

Peer Influence, Family Influence, Academic Difficulties and Gender Differences as Agents of Career Indecisiveness of Senior High School Students in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at finding out how peer influence, family influence, and academic difficulties affect the career decision-making process among senior high school students in Ghana. Employing a descriptive survey design, the study involved 450 students selected through multi-stage sampling. Data collection utilized a Likert-type scale questionnaire. Analysis and presentation of findings relied on Descriptive Statistics. Results indicated that peer influence, family influence, and academic difficulties collectively played significant roles in causing career indecisiveness among senior high school students in Ghana. Females were affected more by the agents of career indecisiveness. The study recommends that school counsellors remain attentive to peer influence, family influence, and academic difficulties, offering appropriate guidance and counselling to aid informed and effective career decision-making among senior high school students. Gender specific characteristics and behaviour must be critically explored in catering for the diverse career counselling needs of gender groups.

Keywords: Career Indecisiveness, Peer Influence, Family influence, Academic difficulties, Senior High School Students.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of career indecisiveness holds immense significance in the realms of career education and guidance. It significantly hampers the decision-making process, particularly among students, obstructing their path towards a chosen career. Scholars such as Di Fabio, Palazzeschi Asulin-Peretz, and Gati (2013) have highlighted the prevalence of career indecisiveness among high school students navigating their future professional endeavours. Burns, Morris, Rosseau, and Taylor (2013) define career indecision as the struggle to commit to an occupation. This indecisive situation may stem from an inability to make an occupational choice (Guay, Senecal, Gauthier, & Fernet, 2003) or from the challenges encountered during the decision-making process (White & Tracey, 2011). These definitions underscore how individuals remain indecisive due to a lack of clarity in occupational interests, often compounded by various uncontrollable challenges and insufficient information.

In Ghana, the senior high school phase marks a focal phase where adolescents contemplate and choose their educational paths, shaping their future careers. For most of them, this period determines their selection of tertiary education programmes aligning with their envisioned careers. Others venture into entrepreneurship,

trade learning, or apprenticeships to acquire vocational skills. According to Otuei (2017), this stage presents the stark reality of making career decisions, yet many face challenges and uncertainties leading to indecisiveness. These obstacles predominantly revolve around information gaps, decision-making capabilities, choice complexities, and external pressures.

The act of career selection is a critical milestone in an individual's social journey, representing the culmination of years of growth, development and the environment. Nyarko-Sampson (2013) emphasizes that the adolescent's career choice serves as a crucial decision shaping their career trajectory, potentially opening or closing various opportunities. This fear of failure in their chosen career path, closing off potential opportunities, contributes to the prevalence of career indecisiveness among adolescents. Bandura, Barbaranelli, Capara, and Pastorelli (as cited in Nyarko-Sampson, 2013) assert that the adolescent phase, particularly during secondary schooling, demands pivotal career decisions. Understanding this decision-making process is pivotal for effective problem-solving and managing one's career trajectory (Beach, 2014). Inadequate comprehension of these basics often leads to career indecisiveness.

Career decision-making, as Osipow (1999) highlights, is the execution of career plans and adaptability to institutional and organizational events. This critical juncture significantly influences almost every aspect of an individual's life. In contemporary society, many young individuals, especially students, grapple with decision-making challenges in their career choices. Poor decisions can result in adverse consequences, both economically and socially (Mung'ara, 2012). The decision-making process, especially within a specific educational context, presents a challenge for most individuals (Ricci & Boccardi, 2010), particularly high school students who need to align their career choices with personal, psychological, and interest-related aspects (Nyarko-Sampson, 2013).

However, decision-making regarding career choices is often left solely to the individual, leading to difficulties, especially when they lack decision-making skills. Ukil (2016) notes that youth in underdeveloped and developing societies face heightened challenges in decision-making, with parents often assuming the role of decision-makers regarding their children's careers. In Ghanaian culture, parental influence heavily impacts career decisions, presenting significant decision-making challenges, particularly for adolescents. The insufficient accumulation of relevant information by high school years compounds the decision-making complexities. Career choice significantly shapes students' life expectations, values, needs, interests, and achievements, affecting their quality of life (Gati & Kulcsar, 2021). Moreover, it holds implications for an individual's vocational future, psychological and physical well-being, societal integration, and the country's economic status (Mann, Harmoni, & Power, 2012; Tagay, 2014).

