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# **UNIVERSITY OF ELDORET**

**SCHOOL OF SCIENCE**

**DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTER SCIENCE**

PROJECT TOPIC

**FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA, CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF ELDORET**

NAME

**JOSEPH ONYANGO OKOTH AST/529/11**

**HASSAN .S. NGALA AST/039/11**

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**ABSTRACT**

Career choice is a complex decision for students since it determines the kind of profession that they intend to pursue in life. As students try to make career choice, they face problems of matching their career choices with their abilities and academic performance. The purpose of this study is to examine factors that influence career

Choice among students, such factors include peer influence, gender, parental influence, job opportunities and personal interest.

The target population will be, first, second, third and fourth year students. The sample size will be 150 students. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques will be used in the study whereas the students will be grouped into strata of year of study. The data collection instrument will be self-administered questionnaire which will contain both open and closed ended questions. Data analysis will be based on the research questions designed at the beginning of the research. The collected data will be inspected and edited to determine their accuracy, completeness and uniformity. Data will be analysed using statistical package for social sciences(SPSS) and R. Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to investigate the factors that influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities in Kenya. The results of the study will be compared with literature review to establish these factors.. The data to be collected will be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in the form of bar graphs and frequency tables.

The result from the study will be of value to the government, universities and other humanitarian actors in empowering the youth in the choice of their career for the growth of our economy.

Two research questions have been raised and answered; while two hypotheses have also been formulated and tested.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

For every incoming university student, choosing the best course can be a difficult decision as well as thinking about their future career. Some students know exactly what course to pursue while others do not know which one will get them there. In fact, due to the large number of courses available to students, most of them find themselves switching majors. The importance of choosing a degree as well as courses available is a vital and crucial part for every student as it is the building block of future success. Students need to be knowledgeable about the path they will be taking to help them prepare for their career path. However, career choice has become a complex science with the advent of information technology, the emergence of post industrial revolution and job competition. It was a common practice in the old days to find feudalism converting it into a family affair where the son of a blacksmith was destined to become a blacksmith and a feudal was born a leader.

Industrialization and post industrialization has made it possible for a common person to be rich as long as they have due skills and knowledge (Wattles, 2009). Today, one has not only to make due career planning but also exhaustive career research before making a career choice so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions (Wattles, 2009).

According to Kerka (2000), career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and financial. Bandura et al., (2001) state that each individual undertaking the process is influenced by several factors including the context in which they live in, their personal aptitudes, social contacts and educational attainment. Hewitt (2010) states that factors influencing career choice can either be intrinsic, extrinsic or both. Hewitt further states that most people are influenced by careers that their parents favour, others follow careers that their educational choices have opened for them, some choose to follow their passion regardless of how much or little it will make them while others choose the careers that give high income.

Students’ perception of being suitable for particular jobs also has been found to be influenced by a number of factors including ethnic background, year in school, level of achievement, choice of science subjects, and differences in job characteristics (McQuaid and Bond, 2003). Perrone et al., (2001) found that role model supportiveness and quality of relationship contribute to career choice of students.

**1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities in Kenya with a focus on the students from the University of Eldoret.

**1.4 Objectives of the study**

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess how family factors influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.

2. To examine the influence of peers on career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.

3. To establish the influence of role models on career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.

4. To determine how gender influences career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.

**1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To determine how career benefit influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
2. To determine the effect of masculinity and femininity in choosing career among undergraduate students in public universities.
3. To assess how family factors influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
4. To examine the influence of peers on career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
5. To establish the influence of role models on career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
6. To determine how gender influences career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.

**1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research sought to answer the following research questions:-

1. How do family factors influence career choice among among undergraduate students in public universities?

2. What is the influence of peers on career choice among

3. How do role models influence career choice among Compassion International sponsored

undergraduate students in public universities?

4. How does gender influence career choice among Compassion International sponsored

undergraduate students in public universities?

**1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research sought to answer the following research questions:-

1. How do career benefits influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities?
2. How do family factors influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities?
3. What is the influence of peers on career choice among undergraduate students in public universities?
4. How do role models influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities?
5. How does gender influence career choice among undergraduate students in public universities?

**STUDY HYPOTHESES**

1. H01: there is no significant association between career benefits and career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
2. H02: there is no significant association between masculinity and femininity and career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
3. H03: there is no significant association between family factors and career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
4. H04: there is no significant association between peers influence and career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
5. H05: there is no significant association between role models influence and career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.
6. H06: there is no significant association between gender influence and career choice among undergraduate students in public universities.

