

Course Preference Guide Among High School Students. A Case Of Bungoma County; Kenya.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Choosing a career is an important road curve that must be negotiated by every individual in the quest to fulfilling their dreams. Career choice is often a complex decision for most high school students in Kenya especially in form two when they are expected to choose subjects that might serve as a key determinant of the kind of profession that they pursue in life. Many of these students often are faced with uncertainty and stress as they make career choices. Many of them do not research adequately on the career they intend to choose, nor do they receive adequate guidance from school educators/counselors. Consequently many high school students go into unsuitable careers due to ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents, and teachers, or as a result of prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate guidance and career counseling. This study therefore sought to establish factors that lead many students prefer choosing some courses over others. The study adopted the **descriptive Survey Design** that allowed collection of a large sample of **multi variant sample** data from a wider population in a fairly short span of time. A multi sampling technique was employed. **Stratified sampling** to have fair representation of the population (National, Extra County and Sub County schools). **Simple Random** was used to collect real sample of schools and learner participants. **Purposive sampling technique** was used to select Career masters. Five (5) schools were sampled from all the school category strata. Five hundred (500) students were selected as follows; (60) form two students from the five schools who had already done subjects selection (300), twenty (20) form four (100) and form three students respectively (100) were sampled randomly. Five (5) career masters per school were purposefully sampled too; one from each school giving a total **sample population of (505)** participants. A self-administered questionnaire was given out to the participants. The questionnaire had two sections; one; demographic information and two; seven questions on a Likert scale related to study. Clarifications were made. Respondents filled and returned the tools to avoid dropout rates. The data was coded and analyzed using SPSS version 20. The findings were; most preferred courses basing on; high marketability, easy to get promotion, pays well, readily available in most places and courses that were entrepreneurial in nature. Also, they preferred courses that had online opportunities, most current and trendy with chances to go abroad, easy to commute to work and has flexible schedules-Not fully occupying time. Selective factors like age, gender, category of school and class level did not directly influence the choice of courses students selected. Hence these factors didn't have direct corroboration with courses selected by the students under study

II. Literature Review

Sending children to school in this era, subjecting them to terminal examinations thereafter churning them out ill prepared for a seamless transition between Learning and Earning is disastrous. This is because proper Career choice plays a significant role in the holistic development of youths. As a matter of fact, poor career selection leads to a student have either negative or harmful thoughts and is also likely to cause psychological, physical and socio-economic inequalities persist well beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life. According to Kerka (2003), career choice is influenced by multiple factors and determinants including personality, interest, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support, and available information and financial resources.

Hewitt (2010) posits that factors influencing career choice can be either intrinsic, extrinsic, or both. Hewitt further states that most people are influenced by careers that their parents' favor, others follow careers that their educational choices have opened for them, some choose to follow their passion regardless of how much or little it will make them while others choose the careers that give high income. The choice of a career is routinely influenced by various internal and external factors such as ignorance, gender role, personal interest, parental/relative influences, and advice from friends, religion, background, family values, and societal perception accorded by a profession (Issa and Nwalo, 2008). Career development, for most people, is a lifelong process engaging the world of work through choosing among available employment opportunities (Bandura et al., 2001). Globally, researchers have investigated factors influencing students' career choices in various fields of specialization.

When compared with men, more women have high school diplomas, are enrolled in college, and receive bachelors' degrees (Ryan and Bauman, 2015). As closing the gender gap remains a top priority for the government, access to education is no longer an issue especially for younger women. However, despite the availability of educational and career options, more than 50 percent of young undergraduate women today are choosing female-dominated careers that are lower in status, prestige, and compensation (Stamarski and Son, 2015). For example, In Nigeria, despite women constituting the major segment of the population, they account for only 24.2% of the labor force (NBS, 2012).

