

Career Decision Making Status of Adolescents in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the decision making status of adolescents in Kisumu municipality across various demographic variables. The sample consisted of 359 (162 males and 197 females) secondary school students from year one to year four. The students were surveyed on a measure of career indecision. The findings of the study show that gender and the type of school a student attends has a significant influence on their career decision making status. Students in private schools are more undecided than those in public schools. Career indecision scores also decrease as one progresses from year one to year four. Based on the findings of the current study the researcher recommends that Career counsellors should attend to the challenges students' face in relation to making career decisions so as to reduce their level of indecision. The current study may provide a Kenyan perspective of adolescence career decision making status which is currently lacking in literature. This information may then aid career researchers and counselors in implementing effective vocational intervention strategies that guide and assist the students in their career development.

Keywords: career indecision, adolescents, gender, type of school, grade, career counseling

INTRODUCTION

One task expected of high school students is to explore and plan for their post secondary career options. According to Super's (1990) Theory of Career Development, there are 5 stages of career development: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and withdrawal. Adolescents who are in their secondary level of education are at the exploration stage of career development which involves crystallizing and specifying occupational preferences while also making preliminary decisions about career choice (Gonzalez, 2008). As individuals mature cognitively and advance through the education system, they learn about different career opportunities, develop an understanding of their own aspirations and become aware of potential matches with different career choices (Junk & Armstrong, 2010).

The choice of a career especially among diverse options is usually a very difficult task (Salami, 2008). For some young people, career decision-making is an exciting yet challenging task of having to choose between a number of equally desirable alternatives all offering possibilities of satisfying and fulfilling careers. Others have a more constrained choice restricted by limited interests, abilities as well as a number of interpersonal, social and environmental factors (Albion, 2000).

High school students are actively engaged in planning and implementing their post secondary

career options (Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). Because of this the school system has the responsibility of assisting the youth in making competent career decisions that are appropriate to their abilities, aptitudes, interests and other personal characteristics (Salami, 2008). The best way to accomplish this mission in today's socioeconomic context is for school counselors to assist students in acquiring decision making skills that will enable them arrive at appropriate and satisfying career decisions (Lens, Herreta & Lacante, 2004).

There is evidence that secondary school students in Nigeria (Salami, 2008) and Kenya (Migunde, Agak & Odiwuor, 2011; Omondi, 2007) complete their secondary education quite deficient in occupational information. Studies have also shown that students in developing countries such as Kenya (Migunde, Agak & Odiwuor, 2011) and Nigeria (Salami, 2008) often make poor career decisions. They often select occupations mainly because of the salaries, positions and prestige associated with them. This has been attributed to lack of career education in schools which limits occupational experiences of adolescents (Omondi, 2007). In Kenya for example, the choice of a career is purely based on academic performance and subject clusters designed by the Ministry of Education (Osoro, Amundson & Borgen, 2000).

Even though career development is a lifelong process, this study will focus on adolescents because adolescence is a period of intense exploration and

deciding on a career is therefore a key developmental task during this period (Onder, Kirdok & Isik, 2010; Martinez, 2007; Savickas, Briddick & Watkins, 2002). It is during adolescence that vocational goals, interests and values are formulated (Onder, Kirdok & Isik, 2010; Peterson & Gonzalez, 2000). In addition, career development undergoes great progress during this stage (Gonzalez, 2008). It is important therefore, to investigate career decision making by adolescents.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study aims to establish the levels of career indecision of adolescents in Kisumu municipality Kenya and to determine the differences in the levels of career indecision of adolescents across the demographic variables of age, year in school, gender, type of school and receiving career counseling.

METHODS

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Kisumu Municipality Kenya. The sample for the study consisted of 359 students. The age of respondents ranged from 13 to 28 years. The sample consisted of 162 (43.8%) male and 197 (53.2%) female students. Year one students represented 25.4%, form year two represented 24.3%, year three represented 31.9% and form year four students represented 18.4% of the total sample.

