

Socio-Economic Status, Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy, Career Maturity and Gender with Secondary School Students in Northern Kenya

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ABSTRACT: This study examined differences of career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity based on gender and socio-economic categories. Participants were 552 senior secondary students [372 males, 178 females and 2 participants did not report their gender]. They were drawn from five public schools located in Wajir County in northern Kenya. Participants responded to survey questionnaires comprising of demographic section (age, gender, class standing, socio-economic status), Career Maturity Inventory CMI-AS (Crites, 1978), Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Betz, Taylor and Klein, 1994). Results indicated absence of impact of socio-economic status on career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. There was significant gender difference on career decision-making self-efficacy and mean difference in career maturity. Young women reported higher level of career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity than young men. Implications for counsellors and recommendations for future researches are discussed.

KEY WORDS: Career decision-making self-efficacy, socio-economic status, career maturity, senior secondary school students

I. INTRODUCTION

People strive day-in-day-out in the pursuit of occupational activities to earn a living, achieve productive and fulfilling life and enhance psychosocial well-being (Vittorio, Pastorelli, Bandura, & Barbaranelli, 2001). Beside economic gains pursuit of occupation also serves as a major source of identity formation and implementation self-concept (Super, 1990). Effective career decision-making is very important because it forms the foundation for successful choice of occupation which will ultimately have huge impact on person's life (January, 2003). Career development is a life-long journey that starts at mid adolescence and ends at retirement (Bozgeyikli & Hamurcu, 2009). Super (1990) opines that career development is a life-long process not an event. There are many factors that influence the process of career development. These factors are classified along psychosocial, social, emotional and physical factors (Bozgeyikli & Hamurcu, 2009). These factors mutually interlink, affect each other and either enhance or limit occupational status of a person. People develop sense of career aspiration through integration and interplay of life-roles and events that happen in the entire journey of life (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2003). Variables that impact the process of career development are many inter alia personality variables such as gender, interest, abilities, values, self-concept, intelligence, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Societal and cultural factors such as ethnicity/race, socio-economic status, social class, religion, family setup, relationships and culture. Also, other external factors which drastically influence career process and development are education, labour market and world events such as wars, diseases, droughts, famines, economic depressions and downturns. Interaction of above factors interestingly shape career choice processes of young adults. Super (1990) highlights impact of interactive role of life-stages and life-roles depicted in his 'life-space-life-span theory' and how crucial it is in the process of occupational choice and development. For example, Super contends that interplay of life roles such as being a worker, a student, a parent, a citizen, a leisurite and a homemaker informs the process of career development. It is alluded that pursuing satisfying work-role contributes immensely in leading productive and satisfactory life which is essential in attaining psychological wellbeing (Swanson & Fouad, 2015).

The purpose of present study was to examine the interrelations of gender, socio-economic, decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity in the career development processes of young adults in northern Kenya. This research investigated impact of gender and socio-economic status on career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. Findings from this study will contribute to the growing body of research examining the dynamics of career development of population from rural and low-income environments. Critics lamented that most of studies inquiring career development processes of young adults were originally based on experience of white, middle-class male adolescence (Rojewski, Wicklein, & Schell, 1995)