There are several studies on factors influencing career choice among students in Nigeria. For example, Odia and Ogiedu (2013) studied the factors affecting the studies of specific courses in Nigeria; while Pitan and Olugbenga (2014) studied the factors affecting student choice of courses. Yet, there are no studies, at least to the best of our knowledge, on the determinants of career choices among females' undergraduates generally. We argue that one way to estimate this would be to survey a population of female undergraduates and ask questions to help understand the drivers of their current course of study and potential career paths. In other words, the objectives of this study were two folds. First, to investigate the drivers of course of study among female undergraduates in Nigeria, and second, to explore the systemic determinants of career choices among female undergraduate students' findings.

Consequently, proper handling of the process of career choice will enable the youths succeed in their academic and career and thereafter living a satisfying and adaptive future life. Youth career decision-making now requires to go through a process of understanding by defining what they want to do and exploring a variety of career options with the aid of guidance and planning (Porfeli and Lee, 2012). Proper handling of the process affirms individual identity and fosters wellbeing, job satisfaction and stability (Kunnen, 2013). Studies reveal that the complexity of career decision-making increases as age increases (Gati and Saka, 2001). Studies reveal that younger children in primary or Elementary Grades are more likely to offer answers about their ideal career which may represent their envisioned utopia and phenomenal perceptions about what they want to do when they grow up (Howard and Walsh, 2011) but high school students or late adolescents indicate that students *struggling with career choice problems at this level have often have exhibited high levels of psychological problems* such as; low levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and low cognitive abilities (Feldman, 2003).

To achieve this delicate process well, there is need to strike an equilibrium match between characteristics of the individual student and of the study or career. Actually, the student should integrate his or her career choice (profession) with his overall passion or abilities. This implies that personal and global commitment development are relevant aspects in career choice development. *Since the development of career choice commitments is considered an important developmental task, and it is seen as one of the most important parts of identity development in late adolescence* in the western world, there is need to help the youths develop satisfying vocational commitments. Internationally studies indicated that students considered both extrinsic and intrinsic factors as possible causes for career selection. Extrinsic Factors: financial remuneration, job security, professional prestige and job accessibility. Financial Remuneration; financial remuneration: most influential in career choice. Income deemed important in life, particularly among youth with higher level of individualism. German students ranked "a high income" highest with a 3.7 out of 5 in comparison to Croatian students who ranked it second while Indian management students rated it third most important factor influencing career choice.

Secondly, professional prestige: an important deciding factor for youth career decision making in India, South Africa, Croatia, Japan and Korea all collectivist settings. Prestige statuses attached to some occupations were strong incentives to career choices was ranked second best. Youths wanted prestigious jobs so that they could live good lives and be respected in the society. Also, youths considered intrinsic factors: the value or importance attached to the career, self-satisfaction and fulfilment, inner desire based on talents, how is raises esteem or worth and superiority over others.

Recent Placement results for Kenyan University and College Central Placement services board (KUCCPS) showed mixed signals. On one hand, students who had qualified to join universities turned down the offer for Tertiary institutes to pursue courses of their passion at Diploma level. But on the other hand, some students went to tertiary to take Diploma courses for which they could still pursue Degrees at the university. Students who sat for their Kenya Certificate of Secondary According to Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS), students who scored C+ and above select courses based on cluster points. Cluster points are a KCSE examination student's computed performance in four subjects required for admission to a given degree programme against that of the best candidates in the particular KCSE examination year. There are 560 undergraduate degree programmes that have been classified into 20 clusters. "In the past, the cluster groups were based on available job opportunities but currently they are determined by the number of slots available in universities against the number of students applying," From the KUCCPS portal, the Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) is at Cluster 1 and the most applied course. "Law is a most sought-after course in Kenya and since most universities offering Law can accommodate a high number of students, it becomes the most applied course,"

