

## Dynamics of Gender, Job Attributions and Work Environment Expectations on the Post-University Job Preferences of Ghanaian Undergraduate Students

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### Abstract

This study sought to understand whether the job preferences of university students nearing graduation in a developing economy is significantly and mutually related to their gender, as well as their job attributions, and work environment expectations. Guided by a cross-sectional research design and quantitative approach, data was collected from a sample of 994 year-three and year-four undergraduate students using a close-ended questionnaire. Correlation and multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to determine if the students' gender and their expected job attribution factors related to their job preferences. Based on the analyses, it was found that only the students' expectation of job varieties significantly related to their job preferences. It is concluded that though a significant and mutual relationship exist between the job preferences of university students and their expectations of job varieties, such preferences are not related to their gender, and other job values factors, such as their expected abilities to use their skills, their expectation of extrinsic rewards, their need for work life balance, and how interesting they expected a job to be. This paper provides useful insights, from developing country context, on university students' future-oriented behavioural dynamics on job preference determination when near graduation.

**Keywords:** Year 3-4 undergraduate students; Gender; Job attributions; Worklife expectation, Job preference, Ghana

### 1. Introduction

Employees' turnover and turnover-intentions are detrimental to organisations in all respect. Although not all turnovers are bad, the turnover of a resolute and competent employee can be disruptive and harmful to an organization due to the additional costs incurred (Boyne, James, John & Petrovsky, 2011). Demagalhaes, Wilde and Fitzgerald, (2011) argue that when employees' values are closely aligned with the organization's values, satisfaction is likely to be greater while turnover will more likely be lower. It therefore makes business sense to understand what the values of students are so organisations can attract those whose values are much more aligned to their values. For instance, a study by Cable and Judge (1994; p. 345) confirmed the assertions of the person-organization fit theory and the attraction component of Schneider's (2001) attraction-selection-attrition framework when they found that students preferred organisations that 'better fit their dispositional orientations and may be attracted to organization's pay systems'. Similarly, Lechner, Sortheix, Obschonka, and Salmela-Aro (2018; p. 59) observe that "the degree of fit (or congruence) between personal work orientations and the job characteristics determines subsequent job satisfaction, engagement, and performance. Having a deeper understanding of this concept will inform employers about the most appropriate form of rewards to give and become an organization of choice since they will be highly attractive to potential job seekers. Also, knowing the job preferences of graduating students can enhance understanding of how to reduce graduate unemployment as students with entrepreneurial values can be spotted early and supported.

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While research on job preferences is not new, Lechner et al. (2018) noted that studies in this area is under-researched in developing country context, since majority of studies are based on western samples thereby raising issues whether its generalizability in the African terrain is prudent.

To address such research shortcomings, this study explored the dynamics of students' gender and job values relative to their job preferences in the Ghanaian environment, which provides a developing country context. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand whether the job preferences of Ghanaian university students, as they near graduation and movement towards entering the job market, is related to their gender, extrinsic reward expectation, work-life balance expectation, expected ability to use skills, expected work excitement, and expected work environment conditions.

## 2. Literature Review

In the view of Kozak, "job preference orientations are the characteristics of jobs that workers find important and desirable, because they are relevant for employee satisfaction, motivation, and well-being" (Kozak (2020; p. 1). Similarly, Lechner et al., (2018) argue that job values refer to the importance individuals place on different job characteristics and the rewards they seek to attain in their job. These values are categorized into extrinsic (e.g., high salary, job security), intrinsic (e.g., interesting work, skill utilization), social (usefulness of work to society), autonomy (e.g., level of independence) and stimulation (e.g., variety of work). Job values across generations are changing, even though gender wise, females place more worth on intrinsic and altruistic values than males who place more worth on extrinsic values (Sundstrom & Wolming, 2013). Students deem altruistic values as more important than extrinsic and intrinsic values and therefore value it more (Sundstrom & Wolming 2013), however, unemployed individuals job values run across the flexibility of their salary, work schedule, and training flexibility (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Lens & De Witte, 2010).

