

# Influence of Family Factors on Careers Choice among Secondary School Students in Kitui Central Sub County

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**Abstract:** Career development is a life-long process, and choices made during the secondary school years are of particular importance in setting the foundation for future professional development. Selecting a career can be an overwhelming liability for many students. This study sought to investigate how family factors influence career choice among high school students in Kitui Central Sub-County, Kenya. The researcher adopted a concurrent triangulation research design to explore the topic of study. The target population constituted 42 secondary schools in Kitui Central sub-county. A sample of 8 schools, which was 20% of the total schools was used. A representative sample of 420 students, 8 career counseling teachers and 12 class teachers were used for the study. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling were utilized to sample the respondents. Piloting was done in one school to test the reliability of the research instruments. Descriptive statistics was used to present the results of the study and the general trends; this involved tabulating and describing data, while the qualitative data was presented using themes and narratives. Both types of data were triangulated in answering the research questions. The study found out that family factors such as parents influence, siblings' careers and family social economic status. The study recommended that guidance and counseling teachers and class teachers should involve students in the career selecting process, considering their interest, ability, skills and personality. The study further recommended the Career choosing process to start earlier in life.

**Keywords:** Family factors, Careers choice, Secondary school, Students, Kitui Central Sub County. Kenya

## 1. Introduction

Career selection is one of many important choices students make in determining future plans, therefore the importance of career choice among senior high students cannot be over emphasized. This decision impacts them throughout their lives. The career decisions made by individuals always lead to important vocational outcomes in the future (Walker & Tracey, 2012). Career may be defined as the actions and progress taken by a person throughout a lifetime, specially related to that persons' occupations. A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one's position (Business Dictionary.com). According to Navin (2009), career development is both a socially and a psychologically constructed process involving complex interactions among different structures, forces, and systems, all constituting spheres of influence which an individual puts into consideration before making a final decision on which career to pursue. Natalie (2006) defined career as the total pattern of one's activities held during a person's life-time.

Ezeani (2013) conducted a review of literature on career choice among primary and secondary school students on basic issues that affect career choice, he identified knowledge of the job, self-knowledge, parental and peer group constraints, and parental financial status as influencers of career choice patterns of students. Madu (2011) studied the impact of gender on academic performance of 160 Arts-Related subjects in Nasarawa State University. He concluded that female students performed significantly better than males in Arts-Related subjects. Similarly, Buabeng (2012) studied female senior high school students' interest in physics as a course of study at the University

level in Ghana and concluded that female students did not prefer physics as a course of study at the University level due to limited employment opportunities for females in physics as a career.

Students from Kitui central, like any other Kenyans, are influenced in their choice of career by several factors including personality, cultural values, family background, and economic activities of the county. Furthermore, Kitui County economy primarily depends on natural resources where majority of the population lives in rural areas and derives their livelihood mainly from these resources (CIDP, 2014). This clearly influences the choices students make concerning their aspirations and the path they intend to follow to secure desirable careers. The County Integrated Development Plan (2014) set a framework to enhance sector integration in areas such as housing, transport, energy, industry and agriculture to boost the economic activities in the county. It is on the basis of the above described background, that Kitui Central was chosen for this kind of study so that the factors that influence career choice in this socio-economic environment could be brought to light.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Most secondary school students do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate career choices, search for jobs and plan their life. They are often faced with uncertainty and stress as they make these choices. Many of them do not make adequate research on their expected careers due lack of exposure nor do they receive adequate directions from their school career guidance masters. Many youth also go into unsuitable careers due to ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers or as a

result of the prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counseling, this has created an outcry among parents, employers and other stake holders. Maingi (2007) observed that 63% of students who joined public Universities in Kenya, through Joint Admissions Board (JAB), were hardly admitted to pursue degree programs of their choices. This was a high figure, despite the fact that Career Guidance and Counseling has been on-going for over two decades in Kenyan secondary schools. This situation compels one to ask whether students are given the needed guidance on available careers relating to their programs of study. This study therefore seeks to find out the extent to which family factors influence career choice among secondary school students in Kitui Central sub county, Kenya.

