

## The Perceptions of Career Counselors and Students about the Influence of Self-Awareness on the Choice of Training Programmes in Public Secondary Schools of Kenya

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

The choice of a career is very important because it affects one's entire life. To enable students make this crucial decision, career guidance is offered in secondary schools in Kenya to help the students realise their potential and select training programmes that will lead them to appropriate careers in future. In career guidance students are assisted to increase their levels of self-awareness to reveal their interests and potential in order to equate them to specific career requirements. Despite this effort many students try to change the training programmes they had chosen immediately after admission or after a period of study in the university, indicating a dissatisfying choice. Since self-awareness is the first step in the selection of an appropriate career this study was carried out to establish if career counsellors and students perceived it as having any influence on the choice of training programmes. The study areas were Mombasa, Meru and Kiambu counties of Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population was 31,145 form four students in 394 public secondary schools. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 395 students from 33 secondary schools. In addition 33 career counsellors were purposively sampled. A pilot study was carried out in 3 public secondary schools in Embu County. The data was collected using two questionnaires and was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (mean, percentages and frequencies) and inferential statistics (Chi-square) were used in data analysis. The findings of the study were that self-awareness was perceived to be useful in influencing the students' choice of training programmes by the career counsellors and students. The study recommended that career guidance be empowered in secondary schools to increase the students level of self-awareness as well as enable them to relate the subjects, training programmes and careers.

**Keywords:** Careers: Career Guidance, Self-awareness, and Training Programmes.

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## INTRODUCTION

Career choice is a very important aspect of life because career is a journey through life, from birth to retirement. It goes beyond an occupation to involve other components like community and social responsibility, enterprise activities, hobbies and interests, cultural activities, education, training and life roles. An individual's choice of career determines where one lives, how one lives and with whom one associates with. If people have to excel and enjoy life they should carefully choose the right careers [1]. The choice of training programmes made by individuals forms a base for the person's future career. The need to guide individuals on career matters has been recognised globally. Career guidance is the process of assisting an individual who possesses certain assets, abilities and possibilities to select from many careers the one that is

suitable for him/her and then aid him/her in preparing for it. Career guidance enlightens the secondary school students on the relationship between the subject of study, the training programme and career choices enhancing their ability to plan for the next step in education and work [2]. Key in career guidance is enhancing self-awareness among students through guided self-exploration and administration of career tests. Career tests enhance the student's level of self-awareness by revealing the potentials that one possesses. Knowledge of one's areas of career interests, academic abilities, and personality traits is basic in selecting training programmes. Self-awareness enables students to appreciate their individual personality, value systems, beliefs, natural inclination and tendencies. Better understanding of self-empowers an individual to build on one's areas of strength and identify areas that require improvement. Students can increase their self-

awareness by gathering feedback from parents, peers, teachers and career counsellors. Involving students in activities that require self-reflection and meditation can also boost self-awareness [3]. According to Mutie and Ndambuki [4], self-analysis is a key component in career guidance. This involves helping the students to appraise themselves by collecting data on the home background, school progress, personality, health, values, interests, aptitudes and achievements, then analyse it with the help of the career counsellor. This will help the students to understand themselves better and to be able to make appropriate choices of training programmes and careers decisions. Career guidance enlighten students on the career opportunities after school and the requirements for each career preparing them for the world of work they will be proceeding to after school. Further, career guidance reveals to the students the training programmes that will lead them the desired careers. All this information enables the students to make an appropriate career choice by equating their abilities to the career requirements.

The Government of Kenya (G.O.K.) has established career guidance through the guidance and counselling programme to enable students make appropriate choice of training programmes which is instrumental to their future careers. Every secondary school head teacher is required to assign a member of staff the responsibility of providing career guidance to all students among other functions of guidance and counselling services. Career counsellors are trained and equipped with necessary information to guide students on how to choose training programmes [5]. The Ministry of Education (M.O.E.) updates the career booklet on a yearly basis recognising the upcoming colleges and universities where students can proceed for appropriate training programmes after secondary school education [6]. Students are assisted to select the subjects they can perform best in which forms the requirements for the training programmes they engage in the tertiary institutions. Many secondary school teachers have trained in guidance and counselling at the universities and workshops which ideally should enable them to give students a more professional guidance in making choices of training programmes. Despite the fact that students are guided and prepared for the training programmes they select, many of them seek to change the training programmes they had selected immediately after admission in the university or even after some period of study, indicating a dissatisfying choice. For one to be in an appropriate career there must be a proper match between the personal traits and career requirements which is possible through effective career guidance. However if self-awareness will influence the students' choice of training programmes depends on how the career counsellors and students perceive it. Since career guidance is offered in public secondary schools to enlighten students on their potential and the training programmes that lead to available career opportunities, this study was carried out