### 2.1 Gender and job preference

The process by which a person learns behaviour presumed appropriate for his /her sex-type is underlined by the sex-role socialization theory (Eagly, 1987). The theory also explains the dynamics of sex-differences in individuals' career choices, relative to job-related skills, and occupational orientation (Marini, Fan, Finley & Beutel, 1996). Underlined by this theoretical perspective, research in the United States, Canada, and Australia (e.g., Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield & Joseph 1995; Browne 1997; Judge & Bretz 1992; Mason & Mudrack 1996; Tomkiewicz, Brenner & Damanpour 1994) have reported gender differences in students' work values, job choices, and career orientations among undergraduate and graduate students. Other studies have also found women as generally, attaching greater importance on working conditions that can have influential effect on their job participation and commitment at the workplace (e.g., Chow & Ngo, 2020; Sanda, 2020). Authors (e.g., Chow & Ngo, 2020; Verheul, Thurik, Grilo & Van der Zwan, 2012) have confirmed a lower rate of female participation in self-employment. Verheul et al. (2012) indicate that this low probability is often because women are risk averse, unwilling to become self-employed and confronted with gender-specific obstacles. Verheul et al., (2012) further explain that females' preference for salaried jobs in the formal sector (i.e., corporate or government institution) rather than self-employment is a function of their unwillingness (e.g., due to income instability) and their inability (e.g., lack of time and finance). Toogood's (2017) study however finds that University leavers who choose to be self-employed are those "who were self-confident, at ease with potential financial and job uncertainty, motivated by controlling their own time and managing their own workload and who had multiple business ideas" (Toogood, 2017; p. 26) and this is applicable to both genders. Similarly, Abebe's (2015) findings in Ethiopia confirms that female students were more inclined for job with private or public sectors than being self-employed. However, majority of students did not have any short-term plans of being self-employed.

Biemann, Zacher, and Feldman (2012) confirm the above findings that graduating students are interested in salaried jobs in the formal sector than self-employment. Espiritu-Olmos and Sastre-Castillo (2015) found male students display an entrepreneurial attitude that is greater than that of female students. Wilson, Kickul and Marlino's (2007) study established gender differences in entrepreneurial activity. Hirschi and Fischer (2013) found that women on the average report fewer entrepreneurial intentions than their male counterparts with differences in their values accounting for this. Whilst Rottinghaus and Zytowski (2006) found gender differences, whereby males scored higher on achievement value and independence compared to females, which are two key values for entrepreneurship, Lechner et al. (2018) intimate that autonomy and stimulation are more important to students with entrepreneurship intentions than those aspiring to be employed. Additionally, the higher premium placed on job security by women and their lower desire for extrinsic rewards account for their low intentions for self-employment.

This is because, self-employment warrants one to be a risk taker, be independent and face uncertainties. These features make them aspire to be in salaried job. Thus, the hypothesis (H1) is proposed:

H1: There is a mutual relationship between the gender of Ghanaian university students and their job preferences.

## 2.2 Job value and job preference

Graduating students usually aspire either to be in salaried jobs in the formal sector (corporate or governmental institution) or self-employment. Research by Benz and Frey (2008) provide evidence to show that the self-employed are more satisfied than the formally employed because of the rewards of having an interesting job and autonomy which the formally employed are deprived of. On the other hand, the formally employed benefit from pay, job security and career advancement and that is a big motivation for those with such aspirations. In a study among university students in Spain by Espiritu-Olmos and Sastre-Castillo (2015), results showed that those aspiring to be self-employed are those who placed a high value on authority and achievement than those with paid-job intentions. Their findings further showed that personality traits had more effect on entrepreneurial aspirations than work values. In contrast to Espiritu-Olmos and Sastre-Castillo (2015), Lechner et al., (2018) found that work values strongly predicted job preferences. Gorgievski, Stephan, Laguna, and Moriano (2018) in a cross-country analysis of four European countries confirm the above in that student who prioritized self-enhancement (power and achievement) and openness (self-direction and stimulation) values were more inclined to be self-employed than those who did not. This was because the possibilities of achieving these values are higher in self-employment. Likewise, Hirschi and Fischer (2013) found that students who scored high on openness to change (stimulation, autonomy) and self-enhancement (power, achievement, prestige) values had self-employment intentions. However, a negative association was found between conservation values (job security and conformity) and entrepreneurial intentions. Those intending to be self-employed focused less on job-security but more on taking risk. According to Lechner et al., “extrinsic rewards (positively) and job-security (negatively) proved to be powerful predictors of both aspirations” (Lechner et al., 2018; p. 66). Based on these observations, the hypotheses (H2) and (H3) are proposed:

H2: There is a mutual relationship between the abilities of Ghanaian university students to use their skills and their job preferences.

