

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND ADOLESCENTS CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine influence of social support on adolescents' career development. The sample consisted of 358 secondary school students from year one to year four. The students were surveyed on measures of career development and perceived social support. The results show that there was a positive relationship between perceived social support and career decision making self-efficacy ($r=.237, p<.05.$) and between perceived social support and internal locus of control ($r=.351, p<.05.$). The results also show a significant negative relationship between perceived social support and career indecision ($r=-.150, p<.05.$) and between perceived social support and external career locus of control ($r=-.106, p<.05.$). Based on the results social support has a positive influence on adolescents' career development. It is therefore important that adolescents seek social support whenever they experience problems in career decision making. Significant people in adolescents' lives should also offer encouraging and nurturing relationships, for the better development of adolescents.

Keywords: Social Support, Career Indecision, Locus of Control, Career Self Efficacy

1. Introduction

Individuals' cognitive and intellectual developments have been thought of to occur alongside their psychosocial and identity development. It is because of this that the field of psychology has been encouraged to fully explore the influence of contextual and individual factors on the career development process (Constantine, Wallace & Kindaichi, 2005). Early adolescence has been attributed to be a critical time in which significant others such as family members may influence adolescents' career development (Tuner & Lapan, 2002). Cobbs (1979) defined social support as the perception that one is loved, valued, esteemed and able to count on others should the need arise.

Although the construct of social support exists within different cultures, the way in which it functions within cultures is unclear (Davidson, et al, 20018). According to Koike (2010) a child's behaviour is influenced by the social interactions in her environment. Few studies appear to address the relationship between social support and career decision making (Otto, 2000). Constantine, Wallace and Kindaichi (2005) suggested that it may be important to address the significance of social support in promoting optimal career development. Savickas 2005, Schultheiss (2003) and Schmidt, Miles and Welsh (2011) have all acknowledged that contextual support variables have a role in shaping career paths of most individuals. Perceived social support and support systems have been reported to positively predict learning experiences, career self esteem and outcome expectations among adolescents and college students (Tuner & Lapan, 2002; Ferry, Fouad & Smith, 2000). These findings suggest that the absence of social support could negatively affect some adolescents' career decision making process resulting in career related challenges.

1.1 Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005)'s ecological systems theory explains how everything in a child and the child's environment affects how a child grows and develops. He came up with levels of the environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem is the small, immediate environment the child lives in. Children's microsystems will include any immediate relationships or organizations they interact with, such as their immediate family or caregivers, teachers and friends. How these groups or organizations interact with the child and the kind of support they offer to the child will have an effect on how the child grows and the choices they make; the more encouraging and nurturing these relationships are, the better the child will be able to grow. Furthermore, how a child acts or reacts to these people in the microsystem will affect how they treat her in return.

The mesosystem, describes how the different parts of a child's microsystem work together for the sake of the child. For example, if a child's caregivers take an active role in a child's life such as their school work, this will help ensure the child's overall growth. The ecosystem level includes the other people that the child may not interact with often but that still have a large effect on her, such as extended family members. Bronfenbrenner's final level is the macrosystem, which is the largest and most remote set of people to a child but which still has a great influence over the child. The macrosystem includes things such as the cultural values and the economy. According to

Bronfenbrenner, these can also affect a child either positively or negatively. According to young (1983) these systems are seen as contexts in which an individual's career development takes place. The purpose of this study is to explore by focusing on adolescents the way in which the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model influences the career development of adolescents. The microsystem addresses the adolescent's immediate environment that contains the home, the school and the peers. The current study will focus specifically on the influence of family members, friends and special people in adolescent's life on adolescent's career development.