Difficulties in the career decision-making process, as highlighted by Chen and Liew (2015), yield three primary consequences: individuals transferring decision-making responsibilities, failure to achieve optimal career choices due to delayed decisions, and temporary unemployment. These challenges often lead individuals into a state of career indecisiveness, the focus of this research. For students entering the transitional phase from senior high school to tertiary education, this period, crucial for career decision-making, frequently results in confusion and distortion, contributing to their indecisiveness. Among the factors contributing to career indecisiveness among senior high school students in Ghana are peer influence, family influence, and academic difficulties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer Influence as Career Indecisiveness

Peer influence holds a key role in the decision-making processes of adolescents. It encompasses both positive and negative behaviors that adolescents emulate and conform to, drawn from their peer circles. This influence often holds significant sway over their lives, impacting various aspects profoundly. For senior

high school students, the influence of peers becomes notably stronger as they seek connection and acknowledgment within their peer groups. Peers often become the primary source for problem-solving in their school environment. As Hellman (2014) suggests, during the transition to emerging adulthood, peer relationships become crucial in career development, marking a shift from reliance on parental influence.

The impact of peer relationships on career choice has been subject to diverse perspectives. Greater attachment to peers often translates to reduced exploration of one's environment, potentially leading to career indecision, as noted by Hellman (2014). Heightened peer interaction might divert attention away from career exploration towards increased engagement with peers, facilitated by modern communication technology like texting and social media.

According to Naz, Saeed, Khan, Sheikh, and Khana (2014), peers significantly influence behaviour, personality development, and the decision-making process related to career adaptation. Vignoli's (2009) study reveals a positive correlation between career exploration and reported self-esteem, indicating that peer attachment may indirectly impact an individual's career exploration through its influence on self-esteem. Young adults often utilize close peer relationships as a support network while making decisions regarding their career development (Hellman, 2014). Such relationships might empower individuals to take positive risks in career decisions, providing a means to alleviate anxiety stemming from career exploration or decision-making stress.

Various studies (Tope, 2011; Peter and Maria, 2012; Naz et al., 2014; Singh, 2015; Mtemeri, 2017; Ogotu et al., 2017) highlight the significant role of peer influence in shaping an individual's career decision-making process. Additionally, Kaur (2020) identifies a noteworthy relationship between career indecisiveness and peer pressure.

Family Influence as Career Indecisiveness

The influence of family dynamics on career decision-making holds significant importance. Wong and Liu (2010) highlight that families play a substantial role in shaping children's career choices. Often, the responsibility for career decision-making is perceived as more aligned with adults due to the complexities and expansiveness of both family and work realms. Family members act as crucial influencers by serving as role models, providing tangible examples of success in specific vocational areas, and guiding individuals towards careers aligning with family businesses (McKay & Tokar, 2012).

Within the family sphere, members often assume the role of mentors, aiding individuals in circumventing traditional barriers by providing opportunities within the family business or facilitating networking to connect individuals with influential contacts. Conversely, when families oppose their ward's career choices, they might erect obstacles like financial or emotional barriers or impose guilt, impacting the individual's career path (Mau & Li, 2018). The level of independence a child gains from their family of origin significantly impacts their identity formation and, subsequently, their career decision-making process. Overbearing family influence can hinder young adults in making autonomous career choices, leading to setbacks.

