**SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TRACK PREFERENCES OF GRADE 10 LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (LSENs):**

**A BASIS FOR SCHOOL CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAM**

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**ABSTRACT**

One of the challenges of grade 10 students is what track to choose in senior high school years. As identified in most of the studies, different factors influence grade 10 learners’ decisions on which senior high school track they ought to pursue, which include personal interest, family influence, peer influence, job opportunities, and financial condition. Embracing the realization of inclusion, learners with special educational needs (LSENs) also experiencing this kind of predicament, the school should be prepared with what support and program they can offer to their learners who are categorized as LSENs for them to choose and decide what senior high school track will they pursue. The purpose of this study is to determine what factors influenced the senior high school track preferences of grade 10 learners with disabilities (LWDs) in a public high school in Cavite, Philippines, and also to know if the health condition of the participants greatly influenced their decision in choosing the senior high school track. In this study, a descriptive design was used, along with a four (4) point Likert scale for each indicator. The grade 10 LWDs of an inclusive public high school in Cavite, Philippines served as participants, and through an online survey questionnaire data was gathered. Data was then interpreted using frequency, ranking, and weighted mean. This study revealed that the LSENs' interests were the most influential factor in their choice of senior high school track while peer influence was the least.

**Keywords:** grade 10, inclusive education, K to 12, LSENs, senior high school, track preference

# INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, to give students enough time to master concepts and skills, foster lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skill development, employment, and entrepreneurship, the K to 12 Program was implemented. The program covers Kindergarten and 12 years of fundamental education (six years of primary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school (SHS). As prescribed by Republic Act 10533, the Department of Education (DepEd) shall adhere that the curriculum shall be learner-centered, inclusive, developmentally relevant, and appropriate. Implementing K–12 programs aimed at producing more educated learners with fundamental skills for employment and lifetime learning.

To accommodate all learners including those with disabilities, inclusive education was being implemented in the Philippines. It is founded on the idea that every learner should have access to education and be given the chance to study. Inclusive education as defined by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) entails actual educational possibilities for historically marginalized groups, such as speakers of minority languages and children with disabilities. Learner diversity is valued in inclusive education, as is each student's contribution to the classroom. Every learner feels secure and a part of the community in a fully inclusive environment. When learning objectives are created and decisions that have an impact on them are made, parents and students are involved.

The decision of which senior high school track to enroll in is one of the challenges faced by students in grade 10. As stated in a study (Moneva & Malbas, 2019), a variety of factors, such as personal interest, family influence, peer impact, job opportunities, and financial situation, affect students in grade 10 when deciding which senior high school track to choose.

## RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research study aims to identify the different factors that influence the grade 10 learners with special educational needs (LSENs) decisions on which senior high school track they ought to pursue. Specifically, this research study sought to answer the following questions:

a. What are the most and least influential factors of grade 10 learners with special educational needs (LSENs) on which senior high school track they’ll choose to enroll?

b. Does health condition greatly influence LSEN's decision in choosing the senior high school track they want to pursue?

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Students in grade 10 are free to choose whatever SHS track they want to enroll in. The said SHS program consists of: 1) Academic Track, which has four (4 strands) a. Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM) Strand, b. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Strand, c. Humanities and Social Science (HUMSS) Strand and, d. General Academic Strand (GAS), 2) Arts and Design Track, theater, music, dance, creative writing, visual arts, and media arts are just a few of the art disciplines that are covered under this track. 3) Sports Track, ideal for students who are interested in jobs in sports-related fields, such as athlete development, fitness training, and coaching. 4) Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track, has four strands: Agri-Fishery Arts, Home Economics (HE), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Industrial Arts.

Different factors affect the decision of grade 10 learners on what SHS track they’ll pursue. Among these factors are as follows: personal interest, family, peer influence, job opportunities, and financial situation. In the study of Malaguia et al., (2022) it has been found that regular students' decisions about which SHS track to pursue are significantly influenced by their personal interests.

According to Republic Act (RA) 11560, all students with disabilities, regardless of whether they are enrolled in public or private schools, are entitled to services and reasonable accommodations based on the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), as well as the right to access the necessary support and related services.