After Law, most students apply for Business, Hospitality and related courses. Currently, there are 64 different undergraduate programs under the category indicating why it is very popular amongst students. In Cluster 3, are Social Sciences, Media Studies, and Fine Arts, Film, Animations, Graphics and related courses? The category is popular for two reasons; first, the cluster points required are generally low making many students apply for them and secondly, like in Law, the slots are usually many in institutions offering those courses. Cluster 4 lists Geosciences and related courses which consist of sixteen undergraduate programs. Engineering, Engineering Technology and related courses are ranked in Cluster 5. "Ideally, you would expect more students to apply for engineering courses compared to geosciences but that is not the case. "Fewer institutions offer those courses and the slots per class are also fewer because the course demands more in terms of infrastructure,"

In Cluster 6, KUCCPS lists Architecture, Building Construction and related courses. KUCCPS in an earlier statement announced medicine and health-related courses were in demand but on the website, it is in Cluster 13. "What KUCCPS meant in terms of demand is that very few slots are available for students to apply. For example, a university can accommodate over 300 students taking LL.B. because all is needed is space and lecturers but for medicine, you need science labs which are expensive leading to lower class size," he explains. On what makes a course popular during the application process, he explains, "KUCCPS automatically locks you out from selecting certain courses if you do not meet the required points making you go for a second alternative" "If a student wants to apply for Medicine but is locked out because of cluster points, chances are he will go for Law pushing it up higher in popularity scale," he adds. The other clusters in order of popularity are: Computing and Information Technology; Agribusiness; Actuarial Science, Accountancy, Mathematics, Economics and Statistics; Interior and Fashion Design; Sports Science; History and Archaeology; Agriculture; Geography; French and German; Music; Education and Religious Studies. Consequently this study sought to establish factors that guided many Kenyan High school students in choosing courses. The objectives of this study were to; Outline courses most preferred in the selection by High school students of Bungoma County and Establish influence of gender, age, class level and category of school in course selection among the High school students of Bungoma County; Kenya.

The purpose of the study

Therefore, this study was aimed at establishing most preferred career choices and selected factors that influenced career choices among Kenyan High school students.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were;

1. Outline courses most preferred in the selection by High school students of Bungoma County.
1. Establish influence of gender, age, class level and category of school in course selection among the High school students of Bungoma County; Kenya.

Research Questionnaires

1. Which are the most preferred courses among the students during selection?
2. What is the influence of age, class level, gender and category of school in career selection among the High school students of Bungoma County; Kenya?

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the **descriptive Survey Design** that allowed collection of a large sample of **multi variant sample** data from a wider population in a fairly short span of time. A multi sampling technique was employed. **Stratified sampling** to have fair representation of the population (National, Extra County and Sub County schools). **Simple Random** was used to collect real sample of schools and learner participants. **Purposive sampling technique** was used to select Career masters. Five (5) schools were sampled from all the school category strata. Five hundred (500) students were selected as follows; (60) form two students from the five schools who had already done subjects selection (300), One hundred (100) form four and form three students respectively. The total sample frame became four hundred (500) students and Five (5) career masters per school purposefully sampled; one from each school giving a total **sample population of (505)** participants. A self-administered questionnaire was given out to the participants. The questionnaire had two sections; one; demographic information and two; seven questions on a Likert scale related to study. Clarifications were made. Respondents filled and returned the tools to avoid dropout rates. The data was coded and analyzed using SPSS version 20.

IV. FINDINGS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Characteristics

The first objective of this study was to establish if the class level, gender, age and type of school influenced career choice among high school students of Bungoma County. This was analyzed from Demographic information as presented as follows; The demographics of the respondents included; Name of the school, Level of class (Form) at the High School, The Type and level of the secondary school, gender and Age (for Secondary School Students). Whereas for the Career Masters Respondents included; Name of the school, Class/Form, Academic Year of study at the University or Tertiary College, Gender, Age Range and Highest Academic Level attained. The demographic findings were as shown below;

Figure 1.0 ; Secondary Schools of the respondents (Secondary School Students)

From figure 1.0 it indicated that that was an equal representation of secondary schools from the whole strata in Bungoma County. An equal number of Questionnaires 100. Hence all the targeted sample of 500 respondents for the Bungoma Secondary Schools effectively participated in this study.

