INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY FACTORS ON CAREER CHOICE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CHUKA SUB COUNTY OF THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, KENYA

Authors
i.   *Elosy Nyambura Riungu*
ii. *Lucy Nyambura Kiriungi*

Authors Affiliation
Chuka University, Department of Education,
P. O. Box 109 – 60400,
Chuka, Kenya

Email of the corresponding author: lucykiriungi@yahoo.com

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of selected personality factors on career choice among secondary school students in Chuka sub-county of Tharaka Nthi County in Kenya. The descriptive survey research design was adapted for the study whose population was 941 students from the 12 secondary schools in Chuka Sub-County. Stratified sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size of 260 form three students. A set of questionnaires was employed for data collection. A pilot study was conducted in order to improve on the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Opinions from experts in the field were sought for validation while test-retest technique was used to ensure the reliability of the instrument. Percentages, frequency counts and Chi square test were adapted for data analysis by use of SPSS version 15.0 the data analysis results indicated a significant influence of personality factors on career choice among secondary school students. Therefore, it was recommended that personality factors including introversion, extroversion, self-concept, shyness, self-esteem among others be considered while designing career guidance and counseling programmes for secondary school students.
Key words: personality, career choice.

1. Introduction

Career choice is crucial among people all over the world and choosing a career is a big problem to those who have had no experience of working life. According to Inkule (2004) a good choice of career means one in which a person stands a good chance of succeeding; a career in which a person's particular strengths and abilities can best be developed. Macionis (2000) argues that for contentment and purposeful education, students need career guidance particularly during the later stages of schooling. Stark (2004) points out that career education and guidance is still slowly gaining recognition of its true significance and value outside the education system. Jest and Gregory (2002) affirm that people who fail in jobs do so because they cannot adjust to situations and to the people within their working environment. This is not due to lack of ability and knowledge but as a result of the prevailing personality factors. While most jobs in the world are worth doing and satisfying to the right person, the problem lurks on how to match the right person

with the right job (Wingfield, 2003). As such, a thoughtful student who is guided to consider this problem carefully can become his/her own adviser particularly if he/she is able to face up to his/her own limitations and not exaggerating his/her abilities, talents and interests.

According to the United States Bureau of labor statistics, women in administrative support work serve as secretaries, typists and elsewhere in jobs as waitressing and other food service work (Macionis, 2000). From the statistics, men predominate in most other job categories holding the lion's share of positions that provide a great deal of income, prestige and power; for example, most men are engineers, physicians, lawyers and judges. In addition, male physicians tend to be assisted by female nurses; male executives have female secretaries; and male airline pilots work with female flight attendants. This clearly indicates gender based inequality in career choice. In Kenya, it appears that some students fill career application forms after the release of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results instead of the required time way before taking the examination. This means that these students do not take advantage of career guidance and counselling at school despite the emphasis put in guiding secondary school students on choosing careers in the country. One explanation for this trend among secondary school students is the notion that education qualifications play a vital role in providing entry to specific careers (Hogan & Ones, 1997). For this reason, students tend to wait until KCSE results are out in order to decide what careers to pursue based on the academic qualifications.

Besides academic performance, other factors that may influence students' choice of careers include: job availability, culture, parental input, exposure to certain careers as well as personal interests. However, a major area that may not have been considered over the years while choosing careers among secondary school students in Kenya is the area of personality factors (Dondo, 1996). Personality factors such as introversion, extroversion, self- concept, self- esteem and shyness may contribute to success in a career and sometimes essential elements of some careers. To guide policy makers as well as school counsellors and ensure that students venture into careers in which personal satisfaction and success rates are heightened, this study sought to examine the influence of personality factors on career choice among secondary school students in Chuka Division of Meru-South District in Kenya.

2. Objectives

The main objective of this study was to determine personality factors influencing choice of careers among secondary school students in Chuka Division of Meru-South District in Kenya.

3. Research Hypothesis

This study sought to test the following hypothesis:

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant influence of personality factors on career choice among secondary school students.

4. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 941 form three students from 12 secondary schools in Chuka Sub-County. Stratifies sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of 260 students from the study population. A self-report personality inventory and career choice questionnaire was utilized as the data collection instrument. The instrument was validated by experts while the reliability was ascertained by use of split-half method. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained and considered appropriate since this was above the study's threshold of 0.7. Permission for data collection was granted by the National

Commission for Science and Technology. The collected data were analyzed by use of SPSS version 15.0 and then presented on tables.

4. Results and Discussion

The respondents were asked to specify their gender. The data analysis results on respondents' gender were represented on Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender and school category

School Category	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Boys	60	23	0	0	60	23
Girls	0	0	65	25	65	25
Mixed	70	27	65	25	135	52
Total	**130**	**50**	**130**	**50**	**260**	**100**

Information on Table 1 indicates that there were an equal number of male and female respondents. However, there were more girls than boys from the single gender schools but more boys than girls from the mixed gender schools.