**1.6 Significance of the study**

The results of this study will be of significance to the Government of Kenya as it will address the factors that influence students to choose specific careers therefore forming a basis for proper information, education and communication among the youths in public and private universities.

This research will also benefit Non-governmental organizations that fund youth programs as this will necessitate capacity building among the youths in the line of career choice.

Scholars and academicians will find the results of this study helpful as it will form a basis for further research.

The universities at large will utilize the results of this study to form a basis for proper information and training during university open days before students join the higher institutions of learning.

**1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study will target undergraduate students from different schools in the University of Eldoret. We will consider first, second, third and fourth year students who will be in session during the period of January to April.

The scope of this study will also be limited to specific variables of the study that influence career choice among undergraduate students. These variables include; Parental influence, Peer influence, role models and gender influence on career choice among others.

**1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A limitation is some aspect of the study that the researcher knows may negatively affect the results of generalizability of the results, but over which he/she has no control( Mugenda and Mugenda 2003). Some of the limitations of this study will be; while the size of the study will be large enough to conclude reasonable assumptions, the sample data will be obtained from one university in one geographical region and may not be indicative of the larger population of public universities in Kenya. The validity of this study will rely on the students’ genuine and thoughtful response. Also, the influence of socialization process and stereotyping by the respondents will be a challenge. This will be overcome by reassuring the respondents of confidentiality of the information.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter reviews the literature that describes the factors that influence career choice. The body of literature available for review encompassed many volumes.

Therefore, this review of the literature focuses on; how career benefits can influence a student career choice, how family factors can influence a student career choice, how role models can influence a student career choice, how peers can influence a student career choice, how gender can influence a student career choice and lastly how masculinity and femininity can influence a student career choice.

**2**.**1 CAREER BENEFITS**

Moy and Lee (2002, p.343) found that business undergraduates rated long term career prospects as the most important job attribute affecting their career choice, followed by pay, job security and managerial relationship. Both research revealed that pay, fringe benefits, working conditions, long term career prospects and marketability as significantly less favourable in SMEs than in MNCs.

Teo and Poon (1994) have used 10 factors such as pay, fringe benefits, working conditions, managerial quality and relationships, long-term career prospects, responsibility given, authority, involvement in decision making, marketability and job security in investigating which of these job attributes or factors influenced the choice of employment of first year business undergraduate. Moy and Lee (2002) in their research of the business graduate perceptions of employment in SMEs and MNCs have tested two hypotheses based on nine job attributes. The missing job attribute in Moy and Lee’s (2002) research in comparison with Teo and Poon’s (1994) was authority.

Another empirical research on factors influencing choice of employment found that individuals who prefer to work for an organization feel such a career provides great development of knowledge and skills, job security, higher income, intellectual simulation and the opportunity to work with people they admire and respect (Brenner, Pringle and Greenhaus as cited in Kolvereid, 1996, p.24). The individuals who preferred to work for an organization and those who prefer to operate their own business concurred that their preferred career will provide greater opportunity for continued development, to earn a higher income and to work with people they admire and respect (Brenner et al., as cited in Kolvereid, 1996, p.25). Kolvereid (1996, p.28-29) has included security, economic opportunity, authority, autonomy, social environment, workload (working hours), challenge, self-realization, participate in the whole process, responsibility, career opportunity as classes of reasons for employment status preferences in his study. His research found that individuals who chose to work for an organisation rated security, social environment, workload, avoidance of responsibility and career opportunity as the reasons. Those who preferred self-employment rated high on factors such as economic opportunity, authority, autonomy, challenge, self-realisation and participate in the whole process

**2.2PEERS**

Peer groups also have influence on the occupation choice of students. In his view Hinchilife (1973) observes that friends are an important factor in the career choice of adolescents. Durojaiye (1970) also found that 76.5% of the pupils he studied said that their classmates would be employed in professional occupations just like them; while 24% said that their chosen jobs would be same as those of their friends.

Peers have a crucial influence on the career planning of students and making key life decisions (Farmer, 2001; Felsman & Blustein, 1999). Students' career planning is not only influenced by the overall supportive mindset of their peers but also by the opportunity to learn from them (Fisher & Griggs, 1995).The ability of peers to influence the behaviors and attitudes of the adolescents is magnified when adolescents perceive that their parental relationship is negative or deficient in support and guidance Middleton and Loughead (1993). Stuart (2000) contends that peers’ attitude toward gender and ethnicity may increase or decrease a person’s confidence in pursuing a career. He further noted that adolescents are easily influenced by their peers because they rely on their friends to provide validation of the choices that they make including career decisions. A study by Berndt (1990) indicated that the best friend exerts strong influence on individuals and their choices. The finding led him to conclude that peer influence leads to an increase in friends’ similarity of decisions. Issa and Nwalo (2008) however concluded that although boys and girls are positively influenced in equal measure by their friends’ interest in computer science, boys seem not to be affected negatively by their friends’ lack of interest in the discipline.