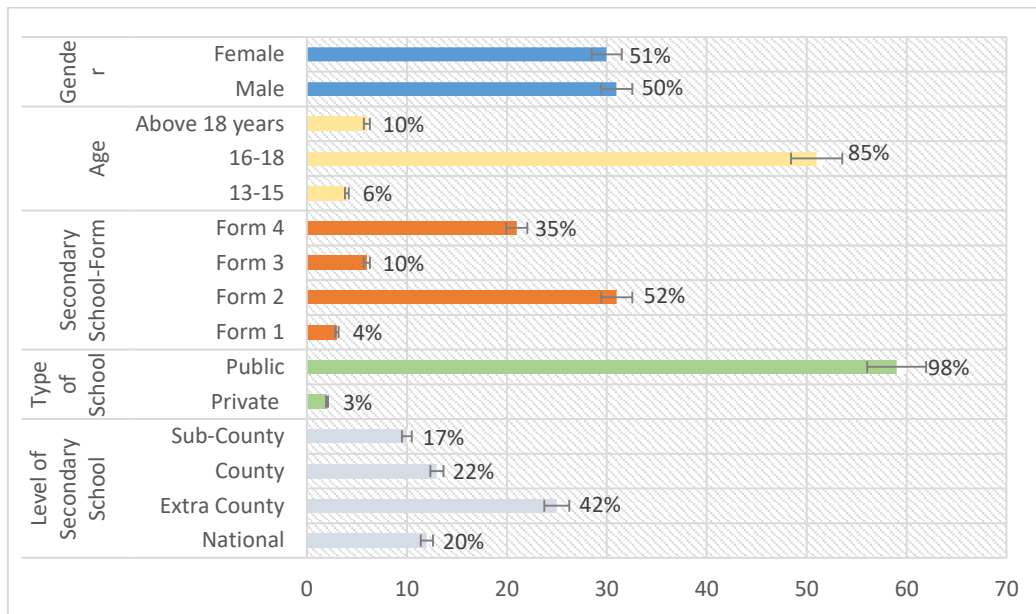


Figure 1.0 ; Demographic Characteristics of the respondents (Secondary School Students)

Figure 2.0 reveals that the study ensured an almost gender balance among the respondents as indicated by 51% and 50% for the female and male respondents respectively. It is also indicated that majority of the respondents were of the age bracket 16-18 years old as represented by 85% Nevertheless, most respondents (52%) were in form 2 which is the expected class where subject and subsequently career selection is done, 35% in form 4, 10% in form 3 and 4% in form 1 respectively. This meant that all academic levels were sampled from the secondary schools of Bungoma County. Seemingly, 98% of the secondary schools that participated in this study are public while only 3% are private. The strata representing all categories of all secondary schools; 42% are at the extra county level, 22% at the county level, 20% at the National level and 17% are at the sub-county level; this is an indication that all types of Bungoma secondary schools at different levels successfully participated in this study.

Figure 2.0 ; Secondary Schools of the Respondents (Career Masters)

Clearly, respondents (career masters) from all the five sampled secondary schools equally participated in this study. Since all the targeted secondary schools were effectively involved in this study, there was therefore adequate for generalization of this research.