To determine personality factors influencing career choice among secondary school students, the career choices were categorized into two groups: careers requiring working with objects because they involve minimal or no interaction with people and careers requiring working with people because they involve maximum interaction with other human beings. Selected personality factors included: introversion/extroversion, self-concept, shyness and self-esteem. Chi square test was conducted to determine the influence of selected personality factors on career choice among the secondary school students. Data analysis results were represented on Table 2 below.

Table 2: Chi square results on influence of personality factors on career choice.

Personality Factors	Career Choice			
	Chi square Value	df	P-Value	Significance
Introversion	129.559	4	0.000	$P<0.05$*
Extroversion	129.559	4	0.000	$P<0.05$*
Self-concept	50.606	2	0.000	$P<0.05$*
Shyness	104.827	2	0.000	$P<0.05$*
Self-esteem	60.153	2	0.000	$P<0.05$*

*significant at .05

Information on table 2 indicates that there was a significant influence of introversion, extroversion, self-concept, shyness and self-esteem on career choice among secondary school students. This is depicted by P-Values of 0.000 which were less than the value at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance for each of the selected personality factors. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected meaning that there was a significant influence of personality factors on career choice among secondary school students.

To determine the trend of the chi square results on Table 2, frequency and percentage analysis of the influence of selected personality factors on career choice was carried out. The results were represented on Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6. Data analysis results on table 3 represent students' scores regarding the influence of introversion and extroversion personality traits on objects oriented careers and people oriented careers.

Table 3: Students' Scores about Influence of Introversion/Extroversion on Career Choice

Personality Score	Personality Trait	Object Oriented Careers		People Oriented Careers		Total	
		Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
18-20	Very introverted	4	2	0	0	4	2
12-17	Slightly introverted	31	12	0	0	31	12
9-11	Average	61	23	64	25	125	48
3-8	Slightly extroverted	0	0	100	38	100	38
0-2	Very extroverted	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	**96**	**37**	**164**	**63**	**260**	**100**

Information on Table 3 indicates that majority of the participants were neither introverted nor extroverted and were approximately equally attracted to either object oriented or people oriented careers. This may mean that this category of participants exhibited both introverted as well as extroverted tendencies. The respondents' career choice in this category are justified by Jung (1996) in Jest and Gregory (2002) who argue that every individual has both introversion and extroversion, but one of them is dominant. Jung elaborates that in the case of introverts; introversion is more dominant compared to extroversion to mean that introverts have some traits of extroversion, though they are not sociable, they can make necessary adjustments when required, and vice- versa for extroverts. The very introverted and slightly introverted participants chose careers that involved working with objects. This is possibly because introverts tend to withdraw from activity with others and live within the self (Gray, 2002). These results are supported by Wingfield (2003) who purports that introverts function best as loners in most pursuits which make them to seldom learn that co-operation is important in making strong relationships. All the slightly extroverted participants chose careers that involved working with people. As such, guidance and counseling teachers may not underscore the consideration of introversion and extroversion in student's career choice.

Data analysis results on Table 4 represent students' scores regarding influence of self-concept personality trait on career choice. The self-concept personality trait was categorized into low self-concept, average self-concept and high self-concept.

Table 4: Students' Scores about Influence of Self-concept on Career Choice

Personality Score	Personality Trait	Objects Oriented Careers		People Oriented Careers		Total	
		Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
0-5	Low self-concept	6	2	0	0	6	2
6-8	Average	96	37	104	40	200	77
9-10	High Self-concept	0	0	54	21	54	21
	Total	**102**	**39**	**158**	**61**	**260**	**100**

Information on Table 4 indicates that majority of the respondents had average self-concept and choose either object oriented careers or people oriented careers. Participants with low self-concept preferred object oriented careers while those with high self-concept choose people oriented careers. According to (Watkins, 2000) people with high self- concept stick in jobs and become productive particularly when they work with other people. Similarly, Dweck (2000) maintains that individuals perform comfortably in tasks with others if their self- concept is high but perform less

comfortably with others if their self-concept is low. This is to say that students whose self- concept is usually low would be advised to choose careers that involve working with objects because they would work less comfortably in people oriented careers since they would feel uneasy in the presence of other people. However, students with high self-concept may be advised to choose careers that involve working with people because they would crave being involved in activity with other people.

Data analysis results on Table 5 represent students' scores regarding influence of shyness on career choice. The shyness personality trait was categorized into very shy, average shyness and slightly shy.

