

INTRINSIC FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' CAREER ASPIRATIONS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NDHIWA SUB COUNTY IN HOMA BAY COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to establish intrinsic factors that influence students' career aspirations in secondary schools. The study was conducted in six public schools in Ndhiwa Sub County among 211 students and 14 teachers. A mixed approach and convergent parallel mixed design were adopted. Purposive non-probability sampling techniques were used to sample teachers, while simple random probability sampling techniques were used to sample form three students. Data was collected using an interview questionnaire and focused group discussion, and the reliability and validity of instruments for the collection of data were tested during the pilot study and correlated at $r = 0.976$. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS. 20.0, while the qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. Regression analysis was also used to further establish the extent to which revealed intrinsic factors are related to students' career aspirations. The results showed that intrinsic factors that greatly influence students' career aspirations are students' interests, personality, knowledge, ability and beliefs. The study recommended that students should pay more attention to all the intrinsic factors in order to develop informed, relevant, and suitable career aspirations and choices.

Key terms: Aspirations, Career, Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Interpersonal.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The study investigated intrinsic factors that influence students' career aspirations in secondary schools. Career aspiration is an individual's ambition towards a given occupation, or it is an attraction of a particular occupation to an individual (Abekam et al., 2018). The aspiration is very significant since it leads to the choice of a career, which is an essential decision in a person's life (Tesha, 2020; Nwamadi, 2015 & Mesa, 2013). A career is the totality of work one practices in a lifetime; thus, it is a chosen pursuit. Life work and success in one's profession depend on it; hence, it has to be chosen with pensiveness (Owusu et al., 2021). Career aspirations develop at the secondary level of education or high school because it is at this point that students are thinking, making decisions and aiming to have a clear direction in mind about career choices (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). Career aspiration is a fundamental step that students face in secondary schools since it determines the subjects to be chosen by students, the type of profession in one's life, the future quality of life and reputation, the level of education, one's economic, social and sometimes religious status (Salami & Salami, 2013 & Mwamadi, 2015). Therefore, successful career aspiration and choice leads to happiness and satisfaction, while an inappropriate career decision results in failure, frustration, disappointments and disillusionment.

Students need accurate career planning and a complete understanding before making career choices so as to adjust to various changes and needs in society (Owusu, 2020). There are many intrinsic, extrinsic and interpersonal factors that influence career aspirations among students in secondary schools in different parts of the world that need to be investigated (Owusu, 2020 & Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018). The intrinsic are the factors that emanate within the individual person, such as personal interest and ability; the extrinsic factors emanate outside the individual person, like remuneration and other benefits, while interpersonal factors emanate from other influential people around us, like parents and teachers (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018). Globally, in the USA, self-efficacy, interests and outcome expectations were established as determinants in career aspirations (Mei et al., 2008). Likewise, in Hong Kong, parental expectations, students' own interests, personal strengths and aptitudes were established to be influential in students' career aspirations (Hui et al., 2020).

Moreover, in Pakistan, parents' personalities, socioeconomic status and traditions affect career aspirations (Zeb et al., 2020). In South Africa, personality, career interest, self-efficacy and personal development influence students' career choices (Abel & Chikoko, 2020). Likewise, in Zimbabwe, parents, peers, career guidance and the geographical location of the job influence career aspirations and choices among students (Mtemeri, 2017). Correspondingly, parental interest and peer pressure are determinants of career aspiration (Owusu, 2020 & Owusu et al., 2021). Regionally, in Tanzania, family background, peers, self-interest, individual personality, attitude, interest and gender (Tesha, 2020 & Vaghela, 2019). In Kenya, career guidance services, parental aspiration, mass media, school policy on subjects' selections, socio-economic and cultural practices, gender, personal interest, security and learning experiences, environmental factors, outcome expectancies and personal contacts affect students' aspirations (Njongu, 2019; Nyamwange, 2016; Elisabeth, 2012; Edwards & Quinter, 2011).

The costs of poor career aspiration and subsequent inappropriate career choices are always reflected by some of the challenges the youth are currently experiencing in the labour market, such as