1.2 Career decision making of adolescents in Kenya

Career guidance in secondary schools in Kenya was first introduced in 1971. However, despite its introduction in 1971, no guidelines were put in place until 2002 (Omondi, 2007). Career counselors in Kenya face a number of challenges which prevents them from offering appropriate career counseling. These challenges include: - lack of necessary skills to provide career counseling and lack of formal training on career guidance (Migunde, 2012; Obura, 2007; Omondi, 2007). In addition to providing career guidance and counselling, all the career counsellors have a normal teaching load and as a result they lack adequate time to provide career guidance (Migunde, 2012; Obura, 2007; Kithyo & Petrina, 2002). Studies have also confirmed that there is inadequate career information in secondary schools (Migunde, 2012; Omondi, 2007). Career counsellors in Kenya are also not aware of the guidelines from the ministry of education on career guidance. A study by omondi, (2007) shows that In most schools (89%) career guidance is only offered at the end of form two when students are choosing subject combinations and at the end of form four when filling university application forms. This implies that adolescents rely on advice and information on careers from other people in their immediate environment other than career counselors. The purpose of this study therefore is to determine influence of social support on adolescents career decision making. The study will be guided by the following objectives: -

1. To establish gender differences in perceived social support of adolescents in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya
2. To determine the relationship between Perceived social support and career variables among adolescents in Kisumu County, Kenya.

2. Methodology

The current study used correlational and cross-sectional research designs. The study was conducted in Kisumu County, Kenya with a sample of 358 secondary school students. The sample consisted of 162 (45%) male respondents and 196 (55%) female respondents. The sample also consisted of students from year 1 to year 4 of study. The age of respondents ranged from 13 to 19.

2.1 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire was used to gather information about students' opinion on career decision making and the various variables that affect their career decision making. The questionnaire consisted of 8 subsections with each sub section measuring a different construct in the study. Questionnaire was used in the current study because they enable the researcher to gather information in a standard way and are relatively quick to collect information. The questionnaire was filled by the students. The following questionnaire was used to gather information from the respondents: -

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic questionnaire was used to gather basic information about the students such as age and gender.

Multidimensional Social Support Scale

The 12-item scale of Multidimensional Scale of Social Support (MSSS; Zimet et al, 1988) was used to assess the sources and level of social support of students in the study. Zimet et al (1988) reported an internal consistency coefficient of .88.

Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale

The Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSES-SF; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) was used to assess the career decision making self-efficacy of students in the study. This instrument measures an individual's degree of belief that he/she can successfully complete tasks necessary for career decisions. It consists of 25 items and has five subscales which measure self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, career planning and problem solving. Nilsson, Schmidt, and Meek (2002) reported reliability coefficients of .83.

Career Locus of Control Scale

The Career Locus of control Scale (CLCS; Millar & Shevlin, 2007) was used to measure career locus of control of the respondents. The scale consists of 20 items measuring both internal and external locus of control. Santos and Ferreira (2012) reported an internal consistency coefficient of .69.

Career Decision Scale

The Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow et al, 1976) was used to measure career decision of the students. The scale contains 19 items which consists of two subscales. 16 items form the indecision subscale while 2 items measure the degree of certainty felt in having made a career decision. High scores indicate higher levels of indecision while low scores indicate lower levels of indecision. Patton and Creed (2007) reported an internal consistency coefficient of .89.

The instruments were administered to 40 students on one occasion. to estimate reliability, the Cronbach's alpha test was run using the reliability command in SPSS for each of the instruments.

This was done to estimate how well items that reflect the same construct yield similar results. The coefficient level was set at 0.70. Results for the reliability of the instruments used were as follows: - Career Decision Scale .74, Multidimensional Social Support Scales .81, Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale .82 and Career Locus of Control Scale .77.

2.2 Data Collection Procedures

Before undertaking the study, the researcher sought ethical approval from Maseno University Ethics Review Committee (MUERC) through the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). The researcher also visited the County Director of Education and the District Directors of education for a courtesy call and informed them of the study area. The researcher then visited the sampled schools for introduction and familiarity with the schools and principals. The visit was also meant to seek permission from the principals and to agree on the date to conduct the study. A second visitation was made to collect data.

Prior to administering the instrument, the participants were briefed on the nature of the research. The participants were advised that their responses would be anonymous and would be used for the purpose of research only. Participation was voluntary; those who agreed to participate in the research were given consent forms to append their signatures. Participants were then issued with the questionnaire which they filled. Participants who were through with the exercise gave back the filled questionnaire to the researcher.

2.3 Methods of Data Analysis

Prior to data analysis, scores were summed up for each scale to get the total score for each respondent on variables under study. Means, standard deviations and correlations were used to analyse the data.