H3: There is a mutual relationship between the extrinsic reward expectations of Ghanaian university students and their job preferences.

Demagalhaes et al. (2011) found that extrinsic job factors were important to students. These factors include career prospects, job security, opportunity to gain experience, work-life balance, and employer location (Demagalhaes et al., 2011). Similarly, Lechner et al., (2018) confirmed the gendered nature of job values when they found that males ranked extrinsic rewards higher than females, but females also ranked security and intrinsic values higher than males. Regarding autonomy and stimulation, although males ranked that higher, the level of significance was small. Conversely, females placed a higher premium on social values but was statistically insignificant. In the same vein, Sorthaix et al., (2015) found that on average, females put a high premium on intrinsic job values while ranking extrinsic features of the job lower than males. Unlike Lechner et al., (2018), Marini et al., (1996) found that autonomy was not gendered. Lechner et al's (2018) work is complemented by Su and Rounds (2015), whose findings were that males had a higher tendency of ranking extrinsic features (higher salary, career prospects) higher than females, while females ranked intrinsic values (learning opportunities, worklife balance and interpersonal relations) higher than males. While a study by Iacovou, Shirland and Thompson (2004), using both undergraduate and postgraduate students, found no gender effect on job orientations, Bundy and Norris (1992) found that females have a higher preference for office support, employer-paid pregnancy leave, after-hours social activities, and on-premises day care facilities. Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb and Corrigan (2000) also found gender differences in job values with women putting a high premium on being helpful to others, good supervision, short commuting time and jobs that develop their knowledge and skills than men. Based on these observations, the hypothesis (H4) is proposed:

H4: There is a mutual relationship between Ghanaian university students' need for worklife balance and their job preferences.

A study by Bundy and Norris (1992) found that for students, job value factors, such as job security, interesting work, and career progression, tend to be of most importance. Similarly, in China, Liu, Li, Yang, Liu and Chen (2019) also found job value factors, such as excellent work environment, career progression, higher income, light working strength, and firm location to be of importance to students.

Thus, to a considerable extent, environmental factors have been found to provide the context when it comes to the job preferences of university students due to its effect on an individual's work values development.

Such environment factors have been identified by Chow and Ngo (2020) to include the differences in work environment conditions (e.g., in HR practices and social policies), government policies regulating college graduates' employment, and gender gaps in employment. Thus, information about an organization's environmental setting is deemed to be important because it helps provide an understanding on university graduates mindsets on constraints and opportunities in organizations and how this shape their job aspirations and job searching behaviour Chow and Ngo (2020). Based on these observations, the hypotheses (H5) and (H6) are proposed:

H5: There is a mutual relationship between Ghanaian university students' expectations of how interesting a job will be and their job preferences.

H6: There is a mutual relationship between Ghanaian university students' expectations of the work environment conditions and their job preferences.

Underlined by the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6, the conceptual framework shown in figure 1 below was developed to guide this study.

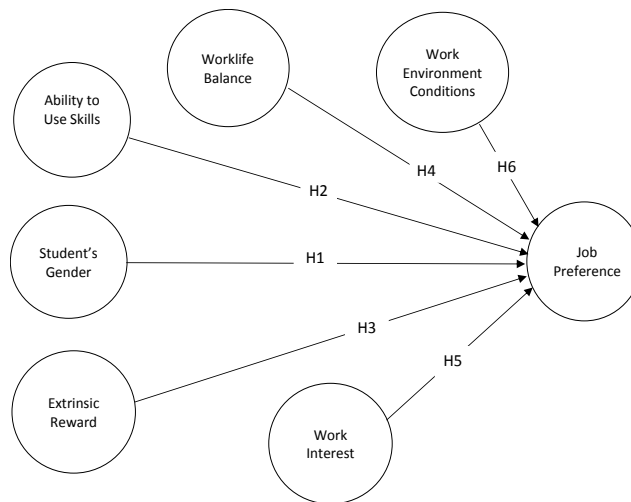


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for relationship between students' gender, job values and job preferences.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

A cross-sectional research design and quantitative approach was used. The study population was comprised of undergraduate university students in Ghana pursuing four-year bachelor degrees programmes in various fields spanning the health sciences, basic and applied science, humanities, and education. The study participants were selected from the study population using convenient sampling. This was because the goal of the study was to solicit data from students who are in the advanced stages of their education and might have had serious thoughts about their career aspirations as they prepare to enter the formal industry work or become entrepreneurs. Thus, the study sample consisted of 994 (i.e., 596 year-three and 398 year-four) undergraduate students. The university was chosen because it is the largest in Ghana with a student population of about forty thousand.