Table 5: Students' Scores about Influence of Shyness on Career Choice

Personality Score	Personality Trait	Objects Oriented Careers		People Oriented Careers		Total	
		Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
8-16	Very Shy	8	3	0	0	8	3
17-24	Average	94	36	61	24	155	60
25-32	Slightly Shy	0	0	97	37	97	37
	Total	**102**	**39**	**158**	**61**	**260**	**100**

Information on Table 5 illustrate the tendency of persons with very shy personality trait to prefer object oriented careers and persons with slightly shy personality to prefer people oriented careers. These results reflects the views of (Gray, 2002) who states that extroversion, which is presented in the study as slightly shy, is a tendency to work vigorously with others. Similarly, Hentz (1995) affirms that the slightly shy who are categorized as extroverts in this study have been found to prefer background noise and social opportunities. Therefore, it would not be advisable for a student who is very shy to choose a career that involves working with people as he/she is likely to resign or work unproductively due to the uneasiness in the presence of other people. This is because very shy people tend to shrink and avoid eye contact and hence less cooperative in people oriented careers (Malhi, 2001). However, shy students can be helped to build up their confidence to help them cope in careers that involve working with people.

Data analysis results on Table 6 represent students' scores regarding influence of self-esteem on career choice. The self-esteem personality trait was categorized into low self-esteem, average self-esteem and high self-esteem.

Table 6: Students' Scores about Influence of Self-esteem on Career Choice

Personality Score	Personality Trait	Objects Oriented Careers		People Oriented Careers		Total	
		Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
13-14	Low self-esteem	11	4	0	0	11	4
8-12	Average	91	35	100	39	191	74
0-7	High Self-esteem	0	0	58	22	58	22
	Total	**102**	**39**	**158**	**61**	**260**	**100**

Information on Table 6 reveals that majority of the participants had an average self-esteem. In addition, among the students with average self-esteem, majority opted for object oriented careers. However, all participants with low self-esteem and high self-esteem chose object oriented careers and people oriented careers respectively. Consistent with these results, Kling, Hyde and Showers

(1999) maintain that persons with high self-esteem portray good interpersonal relationships that make them comfortable in people oriented careers. In addition, Powell (2000) states that people with low self-esteem portray a sign of isolation and withdrawal confining them to preference for object oriented careers. Therefore, if students are helped to understand their self-esteem, they may be able to choose careers that match their self-esteem levels. However, since self-esteem can change based upon the positive and negative events that take place in the life of a person; students with low self-esteem and interested in people oriented careers may be helped to build their self-esteem so that they can comfortably work interactively with others.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the results of this study:

i.   There is need for career guidance and counselling services with respect to matching career choices and personality types among secondary school students.

ii.   Guidance and counseling teachers in secondary schools need to help students understand their personalities so that the latter are able to choose careers that match those personalities.

iii. The Ministry of Education may need to organize seminars for guidance and counseling teachers to empower them on how personality factors influence career choice so that they can advise the students accordingly.

iv.   Parents may be required to collaborate with guidance and counseling teachers because they are likely to contribute to "wrong" career choices if they fail to consider the personalities of the students and their correct career matches.

References

Dondo, M. (1996). *Guidance and Counseling for Schools and Colleges*. Nairobi: Migori School of Guidance and Counseling.

Dweck, C. (2000). *Self Theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality and Development*. Philadelpma: Rout Ledge Press.

Gray, P. (2002). *Psychology (4th Ed.)* Belmont: Wads Worth Publishers Inc.

Hentz, M.C. (1995). *The Relationship between Personality and Career Type*. (Website. Http:// En Wikipendia. Org/wiki/career). Accessed on May, 17th 2008.

Hogan, J. & Ones, D. (1997). *Conscientiousness and Integrity at Work*. San Diego: Academic Press.

Inkule, A.K. (2004). *Career and Educational Aspirations of Secondary School Students in Nigeria (2nd Ed.)*. London: University Microfilms International.

Jest, F. & Gregory, J. (2002). *Theories of Personality*. New York: Mc Graw Hill Companies, Inc.

Kling, K. C., Hyde, J. S. Showers, C.J. (1999). Gender Differences in Self- Esteem: A Meta – Analysis. *Journal of Psychology*, 125: 470 – 500.

Macionis, J. (2000). *Sociology (6th Ed.)* New – Jersey: Prentice – Hall, Inc.

Malhi, R.S. (2001). *Importance of Self- Esteem*: (Website. http: //www. google.co.ke/search) Accessed on May 12th, 2007.

Powell, M. (2000). Children's Memory of an Occurrence of Repeated Event. *Journal of Child Development*. 67: 198-204.

Stark, R (2004). *Sociology* (9th Ed.) Washington: Wads Worth Publishers, Inc.

Watkins, C.E. (2000). *Social Phobia: Shyness and Fear of Public Performance*. (Website http:// WWW. Shyness.Com/ shyness. Anxiety / social phobia) Accessed on June, 4th 2007.

Wingfield, J. (2003). *Psychology: Essentials (2nd Ed.)* New York: Mc Graw Hill Companies, Inc.