3. Results and discussion

Scores of respondents on the Perceived Social Support scale ranged from 20 to 60 out of a possible score of 60. The mean score for the respondents on the Social Support scale was 45.76 ($SD = 8.55$). Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare mean scores of the respondents based on various demographic variables. The results are presented on Table 1. Based on the results there was a significant difference in the mean scores for male ($M = 44.30$, $SD=9.09$) and female students ($M = 46.96$, $SD=7.90$); $t = -2.95$, $p < .05$. These results suggest that one's gender does have an effect on the amount of social support received by students. Based on these results, female students receive more social support than male students. These results are similar to those reported by Zabalegui (2011) who also found that men perceive less social support than females. The results in the present study could be attributed to gender differences in expressiveness. Females are considered to be more expressive and discursive than males hence they are more likely to discuss their career problems with friends and relatives and seek their support. The results show that female adolescents

receive more social support compared to their male counterpart. This could also be a result of the kind of socialization the males and female students undergo.

Further analysis shows that female students receive statistically significant higher social support from a special person and a family member. There was however no statistically significant difference in the social support received from a friend for the male and female students. During adolescents, children are known to like the company of their peers than their family members; it is possible that this is the reason why the influence of friend is almost similar for the boys and girls

Table 1: Gender Differences in Variables under Study

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
PSS	Male	161	44.30	9.09	.72	-2.911	.004	-2.65
	Female	196	46.96	7.90	.56			
CMSE	Male	161	90.80	15.91	1.25	-.907	.365	-1.47
	Female	196	92.27	14.33	1.02			
ELoC	Male	161	37.86	10.55	.83	3.259	.001	3.62
	Female	196	34.23	10.34	.74			
ILoC	Male	161	20.34	4.15	.33	-3.452	.001	-1.39
	Female	196	21.73	3.28	.23			
CI	Male	161	34.97	7.90	.62	-1.491	.137	-1.23
	Female	196	36.20	7.58	.54			
Special Person	Male	161	14.70	4.15	.33	-3.161	.002	-1.33
	Female	196	16.03	3.68	.26			
Family Member	Male	161	13.50	2.68	.21	-3.445	.001	-.97
	Female	196	14.47	2.62	.19			
Friend	Male	161	13.57	3.69	.29	-1.014	.311	-.39
	Female	196	13.96	3.53	.25			

Scores of respondents on the Career Decision Making Self Efficacy scale ranged from 30 to 125 out of a possible score of 125. The mean score for the respondents on the Career Decision Making Self Efficacy scale was 91.60 ($SD = 15.02$). There was however no significant difference in the mean scores for male ($M = 90.80$, $SD=15.91$) and female students ($M = 92.27$, $SD=14.33$); $t = -.917$, $p > .05$. This implies that the differences in male and female students' belief in their ability to make

career decisions could be attributed to chance. These results differ from those reported by Koumounndourou et al (2012) with Greek adolescents, Stacy (2003), murugami (2010), who found significant difference in the CDMSE of male and female students with female students scoring higher than males in the CDMSE scale. These results are however similar to those reported by Wilson (2003, Brown & Haush (2006), Creed, Patton & Prideaux (2006) and Hampton (2006).

Scores of respondents on External Locus of Control scale ranged from 15 to 71 out of a possible score of 75. The mean score for the respondents on the External Locus of Control Scale was 35.87 ($SD = 10.58$). Based on the results there was a significant difference in the mean scores for male ($M = 37.86$, $SD=10.55$) and female students ($M = 34.23$, $SD=10.34$); $t = 3.26$, $p < .05$. These results show that males believe more than their female counterparts that they do not have control over their career outcomes but instead their career outcomes are dependent on luck, fate or other people in their environment.

Scores of respondents on the Internal Locus of Control scale ranged from 5 to 25 out of a possible score of 25. The mean score for the respondents was 21.11 ($SD = 3.76$). Based on the results there was a significant difference in the mean scores for male ($M = 20.34$, $SD=4.15$) and female students ($M = 21.73$, $SD=3.28$); $t = -3.45$, $p < .05$. These results show that females believe more than their female counterparts that their career outcomes are dependent on their own efforts

Scores of respondents on the Career Decision scale ranged from 16 to 54 out of a possible score of 64. The mean score for the respondents on the Career Decision Scale was 35.64 ($SD = 7.74$). Based on the results there was no significant difference in Career Indecision mean scores for male ($M = 34.97$, $SD=7.90$) and female adolescents ($M = 36.19$, $SD=7.58$); $t = -1.50$, $p > .05$. These results differ from those reported by Creed, Patton and Prideaux (2006) who found significant differences on the career decision making status of high school students. These results however are in agreement with those reported by Patton et al (2004), Talib & Aun (2009), Hampton (2006), Akos et al (2004) and Oztemel (2013) who also found no significant difference in career indecision across gender.

