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### Determinants of Academic Program Choice Among Criminology Students

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#### Abstract

This study examined the factors influencing program preference among Bachelor of Science in Criminology students in Tagbilaran City, Philippines. A quantitative descriptive design was employed, and data were collected from 150 criminology students across three higher education institutions offering the program. Results showed that childhood aspiration was the most influential factor in

choosing the criminology program, followed by personal reasons and influence from family members or relatives. Financial constraints and availability of scholarship grants emerged as significant perceived challenges, while mental ability and school location were not considered major obstacles. ANOVA results revealed significant differences in perceived challenges among groups of respondents.

**Keywords:** Criminology Students, Program Preference, Childhood Aspiration, Family Influence, Personal Reasons, Financial Constraints, Tagbilaran City

#### Introduction

Career choice is a complex developmental task shaped by personal aspirations, social influences, and structural realities. Early ambitions often begin in childhood and evolve as individuals interact with family, school, and society. As noted in developmental literature, societal norms, socioeconomic conditions, educational exposure, and cultural expectations significantly shape career trajectories. Students frequently make program decisions while navigating personal interests and external pressures, including financial capacity, job market considerations, and family expectations. In the Philippines, the BS Criminology program has seen a consistent rise in enrollment, partly influenced by increased demand for law enforcement professionals and improved salary structures for uniformed personnel. In Tagbilaran City, where three tertiary institutions offer criminology programs, understanding why students choose this field is essential for improving academic support and aligning institutional programs with student motivations. Research Gap Despite the popularity of criminology as a program, no prior study has examined the specific factors influencing criminology students' program preference in Tagbilaran City or the province of Bohol. This gap limits the understanding of how personal, socioeconomic, and contextual influences shape criminology-related career decisions in this local setting.

#### Research Methodology

##### Research Design

A **quantitative descriptive research design** was used to gather and analyze data on the factors influencing criminology students' program preferences. The researchers utilized a structured, researcher-made questionnaire.

##### Participants and Sampling

The study involved **150 BS Criminology students**, with **50 participants from each of the three institutions** offering the program in Tagbilaran City:

- Holy Name University (HNU)
- University of Bohol (UB)
- Bohol Institute of Technology–International College (BIT-IC)

Participants were selected using **simple random sampling**. Eligibility criteria included:

- Enrolled in the 2nd semester of A.Y. 2022–2023
- Enrolled in the BS Criminology program

Students not meeting these criteria were excluded.

## Research Setting

The study was conducted across the three higher education institutions in Tagbilaran City offering BS Criminology. These institutions represent the primary criminology education providers in the city.

## Instruments

Data were collected using a **validated researcher-made questionnaire** consisting of four parts:

1. Sociodemographic profile
2. Factors influencing program preference
3. Perceived challenges in choosing the program
4. Checklist-type responses and a 4-point Likert scale

The instrument was reviewed and approved by the thesis adviser, statistician, and research panel.

## Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the program heads of the three schools. Participants received a consent form assuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Questionnaires were distributed in person and took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Completed questionnaires were immediately collected, tallied, encoded, and processed for analysis.

## Data Analysis

The following statistical tools were used:

- **Frequency and percentage:** to describe family profile and influencing factors
- **Weighted mean:** to determine perceived challenges
- **ANOVA:** to test for significant differences in perceived challenges among groups

## Interpretation Scale

Scale	Range	Interpretation
4	3.51–4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.51–3.50	Agree
2	1.51–2.50	Disagree
1	1.00–1.50	Strongly Disagree

## Results

**Table 1.1:** Respondents' Family Annual Income

Income (PHP)	Frequency	Percentage
10,000–100,000	71	47%
100,000–250,000	42	28%
250,000–500,000	24	16%
500,000–1,000,000	14	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Interpretation

Almost half (47%) of respondents belong to families earning **PHP 10,000–100,000 annually**, indicating that most criminology students come from lower-income households.

**Table 1.2:** Parents' Educational Attainment

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary	23	15%
High School	57	38%
College	67	45%
Post-Graduate	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Interpretation

Most respondents' parents reached **college level (45%)**, followed by high school (38%).

**Table 1.3:** Parents' Employment Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	127	85%
Unemployed	23	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Interpretation

Most parents of criminology students are employed.

**Table 2:** Factors Influencing Choice of BS Criminology

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Economic	42	28.00%
Peers	14	9.33%
Family Influence	67	44.67%
Childhood Aspiration	74	49.33%
Personal Reasons	70	46.67%
Job Availability	16	10.67%
Job Security	24	16.00%

## Interpretation

**Childhood aspiration (49.33%)** emerged as the strongest influence, followed by **personal reasons (46.67%)** and **family influence (44.67%)**. Peers had the least influence.

**Table 3:** Perceived Challenges in Choosing BS Criminology

Challenge	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Financial	2.49	Agree
Mental Ability	2.61	Disagree
School Location	2.53	Disagree
Availability of Scholarship Grants	2.43	Agree
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.52</b>	<b>Agree</b>

## Interpretation

Financial constraints and limited scholarship availability are significant challenges. Mental ability and school location are not perceived as major barriers.

**Table 4:** ANOVA - Differences in Perceived Challenges Among Groups

Group	Mean ± SD	F	p-value	F crit	Decision	Interpretation
A	2.50 ± 1.57	8.209	0.00041	3.057	Reject Ho	Significant difference
B	2.22 ± 1.69					
C	1.42 ± 0.64					

## Post Hoc (Bonferroni)

- A vs B → Not Significant
- B vs C → **Significant**
- C vs A → Not Significant

## Discussion

The findings reveal that criminology students in Tagbilaran City primarily choose the program due to personal motivations rooted in childhood aspirations, aligning with Holland's Career Choice Theory, which emphasizes personality-career fit. Many students appear driven by early interests related to law enforcement, public safety, or the justice system.

Family influence also plays a key role, consistent with literature showing the importance of parental expectations and familial role models in educational decisions.

Despite financial hardship being common—highlighted by low household income levels—students still pursue the program, although financial constraints and limited scholarships were significant challenges. This indicates a strong internal commitment to the field despite economic barriers.

Meanwhile, mental ability and school location were not considered major concerns, suggesting that students feel confident in their capacity to complete the program and have accessible educational institutions.

The ANOVA results show that perceived challenges differ significantly among student groups, particularly between Groups B and C. This may reflect differing socioeconomic contexts or institutional support mechanisms across schools.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that criminology students' program preference is primarily shaped by childhood aspiration, followed by personal reasons and family influence. Challenges related to financial constraints and scholarship accessibility were notable, while mental ability and school location were minimally impactful. Differences in perceived challenges among institutions suggest varying student experiences across schools.

### Recommendations

1. Schools should strengthen program orientation and career guidance to help students make informed decisions.
2. Enhanced scholarship opportunities and financial assistance programs are recommended to reduce economic barriers.
3. Facilities and resources for criminology programs should be improved to increase student engagement and interest.
4. Early career education should be provided at the senior high school level.
5. Future researchers should replicate the study in other municipalities or provinces to compare findings.

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