

Family Determinants of Career Awareness among Students in Public Secondary Schools in Meru South Sub-County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the family determinants of career awareness among students in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub County. Career awareness is a sign of one's level of democracy and personal freedom in determining their professional development. Career awareness equips learners with a holistic understanding of their talents, personality, interest and capability in preparation for their future endeavours. Uncertainty drive students towards making wrong career choices and as result feel frustrated at a job they had never wished for. Despite the schools having career teachers and Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) providing career guidance, students portray unawareness on occupation matters. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 368 respondents comprising of 12 deans of studies, 12 guidance and counselling teachers, 12 form three and 12 form four parents' representatives, 8 principals and 312 form three and four students participated in the study. The study established that family determinants had an influence on the students' career awareness, especially on the career information. The socioeconomic status of the parents, career path of the family, parental career advice and elder siblings were found to have a great influence on career awareness. However, parent's level of education was of low significance on career awareness. Parents and guardians should be sensitized on the importance of career awareness to their children.

KEY WORDS: Career, Career Awareness, Family Determinants, Attitude, Parental Factors, Structural Functionalism

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INTRODUCTION

Career refers to a profession or line of work that a student aspires to become and prepare for training. Professional career has been changing rapidly with the growth of technology and individuals have turned out to be more awake on the need to focus on career development with the appearance of data technology, the emergence of post historic period and job competition (Gati et al. 2019). Students appreciate the world they live in, and adopt the best practices regarding careers (Akosah-Twumasi et al. 2018). Career awareness is working towards developing a complete understanding of possible career fields and opportunities, factors that can influence a job outlook, personal strengths and preferences, and the level of training needed to be successful. As a result, career awareness emphasizes on individual's special skills, guides personal perspectives, measures democracy and the level of individual choice in selecting one's profession and, ultimately, one's destiny. According to (Okolie et al., 2020), career awareness helps students develop their professional paths in an educational setting by giving them the support they need, and assisting them recognise their physical, cognitive and mental features. Career awareness is crucial for students because it enables them to effectively prepare for their careers and realize the options that are available to them now and in the future. Awareness on careers also equips learners with enough knowledge of the environment and skills required before engaging and responding to the challenges in career selection. The awareness on careers equips learners with a holistic understanding of their surrounding environment and how it affects their day-to-day endeavours (Carpi et al., 2017). According to Okolie et al. (2020), identifying each student's unique interests and strengths is the most challenging and complex task educators and organisational leaders must complete to help students find the right vocations.

Wambu et al (2017), research in Ethiopia found that student perceptions of their job alternatives were influenced by familial factors as they had an external source of control. Students are reluctant to pursue numerous careers without parental support or approval. Mau and Li (2018) found that students cite parents as crucial influence in their selection of career. Marcionetti and Rossier (2017), research on predicting career indecision in college students, discovered that the family is crucial to a child's professional development. Teenagers' opinions of their potential career opportunities are influenced by a number of variables, including their family social economic status and parents' educational backgrounds. Due to the significant influence that parents, families and guardians have on their children's development of their professional goals and occupational aspirations, this study established the importance of parental factors in influencing career awareness among

secondary school students in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County.

In Zambian colleges, parents encourage career awareness in the belief that these occupations will give better employment prospects than their own (Sinkombo, 2016). Through conversation about the workplace and professional knowledge, parents, particularly the more educated ones, provide career guidance to children. In a study of career awareness among Nigerian youths, Waring (2018) established that majority of the youths had erroneous information on careers due to peer pressure, ignorance and inexperience. Waring further established that peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and prestige attached to certain jobs are some of the guiding factors towards career awareness. Amani and Mkumbo (2018) study in Tanzania depicted that parental factors may negatively influence career awareness among secondary school graduates since most parents force their preferences to their children.

