



Full Length Research Paper

Career maturity and Career Decision Making Status of Secondary School Students in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the career maturity and career decision making status of secondary school students in Kisumu Municipality and to determine the relationship between career maturity and career indecision of secondary school students in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya. A sample of 370 secondary school students from year one to year four were surveyed on career maturity and career indecision. The current study found that students from public schools are more career mature and have lower career indecision than their counter parts from private schools, receiving career counseling significantly increases one's level of career maturity and females scored significantly higher on career indecision. Career maturity was found to be a significant predictor of career indecision. Based on the results, the researcher came to the conclusion that the type of school a student attends and career counseling has significant influence on their career maturity and decision making status. As career maturity increases, students' level of career indecision decreases. Secondary school students should be provided with adequate career information encouraged to explore various careers and consult widely so as to improve their levels of career maturity.

Key word: Career maturity, Career indecision, Gender, Type of school, Career counseling.

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of education is the maximum development of individuals' potential. According to Tang et al (2008), one task expected of high school students is to explore and plan for their post secondary education. The numbers of career options available to individuals now are more than those existing decades ago. According to Salami (2008), the choice of a career among diverse options is usually a very difficult task. 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 a number of factors (Albion, 2000).

Difficulties in career decision making have been attributed to lack of structure and confidence in dealing with career decision making, having external barriers to preferred career choices, having to choose from a variety of options and personal conflicts that negatively affect

career decision making. Individuals who suffer from such difficulties have been labeled as undecided. This has been considered a normal developmental phase in career development especially during transition points such as when choosing school subjects or university programmes (Creed et al., 2006). In Kenya for example, secondary school students are required to sit for their Kenya certificate of secondary education prior to admission to universities to pursue their careers of choice. Before this, students are required to choose programmes which they would like to pursue in the university and based on their results from the KCSE, they may or not be admitted to one of these choices.

Students are increasingly seeking career counseling in order to formulate career plans. These challenges need to be dealt with prior or during the decision making process. Students need to be informed about the decision making process and ways of resolving psychological difficulties they may encounter during this

process. Because of this, the school system has the responsibility of assisting students in making competent career decisions that are appropriate based on their abilities, interests and personal characteristics (salami, 2008). When career decision competence is supported by adequate information based on planful exploration then students become sufficiently mature to make tentative career choices that are viable and suitable. The Kenya education sector incorporates guidance and counseling within its curriculum whose main aim is to prepare the youth for meaningful adult life after completion of school at both primary and secondary level.

Career guidance in Kenyan is one of the main elements of guidance and counseling. According to the Ministry of Education, there are nine topics that should be covered by the time students are through with their four years in secondary schools. A report on the status of career guidance in Kisumu District however shows that, some of these topics are not covered at all by the time students leave after their Fourth Form.

A report on the Situation Analysis of Guidance and Counseling in Secondary Schools in Kenya shows that ninety four percent (94%) of the teacher counselors are allocated other school responsibilities and are therefore unable to devote adequate time for providing career guidance to students. Studies in Kisumu Municipality have consistently shown that teachers who have been accorded the responsibility of providing students with career guidance lack the necessary skills to provide this service. In addition, career counselors in secondary schools within Kisumu Municipality have also reported not having any formal training on career guidance. Besides, they have a normal teaching load and as a result lack adequate time to provide career guidance to their students (Omondi, 2007).

Studies in Kisumu Municipality have also confirmed that there is inadequate career information in secondary schools. A study conducted by Migunde, Agak and Odiwuor in 2011 shows that, 61% of students in Kisumu Municipality find the information offered to them on careers inadequate. In addition, career counselors in Kisumu Municipality are not aware of the guidelines from the Ministry of Education on career guidance. Only 11% of schools in Kisumu Municipality have an organized process of career guidance. Studies in the Municipality show that most of the students (61%) only receive career guidance once when filling university application forms. In most of the schools, 89% career guidance is only offered at the end of Form Two when choosing subject combinations and at the end of Form Four when filling university application forms. This implies that by the time students are faced with the challenge of making career decisions they are inadequately prepared and lack the necessary career information. It is important to establish the levels of career maturity and levels of career decision making status of secondary school students in kisumu municipality. The purpose of this study is therefore to

establish the level of career maturity and career indecision of secondary school students in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya and to establish the relationship between the two variables.