unemployment, underemployment, ineffectiveness, inefficiency and underproductivity in service due to lack of relevant skills, knowledge and self-satisfaction, poverty and other social sufferings (Scarpetta et al., 2010). Moreover, many students do not aspire for a career based on intrinsic factors but rather extrinsic and interpersonal factors; hence, they end up making inappropriate career choices that are against their interests and abilities (Nong, 2016; Koech et al., 2016 & Njeru, 2016). For instance, Koech et al. (2016) noted that 77.9 per cent of the students from higher levels of learning in Kenya would opt to change the courses they pursue if given a chance to do so, and only 22.1 per cent of the students were comfortable with the courses of choice and would not want to change. Similarly, Ayiro (2016) noted that 65 per cent of students from 22 universities in East Africa were not satisfied with the academic programs they were pursuing and would like to make changes to courses if given another chance. Correspondingly, Darya, as cited by Aineah (2019), postulates that the gap between completion of secondary school and joining tertiary institutions is very wide, and Kinoti (2013) attributes the wide gap to less attention that is given to career awareness in Kenyan secondary schools. Therefore, the study focused only on intrinsic factors that influence students' career aspirations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Career aspirations are long-term hopes and ambitions which people develop based on their personal experiences, including talents, values, lifestyle and many more (Carrico, 2017). Career aspirations are very important, and they should be in line with individual ability, passion and labour demand (Lorenceanu et al., 2021). There are many career aspirations that students can develop in secondary schools, including but not limited to being a lawyer and an advocate, engineering works, entrepreneur, humanitarian, and diplomat (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2016). These career aspirations may be indicated by an individual's desire to know and uphold the rule of law, impart and share knowledge, pure challenge for entrepreneurial creativity, freedom, security, balance, management and hierarchy, service to a cause, technical-functional competence and internationalism.

This study was guided by both the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) and the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision (SLTCD) by Krumboltz (1976). The SCCT seeks to explain how basic academic and career interests develop, how education and career choices are made, and the way academic and career success is obtained (Lent et al., 1994). The SCCT theory incorporates main factors such as interests, abilities, values, and environment, and it emphasises three variables: self-efficacy, outcome expectation and personal goals. Moreover, the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision (SLTCD) posits that people make career decisions as a result of a number of planned and unplanned learning opportunities or moments in the social environment (Krumboltz, 1998). These learning opportunities create or influence an individual's perceptions and ideas, thereby determining the career path one would choose.

Akosah-Twusami et al. (2019) review of the literature from thirty articles published between January 1997 and May 2018 from around the globe identified personal interests, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, professional development opportunities, family members, teachers, peers, and social responsibilities as factors that affect career aspirations and choice. Correspondingly, Carrico et al. (2017) in the USA noted that outcome expectation, status, and job stability influence students' aspirations. Likewise, in Hong Kong,

students' own interests, personal strengths and aptitudes, and parental influence are significant in students' career aspirations (Hui et al., 2020). In the same way, in Pakistan, self-interest, ability and capacity of students, parents, family members, peers, teachers and counsellors influence, socio-economic status, and traditions influence students' career aspirations (Gungozar, 2016 & Zeb et al., 2020). Similarly, Sarkar's (2016) study in Kolkata, India, observed that students develop their career aspirations based on security, remuneration, self-interest and benefits that an individual would accrue upon employment. Besides, Dublin et al. (2020) noted that in the Philippines, personality, interest, prestige, job environment, parental influence and remuneration determine students' career aspirations and preferences.

Likewise, in South Africa, personality, career interest, self-efficacy, personal development, financial matters, family members and teachers' influence, and career opportunities were established to determine students' career choices (Abel & Chikoko, 2020). In Ghana, income, peer pressure, and parental and teacher influence are the main considerations for career aspiration (Kobia-Acquah et al., 2020; Owusu, 2020 & Owusu et al., 2021). In Nigeria, the financial and socio-economic status of the parents influences students' career aspirations (Osi, 2018). Correspondingly, in Zimbabwe, geographical location is one of the factors that influence students' career aspirations (Mtemeri, 2017). In Tanzania, knowledge of careers offered through career guidance, self-interest, gender and psychological factors, family background, peers and friends influence career aspirations (Tesha, 2020 & Vaghela, 2019). Additionally, Njongu's (2019) study in Kenya established accurate information on careers through guidance and counselling, mass media, favourable school policies on subject selection, and parental aspirations are the factors that influence students' career choices.

According to the reviewed literature, the intrinsic factors influencing students' career aspirations include personal interests, aptitudes, personality, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, professional development opportunities and knowledge of career (Akosah-Twusami et al., 2019; Carrico et al., 2017; Hui et al., 2020; Gungozar, 2016; Sarkar, 2016; Dublin et al., 2020; Abel & Chikoko, 2020; Kobia-Acquah et al., 2020; Tesha, 2020; Vaghela 2019 & Njongu 2019). Moreover, the extrinsic factors are job opportunities, job stability or security, financial remuneration or income, professional prestige or status and job accessibility, and job environment or location (Kobia-Acquah et al., 2020; Dublin et al., 2020; Mtemeri, 2017; Carrico et al., 2017; Abel & Chikoko, 2020). Furthermore, interpersonal factors that influence students' career aspirations are parents, family members, peers, teachers, counsellors and traditions (Hui et al., 2020; Dublin et al., 2020; Zeb et al., 2020; Njongu, 2019; Owusu, 2020; Osi, 2018; Owusu et al. 2021 & Tesha, 2020).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Convergent parallel mixed design with a mixed approach was used in the study to allow the collection of more data, complete understanding and analysis of the problem and originality of the study. The research was conducted in Ndhiwa Sub County in Homa Bay County amongst secondary schools. The targeted population for the study was 15,835 students and 562 teachers from 50 schools. Only form three students (3948) were sampled for the study using convenient and judgemental sampling techniques. Six schools with a population of 1049 form three students and 156 teachers were purposively sampled for the study. The population was further sampled using both simple random probability and purposive non-probability sampling techniques to select 211 students and 14 teachers, respectively, from the selected schools. Data