CAREER DECISION-MAKING DIFFICULTIES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS : Years in high school are an important period in which young adults make their first attempt of career related decision-making which lays the foundation for their future career trajectory (Gati & Saka, 2001; Gottfredson, 1981; Super, 1990). One of the major tasks ahead of high school students is to choose elective courses, plan and make preliminary decisions on their post-secondary education. Several studies indicated that many young people face difficulties when making career related choices, therefore, career indecision has been a serious dilemma and a long-standing challenge for young adults for many centuries (Gati & Saka, 2001; January, 2003; Laskin & Palmo, 1983; Salami & Aremu, 2007). Crites as cited in (Creed & Patton, 2004, p.1) defines career barriers as “any factor that thwarts achievement of career goals”. Some researchers use the term barrier to point to career decision-making difficulties (Creed & Patton, 2004). Anchored on decision-making theory Gati et al (1996) as cited by (Gati & Saka, 2001) developed a taxonomy of difficulties in the career decision-making process. This taxonomy is composed of three major categories which culminate into 10 sub-categories. The three major career decision-making difficulties are (a) lack of readiness (b) lack of information and, (c) lack of inconsistent career information. In his developmental theory Donald Super (1990) postulates that high school stage corresponds to the exploration stage in the continuum of career development. He further explains that career development processes encompass growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline. Choices made in formative years of schooling will largely shape the career pathways of young adults through which they will follow it into adulthood (Vittorio et al., 2001). In that context career decisions that are made properly can lead to realistic utilization of potentials and talents while improper and uninformed career choice may usher unexpected wastage of talents, career crisis and job dissatisfaction. Therefore, it is advisable to enhance the career decision-making competencies of young adults for them to make well-informed and appropriate career choices (Tang, Pan, Newmeyer, 2008).

Studies suggest that career decision-making competency of young adults can be improved through coaching and trainings (Leon Mann, Ros Harmoni, 1989). For instance, to assist students overcome career decision-making difficulties and expand their career exploration capacities counsellors should assess the nature of the difficulties and design training modules that provide guidance on how to overcome such dilemmas. A good example of such a developmental programme is ‘*Tu Futuro Profesional -TFP*’ (your future career) practiced in Spain (Repetto, 2001; Savickas, 2001). Initiatives to enhance career decision-making competencies of young adults include putting in place proper career counselling centres in schools. Such centres can provide career resource materials, conduct career assessments and become a hub to impact career information and organize career development trainings. Moreover, career centres can enhance decision-making skills of young adults, improve their self-efficacy and impart information about the world of work. This can propel career development competency of young adults to a greater height. According to Laskin & Palmo (1983) a course or training purposely designed to enhance decision-making self-efficacy of high school students will probably sharpen their career decision-making competency and by extension their career maturity.

CAREER DECISION-MAKING SELF-EFFICACY: The concept of self-efficacy was conceived by Bandura (1977) and had greater influence in the field of vocational psychology. Self-efficacy belief is defined “as the individual’s perceived capabilities to attain designated types of performances and achieve specific results” (January, 2003, p.12). Perceived self-efficacy is rooted in the social cognitive theory. Bandura (1997) (as cited by Vittorio et al., 2001) opines that people are self-organizing, proactive and self-regulating of their own psycho-social development. Among many mechanisms of human agencies research confirms that perceived self-efficacy is the most vocal and pervasive (Vittorio et al., 2001). Career decision-making self-efficacy is described as the confidence exhibited by a person while planning and executing vocationally relevant tasks (Etzel et al., 2001). Research also indicates that perceived occupational self-efficacy of children is essential in forming direction to children’s career aspirations and trajectory (Vittorio et al., 2001). Derived from Bandura’s work of introducing the concept of self-efficacy belief Hackett and Betz (1981) further extended the concept and introduced the concept of ‘career self-efficacy’ into vocational behaviour. Career self-efficacy in this context refers to self-efficacy belief that relates with the process of career development and choice of occupations. Bentz and Hackett (1981) suggested that expectation of personal efficacy will have positive influence on career decisions and achievement for both men and women. According to January (2003) career self-efficacy is an important predictor in grade performance, choosing and being persistent in technical and science courses.

Several studies highlight gender difference in perceived self-efficacy in the choice of occupational pathways. It is reported that boys have high self-efficacy in traditionally male dominated occupations such as mathematics, science, and technology and physically demanding occupations such as military and police then females.

On the other hand girls exhibited high efficacy in female dominated careers that deal with social services, education, health fields and languages (January, 2003; Vittorio et al., 2001). For example, a study looking into the relationship between self-efficacy expectation and career choice revealed that male participants reported higher mean score than their female counterpart in engineering and highway patrol officers while females participants reported higher score in occupations such as teaching, home economist, secretary and social worker (January, 2003). People abandon occupations they lack enough efficacy however attractive and prestigious they may look. Perceived self-efficacy therefore plays a key role in the process of occupational choice and development.