Research by Hou, Leung, Li, Li, and Xu (2018) emphasizes the substantial impact of parents' attitudes towards their children's abilities over their actual achievements. Moreover, parents' own career insecurities influence teenagers' levels of career indecision. Adolescents with parents experiencing low job security tend to face higher levels of career indecisiveness compared to those with parents in more secure job positions. Difficulties experienced by parents in their careers can translate into negative attitudes toward work and studies in their children (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

Dietrich and Kracke (as cited in Marcionetti & Rossier, 2016) categorize three forms of parental behaviour:

career-related support, interference in career choices, and lack of engagement. High levels of career-related support and low interference tend to predict high levels of career exploration, while increased interference often leads to greater career decision-making difficulties and subsequent career indecisiveness.

Academic Difficulties as Career Indecisiveness

Academic difficulties deal with the diverse struggle students go through in their academic pursuits. It encompasses instances of wrong choice of programme, inability to grasp simple and complex concepts, poor grades, class repetition, remedials, trailing in the class and overall poor performance in specific subjects, reflecting the challenges students encounter within their academic pursuits. According to Mung'ara (2012), persistently failing in certain subjects can instill a belief in students that they lack the capability to succeed in those areas, subsequently causing indecisiveness when contemplating careers associated with those subjects. This self-perception might extend beyond the failing subjects, leading individuals to doubt their overall academic aptitude and consequently feel uncertain about their career choices making them indecisive.

Research by Kavas (2011) revealed a negative correlation between academic difficulties and career indecisiveness. However, existing literature lacks a unanimous consensus regarding the direction of this relationship. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that students grappling with academic challenges will likely encounter difficulties in making informed career decisions, as successful career trajectories often align with academic accomplishments. There exists an intrinsic connection between academic success and the formulation of successful career plans.

Gender Differences as Career Indecisiveness

Literature has shown that gender differences exist in terms of career indecisiveness. Walya (2021) aver that gender has been a demographic variable widely investigated in the area of career indecisiveness. Again, according to Priyashantha, Dahanayake and Maduwanthi (2023) there is a significant difference on the career decision making status of high school students in relation to gender. Botha and Mostert (2013 (2011) confirmed gender differences in career indecisiveness. Females have been found to experience lower levels of career indecisiveness as compared to men. This is evidenced in the study conducted by Priyashantha et al. (2023) who found that females experience less career indecisiveness than males. The finding is based on the premise that females make career choice very early than their male counterparts. Contrarily, investigations carried out by Migunde, Othoun and Mbagaya (2015) depicted that female students were affected by high levels of career indecisiveness than males. This paper explores gender difference in relation to the agents of career indecisiveness.

Statement of the Problem

For adolescents, the process of selecting a career often becomes an overwhelming and anxiety-inducing task, primarily due to the fear of making the wrong choice. This decision is critical as it must align with both their senior and tertiary education pursuits. The transition from senior high school to tertiary education in Ghana compounds this challenge for students, accentuated by deficiencies in decision-making skills, the alignment of chosen programmes with career aspirations, and the absence of comprehensive career education for senior high school students. Reports from school counsellors in various senior high schools across the country suggest that approximately 50% to 60% of counselling cases are related to career indecisiveness, echoing previous findings (Amoah, Kwofie, & Kwofie, 2015).). The pivotal question emerges: "What agents contribute to career indecisiveness among senior high school students in Ghana?" Despite existing research in the field of career education and choice, there remains a lack of comprehensive investigation into the agents specifically driving career indecisiveness among senior high school students in Ghana. This study assesses the predictive variables as agents of career indecisiveness for senior high school students in Ghana and seeks to analyze peer influence, family influence and academic difficulties as agents

of career indecisiveness among senior high school students; and investigate gender differences among the agents of career indecisiveness among students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. In what ways do peer influence, family influence, and academic difficulties contribute as agents of career indecisiveness among Senior High School students in Ghana?
2. What significant difference exist between male and female students of the agents of career indecisiveness?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the roles of peer influence, family influence, and academic difficulties as contributors to career indecisiveness among Senior High School students in Ghana. This design was chosen to capture information from a broad population, offering descriptive insights into the variables under study and their relation to career indecisiveness. The target population was all senior high school students in nine public schools from three geographical zones. The accessible population was year two senior high school students within the nine schools which was 5,845.

