

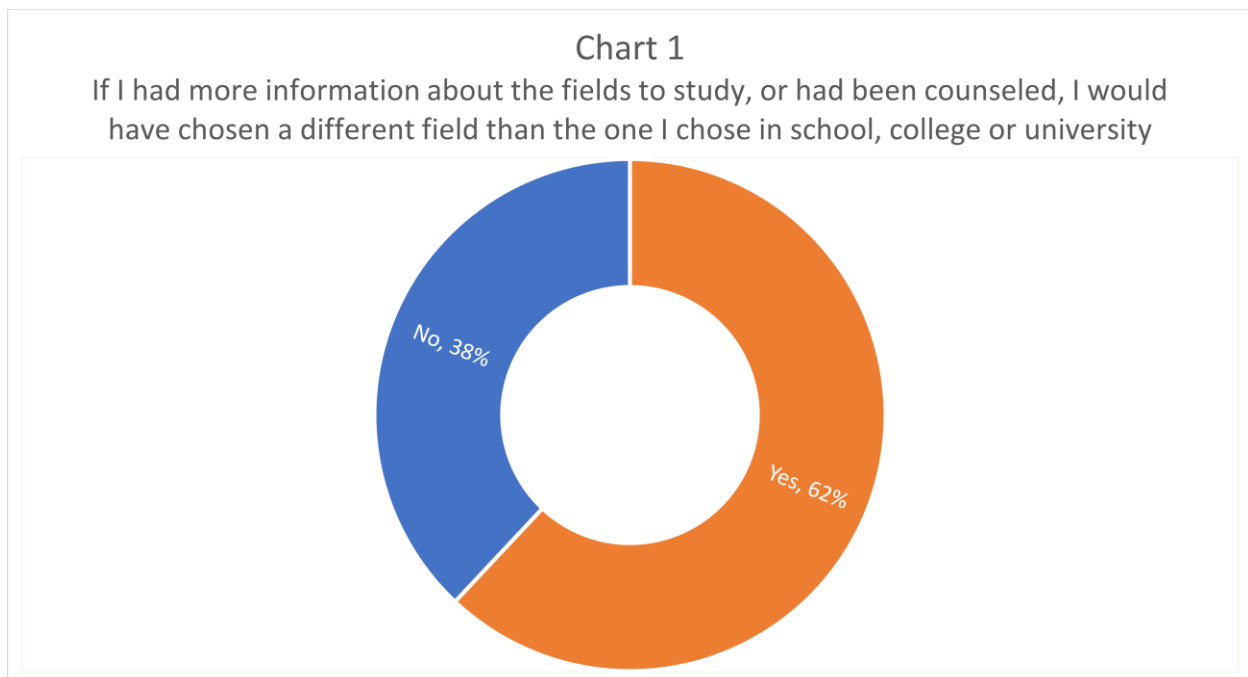
How Students Choose Fields/Majors in School, College & University

taleeminfo.pk conducted a survey on 'How students choose fields/majors to pursue in school, college and university'. A questionnaire was developed and disseminated using social media. The survey remained live from January ___ to February 8, 2023. Students and those who had graduated but were 30 years old or younger were asked to respond. A total 503 persons responded. (However, the number of respondents for each questions vary, as each question was optional).