**2.3 ROLE MODELS**

Role models have been defined as people whose lives and activities influence another person in some way (Basoc & Howe, 1980).According to Gibson and Cordova (1999), the early role models for individuals are normally their parents and then later it is usually someone who comes from a wider arena’, meaning one who sometimes is not known personally by the individuals. Gibson and Cordova further observed that once children grow up and know other people and other environments then they will find people from multi and different backgrounds and professions whom they identify as their role models.

According to Bandura (2000), role models affect career choice directly and indirectly through their influence on self-efficacy. Individuals tend to seek role models who are similar to them in some easily identifiable way, such as gender or race (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004).Identification with role models is critical in the career decision-making. By identifying with an outstanding role model, individuals can become inspired to pursue similar achievements process (Gibson, 2004).

In a study by Perrone (2001) on role model influence on the career decisiveness of college students, it was found that role model supportiveness, and quality of relationship contributed to the career choice of students. The same study indicated that majority of the students selected same gender role models. Gibson (2004) noted that persons tended to identify with multiple role models, except in cases where there was limited availability. Fried and MacCleave (2009) while studying on the Influence of Role Models and Mentorship on female Graduate Students’ Choice of Science as a Career found out that role models and mentors influenced students in distinct ways. Significant gender area-of-study and undergraduate country differences were found. Empirical studies carried out by Hacketh (1996) notes that career role models serve as contextual support that have a direct effect on career choice. Specifically role models may provide vicarious learning experiences that increase the likelihood of choosing a specific career.

**2.6 GENDER**

The role of gender in students‟ vocational choice cannot be underplayed. In most parts of the country, the cultural roles expectations of men and women are known to be clearly defined. Some studies have shown significant relationship between gender and occupational aspirations, preference and choice. In the Nigeria society, boys and girls often undergo different socialization experiences and they tend to learn different gender roles and behaviour patterns and hence develop different interests. These roles and interests later become the dominant factors in career choice. Gesinde‟s (1976) study also showed that gender plays an important role in determining the career preferences of students. Other research findings which support gender differences in career preferences and choices include the works of Yuh (1980) who in her study of some correlates of vocational orientations of some Nigerian secondary students discovered that significantly, more male students preferred realistic, investigative and enterprising careers than females

Many students may restrict their career choices to careers that are gender stereotyped (Eccles,1991). According to Savickas and Lent (1994), it has been shown that females tend to score high in artistic, social and conventional occupations, while men are more likely to prefer realistic, investigative and enterprising occupations. Greenberger (2002) stated that boys are still being steered toward the traditional ‘male’ jobs, which are higher paying while girls are still expected to cluster into the traditional fields of cosmetology, childcare, and other similar jobs. Skills present in males and females alike have been indicative of their vocational interests. Boys are shaped and groomed into stereotypic masculine careers and are given more status in the family (Grant 2004). However, Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) argue that female children receive more attention from parents than male off springs. They attribute the parents’ behavior to the current emphasis on educational attainment for females.

Mothers advising daughters that it’s important to establish yourself in a career before you raise a family ‘both constitutes and perpetuates particular gendered understandings between paid work and childrearing, (Medved& Brogan, 2006). These types of powerful messages, that start within the family, help lay the foundation of how young people will view their future career options, especially when the messages contain either overt or covert biases based on one‘s gender (Medved & Brogan, 2006). Such messages, communicated from adults to children, which focus on a person‘s ability due to their gender, may also increase or decrease a child‘s perception of his or her own skills or aptitude in certain areas (Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, Harris-Britt, & Woods,2008).

Studies in the developed world reveal that under-representation of females in certain subjects and training programs has led to similar occupational under-representation, (Bender 1994). Palmer (2005) observed the reduction in the numbers and caliber of students seeking admissions into engineering education in Australia. Despite advances in other professional fields in recent decades, women remain the minority in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)careers, comprising only 22% of these fields in 2005 (Statistics Canada, 2006).One issue is that girls in high school find engineering or technology boring or not attractive for a career (Kekelis, Countryman, Heber & Ancheta, 2006; Thomas, 2004). According to American Association of university women (AAUW 1992), women in the U.S constituted only about 20 percent of engineering majors and were holding only 9 percent of engineering jobs.