According to Amani and Mkumbo (2018), parents can purposefully or unintentionally affect their children's awareness of career options. This was because children thought of their future very early in life and often looked to their parents either as peers or career advisers. Teenagers will either follow a career path they believe their parents are in favour of or be inspired by a parent's attitude to seek other options. Therefore, it is not surprising to see members of the same family from various generations employed in the same field. Children may favour certain careers over others if their parents have fulfilling careers or comfortable lifestyles. In contrast, if their parents complain about their professions or struggle to support the family, children are more inclined to pursue jobs that are more fulfilling or pay more (Amani & Mkumbo, 2018). Inadequate guidance and career counselling from more experienced career guides, young scholars would result to poor career awareness and overly rising cases of unemployment among the youths hence the study investigated the family determinants of career awareness among the students in public secondary schools Meru South, Tharaka Nithi County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family determinants of career awareness among students include; parental aspirations, family economic status, cultural orientation, parents level of education among others. Parents and other relatives have an impact on the choices regarding careers that children make (Tillman, 2015). Parents' hopes, expectations, and intentions for their children's education and careers (Boonk et al., 2018) are important motivators for students to choose their career options. However, some parents have a misunderstanding of what they want in terms of their children's job knowledge.

A successful education plan for children must be developed by parents who are involved in their education both at home and in school and, who talk to them about careers (Wachira, 2018). According to a study by Pascual (2014), conducted in the Philippines, parents have a significant impact on the careers that their kids choose, while others choose the high-paying jobs that their educational selections have made available to them. As a result, career knowledge studies are an essential component of the educational system. Awang et al. (2014), stated that there are more information sources available and that students are interacting with classmates from all backgrounds. Students begin formal schooling, but the learning environment is dominated by experiences gained in the informal sector, particularly in families. According to Creech et al., (2020), the influence of informal education, which is outside the jurisdiction of parents and teachers, has placed young students at a crossroads in terms of their understanding of potential careers. They will either receive rewards for their efforts from "positive" learner encounters or setbacks from "negative" ones.

According to Watson and McMahon (2016), study conducted in Australia, high school students who talk to their parents about their career targets report having higher expectations to follow those targets. Ngussa and Rehema (2019), asserts that parental participation is a construct that can be used to determine whether a student chooses a vocation that is appropriate for them or not. Parental involvement in a school environment can thus be summed up as the act of parents being involved with their children in activities related to school, transferring academic expertise, participating in school and out of school learning endeavours, getting involved with the learning process, providing opportunities for learning, and delivering suitable learning experiences (Slovacek et al., 2015).

A study by Ngesi (2013), in South Africa on systematic processes influencing educational change found that poor monetary base of scholars from deprived families deter their selections of applicable instructional programs and careers. In contrast to students from higher socioeconomic homes, students from lower socioeconomic strata were less likely to enroll in school, according to Watson et al. (2016). Muyalo (2017) opines that children from such impoverished families frequently lack the resources to complete their secondary education. According to Muyalo, parents of students from underprivileged circumstances rarely support their children in keeping up decent grades that would enable them to attend college. Parents from low social strata have less time to spend with their children than parents from higher social classes do, and the subject of career awareness is also rarely brought up. Mothers were cited as having a special influence because they offer comfort to children who are worried about their future occupations (Shumba & Naong, 2012). According to the Mbanjwa study mentioned by Shumba and Naong (2012), moms are thought to have a big impact on their children's

understanding of career options. The educational and social contexts from the studies discussed above from South Africa are different from Meru South Sub County hence the study on family determinants of career awareness among students in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

Studies on the factors influencing secondary school students' awareness of careers by Salami (2008), in Nigeria and Mutekwe et al. (2011), in Zimbabwe found that parental aspiration was the most important predictor of future career awareness in gender-dominated occupations. Family and community have a significant impact on professional awareness in a social environment (Kaneez and Medha, 2018; Mutekwe et al. 2011; & Slovacek et al. 2015). High parental educational attainment and a family's capacity to support their children's education were found to have an impact on student's career awareness since they are given a greater opportunity to select suitable career options (Muyalo, 2017). Tan (2017), made a similar conclusion, stating that high educationally successful parents had high expectations and ambitions for their children's academic success and actively placed them in awareness-raising courses.

Wambu et al., (2017), research in Ethiopia found that student perceptions of their job alternatives were influenced by a range of factors, including familial and cultural influences, and that they had an external source of control. Students are reluctant to pursue numerous careers without parental support or approval. Mau and Li (2018), found that students cite parents as crucial in their career awareness and career selection. According to recent research by Marcionetti and Rossier (2017), on predicting career indecision among college students, revealed that the family is crucial to a child's professional development. Teenagers' opinions of their potential career opportunities are influenced by a number of variables, including their family, parents' educational backgrounds, schools, friends, their personality, and their social circumstances. Parents, families, and guardians have a significant influence on their children's development of their professional goals and occupational aspirations; this study thus established the importance of family aspects in influencing career awareness among secondary school students in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County.