Relationship between perceived social support and career variables

Correlation analysis was performed for perceived social support, career decision making self-efficacy, career locus of control and career indecision. The results are presented on table 2. The results show that there was a positive relationship between perceived social support and career decision making self-efficacy ($r = -.237$, $p < .05$). This results are similar to those reported by Chan (2020), Gashi, Duraku and Kelmendi (2019) and Wang and Ying (2015) with a sample of college athletes, Kosovar youth and college graduates respectively. Further analysis show that the relationship was stronger between career decision making self-efficacy and support from a family member ($r = -.221$, $p < .05$) followed by support from a special person ($r = -.202$, $p < .05$) and finally support from a friend ($r = -.130$, $p > .05$). These results imply that as perceived social support increases, adolescents confidence in their ability to make career decisions also increases. Further

analysis shows that the relationship between perceived social support and career decision making self-efficacy is strongest when their perceived social support is received from a family member followed by a special person and finally a friend. This is in support of Bronfenbrenner ecosystem theory which states that when family members are involved in a child's development then it influences them positively.

A positive relationship was also reported between perceived social support and internal locus of control ($r=-.351, p<.05.$). These results are concurrent with those reported by VanderZee, Buunk and Sanderman (2006) who also found that individuals with internal locus of control perceive more social support. Further analysis show that the relationship between perceived social support and internal locus of control is stronger when social support is received from a special person ($r=-.291p<.05.$) followed by a family member ($r=-.241p<.05.$) and finally a friend ($r=-.197, p<.05.$). These results imply that as perceived social support increases, adolescents' belief that they are responsible for determining their own career outcomes also increases.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for The Relationship Between Perceived Social Support And Career Variables (N = 369)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 PSS	1							
2 CDMSE	.237**	1						
3 ECLC	-.106*	-	1					
		.206**						
4 ICLC	.351**	.235**	-	1				
			.202**					
5 Career Indecision	-	-	.378**	-.064	1			
	.150**	.148**						
6 Special Person	.831**	.202**	-.070	.291**	-	1		
					.169**			
7 Family Member	.548**	.221**	-	.241**	-.059	.329**	1	
			.193**					
8 Friend	.768**	.130*	-.000	.197**	-.039	.467**	.252**	1

Key: PSS = Perceived Social Support, CDMSE = Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy, CM = Career Maturity, ECLC = External Career Locus of Control, ICLC = Internal Career Locus of Control

The results also show a significant negative relationship between perceived social support and career indecision ($r=-.150, p<.05.$). These results are similar to those reported by Gashi, Duraku and Kelmendi (2019) who found social support to be significantly negatively correlated with career indecision with a sample of Kosovar youth. Further analysis shows that the relationship between social support and career indecision is stronger when adolescents seek social support from a special

person ($r=-.169$, $p<.05$). The relationship between career indecision and family member and between career indecision and friend was however was not statistically significant. These results differ from those reported by Starica (2012) who found parental support to be a significant predictor of career indecision. The results of the current study show that it is important for adolescents to have a special person with whom they seek help in regards to making career decisions. This special person could be a mentor, teacher or a career counselor.

A statistically significant negative relationship was also reported between perceived social support and external career locus of control ($r=-.106$, $p<.05$). This relationship was stronger when social support is received from a family member ($r=-.193$, $p<.05$). The relationship between perceived social support and external locus of control is however not statistically significant when support is received from a friend or a special person. This implies that family members play a key role in helping adolescents feel that their career outcomes are not dependent on other people, fate or luck. This may be through the stories told by family members or by witnessing how easy or difficult family members get jobs after training.

Conclusion

Based on the results it is important to note that social support has a positive influence on career decision making. As a result, it is important that adolescents seek social support whenever they experience problems in career decision making. Significant people in adolescents' lives should also offer encouraging and nurturing relationships, for the better development of adolescents.

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