

# **Deciding Future: The Effect of Teachers' Interest in the Students' Career Plan on High School Students' Career Decision Making**

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## **Introduction**

This study examines the effect of teachers' interest in the students' career on high school students' career plan based on the nationally representative sample of the Korean Education and Employment Panel (KEEP). More specifically, this study aims to answer the question of whether students who receive teachers' interest are more likely to have decided their college major and future career at senior year in high school. Propensity score analysis with fixed effect model was used to account for the potential selection bias and create a demographically comparable sample to assess the effect of teachers' interest.

## **Data and methods**

### ***Sample***

The data for this study come from the Korean Education and Employment Panel (KEEP). The data set contains repeated observations of a nationally representative sample of students, their families, teachers and schools over the period of high school through age 28. The KEEP employed a stratified design structure to randomly select 2,000 students in 100 public schools. The present study used the entire sample of the KEEP to analyze the effect of teachers' interest on high school students' career plans.

### ***Analytical strategy***

The use of propensity scores with fixed effect model, together with a comprehensive dataset based on a large, nationally representative sample (KEEP), enables this study to draw on the strengths of both experimental and observational designs. Different from randomized control trial that each student shares the equal probability of receiving teachers' interest, in a non-randomized study, each student varies in its probability of receiving teachers' interest depending on child and family covariates. As a result, this study employed propensity score matching to

achieve a good balance between demographically comparable samples between treatment (students who receive teacher interest) and control groups.

### *Measures*

The outcome variables included whether students had chosen their (1) college major and (2) future career. The key independent variable was whether students' perceived that their teachers were interested in the students' career plan. A set of 40 variables collected in the KEEP, from parent, student, and teacher surveys were used as control variables. These variables included measures of (a) family structure, (b) socioeconomic status, (c) parenting style, (d) cultural and social capital, (e) prior career assistance program, among others.

### **Results**

Table 1 (Model 2) shows the results from ordinary least squares regression with school as a fixed effect and controlling for all covariates within the region of common support. Analysis of the KEEP (2005) revealed that students who received teachers' interest were more likely to have decided their career plans at senior year in high school. More specifically, students who received teachers' interest were more likely to have decided their college major (.454,  $p < .01$ ) and career (.489,  $p < .01$ ) at senior year in high school.

Table 1. The Effects of Teachers Interest in Students Career Plan on Deciding College Major and Future Career of Senior in Public High Schools in Korea

	Career		College Major	
	Model 1 (SE)	Model 2 (SE)	Model 1 (SE)	Model 2 (SE)
Intercept	0.577 (1.177)	-1.748 (2.122)	1.227 (1.510)	-3.090 (2.797)
Teachers interest in future students' career	0.489** (0.138)	0.447* (0.187)	0.454** (0.172)	0.472* (0.224)
Covariates				
Propensity score	○	○	○	○
Independent variables	○	○	○	○
School fixed effect model		○		○

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Sample size	1,360	1,280	1,333	1,115
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\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

### **Discussion**

This study adds to the growing body of evidence that teachers' interest in students' aptitude and career plan plays a significant role in enhancing career decision making of high school students. To this end, this study suggests that Korean government should find effective policies to raise teachers' interest in students' future career plan.