**2.2 FAMILY FACTORS**

Parents are the primary authority in influencing sex role, socialization, providing social skills training, promoting character development and developing a sense of responsibility. According to Kniveton (2004), the family can provide information and guidance directly or indirectly, to influence a young person’s career choice. For example, parents offer appropriate support for certain occupational choices which tend to follow their own (Small and McClean 2002). Parents' expectation and support are important factors in influencing career decisions, maturation and future educational/occupational attainment (Guerra and Braungart-Rieker, 1999).

When young adults move away from home (for college or for work), their family will likely still have a strong influence upon them on two significant life events—marriage and their career (Larson, 1995).Although schools, peers, and the student‘s community all have an impact on the young adult‘s self-identity and career choice, the parent‘s expectations and perceptions of vocational fit for their children have been found to be the key roles in shaping their career choices (Ferry, 2006). In one study (Creamer &Laughlin, 2005), this influence has been so strong as to override the influence of teachers, faculty, and career counselors, who likely know more about the career field in question but were not as well-known and/or trusted as the student‘s parents for this type of decision. The young adult‘s understanding of his or her parent‘s expectations will influence their own career decisions, depending on whether the adolescent feels the need to go along with their parent‘s views or to rebel against them (Mau, Hitchcock, & Calvert, 1998; Penic & Jepsen, 1992).

When Middleton and Loughead (1993) examined how parents were influencing their children, they classified parents into three main categories: positive involvement; non-involvement; and negative involvement. Parents, who were positively involved with their children‘s career development and career choice, were enthusiastic about their children‘s career exploration and were emotionally and/or verbally supportive of the young adult‘s individual goals. Non- supportive parents, on the other hand, were ―unaware of what to do, how to help, or that their involvement is desired at all according to Middleton and Loughead (1993). A negatively involved parent was in a much more precarious situation where the adolescent felt anxiety or resentment, regarding career decisions based on parental attitudes. Parents in this category may have overtly pressured their son or daughter to focus on a particular career path which went against what the child believed was best for themselves.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the methodology which will be used in this study. This will include the research design, the target population, sampling procedures, description of the research instrument, data collection method and data analysis procedures.

**Research design**

This study will adopt a cross-sectional study design. This design will be appropriate in describing the students’ perception and attitudes on the influence of parents, role models, peer and gender on career choice among others.

**Study Area**

The case study area will be University of Eldoret, Kenya.

**Target population**

The target population will be undergraduate students from different schools in the University of Eldoret. We will consider first, second, third and fourth year students who will be in session during the period of January to May, 2015.

**Sample size and sampling procedure**

Stratified sampling technique will be used to obtain the sample for the study. The students will be stratified into the year of study that is first, second, third and fourth year. Simple random sampling technique will be then employed to select a sample size of about 38 students from each stratum giving an overall sample size of about 150 students.

**Research instruments**

The researcher will use questionnaires as an instrument of data collection. The questionnaires will have both closed and open ended items. The open- ended items will permit a greater depth of response. The closed items will capture personal details and attitude scales.

The questionnaire will have 3 sections. Section A will give the general information of the respondents. Section B will address specific objective of the study which included parental, peer, role models and gender influence on career choices. Section C will provide the respondents with an opportunity to share any information relevant to the study that will not have been covered in the previous sections.

**Data analysis**

Questionnaires filled by the respondents will be edited for completeness and consistency. The data will be checked for coding errors and omissions. The coded data will be processed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20 and R version 3.1.2 and analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, mode percentages, average mean and standard deviation. SPSS will be used to extract data from questionnaires and coding the data appropriately. It will also help us to obtain the descriptive statistics. R will be used to plot bar graphs, pie charts and histograms for visual representation of the results.

**Ethical considerations**

The research will observe confidentiality of the information in the questionnaire from the respondents.

**Factor analysis**

Is a statistical method that is used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of observed variables called factors. Factor analysis will search for joint variation in response to observed latent variables. The observed variables are modelled as linear combinations of potential factors, plus error terms. The information gained about the interdependencies between observed variables can be used later to reduce the set of variables in a data set. Computationally the technique is equivalent to low-rank approximation of the matrix of observed variables. In statistics latent variables (hidden variables) are variables that are not directly observed but are rather inferred (through a mathematical model) from other variables that are observed (directly measured)

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