Data Collection Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire: Demographic questionnaire were used to gather basic information about the students such as age, gender, type of school, work experience, and form in school and parents level of education.

Career Decision Scale: The Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow et al, 1976) was used to measure career decision making status 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. Osipow et al 1996) reported a two week test retest reliability of .90 and .81. Wang et al (2006) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .91. Patton and Creed (2007) reported .89. The reliability for the current study was .74.

Procedure for Data Collection

Before undertaking the study, the researcher sort permission through the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) from the National Council of Science and Technology (NCST). The researcher also visited the County Director of Education and the District Directors of education for a courtesy call and informed them of 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.

RESULTS

The career indecision scores of respondents ranged from 19-64. The minimum and maximum score for this scale are 16 and 64 respectively. The mean career indecision of the respondents was 42.80 ($SD=8.41$). Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare mean scores of the respondents based on various demographic variables such as gender, type of school and receiving career counselling. The results are presented in Table1.

Students reported significantly higher career indecision scores than the male students . Students from private school scored significantly higher on career indecision than those from private schools. No significant differences were noted in the career indecision scores between those who had and had not received career counseling.

Bivariate correlation results between career indecision and the demographic variables of age and year in school for the total sample indicate that correlation between career indecision and age was not significant however, career indecision and grade were significantly correlated ($r = -.121, p = <.05$).

DISCUSSION

Female students were found to be experiencing significantly higher career indecision than male students. These results are in agreement with those reported by creed, Patton and Prideaux (2006) who found significant differences on the career decision making status of high school students across gender. According to Reenen (2010), gender is not only an outcome of biological and genetic factors but also a product of experience that an individual has because of belonging to a particular gender. There are certain opportunities that are gained because of belonging to a particular gender which in turn influence career decision making. Based on the results of the present study, these opportunities appear to fewer for females. As a result they exhibit higher levels of career indecisions.

Students from private schools scored significantly higher on career indecision. These results suggest that students from private schools are more undecided when it comes to career decision making than those from public schools. It is likely that public schools promote a healthy environment that not only stress on academic curriculum but also helps students in finding careers that are appropriate for them by exposing them and encouraging them to participate in numerous activities.

No significant differences were noted in the career indecision scores between those who had and had not received career counseling. Career counsellors have a crucial role to play in helping adolescents make informed career decision that in turn reduce their level of career indecision. Based on the results of the current study the information given to students who seek counselling does not reduce their level of career indecision. It is likely that, the career counsellors do not address the challenges students face in relation to making career decisions but rather just give them general career information which may not help in reducing indecision levels..

Career indecision and grade were significantly negatively correlated implying that students' level of career indecision decreases as one progress from year one to year four. It is likely that as students' progress from form one to form four; they get exposed to more experiences and become more aware of their capabilities and interests which in turn decreases their levels of career indecision. Another possible explanation is that, as students move from one stage of the education system to the next, there are certain decisions that they are expected to make with regard to their career paths such as choice of subjects in form two and choice of degree programmes in form four. As a result, career development activities such as planning, information seeking may increase during these periods.

CONCLUSION

The researcher came to the conclusion that the type of school a student attends has a significant influence on their career decision making status. Students in private schools are more undecided than those in public schools. Female students also experience higher levels of indecision than male students. Career indecision scores also decreases as one progress from year one to year four.

Based on the findings of the current study the researcher recommends that Career counsellors should attend to the challenges students' face in relation to making career decisions so as to reduce their level of indecision.

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Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Levels of Significance for Career Indecision across Demographic Variables

			Mean	SD	t
1	Gender	Males	34.58	7.19	-2.12*
		Females	36.15	6.80	
2	School	Private	37.68	6.80	2.54*
		Public	35.18	6.96	
3	C & C	Yes	35.35	6.95	-.78
		No	36.03	7.06	

Key: C&C = Career Counselling