was collected using an interview, questionnaire, and focused group discussion. The use of more instruments was to ascertain the information given. The reliability and validity of the instruments were tested before data collection, and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient r was $r=0.976$. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, while qualitative data was analysed using thematic coding analysis. Regression analysis was also used to further establish the extent to which revealed factors are related to student's career aspirations. Ethical consideration was adhered to during the study period.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 below summarises the numbers of students who agreed or disagreed with statements that students' career aspirations are influenced by the above factors. This is because those who indicated *true* and *very true* were both saying true or agreeing; likewise, those who indicated *not true at all* or *not true* were on the same side, disagreeing with the statement or saying false.

Table 1: Intrinsic Factors that Influence Students' Career Aspirations

How true are the following statements on how your career aspiration is influenced	True n=211 f (%)	False n= 211 f (%)
As a student, I would aspire for careers that match my interests since I would be the one to pursue it	185(88 %)	26(12 %)
Students aspire for careers which are in line with their faith, religion, culture, customs and belief in the career	98(46 %)	113(54 %)
Students consider and aspire for careers based on their attitudes, feelings and personality	160(76 %)	51(24 %)
Students aspire for careers based on the knowledge they have of the career and their ability to do them	149(71 %)	62(29 %)

f= Frequency, %= Percentage, n = Number of respondents.

Source: Field Data, SPSS Analysis (2023).

According to Table 1, most of the respondents, 185(88 %), 160(76 %) and 149(71 %), observed that students would develop career aspirations based on their interests, personality, knowledge or ability, respectively. However, few respondents, less than half 98 (46 %), agreed that career aspirations amongst students would be influenced by belief (faith, religion, culture and customs). In this regard, the most intrinsic factor that influences students' career aspirations is interest, followed by personality and knowledge or ability of the students' with belief being the least effective factor.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis

Factors	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error	Anova	Sig.	UStd. B	Std.B
Interest	.860	.510	.500	1.25701	.000	.000	0.664	0.480
Personality	.791	.436	.424	1.48902	.001	.000	0.644	0.360
Knowledge/ Ability	.750	.420	.404	1.26006	.003	.000	0.620	0.322
Belief	.575	.113	.110	1.00020	.002	.000	0.531	0.214

a. Predictors: (Constant), Factors

Source: Field Data, SPSS Analysis, 2023

The major research question in this study was to establish intrinsic factors that influence students' career aspirations in public secondary schools in Ndhiwa Sub-County. The linear regression analysis was adopted in order to address the key research question, and Table 2 above shows the analysis.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis Coding

Factors	Transcripts (Verbatim Quotes)	Themes	Codes
Intrinsic	<i>Career aspiration should basically be influenced by Individual interest since without interest, one can't successfully pursue a career, and with no interest, performance will be low...(GD 2)</i>	Individual Interest	II
	<i>I would not always consider my religion, faith, and customs before developing any career aspiration since our society is not divided along belief, and every person needs services...(GD 4)</i>	Belief	B
	<i>Individual attitudes, feelings and personality always play a major role in developing career aspirations. Going against my personality is being dishonest and unrealistic...(GD 6)</i>	Individual Personality	IP
	<i>Students should never aspire or make career choices before having adequate knowledge of its requirements and demands and assessing their ability/suitability for such career...p (I 3)</i>	Knowledge & Ability	KA

Source: Field Data (2023)

Table 3 above illustrates the findings from qualitative data, which were categorised into intrinsic factors and coded into themes such as Individual Interest (II), Belief (B), Individual Personality (IP), and Knowledge and Ability (KA). The coding of the responses from the open-ended questionnaires, focused group

discussion, and interview was important because it allowed the researcher to categorise, retrieve and analyse the data by clustering and comparing the themes with the identified research problem.