Sample and sampling Procedure

To create a representative sample, 450 senior high school students categorized as experiencing career indecisiveness were selected from the accessible population of 5,845 across nine public Senior High Schools. The sample selection process utilized a multistage approach involving cluster sampling, stratified sampling, purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and quota sampling methods. Cluster sampling grouped the country into three geographical zones (northern, middle & southern), while purposive sampling ensured representation from three selected metropolitan assemblies based on school type (all boys, all girls, and mixed) and programme of study. Stratified sampling further categorized students by gender and program of study, ensuring proportional representation. Lottery method within random sampling ensured unbiased selection within strata, while quota sampling allocated an equal number of participants from various schools. Simple random sampling, employing the lottery method, finalized individual student selection across the selected regions and schools.

Determination of sample size was done by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table and so for a population of 5,845, sample size of 354 needed to be used. However, going by Glenn's (1992) proposition, an estimated sample of 22% was added to the sample to make it 450 as the total sample size used for the study.

Instrument

The instrument used in soliciting data was questionnaire. Questionnaire are mostly used in gathering information in educational research and has standardized questions, ensuring anonymity and also, questions can be written to solicit respondents' opinions and beliefs on specific subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The questionnaire was developed by the researcher in relation to the literature and research questions. The questions were multiple choice with a four-Point Likert-Type Scale (strongly-agree, agree, strongly-disagree, disagree). It employed the close-ended type of questions because it represents respondents' strengths of feeling and attitude it ensures simpler data analysis as well as easy coding of

responses (Gray, 2004).

Pilot test was conducted using 10% of the total respondents of 450. Therefore 45 students were used, selected from three schools in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. The internal consistency of instrument was calculated using the Cronbach’s Alpha formula which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.80 and considered as good (Pallant, 2005). The respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity as a result of the nature of the study and that the data was purely for academic purposes only. Data was collected by researcher over a period of six weeks. There was a 100% return rate. Means and standard deviations were used to analyse the responses to determine which agents of career indecisiveness affect students as well as gender differences.

RESULTS

The section took into consideration demographic characteristics of respondents as well as covered the areas investigated in terms of the agents of career indecisiveness affecting students’ career decisions. Means and standard deviations were used in data analysis. Tables were used in the presentation and discussion of results. In all 450 respondents took part in the study.

Demographic Characteristics of Students

Out of the 450 respondents who took part in the study, 225 were males representing 50% while 225 were females also representing 50% indicating an even distribution by gender.

Peer Influence, Family Influence and Academic Difficulties as agents of career indecisiveness among senior high school students in Ghana

Research question one sought to identify whether the predicted variables such as peer influence, family influence and academic difficulties are responsible for students’ career indecisiveness in Ghana. Mean scores ranging above 2.5 indicate a positive agreement while below 2.5 depict a negative agreement. Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the contributions of the variables predicted as agents of career indecisiveness among students.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations Distribution of Peer Influence as an Agent of Career Indecisiveness

Statement I am indecisive on my career because:	M	SD
my friends disapprove of my preferred career choice	2.9	1.1
my friends perceive my career desires as inferior	3.0	.91
my friends always dictate to me what I should do	3.0	.99
my friends always oppose my career decisions	3.1	.92
my friends believe I can’t align with them based on my career choice	3.1	.91
my friends don’t encourage me in my career selection	2.9	.95
my friends don’t aspire to work	3.1	.91
I prefer socialising with my friends to exploring my career interests	2.8	1.1
my friends don’t have career choices in mind	3.1	.90
my friends think I am too dull to be able to work in any career field	3.2	.91
Total	3.0	.67

The data analysis from Table 1 reveals the substantial effect of peer influence on career indecisiveness among senior high school students. This is evident through the overall mean score (M = 3.0, SD = .67)

calculated across all statements. It becomes apparent that peer influence significantly contributes to the respondents' career indecisiveness. Each statement's mean score ranges between 3.3 and 2.7, signifying the respondents' acknowledgment of peer influence as a key factor in their career indecisiveness.