#### 3.2 Measures

The study adapted the improved version of the 16-item work values instrument (Vecchio, 1987) by Lechner et al. (2018). The adapted job value items in Lechner et al's. (2018) scale include extrinsic reward, work life balance, ability to use skills, and expected work excitement. The items have the following composite reliabilities that are above the threshold; extrinsic reward dimension ( $\alpha = 0.690$ ), worklife balance (Social dimension,  $\alpha = 0.826$ ), expected work excitement and work environment conditions (Stimulation dimension,  $\alpha = 0.871$ ), ability to use skills (Autonomy dimension,  $\alpha = 0.872$ ). The items were measured on a six-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from "Very important = 1" to "Not important at all = 5", and "Not sure = 6".

### 3.3 Data collection procedure

Data was collected using a close-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was sectioned into two sections. The first section solicited data on the study participants’ demographics (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, and nationality) as well as their job preferences(i.e., salaried jobs in the formal sector or self-employment). Section B solicited data on factors constituted students’ job values (e.g., good pay, job security, job variety). Data was collected between October 2018 to April 2019. The study participants, all of whom are full-time students and not engaged in any formal full-time or part-time jobs were given closed-ended questionnaire to complete during lecture hours and collected the same day. In terms of the ethical protocols, the researchers gained informed consent from these students before the distribution of the questionnaire. The students were encouraged, but not coerced to complete the questionnaire and were informed that they could withdraw from the study should they wish to do so.

### 3.4 Data analysis method

The data was analysed both descriptively and inferentially. In the descriptive analysis, the respondents’ gender, age, and job preferences were analysed. In the inferential analysis, both correlation analysis was conducted to test the orientations and significances of the relationships between the dependent variable (job preferences) and the independent variables (gender, extrinsic reward, worklife balance, ability to use skills, expected work excitement). Multiple linear regression analysis was also conducted to evaluate how the dependent variable was predicted by the independent variables. The respondents’ age was used as control a variable. The statistical package for social sciences software version 23 was used as the analytic tool.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic analysis of study participants

Out of the 1100 questionnaires distributed, a total of 994 usable questionnaires, made up of 498 (50.10%) female students and 496 (49.90%) male students were successfully retrieved. This represented a response rate of 99.80 percent. Analysis of the respondents’ age showed that it ranged from 18 to 30 years. Analysis of the job preferences showed that 726 (73.04%) of the student participants chose salaried jobs in the formal sector while 268 (26.96%) chose self-employment.

### 4.2 Correlation analysis for dependent and independent variables

As a recall, five hypotheses were outlined earlier in section 2 whose veracity need to be evaluated. To evaluate the hypotheses, the correlations between the dependent (i.e., job preferences) and independent variables (i.e., students’ gender, extrinsic reward, worklife balance, ability to use skills, and expected work excitement) were evaluated. The means (M), standard deviations (SD), and Pearson correlation estimates are shown in table 1 below. As it is evident from table 1, the associations that exist between the dependent variable and all the independent variables are not significant. This is indicated by the correlation measures between the students’ job preferences and their gender ( $\alpha = 0.00, p > 0.05$ ), as well as their expectations for Extrinsic Reward ( $\alpha = 0.01, p > 0.05$ ), Worklife Balance ( $\alpha = 0.026, p > 0.05$ ), Ability to Use Skills ( $\alpha = 0.03, p > 0.05$ ), Work Excitement ( $\alpha = 0.04, p > 0.05$ ), and Work Environment Conditions ( $\alpha = 0.08, p < 0.05$ ).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation estimates for the study variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender	1.50	0.50	1						
Employment preferences	1.73	0.44	0.00 (0.92)	1					
Extrinsic reward	1.17	0.44	-0.04 (0.16)	0.01 (0.69)	1				
Worklife balance	1.31	0.54	-0.10** (0.00)	0.03 (0.48)	0.22** (0.00)	1			
Ability to use skills	1.26	0.62	-0.07* (0.03)	0.03 (0.44)	0.05 (0.14)	0.22** (0.00)	1		
Expected work excitement	1.35	0.62	-0.04 (0.23)	0.04 (0.25)	0.06 (0.06)	0.25** (0.00)	0.15** (0.00)	1	