Many students in Kenya experience difficulties when choosing careers Koech et al. (2016). As cultures get more urbanized, and children become more interested in pursuing occupations, parents' influence over them diminishes and their responsibilities are no longer the most obvious objects of identification (Martin, 2016). Choosing the proper subject combination that leads to the ideal employment is usually what separates future enjoyment of the work from future dread. Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS), advises parents to support their children, assist them in making decisions, motivate them to establish and accomplish academic goals, and foster in them a culpable mind-set and a positive outlook on life rather than compelling them to follow their (parents') career objectives. Niles et al. (2010), contends that; parents should motivate their children to perform more effectively in high school, accomplish a career readiness self-assessment test, and plan potential career paths that they can pursue in institutions of higher learning, in order to increase the likelihood that their children will get admitted to colleges and universities and be able to enrol in courses that will help them pursue their chosen career path.

Secondary school education in Kenya has traditionally been seen as the clear step into adulthood, and job readiness as learners start to grow independent of their parents and discover their define independence (Heto et al., 2020). While in the school, learners usually come to terms with who they are, what they excel at, and what they could do after graduation. They identify and evaluate their talents, skills, and prowess. They are assumed to own the fondness to look for an area to belong to, besides they have been known to rely on parents and peer approval and acceptance for selections. The need for direction-finding in creating concrete and comprehensive career awareness couldn't be overstressed in secondary schools in Kenya thus the researcher investigated the impact of family determinants in career awareness among students in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub County.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The structural functionalism theory founded by French sociologist Durkheim in 1893 and improved by Merto (1910) and Parsons (1975) served as the foundation for this study.

STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM THEORY

The study was guided by Structural functionalism theory developed by Durkheim as cited by Lent and Brown (2013). According to this theory; society is a well-functioning system whose majority of participants share a set of fundamental principles. The idea contends that interdependence among societal components imposes structure on institutional behaviour and that of its constituents. Institutions, teams, and roles form a cohesive whole. According to the hypothesis, which serves as the study's model, society works because shared morals and standards foster widespread social cohesion. Schools are essential in this process since they impart moral values to youngsters, preparing them to become productive members of society as adults. A strong society requires a stable social environment, and a stable social environment necessitates sufficient socialisation and social integration. Institutions throughout society serve crucial roles in promoting societal stability. In contrast to quick

social change, which jeopardises social order, slow change in society is preferable. Establishing goals and objectives is the first step in the conventional and recognisable decision-making process, which is followed by feedback and assessment to guide future decisions. The fact that various society institutions are geared towards the stability of the learner career wise, they are all willing to work together to ensure there is stability.

According to structural-functionalist theory, education is beneficial since it serves society's and its sectors' integrative needs. Through career awareness of the society and its sectors, this function promotes a student's sense of belonging (Cheung & Hue, 2017). Education must be a structural component of society so that it may perform the integrative function. The upkeep of societal functioning depends critically on students' career understanding (Kuah-Pearce & Fong, 2010). According to David (2014), through career awareness, education empowers people and consequently individualises and dissolves social ties in society and its sectors, allowing learners to feel a part of society. Student's personal growth may be significantly impacted by their awareness of their career options. Parents are the Student's first socialisers at home; hence the family determinants of career awareness were researched and documented.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey study design was used by the researcher to explore the family determinants of career awareness among students in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County. The description, recording, analysis, and reporting of current or past situations are the primary focuses of descriptive survey research, according to Kothari (2004). The study regarded descriptive survey research because it describes data and analyses the connection between social variables and secondary school students' career awareness. Due to the fact that no variables were altered during data collection and reporting, the study complies with the requirements of the descriptive survey research design.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The Target population was 7330 respondents from public secondary schools in Meru South Sub County comprising of 39 principals, 39 Dean of studies, 39 Guidance and Counselling teachers, 78 form three and four parents' representatives, and 7,135 form three and four students. The 39 Public secondary schools in Meru South Sub-County were clustered into National, Extra-county and County schools categories and 12 schools randomly selected from the clusters forming 30 percent of the targeted population. Table 1 shows the Sample matrix.