Self-efficacy belief has significant impact in many spheres of life. Individuals with high self-efficacy can help manage troublesome behaviors, attain high academic achievements and aspirations, deal with phobia and anxiety disorders and can establish satisfying relationship (January, 2003; Vittorio et al., 2001). Self-efficacy belief was also found to play a significant meditational role between cognitive and behavioral variables in career aspirations and development (Han, Chu, Song, & Li 2014). A study examining influence of self-efficacy belief on career aspirations of children revealed that familial socio-economic status has no direct influence on children's perceived self-efficacy, academic aspirations but makes indirect impact through its influence on parents' perceived efficacy and academic aspirations (Vittorio et al., 2001). Thus, stronger the socio-economic status of the parents the higher their belief to promote their children's academic aspirations. Several studies (Betz, 1992; Lent & Brown, 2002; Super, 1990) support facilitative and mediating role of career self-efficacy in relation to contextual factors such as background factors, interest and outcome expectation in the process of career choice. For example, through its impact on perceived social support self-efficacy indirectly influences career choice of young adults (January, 2003; Lent et al., 2003).

INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON CAREER DECISION-MAKING SELF-EFFICACY

Socio-economic status (SES) is an important construct which has both direct and indirect impact on career aspirations and career maturity of young adults. Socio-economic status is the perceived hierarchy resulting from the amount of possession of social resources an individual believes he/she has and controls (Han et al., 2014). Social resources include social dimensions such as annual income of the family, level of education and occupational status and reputations of parents.

Previous researches indicate that SES correlated with social capital (Han et al., 2014), has both direct and indirect influence on self-efficacy (Bozgeyikli & Hamurcu, 2009; Han et al., 2014) and has indirect influences on children's career aspiration through its impact on parent's perceived self-efficacy and academic aspirations (Vittorio et al., 2001). Social capital is defined as the support received from family, peers and others. It can be inferred therefore the higher the SES the wider the social support and which in turn boost self-efficacy of a person. Among the proxy variables in the SES are father's level of education which was found to specifically influence self-efficacy of children (Han et al., 2014). Her (as cited in Heidi & McWhirter, 2000) postulates that people operate in complex ecological context that include social, personal, behavioral, emotional, psychological, political, economic and physical environments. These complex and interactive factors give rise to development of identity, create system of belief and worldviews and triggers career aspirations. However, the influence of some factors is very proximal and some distal to the process of career development. For instance, the proximal impact of SES is highlighted by Bozgeyikli & Hamurcu, (2009, p. 1) that "if one were permitted to mention only a single variable with which to predict an individual's occupational status, surely, it would be the socioeconomic status (SES) of that individual's family of orientation." Socio-economic status influences career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity directly and also acts as a moderator variable (Bozgeyikli & Hamurcu, 2009; Super, 1990). Negative outcomes arising from low socio-economic status on young adults include poor schooling, lack of career role models, inability to pursue career dreams and financial constraints. This may deprive young adults opportunities hence causing low self-efficacy to cope with challenges of life. Teachman, Baasch, Day and Carver (as cited in Richardson, 2006) outline that there is close correlation between effect of poverty and high school dropout. They opined that income has direct impact on academic achievement. Thus, students from low socio-economic hardly graduate and they perform dismally in examinations. There are limited researches examining impact of socio-economics on self-efficacy from rural population.