to establish if students and career counsellors perceive self-awareness as having any influence on the choice of training programmes in public secondary schools in Kenya. The objective of this study was to determine the perception of the students and career counsellors about the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes in public secondary schools in Kenya.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate in a study where the independent variable cannot be directly manipulated since its manifestations have already occurred [7, 8]. The purpose of a descriptive survey research is to explore the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of groups of people of interest to the researcher at a given time [9]. This design was appropriate for this study since the researcher intended to determine the perceptions of career counsellors and students about the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes at the time of study. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Mombasa, Meru and Kiambu counties of Kenya. The population of the study was all form four students and career counsellors in public secondary schools in Mombasa, Meru and Kiambu counties of Kenya. The study targeted form four students because they had already received adequate career guidance to enhance their self-awareness essential in and selecting the training programmes they wished to pursue for higher education. Career counsellors were also involved in the study because they are responsible for career guidance in public secondary schools. There were 394 public secondary schools and 31,145 form four students in the three counties. Each secondary school had one career counsellor therefore there were 394 career counsellors. The sample size for the study was 395 students and 33 career counsellors which were obtained using the formula indicated by Nassiuma [12]. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample of study. The schools were stratified according to counties and categories. The proportion of the schools studied was determined by the population of schools in each county and category. Random selection of 33 schools was done by putting pieces of paper with names of schools in a bag and drawing without replacing. The students' sample was picked from the 33 sample schools and the proportion of students studied in each school was based on the population of students in each county and category of school. The students were selected randomly by putting pieces of paper with the registration numbers of students in a bag and drawing without replacing. Lastly one career counsellor was purposively selected from each school in the sample.

Data was collected using two questionnaires; one for career counsellors and the other one for students. The questionnaires obtained information on the perception so students and career counsellors about

the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes. The researcher adopted the instruments from Ngumi [11] and in consultation with the supervisors modified it to suit the current study. Further, a pilot study was conducted in three schools from Embu County to ascertain its validity. Ten students and a career counsellor from each school were involved in the exercise. This was done not only to determine the validity of the data collection instrument, but also to enable the researcher understand logistical issues of the study.

Reliability was determined using the Cronbach alpha method, and the instrument was to be considered sufficiently reliable if  $\alpha \geq 0.7$  [13]. The questionnaires had reliability coefficient of 0.71. Therefore the instruments were considered reliable enough for the study. The data obtained from the study was organised and coded, then processed using SPSS. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in data analysis. Descriptive statistics; frequency tables, mean and percentages were generated to explain various attributes of variables under study. Inferential statistics; Chi Square was used to test the hypothesis. The information obtained from the qualitative data was coded according

to various themes, categories and patterns then applied in answering the research questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to determine the perception of the students and career counsellors about the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes in public secondary schools in Kenya. This objective was based on the fact that career choice depends on the students' awareness of their own ability and requirements of the training programmes. In this study, the students and career counsellors were presented with eight statements depicting various aspects of self-awareness and how they influence choice of training programmes. They were requested to rate the extent of influence of each of these aspects on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (where, 1 = Strongly disagree - SD, 2 = Disagree - D, 3 = Undecided - U, 4 = Agree - A and 5 = Strongly Agree - SA). The higher the score, the higher was the level of influence of the various aspects of self-awareness on the choice of training programme, and vice versa. Tables 1 and 2 depict the distribution of the rating of the career counsellors and students, respectively.