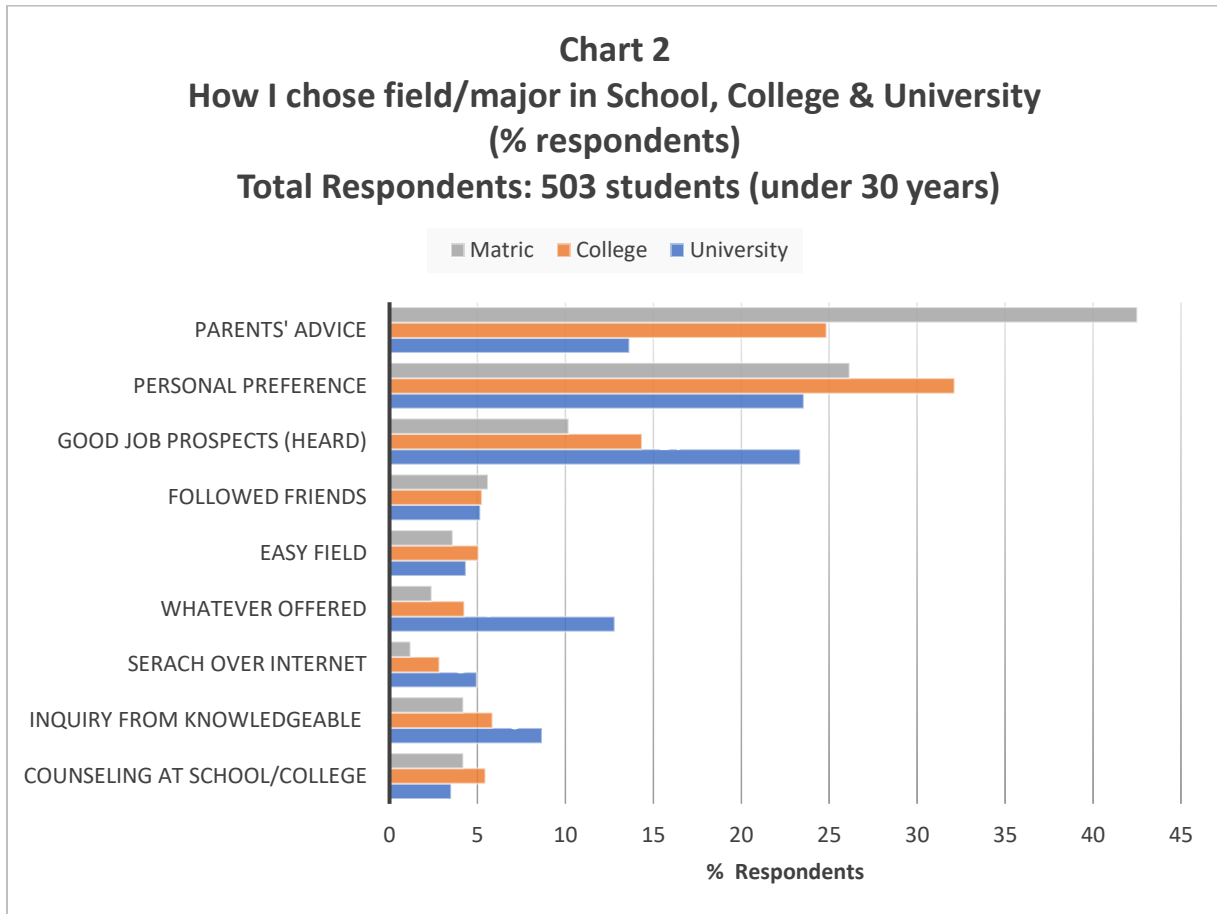
Findings

We asked the respondents, "If more information was available to you about different fields or you had been counseled at school, college regarding different fields, would you have chosen a different field than the one you chose?"

The key and surprising finding of the survey is that a sizeable majority – 62% answered YES – that is, the **more information/counseling was likely to have changed their decision regarding the choice of field/major**.



Following is the set of responses of responses to the question ‘How I chose field/ major in school, college and university’.



It’s evident from chart 2 that **Parent’s advice, personal preference, and good job prospects are three major factors that determine the choice of field/major by the students in school, college, and university** – In fact the parent’s advice and personal preference could also be influence by the job prospects.

Worrisome factors

What is worrisome is that even when the determining factor is ‘job prospects’ this is based on what the students have generally heard – as is evident from the responses, students typically do not try to inquire prospects from someone knowledgeable about the field or do some search over the internet (or otherwise) to find about the prospect of a field.

Chart 1 shows that a very large proportion of students feel that they might have chosen a different field had they more information or had they been counseled by someone. There could be several reasons for the inclination to choose a field different than the one chosen. For example:

Once the student goes through the subjects and gets to know more about the field. He/she realizes that,

1. The field is too difficult for him/her.
2. The job prospects may not be as good as the student had thought while entering the field.
3. It requires a long time and higher studies to make a mark in the field - A MBBS doctor may not be able to make a mark without specialization in a certain sub-specialty of medicine.
4. The student may not feel comfortable in a subject, being good in which, is crucial for success in the field – for example, Mathematics for Computer Science/Artificial Intelligence.

What needs to be done?

Good knowledge of the factors like the above, would help students making a better choice.

How to get the required knowledge for making the right choice

1. Counselling at educational institutes about:

- a. The prospects of a field
 - b. How much effort and duration does it require a person to make a mark in a field?
 - c. What, if any, specific strength/inclination/aptitude is required for a certain field
2. The educational institutes that find it difficult to do the above, the minimum they should do is to induce the students to;
 - a. find out the above on their own and if possible, suggests the web sources which might help the student decide or
 - b. suggest people who might counsel the students.
 3. Too often one hears that knowledge/information about almost everything is available on the web. True! Our survey (chart 2) tells that students do not use the web to know more about field that they might choose – so the issue is not the availability of information but the desire to use the available information.
 - a. Counsel the students at school, college & university to let them make the right choice.
 - b. Induce the students at educational institutes to
 - i. use web and other sources to find out more about the intended fields before making a choice.
 - ii. Consult people knowledgeable about specific fields.
 - c. The government, think tanks and other stakeholders need to publish more information demands of an academic field from students and the prospects that it holds for them – for example, P@SHA (Pakistan Software House Association) is the only body that publishes a ‘Salary Survey’ for the IT industry – there need to be such publications for other fields as well. Such survey would help the students make career choices.
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