Work environment condition	1.50	0.73	-0.16** (0.00)	0.08* (0.02)	0.10** (0.00)	0.10** (0.00)	0.10** (0.00)	0.30** (0.00)	1
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Statistically, the correlation outcomes show that only hypothesis H6 was supported. The hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5, are all not supported. By implication, the following findings, which indicate predictive relationships that can be exploited in practice, are made.

1. The job preference of Ghanaian university students is significantly and mutually related to their expectations of job varieties.
2. The job preference of Ghanaian university students is not significantly related to their gender.
3. The job preference of Ghanaian university students is not mutually related to their expected abilities to use their skills.
4. The job preference of Ghanaian university students is not significantly related to their expectations of extrinsic reward.
5. The job preference of Ghanaian university students is not significantly related to their need for worklife balance.
6. The job preference of Ghanaian university students is not significantly related to how interesting they expected a job to be.

On the contrary, there is a semblance of strong statistical associations between the independent variables. The correlation between the students' gender and their worklife balance expectation is negative and highly significant ( $\alpha = -0.00, p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the correlation between their gender and ability to use skills is negative and significant ( $\alpha = -0.07, p > 0.05$ ). There are also a positive and highly significant correlations between the students' worklife balance expectation and their extrinsic rewards expectations ( $\alpha = 0.22, p < 0.01$ ), ability to use skills ( $\alpha = 0.22, p < 0.01$ ) and expected work excitement ( $\alpha = 0.22, p < 0.01$ ). A positive and highly significant correlation also exist between the students' ability to use skills and their expected work excitement ( $\alpha = 0.15, p < 0.01$ ). A negative and remarkably high significant correlation also exist between the students' expectation of work environment conditions and their gender ( $\alpha = -0.16, p < 0.01$ ). Also, a positive and highly significant correlations exist between the students' expectation of work environment conditions and their Extrinsic Reward expectations ( $\alpha = 0.10, p < 0.01$ ), worklife balance expectation ( $\alpha = 0.10, p < 0.01$ ), Ability to Use Skills ( $\alpha = 0.10, p < 0.01$ ), and expected work excitement ( $\alpha = 0.303, p < 0.01$ ). As a result of these strong correlations among the independent variables, the following findings are made.

- i). The students' worklife balance and work environment conditions expectation, as well as their expectations of the ability to use skills is mutually related to their gender.
- ii). The students' worklife balance expectation is mutually related to their extrinsic rewards and work environment conditions expectations, as well as their expectations of work excitement and the ability to use skills.
- iii). The students' expectations of ability to use skills is mutually related to their expectation of work environment conditions and work excitement.

By incorporating the above findings in the conceptual framework (figure 1), the empirical framework shown in figure 2 below is obtained.

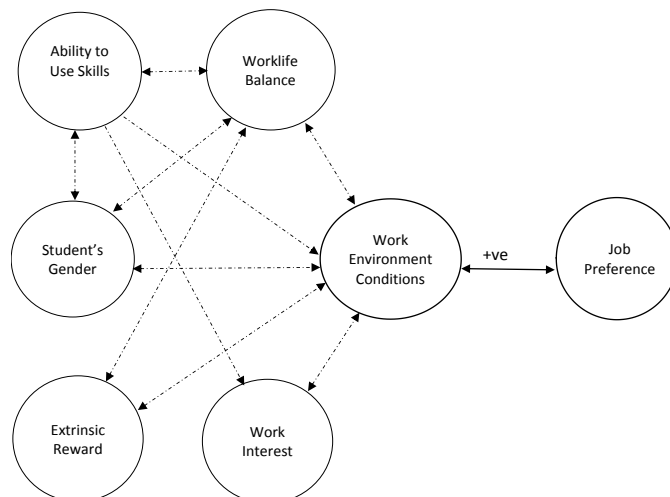


Figure 2: Empirical model for relationship between students' gender, job values and job preferences.