METHODS

Participants

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya. The sample for the study consisted of 370 secondary school students from forms one to form four. The sample consisted of 162 male and 197 female students. 11 of the respondents did not indicate their gender. The age of participants ranged from 13 to 28 years. The mean age of the participants was 16.5. Year one students represented 25.4%, year two represented 24.3%, year three represented 31.9% and year four students represented 17.0% of the total sample.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic questionnaire was used to gather basic information about the students such as age, gender, type of school, and year in school.

Career maturity

Career Maturity Inventory – Adaptability form (CMI; Savickas and Porfeli, 2011) was used to measure the career maturity of the students. The maturity subscale which has a total of 18 items measuring concern, curiosity and confidence was measured on a 5-point likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). Sample items include: 'I am not going to choose a career until I am out of school' and 'I don't know what subjects to take in school'. Savickas and Porfeli (2011) reported a coefficient alpha of .86 measuring readiness which were used in the current study. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .71.

Career Decision Making Status

The Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow et al, 1976) was used to measure career indecision of the students on a 4-point likert scale (1=Not at all like me, 4=Exactly like me). 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.

Table 1: Summary Data for Gender, Career Indecision, Career maturity and the Subscales of Career Maturity

	Male			Female			Total			t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
Career indecision	162	34.58	7.19	197	36.15	6.80	359	35.44	7.00	-2.12*
Career maturity	162	61.04	8.75	197	59.63	9.84	359	60.28	9.37	1.44
Concern	162	21.68	3.48	197	21.39	3.79	359	21.52	3.64	.78
Curiosity	162	19.88	3.88	197	19.54	4.19	359	19.70	4.04	.80
confidence	162	19.47	4.52	197	18.70	4.82	359	19.07	4.70	1.57

Table 2: Summary Data for Type of School, Career Indecision, Career maturity and the Subscales of Career Maturity

	Private			Public			Total			t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
Career indecision	57	37.68	6.80	310	35.18	6.96	367	35.56	7.00	2.54*
Career maturity	57	56.43	7.94	310	60.78	9.47	367	60.14	9.39	-3.68**
Concern	57	19.68	3.87	310	21.82	3.51	367	21.50	3.65	-3.89**
Curiosity	57	18.55	4.10	310	19.78	3.68	367	19.61	4.06	-2.10*
confidence	57	18.21	3.68	310	19.17	4.84	367	19.04	4.70	-1.44

Wang et al (2006) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .91. Patton and Creed (2007) reported .89. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .74.

RESULTS

Gender, Career Maturity and Career Indecision

No significant gender differences were noted on career maturity and in all the subscales of career maturity. Female students reported significantly higher career indecision scores than the male students ($p < .05$). The results are presented in Table 1.

Type of School, Career Maturity and Career Indecision

Students from private school scored significantly higher on career indecision than those from private schools. Students from public schools however scored significantly higher than those from private schools on career maturity, concern and curiosity. The results are presented in Table 2.

Career Counseling, Career Maturity and Career Indecision

No significant differences were noted in the career indecision scores between those who had and had not

received career counseling. Students who had received career counseling however scored higher than those who had not received career counseling on career maturity and the subscales of curiosity and confidence. The results are presented in Table 3.

Inter Correlations between Career Indecision, Career Maturity, and the Subscales of Career Maturity, Age and Year in School

Table 4 presents bivariate correlation results among all dependent and independent variables and the demographic variable of age and year in school for the total sample. Moderate correlations were observed among the subscales of career maturity. Career indecision was also moderately correlated to the subscales of career maturity. Weak correlations were observed between year in school and career maturity, curiosity and confidence. The correlation between age and all the variables under study were not significant.