CAREER MATURITY : Donald E Super came with landmark contribution in vocational psychology in 1980s. Super not satisfied with person-work fit and 'job for life' approach of person-environmental fit theories introduced life-span, life-space perspective of vocational choice and development (Chui & Leung, 2007; Savickas, 2001). Super lamented occupational choice focusing on individual differences and social modelling

ignored longitudinal vantage of using opportunities, skills, abilities and process of changing and adjusting to careers. Super views that career development as process of growth and learning (Repetto, 2001). He developed a rainbow image containing the individual's 'life space' and the various roles within it (Jennifer, 2006). He emphasized on personality and human development to insight career process hence formulated a "life-span, life-space" approach of career development. To comprehend this developmental perspective Super highlighted important features including career maturity, salience, stages, patterns and themes (Savickas, 2001). His innovative idea opened new grand-work in vocational guidance and ushered in the concept of career counselling. Career maturity refers broadly to the "readiness of an individual to make informed, age appropriate career decisions and the ability to deal with career developments tasks" (Savickas, 1984, p.2). According to development approach career maturity is central in career process and development (Patton & Creed, 2002). Studies have suggested that career maturity is influenced by a wide range of factors including gender, race, years in school, sports, locus of control (Etzel, Brooks, Kalodner, 2001), age, gender, culture (Repetto, 2001), historical times, culture, economic status (Patton & Creed, 2002), self-concept (González, 2008).

II. METHODS

Participants : Senior secondary school students ($N = 552$) enrolled in five public secondary schools in Wajir County, northern Kenya participated in this study. A senior secondary student in our context means those students in third and fourth classes in secondary studies in 8-4-4 educational system in Kenya. The sample comprised of 372 males, 178 females and 2 participants who did not report their gender. The sample was drawn from 5 public school in Wajir County. The mean age of the participants was 18 years with age ranging from 13 to 24 years. Their class standing was 254 form threes, 274 form fours and 24 participants did not specify their level of study. In the demographic section participants were asked to tick their perceived socio-economic status from a list of check boxes (low income, middle income and higher income). This was further cross checked with educational level of parents. Accordingly, 195 participants identified themselves as lower income bracket, 297 from middle income, 53 from higher income families while 7 participants did not specify the SES.

Instrumentation : Demographic section. Demographic section elicited demographics information on gender, age, level of study, parents' level of education and socio-economic status (poor, middle and rich). Decision-Making Self-Efficacy. Career certainty or indecision of the participants was measured using Betz, Taylor and Klein (1994) 25 items short version of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE-SF). CDMSE-SF measures the belief of someone to perform career related tasks and achieve specific results (Alessandro Lo Pretsi, 2013). CDMSE-SF represented five areas of competencies namely self-appraisal, collecting sufficient occupational information, ability to select career goals, making accurate future career plan and ability to solve problems. Participants responded to a set of questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) no confidence at all to (5) complete confidence. High scores in CDMSE suggests high efficacy. Several studies reported fair and acceptable internal consistency coefficient of CDMSE-SF. Such reports include overall reliability coefficient of 0.97 and subscales reliability coefficient that ranges from 0.86 to 0.9 (Chui & Leung, 2007); test-retest reliability of $r = .78$ and Cronbach's alpha of .91 (Bozgeyikli & Hamurcu, 2009).

Career maturity—Career maturity was measured using Crites (1978) career maturity inventory attitude scale (CMI-AS). CMI (AS) comprising of 50 items is approved scale which measures career maturity for grade 8 through 12. Since its development career maturity inventory was widely used and is a validated instrument to measure career maturity (Omwig & Thomas, 1977; Rojewski et al., 1995). CMI-AS explains how individual feels and reacts toward choosing a career and entering world of work. This scale was found to have acceptable internal consistence of coefficient alpha reliability of .63 ($p < .001$) (Laskin & Palmo, 1983), .65 to .84 (Rojewski et al., 1995).

Procedures : The researcher considered ethical procedures in conducting the study. Permission was sought from schools' authority and the purpose and significance of the study was explained. Participants were assured of confidentiality of their responses. They were informed of the process of the study and that the data was solely aimed for research. Data was collected with the assistance of teachers from schools. The researcher engaged participant physically, developed rapport and clarified the instructions on how to answer the questionnaire. Standardized survey questionnaires were administered to the participants in their class rooms during regular semester of the year. In the demographic section participants provided information about age, gender, level of study, parents' level of education and socio-economic status (comprising of 3 categories: poor, middle and rich). Also, participants responded to two standardized scales: The Career Inventory the attitude scale (CMI-AS) of 50 items and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) of 25 items. Responses of both standardized

scales was captured on 5-point Likertscale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree for CMI-AS and (1) no confidence at all to (5) complete confidence for CDMSE-SF. Testing time was 1hr and 30 min.