Table 1: Sample Matrix

School	Population	Sample	Sampling Method
GCTs	39	12	Simple random
DOS	39	12	Cluster random
PR	78	24	Cluster random
Principals	39	8	Cluster random
Students	7,135	312	Cluster random
Total	7,330	368	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RESPONSE RATE

The questionnaires and interviews used to gather the data for this study were given to teachers of guidance and counselling, the dean of studies, students in forms three and four, principals, and parents' representatives in Meru South Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. A total of 336 questionnaires and 32 interviews were administered making a total of 368 responses. Table 2 displays the response rate.

Table 2: Response Rate

Category	Questionnaires		Interviews	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Number of respondents	325	96.7	28	87.5
Number Un-responded	11	3.3	4	12.5
Number targeted	336	100	32	100

According to the findings in Table 2, a total of 336 questionnaires were issued, and 325 replies were obtained. For the purpose of this study, a response rate of 96.7 percent was sufficient. Due to the research instruments being self-administered by the researcher, a high response rate was attained. The results further indicate 28 respondents from the interviews forming 87.5 percent of the targeted respondents. Fincham (2008) noted that a response rate of over 80 percent is satisfactory for a descriptive data analysis.

FAMILY DETERMINANTS OF CAREER AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS

The study sought to establish the influence of family determinants on career awareness among students in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub County. The students were asked to provide their opinions on how family factors affected their decision to pursue a particular career. The data were presented using a five-point Likert scale, as follows: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neutral (N); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD); The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Family Determinants and Career Awareness among Students

Statement	Respondent	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %
Socioeconomic status of parents affects student's awareness of careers	Students	11.5	14.7	1	56.9	15.9
	Teachers	0	5	0	70	25
Student's awareness of a career is determined by the parent's level of education	Students	56.6	25.9	1.1	9.2	7.2
	Teachers	5	65	0	10	20
The career path of a family influences awareness of careers by students	Students	8	13.3	5.7	65.9	8.1
	Teachers	10	10	0	55	25
Parental advice on careers influences the choice of career a student makes	Students	6.6	8.2	2.7	63	19.5
	Teachers	5	5	0	80	10
Elder siblings in a family have an influence on the awareness of careers by a student.	Students	5.9	9.8	2.5	71	10.8
	Teachers	0	10	0	75	15

Data in Table 3 shows that majority of the students (56.9%) agreed with the statement that the socioeconomic status of the parents affects the student's awareness of careers. According to the study, 70 percent of the teachers concur with the statement that social economic status of the parents affect career awareness. These results were in accordance to Amani and Mkumbo (2018), who asserted that children were more likely to pursue fulfilling or profitable occupations if their parents were having financial difficulties or are not happy in their jobs. The findings, however, were in conflict with a study by Mwaa (2016), which found that parental socioeconomic factors had no impact on student's awareness of careers since parents would motivate their children to pursue the careers of their preference by providing appropriate educational resources and opportunities for their career growth.

Students from less affluent homes have a lower likelihood of enrolling in school than those from more affluent backgrounds, Watson et al. (2016). According to Muyalo (2017), students from disadvantaged origins frequently lack the resources to pursue postsecondary education. Muyalo asserts that, parents from lower socioeconomic levels had less time to spend with their children than parents from higher socioeconomic levels, thus the topic of career awareness was rarely discussed. The findings were a confirmation by Wachira (2018), that the socio-economic background and parental aspirations influenced learners' career awareness of secondary school students in Meru County.

Akosah-Twumasi et al. (2018), study in the USA found that parental factors had an impact on young adults' job exploration and decision-making. Akosah asserts that, students that were much attached to parents and sought career guidance ended up doing courses that were satisfying. The study further recognised that the student's awareness of a career was not determined by the parent's level of education, as was indicated by 56.6 percent of the students who strongly disagreed and 65 percent of the teachers who disagreed. The findings were a contrast by Wachira (2018), who asserted that the level of education of parents influenced learners' career awareness of secondary school students in Meru County.

The study demonstrates that parents' careers impact the awareness of career by the students, as was agreed by 65.9 percent and 55 percent of the students and teachers respectively. According to Watson and McMahon (2016), study conducted in Australia, high school students who talk to their parents about their career objectives report having higher expectations to follow those objectives. Parental involvement, as a construct according to Ngussa and Rehema (2019), can be considered as a key feature in determining student's poor career or proper career selection. The act of parents getting involved with children in school-related activities, teaching academic skills, taking part in both in and out of school educational endeavours, and giving children the resources they need to learn, can all be categorized as parental involvement in educational settings. The results were consistent with Obot et al., (2020), who alludes that parents' educational backgrounds had little effect on their children's career choices. This implies parental level education does not determine the student career awareness.