The respondents' decision-making regarding careers appears greatly affected by comments and perceptions from their friends about their personality and work capabilities. For instance, respondents remain indecisive about their careers due to their friends' perception of their dullness, recording a mean score of 3.2 (SD = .91), surpassing the overall mean score. Statements like "My friends always oppose my career decisions" (M= 3.1, SD = .92); "My friends believe I can't align with them based on my career choice" (M = 3.1, SD = .91); "My friends don't aspire to work" (M = 3.1, SD = .91), and "My friends don't have career choices in mind" (M = 3.1, SD = .90) highlight how peer influences impede their career decision-making.

Furthermore, respondents express continued indecisiveness influenced by peers due to their friends' perception of their desired careers as inferior (M = 3.0, SD = .91) and their friends' tendency to dictate their decisions (M = 3.0, SD = .99). Again, further support of the significant role of peer influence in respondents' career indecisiveness which include, friends' disapproval of their desired careers (M = 2.9, SD = 1.1); lack of encouragement in career selection (M = 2.9, SD = .95); and preference for socializing over exploring career interests (M = 2.8, SD = 1.1) strongly impact their decision-making process.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations Distribution of Family Influence as an Agent of Career Indecisiveness

Statement I am indecisive on my career because:	M	SD
my parents believe that selecting a career is for experienced adults	2.7	1.0
my parents doubt my ability to make the right choice of career	2.7	.95
my family disapproves of my career option	2.8	.95
I dislike my parents' preferred career choice for me	2.6	1.0
my family thinks that certain careers belong to particular class of people	2.8	.99
my parents insist I follow their profession	2.9	.99
my parents believe that certain careers are made for specific ethnic groups	3.1	.90
my family's religious beliefs hinder my desired choice of career	3.1	.92
my family's financial background affects my career decisions	2.8	1.0
my parents' career difficulties and experiences hinder my career decisions	2.9	.98
Total	2.8	.64

Respondents concurred that family influence significantly affects their ability to make career decisions. The data analysis presented in Table 2 strongly supports the assertion that family influence serves as an agent of career indecisiveness among senior high school students in Ghana, as evidenced by the total mean score of 2.8 (SD = .64). Across various statements pertaining to family influence, mean values ranged from 2.5 to 3.2, which fall within the cut-off point, indicating indecisiveness regarding careers. For instance, when examining whether respondents haven't decided on their careers due to their parents' belief that specific careers belong to certain ethnic groups, the mean score calculated was 3.1 (SD = .90), signifying a prevalent positive response. Similarly, the statement "My family's religious beliefs hinder me from choosing my desired career" recorded a mean score of 3.1 (SD = .92). These mean scores, accompanied by standard deviations, suggest that family influence regarding ethnicity and religious beliefs acts as barriers to respondents' career decision-making processes.

Moreover, the study elucidates that family influence manifests as parents insisting their children follow their profession (M = 2.9, SD = .99), discouraging independent career choices. Statements like "My parents'

career difficulties and experiences hinder my decisions” ($M = 2.9, SD = .98$) highlight how family influence affects students’ career choices. respondents also acknowledged family influence in terms of disapproval of their career options ($M = 2.8, SD = .95$), attributing certain careers to specific social classes ($M = 2.8, SD = .99$), and limitations imposed by the family’s financial background on career choices ($M = 2.8, SD = 1.0$), all contributing to their indecisiveness about careers.

Furthermore, participants revealed that family influence constrains their career choices as parents perceive career decisions as the domain of experienced adults ($M = 2.7, SD = 1.0$). They also expressed being indecisive due to parents’ skepticism about their ability to make the right choices ($M = 2.7, SD = .95$). The findings further highlighted respondents’ career indecisiveness due to their reluctance to comply with their parents’ preferred career paths ($M = 2.6, SD = 1.0$). Overall, the calculated means across various statements underscore the diverse ways in which family influences contribute significantly to the career indecisiveness experienced by senior high school students.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations Distribution of Academic Achievement Difficulties as an Agent of Career Indecisiveness