### 4.3 Regression analysis of dependent and independent variables

The correlation analysis established a significant mutual relationship only between the students’ job preference (independent variable) and work environment conditions (a dependent variable). Though the correlation between the dependent and the remaining independent variables are statistically insignificant, the fact that a semblance of association existed between them could be deemed to have practical relevance, especially in the Ghanaian educational environment. As such, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to explain the students’ job preference based on their expectations for work environment conditions, complemented by their gender, extrinsic reward expectation, worklife balance expectations, ability to use their skills and their expected work excitement. All the assumptions were met, and the estimated regression coefficients are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2. Multiple regression coefficients for independent and dependent variables relationship

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		Standardized Coefficients <sup>a</sup>	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.61	0.09		18.64	0.00		
	Gender	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.48	0.63	0.97	1.03
	Extrinsic reward	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.12	0.90	0.93	1.07
	Worklife balance	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.10	0.92	0.82	1.22
	Ability to use skills	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.05	0.96	0.85	1.17
	Expected excitement	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.42	0.67	0.87	1.15
	Work environment conditions	0.05	0.02	0.08	1.92	0.05	0.82	1.22

a. Dependent variable = Job preferences

From table 2, the B coefficients indicate units increase of the choice of job preference for a single unit increase in each predictor. In this regard, the following are inferred.

- i). With one-unit increase in gender, the job preference increases by 0.016, which was found to be an insignificant change,  $t(73) = 0.48, p > 0.05$ .
- ii). With one-unit increase in extrinsic reward, the job preference increases by 0.005, which was found to be an insignificant change,  $t(73) = 0.12, p > 0.05$ .
- iii). With one-unit increase in worklife balance, the job preference increases by 0.003, which was found to be an insignificant change,  $t(73) = 0.10, p > 0.05$ .
- iv). With one-unit increase in the ability to use skills, the job preference increases by 0.002, which was found to be an insignificant change,  $t(73) = 0.05, p > 0.05$ .
- v). With one-unit increase in expected work excitement the job preference increases by 0.012, which was found to be an insignificant change,  $t(73) = 0.42, p > 0.05$ .
- vi). With one-unit increase in the work environment condition, the job preference increases by 0.046, which was found to be a significant change,  $t(73) = 1.92, p = 0.05$ .

Given the scores on the predictors shown in table 2 above, the students’ ability to use skills, as well as their extrinsic reward and worklife balance expectations have no predictive significance. Thus, their choices of job preference can be predicted by their gender, expected work excitement and work environment condition, as underlined by the following computation.

$$\text{Preference} = 1.61 + (0.02 \times \text{Gender}) + (0.01 \times \text{Expected work excitement}) + (0.05 \times \text{Work environment condition})$$

Using the beta coefficients of the predictors shown in table 2 above, a comparison of their relative strengths was obtained as 1:1:4 for gender, expected work excitement, and work environment conditions, respectively. This means that the students need for work environment conditions is the strongest predictor of their job preferences, as supported by the significant correlation found between the two variables earlier on.

Though, it is indicative that the students’ job preference is not significantly associated with their ability to use their skills, as well as their extrinsic reward and worklife balance expectations, it is slightly associated with their gender, expected work excitement, and expected work environment condition. The model summary and ANOVA estimates are shown in table 3 and table 4 below.

Table 3. Model summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.01	0.00	0.44	1.76	0.09 <sup>a</sup>

a. Predictors: (Constant), work environment conditions, expected work excitement, gender, extrinsic reward, ability to use skills, worklife balance

b. Dependent variable: Job preference

Table 4. ANOVA<sup>b</sup> estimates

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.09	6	0.18	0.92	0.48 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	145.00	735	0.20		
	Total	146.09	741			

a. Predictors: (Constant), work environment conditions, expected work excitement, gender, extrinsic reward, ability to use skills, worklife balance.

b. Dependent variable: Job preference.

As it is highlighted in table 3 above, the value of the multiple correlation coefficient (R), which denotes the correlation between predicted and observed job preference is 0.01. The value of the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) is 0.00, indicating that the model does not explain the variations in the dependent variable. But a consideration of the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value (0.44) indicates a more realistic but low predictive power of the model, that is the model explains 44% of the variation in the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson check on autocorrelation showed that the residuals are positively correlated. This observation is supported by the ANOVA estimates (see table 4 above) which shows that, overall, the model is not significantly useful in explaining the students' job preferences,  $F(6, 735) = 0.92$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . yet, its ability to explain 44% of the students' job preference is deemed as relevant.