Predicting Career Indecision

Linear regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis in relation to predicting career indecision from career maturity. Career maturity scores significantly predicted career indecision scores. The career maturity scores were significantly negatively correlated to career indecision scores ($r = -.49$, $p < .05$). This means that, as career maturity increases, career indecision decreases.

Table 3: Summary Data for Career Counseling, Career Indecision, Career maturity and the Subscales of Career Maturity

	Received career counseling			Not received career counseling			Total			t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
Career indecision	260	35.35	6.95	94	36.03	7.37	354	35.53	7.06	-.78
Career maturity	260	60.91	9.49	94	58.23	8.21	354	60.20	9.38	2.44*
Concern	260	21.50	3.60	94	21.52	3.48	354	21.51	3.57	-.03
Curiosity	260	20.05	4.00	94	18.73	4.05	354	19.70	4.05	2.72**
confidence	260	19.35	4.70	94	17.98	4.64	354	19.00	4.72	2.45*

Table 4: Person's Product- Moment Correlation Matrix (2-tail) among Dependent Variables (Career Maturity, Concern, Curiosity and Confidence), Independent Variable (Career Indecision), Age and Year in School for the Total Sample N= 370

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Career indecision	1						
2. Concern	-.37**	1					
3. Curiosity	-.32**	.28**	1				
4. Confidence	-.44**	.32**	.45**	1			
5. Career Maturity	-.49**	.67**	.77**	.82**	1		
6. Year in school	-.10	.06	.11*	.11*	.12*	1	
7. Age	.02	-.07	-.01	-.02	-.04	.59**	1

Thus career maturity accounted for 24% of the variance in career indecision ($R^2 = .24$, $F = 115.66$, $p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

Female students were found to be experiencing significantly high 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 public school scored significantly higher on career maturity and significantly lower on career indecision compared to students from private schools. These results suggest that students from public schools are more career mature than those from private 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.

Students who had received career counseling had higher scores in career maturity than those students who did not receive career counseling. Based on the results of the current study, career counselors are actively engaged in helping students explore the different occupations and careers and finding out the requirements of various careers. Career counseling also significantly increases students' faith in their ability to make career decisions.

Bivariate correlation between career maturity and year in school showed that there was a significant positive relationship between career maturity and year in school. This result implies that career maturity increases as one progresses from year one to year four. It is likely that as students progress from year one to year four; they get exposed to more experiences and become more aware of their capabilities and interests leading to increase in levels of career maturity. 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 and choice of degree programmes. As a result, career development activities such as planning, information seeking may increase during these periods.

The results of the present study also show that career maturity significantly predicted career indecision. Similar results have also been reported by Prideaux and

Creed (2006), Creed and Patton (2003) and Creed (2006) who also found that career maturity scores can be used to predict career indecision scores with Australian adolescents. Career maturity involves making age appropriate career decisions, exploring the world of work and seeking information about occupation and their requirements, having faith in one's ability to make realistic career decisions and seeking advice from others in making career decisions. As an individual's involvement in these activities, their level of career indecision also decreases.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results, the researcher came to the conclusion that the type of school a student attends and career counseling has significant influence on their career maturity and decision making status. Students in public schools are more career mature and have lower career indecision scores than those in private schools. Receiving career counseling also significantly increases one's level of career maturity. Career maturity of students also significantly increases as they progress from year one to year four. Career maturity scores can also be used to predict career indecision scores. As career maturity increases, career indecision decreases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should promote a healthy environment that not only stresses on the academic curriculum but also aims at overall development of students by encouraging participating in numerous activities which may in turn help in improving students' career maturity. Students should also be encouraged to engage in career related activities such as information seeking, consultation etc. They should also be encouraged to seek career counseling so as to help in determining the appropriate careers for them. Career counselors should address the challenges students face in relation to making career decisions so as to reduce their level of indecision. Students should be provided with adequate career information; they should be encouraged to explore various careers and consult widely so as to improve their levels of career maturity. As their career maturity increases, their level of career indecision will decrease.

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