Discussion

Table 1 above demonstrated that the majority of students, 185 (88 %), 160 (76 %) and 149 (71 %), would develop career aspirations based on their interests, personality, knowledge or ability, respectively. However, only a few students, 98 (46 %), indicated that they would consider their beliefs (faith, religion, culture and customs) in developing their career aspirations. Similarly, the same result was established by linear regression analysis in Table 2 that showed positive correlations (cause-effect relationship) between all the intrinsic factors and students' career aspirations since the standardised coefficient Beta of all the factors was within the required range. Moreover, the ANOVA test proved that the results could be generalised. In this regard, the most intrinsic factor that influences students' career aspirations is interest, followed by personality and knowledge or ability of the students' with belief being the least effective factor. Career interest is the feeling of wanting to know, learn or do something about a career. Interest is regarded to have more influence on career aspirations. Any individual who is not coerced by extrinsic factors has to pay more attention to personal interest because it would be difficult to make an aspiration for a lifelong career, which is against one's interest. One of the students stated in a group discussion as follows, "*Career aspiration should basically be influenced by individual interest since without interests one can't successfully pursue a career and with no interest, performance will be low*" (GD 2). The results are in line with the findings of Hui et al. (2020).

Personality is regarded as a combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual distinctive character. Every career requires special qualities in order to perform it successfully; for instance, those interested in humanitarian acts and charity services must be filled with great love and compassion for the suffering and the needy in order to serve well. The majority of the students, 160 (76%), observed that individual personality should be considered in career aspirations development, as one of the students opined in group discussion. The study by Abel and Chikoko (2020) in South Africa established personality as a key influencer in career aspirations. Career knowledge is facts, information and skills acquired through education or experience about a career. The knowledge will involve the career available, their requirement and the demand to undertake them. In the school set-up, students can better access such knowledge from the career and/or guidance and counselling teachers. A good number of students, 149(71%), were in agreement that knowledge and ability should be considered in career aspirations development. The emphasis on career knowledge and ability as a factor for career aspiration was also revealed by Tesha (2020) in Tanzania and Njongu (2019) in Kenya, who both noted that students should be given adequate and accurate information in order to make informed career aspirations.

Belief is basically a feeling of being sure that someone or something exists without proof. It is much attributed to religion, faith, customs or experience. Belief as a factor for career aspirations would imply individual belief in his or her ability to undertake or perform in a particular career (self-efficacy). Basically, in this case, it implies a system of customs and religious or faith doctrines that are likely to influence individual career aspirations and choices. Although Akosah-Twusami et al. (2019) also observed the need

to pay attention to belief in career aspirations, the authors placed more attention on it since the review was conducted in many religious states, including religious states like Arabian countries.

The model summary table 2 above shows the summary of the results of regression analysis from SPSS. From the analysis above, correlation (R) variables showed that the variables were correlated; hence, there is a cause-effect relationship. Again, since the R-values were greater than 1, then there is a positive correlation between all the investigated factors and the student's career aspirations. Further, the R Square values show that career aspirations are influenced by every factor by at least 11.3 per cent. For instance, in this analysis, students' interest has R Square =0.510, which implies that 51 per cent of the students' career aspirations are influenced by students' interests. Moreover, the Adjusted R Square shows that the research conceptual framework contained no variables that were unnecessary for the prediction of the research outcome since the difference between the Adjusted R Square and the R Square of all the factors was less than 0.05, which is insignificant. Again, the ANOVA test shows that linear regression results can be generalised to the population, which the sample represents since the ANOVA results of all the factors were less (<0.05), which is treated as significant.

The study results and discussion have established several intrinsic factors that influence students' career aspirations in public secondary schools, and there is no single factor that is sufficient in determining the career aspirations of students. It can be further understood that students' interests, personalities, knowledge and abilities are significant intrinsic factors that influence career aspirations. The aforementioned intrinsic factors are key in developing career aspirations, and their consideration can influence students' career choices.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: There are many intrinsic factors that influence students' career aspirations in secondary schools in Ndhiwa Sub County. No single intrinsic factor is sufficient, and consideration of all the factors that influence students' career aspirations is likely to help students develop informed, relevant, and suitable career aspirations and choices. Therefore, it can be concluded that many confusions, dissatisfactions and difficulties that students face in making career choices to the extent of ending up with no clear career choice could be attributed to inadequate knowledge of the factors or paying little or no attention at all to the factors.

Recommendations: Students should be guided and supported by being given accurate and adequate career knowledge and information by career counsellors or masters in order to help them make independent decisions based on their interests, personality, beliefs, ability, attitude and other salient intrinsic factors. Additionally, students should consider a combination of all intrinsic factors since no single factor is sufficient to influence students' career aspirations. Moreover, students should make voluntary career aspirations based on adequate career knowledge and information without any form of compulsion or undue pressure from significant others like parents, teachers, siblings, relatives, peers, friends and any other influential persons. Instead, they should make decisions independently based on their capabilities.

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