be a much descriptive of the dominant Muslim students.

5.5 Recommendations

It is important to note that the students in this study who studied the same programme had interest in similar careers which were limited in scope. Therefore, it will be very good for career fairs to be organized for students at least once in every academic year to provide students the opportunity to further explore other careers which they might not be aware off. To further aid students who will frequently need career counselling, more counselling psychologists needed to be recruited to schools and resourced to meet the career counseling need of students. At areas where there are inadequate professionals to see to the career counselling needs of students in schools, the Ghana education service can create a partnership with institutions like health facilities who may have professionals to assist with the career counselling policy currently being implemented at the SHS level only.

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Counselling psychologists working in junior and senior high schools should also collaborate with their school authorities to invite their former students who partook in career counselling sessions or other career development activities whiles in school and have progressed to the next academic stage to share their experience and benefits on career counselling or career development activities during a career education or fair programme. This will help improve the attendance of career counselling sessions or career development programmes organize for students. In an attempt to temporary meet the career counselling needs of students, teachers in junior and senior high schools in the country can be provided further training on career counselling to serve as lay career counsellors who will complement the work of the limited counselling psychologist available in schools. Knowing that parents or guardians could influence the career interest of students, schools should endeavour to provided parents and guardians of students with career education especially during the periodic parents and teachers association meetings. This is relevant to equip parents or guardians with career knowledge that will enable them provide their wards with informed information on careers and a supportive attitude towards their wards in determining their career interest that is void of a controlling posture.

5.6 Conclusion

Students who participated in this study minded to consider things they regularly prefer and situated it in the context of their career interests. Moreover, their perceived capabilities in succeeding in their career of interest were explored before they chose a career of interest. The course the students are reading is a major factor that influenced their career interests and students demonstrated careers of interest that were in line with their courses or programmes read in school.

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Students with illiterate parents or guardians avoided having discussions with them mainly due to their belief that these parents or guardians would not understand them. Discussions of career interest with parents or guardians showed an accommodating posture of parents or guardians; and when the students do not get the accommodating posture from their parents or guardians on their career interest, they tended to hold onto their career interest. Aside parents or guardians, another group of people that students prefer to discuss career related issues with are their siblings and other family relatives, especially if the students see these people to be literates and would better understand their career aspirations.

The students' engagement in some jobs have also shaped their career interests, they were focused on pursuing the job in general or working in an aspect of the job they have been exposed to. Even though the students were aware of their societal perceptions related to careers, they did not pay heed to their societal gender roles in considering their career of interest. Male students especially did not sense any impediment gender roles within their society could pose to their expressed careers of interest. On the other hand, female students were also much focused on their career of interest even if the prescribed gender roles of society opposed it. This implies that the students', especially females, career interest are not shaped by the defined gender roles of their society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Consent form

Exploring the career interests of high school students in the Tamale Metropolis, Ghana

Introduction and Consent

I am Barnabas Atangongo, a student at the University of Ghana. I am conducting a study to explore the career interests of high school students in the Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. This study is being conducted as part of the requirement for the award of an MPhil in Counselling Psychology degree. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the various factors that influence the career interest of students in the Tamale Metropolis. Information shared in this study is confidential, and will be used for academic purposes only. Your participation in the study will be highly appreciated. However, participation in this study is voluntary, as you can opt out any time you feel uncomfortable without any penalty.

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Consent (Assent) statement

I have read or have had someone read/ explain the purpose of the study to me and I have asked questions or received answers regarding my participation in this study, and I am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records.

_____

Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature or mark of Participant Date

If participants cannot read and or understand the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

_____

Name of witness

_____ _____

Signature of witness / Mark Date

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I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

_____

Name of Person who Obtained Consent

_____ _____

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent Date

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Appendix II: Interview guide

Demographics

1. Can you please tell me about yourself?

"probes; gender, age, ethnicity, religion education level"

2. Can you tell me a little about the programme you are reading currently?

"probes; details of the courses"

3. Could you give me some details about your family?

"Probes; number in the family, nature of family, living conditions of the family"

4. How would you describe your family in terms of their financial status?

5. Tell me a little about where you reside

6. Could you describe the predominant occupation in your area of residence?

Relationship between personal interest and career interest

7. What are some of the things that give you joy in life?

"Probes; Generally in relation to activities, lifestyle and courses"

8. What is your understanding about what a career is?

9. What are some of your career interests?

"Probes; for the topmost career interest''

10. Which of your career interest would you want to pursue in future?

"Probes; why this choice''

11. How does your personal interest match with your career interest?

"Probes; if there is no link, find out why''

Relationship between courses pursued and career interest

12. How did you select the programme/courses you are reading?

"Probes; did teachers, parents, or any other person help in any way? ''

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14. Prior to the selection of the current programme did you consider the career you want to pursue in future?

"Probes; if yes how, if no why? ''

15. How do the courses you are pursuing currently match with your career interest?

Relationship between parental/guardian and career interest

16. To what extent have you discussed your career interest with your parent/guardian?

"Probes; if no, why''

17. What are some of the inputs they have made in the determination of your career interest?

18. How satisfied are you with the inputs your parents/guardians have made towards your career interest?

19. To what extent do your parents give you some freedom to make decisions on your career interest?

"Probes; if parents/guardian are forcing it on you, why''

Relationship between cultural factors and career interest

20. How are career choices perceived in relation to gender in your culture?

21. How do you think gender roles in your community affected the determination of your career interest?

22. What are some of the predominant careers in the Tamale metropolis?

23. Why do you think these careers are predominant?

24. What role have these predominant careers played in the determination of your career interest?

25. To what extent have you gained personal experience in any of these predominant careers?

26. How is your career interest linked to the previous job you were exposed to?

27. What are some other factors that played a role in the determination of your career interest?

28. What are some of the challenges you foresee to prevent you from attaining your career interest?

Thank you

University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh

Appendix III: Ethical clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)
P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No....ECH 029/ 22-23

February 03, 2023

Barnabas Atangongo
Department of Psychology
University of Ghana
Legon.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE
(ECH 029/ 22-23)

The Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH) conducted a full board review and approved your protocol titled:

EXPLORING THE CAREER INTERESTS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE TAMALE METROPOLIS, GHANA

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **BARNABAS ATANGONGO**

Please note that the final review report must be submitted to the Committee at the completion of the study. Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation. Any modification of this research project must be submitted to ECH for review and approval prior to implementation.

Please report all serious adverse events related to this study to ECH within seven (7) days verbally and in writing within fourteen (14) days.

This certificate is valid till February 02, 2024. You are required to submit annual reports for continuing review.

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor C. Charles Mate-Kole
ECH Chair

Cc: Dr. Joana Larry-Afiutu, Department of Psychology, UG
Dr. Enoch Teye-Kwadjo, Department of Psychology, UG

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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