As stated in RA 10533, also known as the Basic Education Act of 2013, the career guidance program (CGP) intends to assist secondary-level students in making educated career decisions to become productive and contributing members of society. Parents and teachers play a significant role in influencing their children's choices, so career guidance counseling should be a part of PTA (Parents Teachers Association) meetings for graduating junior high school students Lebosana et al. (2019).

# METHODOLOGY

Participants in this research study are grade 10 Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) enrolled in a public high school in Cavite, Philippines for the school year 2022-2023. Total enumeration is employed. A request letter to conduct the study was written to the principal of the school. After approval, participants under the age of 18 completed a consent form signed by their legal guardian.

Participants were provided a link to the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two (2) parts: a demographic profile of the participants and thirty (30) questions. Participants were asked to answer the said questionnaire using a 4-point Likert scale, shown in Table 1. Data was obtained using an online survey questionnaire administered via Google Forms, and it was then evaluated using frequency, ranking, and weighted mean.

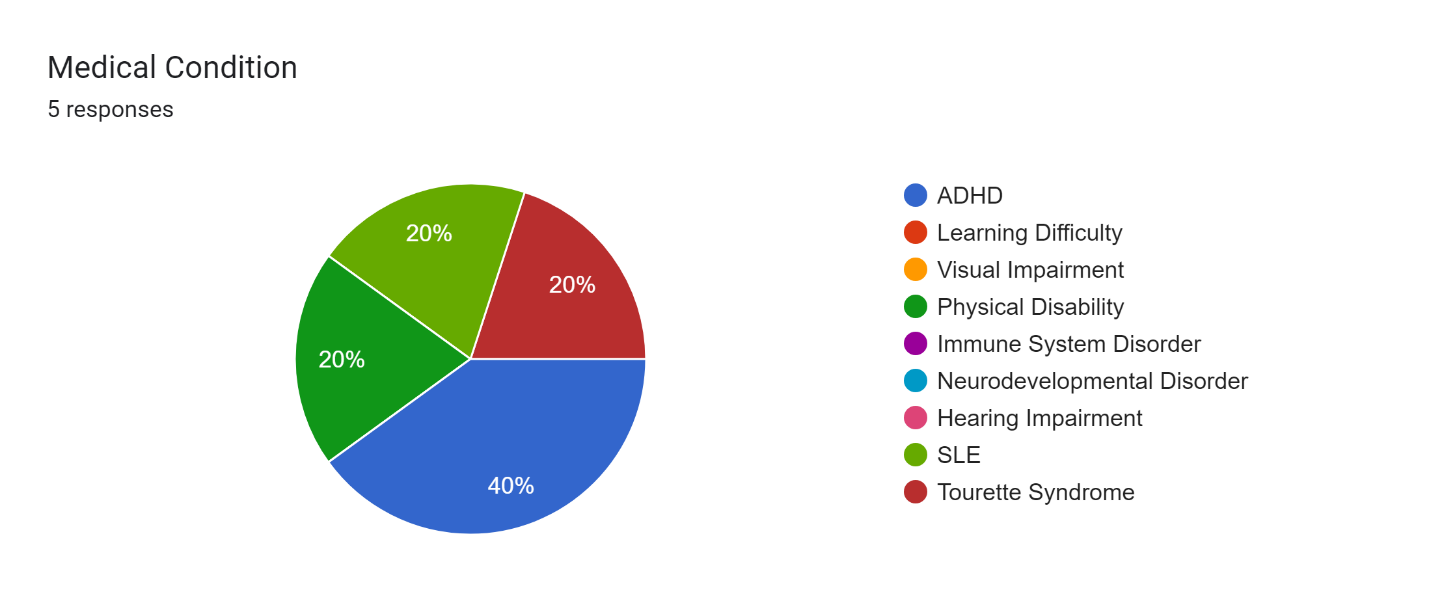
***Table 1:*** *Evaluation Rating Scale*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scale | Range | Verbal Interpretation |
| 4 | 3.50-4.00 | Very Influential |
| 3 | 2.50-3.49 | Influential |
| 2 | 1.50-2.49 | Slightly Influential |
| 1 | 1.00-1.49 | Not Influential |