**Table-1: Career Counsellors' Ratings of the Influence of Aspects of Self-Awareness on the Choice of Training Programmes**

Statements	Response (%)					Means
	SD	D	U	A	SA	
Career guidance increases students' level of self-awareness	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (40.0%)	18 (60.0%)	4.60
Students know their abilities in terms of career involvement	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	2 (6.7%)	14 (46.7%)	9 (30.0%)	3.83
Students know their career interests	1 (3.3%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (16.7%)	11 (36.7%)	9 (30.0%)	3.77
Students choose the training programmes that suit their abilities and interest	1 (3.3%)	8 (26.7%)	3 (10.0%)	9 (30.0%)	9 (30.0%)	3.57
Students know careers that would give them optimum satisfaction	1 (3.3%)	4 (13.3%)	9 (30.0%)	10 (33.3%)	6 (20.0%)	3.53
Students know careers that suit their personalities	1 (3.3%)	9 (30.0%)	5 (16.7%)	8 (26.7%)	7 (23.3%)	3.37
Students know the career environment in which they can work best	1 (3.3%)	8 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)	6 (20.0%)	7 (23.3%)	3.33
Students know their career capabilities and limitations	2 (6.7%)	10 (33.3%)	5 (16.7%)	6 (20.0%)	7 (23.3%)	3.20

SD- Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, U- Undecided, A- Agree, SA- Strongly Agree

As shown in Table 1, career counsellors rated all the eight aspects of student self-awareness influencing choice of training programme as useful (above average 3.00). This suggests that career counsellors are confident that career guidance has the potential to enlighten the students on their self-awareness which is paramount in choosing training programmes. Mellisa [14] states that individuals are different and can fit in different careers. All the career counsellors agreed that career guidance increases students' level of self-awareness. Myers [15] argues that perception is influenced by the individuals'

attitude. Therefore, the career counsellors may have a positive attitude towards their work. Majority of career counsellors indicated that students are aware of their abilities in terms of careers and training programmes. This is most probably because the information on career requirements is available in schools thus making it possible for students to identify careers that match their abilities. However 9 (30%) of the career counsellors were not decided if students know careers that would give them optimum satisfaction, while only 13 (43.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that students knew the career environment in which they can work best. This suggests

that the career counsellors may be aware that the students do not have the information that would enable them to know careers that would give them optimum satisfaction. The career counsellors might have not emphasised on this in career guidance although it is

crucial. Osoro, Amundson, & Borgen [16] argue that through career guidance, the students are assisted to identify their work values and understand themselves in relation to the world of work in terms of the working environment they would enjoy.

**Table-2: Students' Ratings of the Influence of Aspects of Self-Awareness on Choice of Training Programmes**

Statements	Response (%)					Means
	SD	D	U	A	SA	
I know my career interests	9 (2.3%)	3 (0.8%)	43 (11.1%)	128 (33.2%)	204 (52.6%)	4.33
Career guidance has increased my level of self-awareness	17 (4.4%)	14 (3.6%)	27 (7.0%)	136 (35.2%)	192 (49.7%)	4.22
I choose the training programmes that suit my abilities and interest	9 (2.3%)	14 (3.6%)	44 (11.4%)	135 (35.0%)	184 (47.7%)	4.22
I know the career that would give me optimum satisfaction	10 (2.6%)	11 (2.8%)	63 (16.3%)	108 (28.0%)	194 (50.3%)	4.20
I know the career environment in which I can work best	13 (3.4%)	10 (2.6%)	59 (15.3%)	127 (32.9%)	177 (45.9%)	4.15
I am aware of careers that suit my personality	10 (2.6%)	11 (2.8%)	64 (16.6%)	136 (35.2%)	165 (42.7%)	4.13
I know my abilities in terms of career involvement	14 (3.6%)	17 (4.4%)	44 (11.4%)	143 (37.0%)	168 (43.5%)	4.12
I know my career capabilities and limitations	17 (4.4%)	15 (3.9%)	75 (19.4%)	129 (33.4%)	150 (38.9%)	3.98

SD- Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, U- Undecided, A- Agree, SA- Strongly Agree

Table 2 indicates that the students rated all the eight aspects of student self-awareness influencing choice of training programme as useful (above average 3.00). This suggests that students have a clear understanding of themselves. Majority of the students 329 (82.7%) claimed to know their abilities and careers that suit them. However, the students and school counsellors varied in their individual ratings of each aspect of self-awareness. Career counsellors rated the aspect that career guidance increased the level of self-awareness most useful probably from the knowledge that career guidance has this potential. While the students rated the claim to know their career interest highest, and the influence of career guidance on their self-awareness was rated second. This suggests that both career counsellors and students agree that career guidance increases the students' level of self-awareness but the students could have more information about themselves from other sources. Both career counsellors and students rated the aspect of students' knowledge about their capabilities and limitations lower than other aspects indicating that capabilities and limitations may have not been addressed together in career guidance. The career counsellors should incorporate this in career guidance.