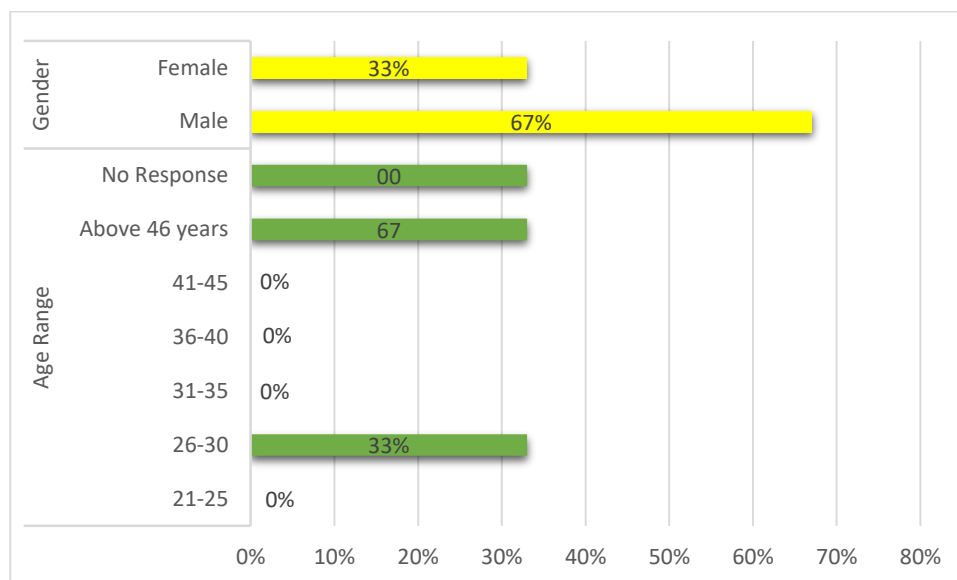


Figure 2.0; Gender and Age of the respondents (Career Masters)

From figure 2.0, it seems that 33% and 67% of the respondents were female and male respectively concerning age, 33% of the respondents were aged 26-30 years and 67% were aged above 46 years old. This is a clear indication that gender equity and age factor was ensured during the data collection process among the Career Masters respondents and those that participated were statistically matured enough to effectively give reliable information probed on the field.

Table 1.0; Other Demographic Characteristics of the respondents (Career Masters)

Demographic	Level	%Count	Count
Primary School	Lower	0%	0
	Mid	0%	0
	Upper Primary	0%	0
Secondary School- Form	Form 1	0%	0
	Form 2	33%	3
	Form 3	33%	1
	Form 4	0%	1
	No Response	33%	1
Tertiary College	Year 1	0%	0
	Year 2	0%	0
	Year 3	0%	0
	Year 4	0%	0
University	Year 1	0%	0
	Year 2	0%	0
	Year 3	0%	0
	Year 4	0%	0
Academic Level	Primary	0%	0
	Secondary	0%	0
	Degree	67%	2
	Masters	0%	0
	PhD	0%	0
	No Response	33%	1

None of the respondents (Career Masters) were teaching at any primary level while one (33%) were teaching at Form 1 and 2 as shown in table 4.0. The findings also shows that none of the respondents were currently enrolled in a Tertiary College or University. It is also clear that majority of the respondents were degree holders as indicated by 67%.

Preferred Courses in the Career Selection

The second objective of this study was to outline the most preferred courses in the career selection. To achieve this, parametric and non-parametric one sample t test was adopted to determine whether the observed mean is statistically significant different from a hypothesized 2.5 mean (For Parametric Test Only). The researcher sought to test for the following hypothesis;

H₀₂; The observed mean of the Market Trend is not Statistically Significant Different from the hypothesized mean.
The findings for the descriptive and inferential statistics are as shown in table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Descriptive/Inferential Statistics for Market Trends