### The General objective of the study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the influence of family factors on career choice among secondary school students in Kitui Central sub county, Kenya.

### The Specific objectives of the study

- 1) To investigate the influence of Parental influence on career choice among secondary school students in Kitui Central sub county, Kenya
- 2) To investigate the influence of Family economic status on career choice among secondary school students in Kitui Central sub county, Kenya
- 3) To investigate the influence of Sibling influence on career choice among secondary school students in Kitui Central sub county, Kenya

## 3. Theoretical Review

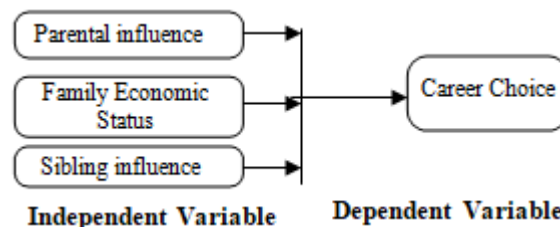
### Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (SLTCDM)

This study was also guided by Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (SLTCDM) by John Krumboltz (Krumboltz's, 1998). This theory was conceptualized as one theory which explains the origins of career choice; and two, Krumboltz's Learning Theory of Career Counselling (LTCC)- which explains what career counsellors can do about many career related problems. Krumboltz's SLTCDM was designed to address the reasons behind decisions to enter, change or express interest in educational programs or occupations. It highlights four factors that influence career decision making path. These factors include, a) genetic endowment and special abilities, b) environmental conditions and events, c) learning experiences, and d) task approach skills. The result of the learners' interaction with these four factors was said to develop in them self-observation generalizations and world-view generalizations, which in turn make individual learners engage in behaviours that lead to entry into a given career occupations. In summary Krumboltz's SLTCDM, postulated that career transitions resulted from an uncountable number of learning experiences, made possible by both planned and unplanned encounters with the people, institutions and events in each person's particular environment. By examining the levels of career decidedness, investigating the existing factors influencing students career choices and exploring the preparedness of school in career decision paths, it was

thought that it would be more evident how the students- while still acknowledging the role played by innate and developmental processes, initiated career choices following this model of Krumboltz's SLTCDM.

## 4. Conceptual Framework

The study adopted the following conceptual framework:



Source: Author 2018

### Family Factors Influencing Students Career Choices

Ferry (2006) investigated factors influencing career choices of adolescents and young adults in rural Pennsylvania using a qualitative study to explore factors that play key roles in rural high school seniors in the career choice process. Participants were 98. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The findings of the study confirm existing knowledge about the great impact that family and community have upon young adults' self-identity and career choice. The study did not sample from the urban centers of Pennsylvania and career counselors were not interviewed to get their contribution in the subject. The research was purely qualitative despite the big sample. The current study used both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to gather all necessary information. Career counselors were also interviewed since they largely influence what careers students choose.

A Qualitative study carried out in USA by Jungen (2008) on how Parents affect the career aspirations of students, concluded that a variety of influences are likely to determine one's ultimate career choice. Parents were found to greatly impact the career selection process of their children. This literature review dispelled the myth that children and adolescents defy their parents' values and expectations regarding career options. The study was a review of literature; no actual respondents were involved. The current study sampled secondary school students from Kitui Central Sub County, where respondents gave personal responses to the research questions.

Habene (2015) indicated that parents had a responsibility to guide their children on the right track towards making a better leaving emanating from a decent job. His study was on parental involvement in high school students' career choice in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study was purely qualitative with 15 participants from were secondary students in grade 11 and 12. Three teachers were also interviewed. The researcher found out that both parents and students have good understanding about career choice, that help them to commit themselves to take part in career decision making. The current study was also based on family influence on student's career choice but utilized both qualitative and quantitative research methods for data collection, drawing a larger sample size of 861 respondents.

The current study did not limit itself on parental factors only but included other family factors. Simple random sampling was used to sample schools from kitui central sub County thus giving all students in the target population an equal opportunity. Besides questionnaires, interview guides were used in the current study in order to get in-depth information on the research question.