**RESULTS AND FINDING**

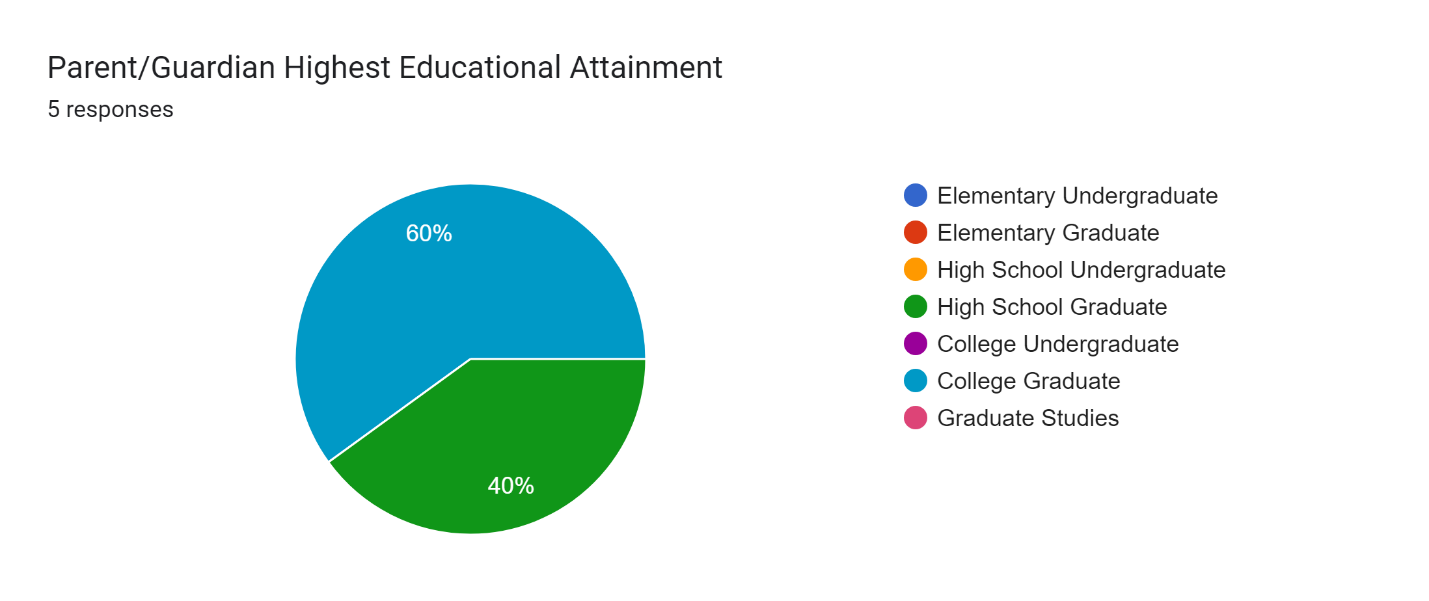
A total of five (5) grade 10 students who were identified as LSENs classified as learners with disabilities (LWDs) and were enrolled in a public high school in Cavite, Philippines took part in the research study. These students are in a full inclusion program. The following are the results of the administered survey questionnaire online.

***Figure 1:*** *Participants’ Medical Conditions*



Shown in the above figure 1 are the medical conditions of the participants who are attending the inclusion program for grade 10 learners.

***Figure 2:*** *LSENs’ Parents Socio-Economic Status (Highest Educational Attainment)*



According to Figure 2, 60% of grade 10 LSEN parents are college graduates, whereas 40% are high school graduates.

As shown in Table 2, 60% of grade 10 LSENs preferred to pursue the Academic Track while the Sports track got 20% Arts and Design also got 20% and TVL got 0%. Most grade 10 LSENs prefer to pursue the Academic senior high school track. None of the participants have chosen the Sports track.