## 5. Discussion

This study hypothesized that a mutual relationship exists between the job preferences of Ghanaian university students and their gender. The finding that the students' job preference is not significantly related to their gender is contrary to those of Chow and Ngo (2020), Espiritu-Olmos and Sastre-Castillo (2015), Brooks et al. (1995), Browne (1997), Judge and Bretz (1992), Mason and Mudrack (1996), and Tomkiewicz et al. (1994). Although these studies found that female students prefer salaried jobs in the formal sector while male students had a higher preference for self-employment, this study found otherwise. An explanation for this might be because students are not aspiring to be self-employed, a finding consistent with Abebe's (2015) and Biemann et al's (2012). It may partly be explained that these graduating students do not have the characteristics described by Toogood (2017) as necessary for being self-employed. Thus, using Toogood's (2017; p. 26) assertion as a point of departure, it could be argued that students who are self-confident and at ease with potential financial and job uncertainty are more likely to have entrepreneurial aspirations than those who do not. Students seeking salaried jobs in the formal sector appear unwilling to take risks, and do not put high value on independence, and are likely to be anxious in the face of uncertainties. This finding represents a contextual issue in Ghana because the syllabi of courses for programmes in the educational system has been criticized as not equipping graduating students to be interested in entrepreneurship. The syllabi of universities do not focus on job creation hence students graduate with the hope of becoming successful job seekers.

Although Espiritu-Olmos and Sastre-Castillo (2015), Lechner et al. (2018), as well as Gorgievski et al. (2017) found that work values strongly predicted job preferences, in this study, some job attributes were found as not mutually related to the students' preference of being self-employed or for salaried job. Job values such as expected abilities to use their skills, extrinsic rewards, need for work-life balance and interesting nature of jobs are not mutually related, an unanticipated finding.

Findings show that except for expectations of job varieties that is mutually related to their job preferences, all others were insignificant; a finding contrasting the work of Benz and Frey (2008) who provide evidence to show that the self-employed are more satisfied than the formally employed because of the rewards of having an interesting job which is the preserve of those aspiring to be in paid job. Although the employed are motivated by extrinsic rewards (pay, job security, work-life balance, and career advancement) (Benz & Frey, 2008), this study finds a contrary view as



these values did not relate to the students' choice of being in either paid or self-employment. Though Lechner et al., (2018) found a relationship between extrinsic rewards and students' decision to either be in paid or self-employment, such finding is contrasted by that of this study. It seems possible that these results are due to the age range of the study respondents. As undergraduates and millennials, majority of whom are within the age range of 18 to 24, other job values appear of interest to them. For such young people, they have time at their disposal such that they may not value work-life balance. This is not unusual because they might have no family responsibilities, hence the less premium put on the value. Obviously, people are likely to desire that which they do not have than what they currently have. Based on the foregoing, we postulate that, due to the contextual nature of the study, the gender-role socialization theory (Eagly, 1987) that explains the dynamics of gender-differences in individuals' occupational orientation (Marini et al., 1996) must be applied with caution, especially in developing environments, such as in Ghana.

Though, five hypotheses (i.e., H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5) were not supported, the findings that emerged established a mutual relationship between the students' gender and their work-life balance and work environment conditions expectation, as well as their expectations of the ability to use skills. The findings resonated with those of Lechner et al. (2018), Sorthaix, Chow and Salmela-Aro (2015), Su and Rounds (2015), Bundy and Norris (1992) and Konrad et al., (2000). In effect, in designing reward systems, organizations should not underestimate the role of gender, because female students, as potential future employees, tend to have different values from their male counterparts (i.e., different things will motivate different genders differently). Properly aligning these values with gender differences in mind, as advanced by Demagalhaes et al. (2011), will increase the expected job satisfaction and productivity of such future-oriented human resource.

## 6. Conclusion

Though studies on students' job values are limited in a developing country context, findings in this study regarding the relationship between the students' job preferences and their gender, as well as with their job attributes, showed a level of conformance and contrast with those in the extant literature by researchers from advanced economies. It is concluded that though the job preferences of Ghanaian university students are mutually related to their expectations of job varieties, such preferences are not related to their gender, and other job values factors, such as their expected abilities to use their skills, their expectation of extrinsic rewards, their need for worklife balance, and how interesting they expected a job to be.

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