FINDINGS : This section presents the outcomes of data analysis on constructs socio-economic status, gender, career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. A total of two analysis was performed.

Analysis 1: Impact of socio-economic on career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity (One-Way Onova). One-Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was separately conducted to examine the mean score differences of the three levels of socio-economic status on career maturity and career self-efficacy (Table 1). The outcome of ANOVA indicates that there was no significant difference of the three levels of socio-economic status on career maturity ($F = .986, p = .4$). The mean scores of the three levels of socio-economic status: low, middle and high on career maturity (CMI-AS) were 161.4, 156.4 and 156.8 respectively. Also, another analysis was performed to examine the differences of SES scores on career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE). The mean scores for the categories low, middle and high on SES were 88.1, 90.2 and 91.3 respectively. However, the mean difference was not statistically significant ($F = .514, p = .67$).

Table 1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for CMI-AS and CDMSE by SES

Variables	SES	N	X	s.d	f	P
Career maturity (CMI-AS)	low	79	161.4	26.1	.986	.4
	Middle	173	156.4	23.4		
	High	32	156.8	20.9		
CDMSE	low	102	88.1	17.3	.514	.67
	Middle	204	90.2	17.0		
	High	36	91.3	13.7		

* $p < .05$

Analysis 2: Gender differences on career decision-making self-efficacy (CDMSE) and career maturity (CM) (independent sample t-test). An independent t-test was performed to examine the differences of males and females on decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity (Table 2). On the variable career decision-making self-efficacy female participants ($M = 94.53, SD = 15.11$) reported significantly higher level of decision-making self-efficacy $t(388) = -4.0, p = .000$ than male participants ($M = 87.43, SD = 17.16$). Similarly, another independent sample t-test analysis of gender difference on career maturity indicates female participants ($M = 161.13, SD = 22.89$) reporting slightly higher mean score than their male counterpart ($M = 156.73, SD = 25.48$). However, this difference was not statistically significant $t(320) = -1.51, p = .13$.

Table 2: Gender differences on CDMSE and CM

Variables	Gender				t-test	P
	Male M	(n=258) SD	Female M	(n=132) SD		
CDMSE	87.43	17.16	94.53	15.11	-4.0	.000
Career maturity	156.73	25.48	161.13	22.89	-1.51	.13

* $p < .05$

III. DISCUSSION

Impact of socio-economic status (SES) : This study examined the interrelations of factors career decision-making self-efficacy, socio-economic status, career maturity and gender of senior secondary students in the processes of career development. The ANOVA analysis examining impact of socio-economic status on the two dependent variables career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity revealed no statistically significant outcome. Despite, living in rural and economically disadvantaged setup the findings indicate absence of impact of socio-economic on participants' career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. This is opposite of the anticipated outcome of negative impact of socio-economics on youths from economically disadvantaged areas known not to receive considerable attention of career development programmes. According to (Rojewski et al., 1995) youths living in rural areas exhibit academic risk behaviour and lack of career maturity. Non-impact of socio-economic on this population can be explained in several ways. One likely explanation is that the

sample might be socio-economically homogenous. However, this explanation warrants further inquiry and confirmation. Another possible explanation is that other personal and psychological factors such as self-concept, intelligence (Lawrence and Brown, 1976; West Brook, Sanford, & Donnelly, 1990) and attitude influences decision-making and career maturity of this population. Another possible explanation of this findings is in light of attribution theory and locus of control (Weiner, 1986). Attribution theory suggests that people exercise sense of control on important events in their lives. Of course, this explanation also deserves attention and further research. According to (Trice, Haire, & Elliott, 1989) career locus of control entails the extent to which people believe they are in control of their decisions and craft their future career plans. Researches indicate that level of career decision-making and career maturity are linked to attributional style of taking control and taking responsibility on noble events in life (Darrell & Anthony, 1998; Luzzo & Jenkins-Smith, 1998). Thus, people with high internal locus of control tend to believe career related events in their lives such as career decision-making and career maturity are as a result of their skills, abilities and internal factors that are within their control. Such people acquire motivation and energy from within self and therefore rely on hard-work and effort to achieve goals. They are rarely influenced by external factors such as socio-economics status and other social and environmental factors.