***Table 2:*** *Preferred Senior High School Track of Grade 10 LSENs*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Senior High School Track | No. of Responses | Percentage |
| Academic | 3 | 60 % |
| TVL | 0 | 0 % |
| Sports | 1 | 20 % |
| Arts and Design | 1 | 20 % |
| Total | 5 | 100 % |

Table 3 lists the overall findings of the factors that influence the grade 10 LSENs' preference for the senior high school track. According to the data in the table below, personal interest came in first place with a mean value of 3.28, which is interpreted as influential. This was followed by job opportunities with a mean value of 3.12, financial situation with a mean value of 2.96, health conditions with a mean value of 2.44, and family with a mean value of 2.20. Peer influence came in last place with a mean value of 1.96, which is interpreted as slightly influential.

The majority of grade 10 LSENs considered their interests when deciding what track, they would enroll in for senior high school, placing their health condition as the fourth consideration.

***Table 3:*** *Factors’ Influence Level on Grade 10 LSENs SHS Track Preference*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Factors | Mean | Verbal Description | Rank |
| Personal Interest | 3.28 | Influential | 1 |
| Job Opportunities | 3.12 | Influential | 2 |
| Financial Situation | 2.96 | Influential | 3 |
| Health Conditions | 2.44 | Slight Influential | 4 |
| Family | 2.20 | Slight Influential | 5 |
| Peer Influence | 1.96 | Slight Influential | 6 |

Shown in Table 4 are the results of personal interest influence. The total mean value of personal interest is 3.28, interpreted as influential. Both statement numbers 4 and 5 got a mean value of 3.40 interpreted as influential. Which emphasized that grade 10 LSENs’ interest greatly influenced them as stated in the statements, *“My personality and habits are well-suited to the SHS track I've chosen”, and “I choose SHS track that best suit my abilities and interests.”*

***Table 4:*** *Results of Personal Interest Influence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statements | Mean | Verbal Description |
| 1. I make my decision based on my desires | 3.20 | Influential |
| 2. I consider my aptitudes and abilities in selecting my SHS track. | 3.20 | Influential |
| 3. I decide based on my freedom. | 3.20 | Influential |
| 4. My personality and habits are well-suited to the SHS track I've chosen | 3.40 | Influential |
| 5. I choose the SHS track that best suits my abilities and interests. | 3.40 | Influential |
| Total | 3.28 | Influential |

Shown in Table 5 are the results of family influence. The total mean value of family influence is 2.20, interpreted as slightly influential. These results proved that grade 10 LSENs’ parents don’t have much influence when it comes to their child’s track preferences in SHS.

***Table 5:*** *Results of Family Influence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statements | Mean | Verbal Description |
| 1. In choosing my SHS track/strand, I consider my parents' careers. | 2.20 | Influential |
| 2. I chose my SHS track based on my parents' preferences. | 1.80 | Slight Influential |
| 3. My parents encouraged me to enroll in the specific SHS track. | 2.40 | Influential |
| 4. My parents' influence on my choice of selecting the SHS track | 2.60 | Influential |
| 5. My parents suggested that I select the SHS track they wanted for me. | 2.00 | Slight Influential |
| Total | 2.20 | Slight Influential |

Shown in Table 6 are the results of peer influence. The total mean value of peer influence is 1.96, interpreted as slightly influential. Statements 2 and 3 got the lowest mean of 1.40, 1.80 respectively. That confirmed that grade 10 LSEN friends don’t influence them in choosing what track to choose.

***Table 6:*** *Results of Peer Influence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statements | Mean | Verbal Description |
| 1. I was influenced by my classmates in choosing my SHS track. | 2.00 | Slight Influential |
| 2. I worry that my friends will ignore me if I choose the track I want. | 1.40 | Not Influential |
| 3. My friend's decision is my decision too. | 1.80 | Slight Influential |
| 4. Before deciding on the SHS track/strand, I spoke with my friends. | 2.60 | Influential |
| 5. I had the same SHS track preferences as my peer group. | 2.00 | Slight Influential |
| Total | 1.96 | Slight Influential |

Shown in Table 7 are the results of job opportunity influence. The total mean value of job opportunities influence is 3.12, interpreted as influential. As reflected in the results, grade 10 LSENs consider SHS track's potential workplace and job market availability influences their decision.