The overall perception of the students and career counsellors about the influence of students' self-

awareness on the choice of training programmes was determined by the cumulative interaction of all the eight statements. Therefore, the responses to each constituent statement were scored on a scale of 1, indicating least/not useful perception, to 5, indicating high/useful perception. The overall perception of the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes was obtained by summing up the individual scores to form a self-awareness index score for each respondent. The index score varied between 8, indicating the (least) not useful perception, and 40, indicating the (highest) most useful perception of the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes. The higher the score, the more useful the self-awareness was perceived to influence the choice of training programmes, and vice versa. The index score was later collapsed into three ordinal categories in order to differentiate the levels of perception of the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes among the sampled respondents. This included a score of 8-18, meaning low/not useful perception, a score of 19-29 (neutral) and a score of 30-40 indicating useful perception of the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes. Table 3 depicts the overall perception of students and career counsellors about the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes.

**Table-3: Career Counsellors’ and Students’ Perceptions about the Influence of Self-awareness on the Choice of Training Programmes**

Perception	Counsellors		Students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Not Useful	2	6.7	10	2.6
Neutral	11	36.7	78	20.2
Useful	17	56.7	298	77.2
Total	30	100.0	386	100.0

Table 3 indicates that 17 (56.7%) of the career counsellors and 298 (77.2%) of the students perceived self-awareness to be useful in influencing the choice of training programmes. This suggests that the career counsellors rated the aspects of self-awareness from the way they knew the students, yet the students seem to have a better understanding of them. The students’ perception could have been influenced by their self-concept. An individual’s self-concept is a key determinant of perception [15]. The fact that 11 (36.7%) of the career counsellors and 78 (20.2%) students were neutral regarding the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes may be an indication that the significance of self-awareness in the choice of training programmes was not addressed in career guidance in some secondary schools. The career

counsellors should assist students to increase their levels of self-awareness because with a better understanding of themselves students are empowered to make decisions and build on their strengths [3]. Further, self-awareness is the first step in goal setting based on the choice of training programmes made by students.

**Relationship between Gender and the Perceptions of Career Counsellors and the Students about the Influence of Self-awareness on Choice of Training Programmes**

The study further sought to find out if there was a relationship between gender and the perceptions of career counsellors and students about the influence of self-awareness on the choice of training programmes. A cross tabulation of the findings is shown on Table 4.

**Table-4: Relationship between Gender and Perceptions of Career Counsellors and Students about the Influence of Self-awareness on choice of Training Programmes**

			Counsellors			Students		
			Gender		Total	Gender		Total
			Male	Female		Male	Female	
Level of perception	Not Useful	Count	0	2	2	4	6	10
		%	0.0%	11.1%	6.7%	1.9%	3.4%	2.6%
	Average	Count	3	8	11	38	40	78
		%	25.0%	44.4%	36.7%	18.3%	22.5%	20.2%
	Useful	Count	9	8	17	166	132	298
		%	75.0%	44.4%	56.7%	79.8%	74.2%	77.2%
Total			12	18	30	208	178	386
			$\chi^2 = 3.264 \quad p = 0.196$			$\chi^2 = 2.011 \quad p = 0.366$		

Findings on Table 4 suggest that there was no significant relationship between the levels of perception of the influence of self-awareness on choice of training programmes and gender. It was observed that even though majority of the male counsellors and male students perceived self-awareness as useful in influencing the choice of training programmes, there was no particular significant pattern in the distribution across gender. A Chi-square test was carried out to confirm this relationship and yielded these results ( $\chi^2 = 3.264$  for counsellors and  $\chi^2 = 2.011$  for students). These values were not significant at 0.05 significance level. This means that gender did not influence the level of perception about the influence of self-awareness on choice of training programmes. Therefore, both girls and boys have high levels of self-awareness and this influences their choice of training programmes. This indicates a uniform level of self-awareness across all

students; therefore career counsellors must put more effort to enhance self-awareness among the students.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the results it can be concluded that self-awareness influences students’ choice of training programmes. However the students and career counsellors agreed that some students were not aware of the career capabilities and limitations. Most probably in career guidance the area of career requirements was not well covered. The study further revealed that demographic characteristics of the career counsellors and students do not influence their perception of career guidance on choice of training programmes.

**Recommendations**

It is therefore recommended students should be given more information about training programmes

and careers requirements to enable them make selections that suit them.

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