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	P-Value (Chi-Square One Sample)
Highly Marketable	0 0%	1 2%	2 3%	11 18%	47 77%	4.70 (94%)	0.615	0.00
Easy to get promotion	0 0%	0 0%	5 8%	17 29%	37 63%	4.54 (91%)	0.652	0.00
Pays Well	0 0%	0 0%	1 2%	7 12%	51 86%	4.85 (97%)	0.407	0.00
Readily available in most places	2 3%	3 5%	7 12%	19 32%	28 47%	4.15 (83%)	1.047	0.00
Entrepreneurial in Nature	0 0%	4 7%	10 16%	23 38%	24 39%	4.10 (82%)	0.907	0.00
Has online opportunities	0 0%	5 8%	8 14%	24 41%	22 37%	4.07 (81%)	0.926	0.00
Most current and trendy	2 3%	5 8%	13 22%	17 29%	22 37%	3.88 (78%)	1.115	0.00
Has chances to go abroad	1 2%	1 2%	5 8%	10 17%	43 72%	4.55 (95%)	0.852	0.00
Easy to commute to work	0 0%	0 0%	5 8%	25 42%	30 50%	4.42 (88%)	0.645	0.00
Has flexible schedules-Not Fully occupying time	1 2%	3 5%	8 14%	17 29%	30 51%	4.22 (84%)	0.984	0.00
Average Level of Market Trends (Secondary School Students)	Mean		%Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	Test Value (Average)=2.5 (50%)		
	4.3580	87%	0.46853	0.05999	72.646	Df	p-value	0.000
Average Level of Market Trends (Career Masters)	Mean		%Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error of Mean	Test Value (Average) = 2.5 (50%)		
	4.4667	89%	0.23094	0.13333	T	df	p-value	
					14.750	2	0.005	

Table 1.0 findings shows that more than a half of the respondents strongly agreed that the most preferred courses were considered; highly marketable, easy to get promotion, pays well, readily available in most places and were entrepreneurial in nature as indicated by 86%, 77%, 63%, 47%, and 39% respectively which were found to be all significant as indicated by (Mean=4.70, std. dev=0.615, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 94% rated high,(Mean=4.54, std. dev=0.652, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 91% rated high, (Mean=4.85, std. dev=0.407, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 97% rated high, (Mean=4.15, std. dev=1.047, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 83% rated high and (Mean=4.10, std. dev=0.907, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 82% rated high. Similarly, 41% of the respondents agreed that they preferred courses that had online opportunities as indicated by (Mean=4.07, std. dev=0.926, p=0.000<0.05) which was found to be significant and with a mean score of 94% rated high. Apparently, 72%, 51% and 50% and 37% respectively strongly agreed that; the preferred courses should be most current and trendy, has chances to go abroad, easy to commute to work and has flexible schedules-Not fully occupying time. These sentiments were found to be significant as indicated by (Mean=3.88, std. dev=1.115, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 78% rated high, (Mean=4.55, std. dev=0.852, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 95% rated high, (Mean=4.42, std. dev=0.645, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 88% rated high and (Mean=4.22, std. dev=0.984, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 84% rated high.

V. SUMMARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most respondents strongly agreed that courses most preferred were considered basing on ; high marketability easy to get promotion, pays well, readily available in most places and were entrepreneurial in nature as indicated by 86%, 77%, 63%, 47%, and 39% respectively which were found to be all significant as indicated by (Mean=4.70, std. dev=0.615, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 94% rated high,(Mean=4.54, std. dev=0.652, $p=0.000<0.05$) Also, they preferred courses that had online opportunities, most current and trendy with chances to go abroad, easy to commute to work and has flexible schedules-Not fully occupying time. Generally, the Market Trend Factors for selection of the most preferred courses by the secondary students of Bungoma County is significantly high as indicated by 87% mean score (Mean =4.3580, Std. dev. = 0.46853, $t =72.646$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the observed mean of the Market Trend is Statistically Significant Different from the hypothesized mean. This is a clear indication that the discussed significant most preferred courses by the secondary students of Bungoma County have a great influence in their career selection. These findings could be corroborated with the Career Masters' who also showed that the most preferred courses significantly depend on the Marketability Factors as indicated by 89% mean (Mean = 4.4667, Std. dev. = 0.23094, $t =14.750$, $p\text{-value} = 0.005 < 0.05$) rated high.

Selective factors like age, gender, category of school and class level did not directly influence the choice of courses students selected. Hence these factors didn't have direct corroboration with courses selected by the students under study.

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