Statement I am indecisive on my career because:	M	SD
I am generally weak in academic performance	2.4	1.0
certain subjects in my programme disinterest me	2.4	.97
my programme of study is excessively challenging for me	2.8	.93
I am an average academic achiever	2.9	.93
I have repeated my class	2.4	1.0
I perform poorly in some subjects which are requisite for career choice	2.3	1.0
my programme does not match my intended career	2.4	.99
I excel in all subjects and so I struggle to decide on a career	2.6	.93
I lack enthusiasm for my programme	2.4	.97
I am unable to achieve the necessary grade for entry into my desired career field.	3.3	.94
Total	2.8	.57

Academic difficulties significantly contribute to the career indecisiveness observed among participants, evident from the findings presented in Table 3. The total mean score of 2.8 ($SD = .57$) aligns with the established benchmark (where 2.5 and above indicate a positive response rate), affirming that, academic difficulties indeed act as catalysts for career indecisiveness. Respondents acknowledged their lack of clear career decisions due to academic challenges they encounter. Notably, participants strongly endorsed the statement “I am unable to attain the necessary grade for entry into my desired field of study” ($M = 3.3, SD = .94$) as a major reason for their indecisiveness. Similarly, statements such as “I am an average academic achiever” ($M = 2.9, SD = .93$) and “My program of study is excessively challenging for me” ($M = 2.8, SD = .93$) corroborate participants’ indecisiveness, with their mean scores aligning closely with the total mean score. Moreover, calculated mean score for statement like “I excel in all subjects and hence struggle to decide on a career” ($M = 2.6, SD = .93$) underscore how academic hurdles significantly contribute to participants’ indecisiveness about their future careers.

Differences between male and female students as agents of career indecisiveness

The main concern was to find out if there were any differences in terms of gender in the predicted variables (peer influence, family influence & academic difficulties) that act as agents of career indecisiveness. The cut-

off established is 2.50.

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations Distributions on Gender Difference of Peer Influence, Family Influence and Academic Difficulties

Variables	Peer Influence		Family Influence		Academic Difficulties	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Male	2.91	0.67	2.72	0.61	2.75	0.60
Female	3.14	0.66	2.98	0.64	2.76	0.54
Total	3.03	0.67	2.85	0.64	2.76	0.57

Gender distributions of peer influence, family influence and academic difficulties clearly depict some levels of differences. Peer influence show differences in male and female as females (M = 3.14, SD = 0.66) are more influenced than males (M = 2.91, SD = 0.67). Again, the results depict that, females (M = 2.98, SD = 0.64) are affected by family influences more than their male (M = 2.72, SD = 0.61) counterparts. For academic difficulties, there is slight difference between females (M = 2.76, SD = 0.54) and males (M = 2.75, SD = 0.60) as they are likely to face them same difficulties.

DISCUSSION

The investigation revealed that peer influence significantly contributes to the indecisiveness about careers among senior high school students in Ghana. This aligns with Kaur’s (2020) discovery of a strong link between career indecisiveness and peer pressure. Additionally, Hellman’s (2014) assertion that increased peer engagement diminishes exploration of occupational opportunities, leaving individuals undecisive, finds support in this study. The students’ uncertainty regarding career choices stems from comments made by their peers concerning their career aspirations. These comments include being labelled as inept, facing opposition to their preferred careers, feeling disconnected from their career options, disliking their desired careers, succumbing to peer influence, and experiencing resistance to their career decisions. These findings illustrate the students’ pursuit of acceptance and validation among their peers, leading them to conform to peer expectations to gain recognition rather than assert their own preferences.