Majority of the students (63.0%) and teachers (80%) agreed that parental advice on careers influence their career awareness. According to Muyalo (2017), parental engagement in their children's education had a favorable influence on their academic performance, which in turn affected their awareness of various career paths. Similar conclusions were made by Mundi (2017), who observed that 56 percent of year one nursing students at Consolata Nkubu School of Nursing were motivated to pursue careers as nurses by interactions with nurses, 23 percent because of relatives and parents, 17 percent because of social media, and 7 percent through teacher

advice.

Data in Table 3 shows majority of students (71.0%) and teachers (75%) agreed that having older siblings in the household had an impact on how students' perceived their future careers. The results are consistent with those of Gabay et al. (2022), who found that girls preferred STEM majors if they were raised in smaller sibling groups, in male-dominant sibling groups, and if they had an older sister who excelled in arithmetic. According to the research of Gabay et al. (2022), sibling-level socialization experiences were extremely important in determining whether females are interested in and choose to pursue "gender-atypical" academic careers. The findings were supported by Mberia and Midigo (2018), who indicated that siblings were the primary reason why some students opted for some career resolutions and thus students were likely to seek for career advice from their siblings.

Interviews were carried out with parents and principals to further explore family determinants affecting career awareness among Students. From the excerpts;

Excerpt 1

Researcher: *What do you think are the family determinants affecting the career awareness among Students?*

Respondent 1: *In most cases, parents don't discuss careers with their children and are only concerned with fees payment and other school requirements.*

Respondent 6: *Some of the parents are illiterate and thus do not know the viable careers hence no career awareness discussion with children. Other parents are just concerned in finding fees for their students and less concerned with careers.*

Respondent 18: *Some families have a bad perception about some of the courses and careers, thus discouraging their children from taking the said careers.*

Researcher: *Suggest measures that families can use to improve on the career awareness among students*

Respondent 10: *Sponsoring the children to go for career awareness seminars so that can get guidance from professionals.*

Respondent 7: *Encouraging the students to identify the potential mentors and organizing meetings for mentorship.*

Respondent 17: *Guiding the students on getting the right role models and encouraging them to follow the footsteps of the role models*

Respondent 4: *Supporting the students to follow their career line and not being dictated.*

From the interviews results in excerpt 1, it is evident that family determinants influence student's career awareness, where parents' failure to guide the students while at home, illiteracy of the parents, lack of knowledge by the parents and negative perception of some families towards some careers influenced students' choices. The respondents suggest that the parents should organize for mentors and role models for the students to engage on career awareness discussions. The respondents further suggested that the parents should sponsor their children to go for career awareness seminars and in order for them to learn more about the careers awareness, choices and alternatives available. Amani and Mkumbo (2018), study in Tanzania depicted that parental factors may negatively influence career awareness among secondary school graduates since most parents force their preferences to their children. According to Amani and Mkumbo (2018), parents can purposefully or unintentionally affect their children's understanding of career options because children visualize their future early in life and often look to their parents as their career advisors.

Children may follow a job path they believe their parents agree with or they may be inspired by a parent's attitude to seek other options. It is therefore not a surprise to find different generations in the same family working in the same profession. Wambu et al. (2017), research in Ethiopia found that students had a secondary source of control and thought that a variety of variables, like family and societal influences, influenced their career knowledge. Students are reluctant to pursue numerous careers without parental support or approval. Mau and Li (2018), found that students cite parents as crucial influence in their selection of career. The results of Excerpt 1 are in line with Marcionetti and Rossier's (2017), recent study, "Mediating the Effect of Parental Support on the Relationship between Personality and Career Uncertainty in Adolescents," which found that family is important for a child's growth as a worker.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to establish the family determinants of career awareness among students in public secondary schools. The study established that the socio-economic status of the parents, career path of the family, parental advice on careers and family's elder siblings had significant effect on career awareness among the students. However parent's level of education was of low significance on career awareness among the students in public secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the conclusions of the study, the researchers made the following recommendations;

The school administration to sensitize parents during the school parents' days on the importance of career counselling to their children. The school administration to hire career counsellors to guide the parents on how to do career counselling to their children, as soon as they enrol in secondary schools.

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