***Table 7:*** *Results of Job Opportunities Influence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statements | Mean | Verbal Description |
| 1. I choose the SHS track based on its employability demand. | 3.00 | Influential |
| 2. I choose the SHS track based on its potential salary. | 3.20 | Influential |
| 3. I choose the SHS track based on its employability and stability rate. | 3.00 | Influential |
| 4. The news and job market availability influence which SHS track I choose. | 3.20 | Influential |
| 5. Considering the SHS track's potential workplace influences my decision. | 3.20 | Influential |
| Total | 3.12 | Influential |

Shown in Table 8 are the results of Financial Situation Influence. The total mean value of financial situation influence is 2.96, interpreted as influential. Generally, grade 10 LSENs choose the SHS track they’ll pursue based on its tuition cost.

***Table 8:*** *Results of Financial Situation Influence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statements | Mean | Verbal Description |
| 1. I choose the SHS track which would not cause financial stress for my parents/guardian. | 2.80 | Influential |
| 2. I choose the SHS track that would not burden my parent's/guardian's current financial status. | 3.00 | Influential |
| 3. I choose the SHS track based on its tuition cost. | 3.20 | Influential |
| 4. I choose the track that would not stress my present work. | 3.00 | Influential |
| 5. I consider my financial situation in choosing my SHS track | 2.80 | Influential |
| Total | 2.96 | Influential |

Shown in Table 9 are the Results of Health Condition Influence. The total mean value of health condition influence is 2.44, interpreted as a slight influence.

***Table 9:*** *Results of Health Condition Influence*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statements | Mean | Verbal Description |
| 1. My health condition influences my SHS track preference | 2.00 | Slight Influential |
| 2. My health condition hinders me from choosing the track I want. | 2.60 | Influential |
| 3. I know I cannot choose the track I want because of my condition. | 2.40 | Slight Influential |
| 4. I have trouble choosing my SHS track because of my condition. | 2.60 | Influential |
| 5. My health condition influences my SHS track preference | 2.60 | Influential |
| Total | 2.44 | Slight Influential |

# DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study's findings showed that grade 10 LSENs' interests had the greatest mean value of 3.28, which is significantly similar to the study of Malaguia et al., (2022) that regular students' decisions about which SHS track strand to pursue are significantly influenced by their interests. As explained by Rio et al., (2022), regular grade 10 students agreed that they chose their senior high school track depending on their desires and that will fit their skills and interests. Grade 10 LSENs and regular students both believed that their personal interests contributed the most significant part in determining which track they would choose to take in senior high school.

**Limitation of the Study**

This study is focused on an inclusive public high school in Cavite, Philippines that has five (5) enrolled grade 10 LSENs for S.Y. 2022-2023. Considering that there are only five (5) students in the study, the use of mean might be subjected to statistical error and not be able to show the variability in the data.

**Conclusions**

According to the study's findings, sixty percent (60%) of grade 10 LSENs would like to pursue an academic track in SHS. Influenced by different factors: personal interest, job opportunities, financial situation, health condition, family, and peer influence play an important role on them on what SHS track they’ll enroll in. Their personal interest has the most influence, whereas peer influence has the least. In terms of their health conditions, it does not greatly influence them on which track they’ll pursue.

The best way for grade 10 LSENs to succeed in high school is to select the SHS track that best fits their personalities, abilities, and health conditions. Considering the track that is suitable for learners can make sound decisions about which track they'll take in senior high school by integrating career plans with the curriculum. It's crucial to make sure that the learners comprehend the critical factors they must consider while selecting a career path, such as the SHS track significance on the college courses they hope to enroll in.

The study's findings support the idea that a school career guidance program for LSENs should be created continuously and should begin at a lower grade level to assist the learners in thoroughly identifying the appropriate senior high school track for them. Including LSEN's parents in the development of the career guidance program will enable them to comprehend and support their children. The parents decide the track that best suits their child's interests, personality, level of intellect, and medical conditions.

**Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, it is acclaimed that further study should be done on the relationship of LSENs’ condition to their SHS track preferences. Schools should start creating a career guidance program that will be intended for LSENs’ knowledge about themselves, including their personality, hobbies, strengths, and weaknesses. And that there should be an active parental involvement.

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