Literature underscores the pivotal role of family influence in an individual’s career indecisiveness. The study’s findings affirm that family influence significantly impacts the career indecisiveness of Ghanaian senior high school students, supporting Wong and Liu’s (2010) argument that families wield substantial influence over children’s career decisions, which can be either positive or negative. Families often assume that career decision-making is reserved for experienced adults and trained professionals, believing that children lack the ability to make appropriate choices. This belief is founded on the notion that an individual’s life prospects are determined by the type and success in their chosen work. Notably, the study revealed that family factors such as religious beliefs and perceptions regarding certain careers being associated with specific ethnic groups hinder students from pursuing their desired careers. Parents’ disapproval of their children’s career choices, financial constraints, and parental career difficulties also emerged as significant factors influencing students’ indecisiveness. These findings align with Mau’s (2004) research, highlighting how unsupportive family members impede students’ progress by setting obstacles in their career paths. Furthermore, the study reflects Feldman’s (2003) assertion that adolescents face career indecisiveness due to their parents’ personal career insecurities, which negatively affect their attitudes toward work and studies. In Ghanaian culture, adolescents are typically guided by their families, limiting their decision-making autonomy, particularly concerning career choices, as they are perceived as immature and inexperienced in making decisions that have substantial implications for their future.

The investigation indicated that senior high school students grappling with academic difficulties tend to be indecisive about their careers. Challenges such as the inability to meet entry grade requirements, struggles with their study programmes, and perceived average academic performance contribute to their career indecisiveness. These findings echo Mung'ara's (2012) observations that students facing academic challenges, such as persistent failures in particular subjects, tend to believe they cannot succeed in related fields or any other fields, leading to indecisiveness. Students with academic struggles often believe they cannot excel in any career field and perceive themselves as unworthy due to poor academic performance. This mindset hinders their career aspirations. Moreover, mismatched career aspirations with selected programmes, dictated by parents and significant others, deter students from making firm career choices. Additionally, the stringent academic prerequisites for various careers serve as a barrier, preventing students who fail to meet these criteria from aspiring to certain career fields or making decisive career selections.

Gender differences also tend to have a significant role in students' career indecisiveness as indicated by the findings. Females tend to be affected more than males in terms of peer and family influences. This is because females are easily influenced by peers as a result of their vulnerability as compared to their male contenders. Also, they cannot stand constant pressures from family members and their threats, obstacles and lack of support in terms of sponsorship in their desired career pursuits. The slight gender difference in academic difficulties implies that both male and female face the same challenges.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

Counsellors would gain insights into these agents causing students' career indecisiveness, making them strategise in organizing interventions such as seminars, talk shows and career days for both students and parents.

Counsellors, teachers and career practitioners would be informed to equip themselves with the requisite skills to facilitate students' career planning and development.

It would inform counsellors to divert their attention to the needed areas in offering career guidance and counselling to students.

CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENTIFIC AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of the study will help school counsellors and guidance and counselling coordinators to gain more knowledge on the factors that are peculiar to students' career indecisiveness in order to educate and create awareness as to the extent to which these factors can impede students' career choices. The study will serve as an eye opener to students and parents who chance on the article to pay attention to students' career needs and interests.

Since this research adopted the quantitative approach, further research can employ either the qualitative or mixed method approach to provide an in-depth information that can be relevant to the study.

CONCLUSIONS

The study solicited students' views on the agents of career indecisiveness. After analyzing the study's findings and subsequent discussions, the primary inference drawn is that peer influence, family influence, and academic achievement difficulties significantly serve as catalysts for career indecisiveness among students. It also indicated a gender difference in relation to these agents as females top the list for each of the variables investigated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations stemming from this study suggest that school counsellors should meticulously address family dynamics, peer associations, and academic concerns presented by students seeking guidance. Comprehensive attention to these areas is crucial for effective career planning and development. Furthermore, it is advised that parents and family members adopt a more adaptable approach to their principles and beliefs, prioritizing their wards' interests, abilities, and talents during the career decision-making process. Offering assertiveness training to students is also proposed, aiming to foster independence rather than excessive reliance on peers and family during career decision-making.

Moreover, school counsellors and educators are encouraged to communicate and advise parents or guardians regarding students facing academic challenges, facilitating their access to additional academic support like extra tuition. To ensure the efficacy and inclusivity of career counselling policies and activities, it is suggested that gender-specific characteristics and behaviour be critically considered in their planning, organization, and implementation, catering for the diverse career counselling needs of different gender groups.

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