Gender difference on Career Decision-making Efficacy and Career Maturity : The second analysis examined the differences of gender on career maturity and career decision-making self-efficacy. Using t-test the results revealed that females reported higher mean score than male participants on both constructs (Table 2). However, the mean differences on decision-making self-efficacy were statistically significant while mean difference on career maturity was not statistically significant. Researches examining impact of gender on career decision-making self-efficacy has produced conflicting outcomes (Patton & Creed, 2002). Some studies indicated boys having higher CDMSE than girls (Kishor, 1981; Richardson, 2006). While other studies revealed young women exhibiting significantly higher level of career decision-making efficacy than young men (Alvi & Khan, 1983; Lokan, Boss, & Patsula, 1982; Luzzo, 1995; Rojewski et al., 1995). On career maturity studies indicated existence of gender difference on this construct (Alvi & Khan, 1983; McNair & Brown, 1983; Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Conversely, other studies found no gender difference in career maturity (Darrell & Anthony, 1998; Leon Mann, Ros Harmoni, 1989; Luzzo & Jenkins-Smith, 1998). The findings of this present study reflected the presence of statistically significance difference in career decision-making along gender and mean differences of career maturity though not statistically significant. Notably, the mean scores of females on both constructs was higher than that of male participants. Interestingly, there is emerging trend that girls are going against odds and breaking the general constraints imposed on them by culture and society. Girls are out performing boys in many areas of life including academic achievements, career competencies, task performance and resilience. A possible explanation of sex difference on both constructs and girls exhibiting higher scores than boys may be related to the intense care and global support of the girl child. Another possible explanation can be attributed to sex difference in the rate of overall maturation (Omviig & Thomas, 1977). Maturation theory postulates that female mature earlier than male, therefore, female participants in this study have identified their career goals and achieved a good sense of career efficacy and maturity than boys. The generalizability of this study to other rural town may be limited in the sense that it was conducted in one town in northern part of Kenya hence other students' population in other rural areas might not display same results.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have important implications for theory and practice in career development. It has practical implications for school psychologists and school counsellors. The first implication is to consider gender differences when designing career developmental programmes. It is notable that female students are faring well in some career variables than male and vice-versa. Career counsellors should be aware influences of gender, socio-economic and other variables on career development of students. As data from this research points to female participants reported higher decision-making self-efficacy than male participants. The fact that female participants reported higher level of career decision-making self-efficacy than boys makes school counsellors formulate strategies to increase male's decision-making self-efficacy in this setup. In general counsellors should examine gender differences before conducting all-fit career programmes. The findings also reveal the contextual factor socio-economic having no impact on both career self-efficacy and career maturity. Despite participants living in rural areas and the negative impact of socio-economic was much anticipated the finding reveals the opposite. This is promising in the sense that influence of contextual factor such as economic status has minimal influences on career trajectory of this population. Implications for counsellors when designing intervention is to enhance students' internal locus of control that will make them take responsibility over their decision-making process over important events in their lives.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

Future studies might correct the limitations of this study and include freshers and sophomores in their samples. Also, further researches can consider more heterogeneous samples (in socio-economic status, geographical locations, type of school: private/public) and gather data both from urban and rural schools for comparison. Further researches can also look into the impacts of other variables (grade point average (GPA), intelligence, skills, interest, parental support, attributional style of decision-making etc.) on career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. In summary, this study examined impact of socio-economic categories and gender on career decision-making self-efficacy and career maturity. The findings revealed lack of influence of socio-economic on both constructs and existence of gender difference in career decisions-making and career maturity. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing knowledge of career development and help us understand more career development processes of rural youths. .

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