**Research Methodology**

The quantitative design utilized cross-sectional survey design to collect data. Rumberger and Rotermund (2012) pointed out that cross-sectional survey design is a present oriented methodology and is used to investigate population by selecting samples to analyze and discover occurrences and then data obtained can be used to determine specific characteristics of a group. This method was found to be suitable to carry out the study across schools comprehensively. This study followed the guidelines of determining a sample size in correlational survey by Gay (1996) that 10% to 20% of the population is sufficient for reliable findings. He suggests 10% of large populations and 20% for small populations. Thus a representative sample of 420 students which is 10% of the population of 4200 was used, 8 career counseling teachers which was 20% of the population and 17 class teachers which was 100% of the population was used

**Target Population and Sample size of the study**

Sample Frame	Target Population	Sample Size	%	Sample method used
Schools	42	8	20%	Random
Students	4200	420	10%	Random
Class Teachers	12	12	100%	Purposive
G/C Teachers	8	8	100%	Purposive
Total	4262	448		

Source: (Author, 2018)

**Table 4.6: Family Factors Influence on Career Choice**

Statements	SD	%	D	%	A	%	SA	%
My parents have influence on my career choice	20	5%	20	5%	130	34%	210	56%
All my siblings are in this line of career that I choose	60	16%	69	18%	218	58%	122	32%
I want to follow in the footsteps of my role model who is a family member.	58	15%	86	23%	122	32%	112	30%
The financial situation of my family influenced my choice of career	67	18%	80	21%	124	33%	107	28%
In my extended family I will be the only one in this career	140	37%	90	23%	78	21%	70	19%
I want to have the highest paying job among my siblings	62	16%	78	21%	114	30%	124	33%

Taking a mean percentage of 25 % and above as an index of a group majority agreement to a statement, data provided in table 4.4.1 indicates that, combined, most students agreed and strongly agreed 34% that their parents had influence on their career choice, 54% agreed that their parents had influence on their career choice. Many students at 58% and 32 % agreed and strongly agreed respectively that all their siblings were in the line of career that they chose. 33% of the students agreed and 28% strongly agreed that the financial situation of their families influenced their career choice. Some of the students, 30% and 33% respectively wanted to have the highest paying job among their siblings. On the other hand, 37% of the students disagreed with the statement that in their extended families they would be the only ones in the career they chose. These results implied that students' choice of career was influenced by family factors such as parents, sibling careers, familial role models, family social economic status and sibling income. The findings also

The questionnaires were used to collect data in this study. The questionnaires contained a series of structured questions that were related to the research work and directed to respondents with the aim of gaining first-hand information. The questionnaire consisted of both open ended and close-ended questions. Thus, in some cases, respondents chose the options that best reflect their opinions. The questionnaire afforded respondents much flexibility and privacy in answering the questions without any undue influence. Interviews were conducted with career guidance teachers to obtain more data required to answer the specific research questions of the study. Qualitative analysis was done on the information collected from the results of the questionnaires; quantitative analysis was included, both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data. The findings were presented using tables, graphs and pie charts.

**5. Results and Discussions of the findings**

**Family Factors**

In an analysis of the psychosocial factors influencing career choice among high school students in Kitui Central Sub County, the responses of the students on family factors were analyzed using frequencies and percentages on a Likert type scale that was scored as Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The results are presented in table 4.4.1 below:

revealed that the extended family did not have significant influence.

One student hoping to become a secondary school teacher explained: "...just hanging out around my mother's school, just getting a feel for what teachers do, I liked it... That whole background and involvement made me kind of interested in teaching." To this question, another student reported that: ".....My mother is a nurse, since high school she expressed her wish for me to be in the medical field, therefore it was quite natural for me to choose a medical course..." The influence of the extended family cannot be overlooked. One of the students commented that:

"My family is quite competitive. My dad is a first born and we are the oldest children, therefore my whole family looks upon us to set the academic standards and good careers. I am my younger siblings and cousins' role model which means

that I have to pursue a career that my cousins will admire and aspire to pursue.” Guidance and counselling teachers and class teachers also felt that students were influenced largely by the family factors. In the interviews with guidance and counselling teachers and class teachers, one class teacher stated that:

Students will always tell you that they choose careers because their parents want them to even if they don't fancy them. If they choose such careers they will get support even if they joined university as self-sponsored students. Few parents will pay for courses they don't like. (Participant 1)

Another guidance and counselling teacher noted that: During university selection, students tend to choose courses that their older siblings pursued if they were successful in getting employment or they were successful, in this case remuneration wise. (Participant 2)

A class teacher contradicted this finding and stated that: Family does not influence students on career choice as it used to, since students are exposed to social media and that's where they get role models and a lot of ideas on careers. They assume that they know more than their parents or teachers who are old fashioned. (Participant 3)

From the data and narratives above, the most important factor influencing the aspiration of a science career by the adolescents was their perception as to whether their parents wanted them to pursue such careers. The findings of the current study are in line with several other researches. Sarwar and Zmat (2013) found that Students were more likely to pursue their careers in the same sector as that of their fathers. Dodge and Welderufael (2014) stated that most students had conversations about careers with their parents or caregiver and observed their relatives at work. In other contradicting studies, whereas Olaosebikan and Olusakin, (2014) noted that students disagreed that their parents' line of business influenced their career choice. The results of these findings indicated that adolescents in secondary schools had some form of independence in making career choices. Yet, in other studies Taylor, Harris, and Taylor (2004) found out that family variables were insignificant in influencing career aspirations.

As noted, the kind of relationship between the parents and their children has an impact on career choices. Children need help from parents to a certain extent but also need to be given autonomy to explore their world on their own. Ellefsen & Beran (2007) noted that parental nurturing motivate children to please their parents and meet expectations. In Hong Kong, students value the opinions of their parents according to Law & Yeun (2011). This implies that parents can foster interest in certain careers in their children from childhood

## 6. Summary of the Findings

The study was anchored on human ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) which examined the impact of the larger context on the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the dynamic properties of their immediate settings. The research question was aimed at finding out the extent to which family factors influenced career choice

among secondary school students in Kitui central sub county. The study established that family was one of the major factors that influenced career choices among the students. Majority of the students agreed and strongly agreed to statements that implicated that their parents, siblings and role models within their families influenced their choice of careers. The guidance and counselling teachers and class teachers also agreed that family was a major influence to students' career choice.

## 7. Conclusions

It has been observed that students aim at the prestigious careers and careers influenced by peers, their personalities and to a lesser extent the school based factors where surprisingly they spend most of their time at. It has not been possible for many to achieve their aims for one reason or the other. Such reasons often include among others, lack of exposure, poor academic performance, and poor choice of subject, lack of financial support and lack of suitable role models. Additionally, most of them also lack sufficient information about different jobs and job requirements thus unable to clearly judge whether they would like all that their career choices actually entail. One can therefore conclude that all stake holders, especially teachers and school administrators should step in and guide students in the process of career choice.

In agreement to Wango, (2007), despite the importance that seems to have been attached to guidance and counseling services in Kenyan schools, especially public secondary schools, the program me has not been evaluated fully as to the extent to which it can help secondary school students to make realistic career decisions in line with one of the Ministry of Education policies.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on the findings some recommendations were made: Professional career counselors should be consulted to assist students in planning and choosing their careers. The professional career counselors should include the students in the selecting process, considering interest, ability, skills and personality of the students. Based on the conclusions that career choices are mostly influenced by the outcome expectancies of each career, this study recommends that career counselors should provide students with experiences that expand the exploration process and a wide range of career information on all the available careers so that they can be able to explore widely before making their choices.

The study further recommends that, after initial career decisions have been made, career counselors can continue to encourage successful career development by identifying sources of psychosocial support available to students. Persons that offer career advice to students should ensure that they are well informed so as to provide accurate information that will lead students to correct career choice. In the light of findings made in this study, it is also recommended that if the government and the school administration are going to impact secondary students, there are areas rather than school that students feel are more important.

## 9. Suggestion for Further Studies

A study determining what parents and business could do to aid in the career discovery process could give answers in the mentoring and advising area. An important source of feedback would be those who are post high school and feel they could have done better choosing their career and what it is they would do different. We could evaluate the changes they propose and judge their effectiveness

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