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EVALUATING SELF-CONCEPT, CAREER DECISION-MAKING SELF-EFFICACY AND PARENTAL SUPPORT AS PREDICTORS CAREER MATURITY OF SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract:

This study examined the impact of decision-making self-efficacy, self-concept and parental support on career maturity. Participants included in this study were 552 senior secondary students [234 form threes, 258 form fours and 60 students did not identify their grade; 379 males and 173 females] from Wajir County in northern Kenya. Participants responded to four standardised inventories: Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1973), Career-Related Support Scale (Turner et al., 2003), Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor and Benz, 1983) and Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept scale (Piers, 1984). In addition, they responded to a demographic section that provided information about gender, age, grade, stream of study, and socio-economic status. The result indicated a significant relationship between career maturity, career decision-making self-efficacy parental support and self-concept. Career decision-making was highest predictor followed by self-concept. Implications and recommendations for career counsellors are discussed.

Keywords: career maturity, self-concept, self-efficacy, senior secondary school students

1. Introduction

A better part of person daily life is spent in occupation activities to earn a living. Pursuit of fulfilling occupational activities contributes to individual psychosocial well-being. The choice made during early adulthood shapes pursuit of productive and successful

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career. Secondary schooling is a critical stage in the development of career maturity of learners (Gonzalez, 2008). It is this period young adults are faced with ongoing challenges of academic decision-making and occupation choice. Young adults contemplate, conceptualize and decide on future career pathway (Sultana, 2003; Swanson & Fouad, 2015). Secondary school students face dilemma and difficulties while making effective career decision (Laskin S. B., & Palmo, A. J., 1983). As they proceed to senior classes these students are expected to choose a major or join a specific stream that will ultimately determine their future career trajectory. Examples of such streams are sciences, arts, commerce and business. Interestingly, as depicted in Super's Life- Career Rainbow, this stage also concurs with maturational stage of growth which is characterized by explorative behavior, zeal and energy (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996).

Existential dilemma surrounds young adults while entering world of work and this is widely recognized but little understood (Crites, 1976). Providing proper career guidance during this stage is very important. Activities including exposing students to different working scenarios, organizing career expositions and conducting work-toschool programmes will increase students` knowledge about world of work and enhance their career decision-making ability.

2. Career Maturity

Career maturity is fundamental construct in career development processes (Sneva, 2011; Powell & Luzo, 1998). The concept of career maturity initially called "vocational maturity" (Super, 1957) and, also termed "career readiness" (Chui, 2007) was proposed by Donal Super 53 years ago. Career maturity is attained readiness in attitude and achieving competency in the related career development task. Super conceptualizes career maturity as "a group of physical, psychological and social characteristics that represent the individual's readiness and ability to cope with career related problems and challenges he or she may face and master them" (Sneva, 2011, p. 52). Crites (1978) defines career maturity as the extent to which a person has mastered appropriate vocational development tasks such as knowledge of self and knowledge about world of work and developing right attitude relevant for his/her vocational development. Moreover, Gysber, Heppner and Johnson (2003, p. 24) conceptualized career maturity as the "readiness to engage in the developmental tasks appropriate to the age and level at which one finds onself". Interestingly, Donald Super later came up with the term 'Career Adaptability' to suggest career maturity for adults (Gysber et al., 2003). It is important to note that career maturity is not an irreversible and static state but a life-span process. Consequently, career maturity cannot be attained fully at one instance but relative to when and where one is at on the career continuum. Career maturity is regarded very vital element in the provision of vocational guidance particularly for the adolescence and is one of the mostly researched construct in career development (Bozgeyikli, Eroglu, & Hamurcu, 2009; Powell &

Luzzo, 1998). Gonzalez (2008) and Sultana (2003) affirm that career maturity witnesses greater development at secondary school where young adults are achieving maturity.

One of the major signs of attaining career maturity is making proper career decision. Kaur (2012) contends that the greater the career maturity attained the higher the chances someone can make wise and satisfactory career choice. Career maturity inventory was developed to measure facets like career maturity attitude and competency that are vital of realizing career decision-making competency. Crites (1971) hypothesizes that career maturity comprises of both affective and cognitive dimensions. Activities such exploring different occupations, clarifying about work values, and attitude regarding career planning signifies attaining maturity in the affective domain. Cognitive dimensions are related with increasing knowledge about career issues. Super (1951) explains that career maturity is exhibited when a person exhibits behaviors that indicate career readiness which is equivalent to those in the same chronological age.

Several variables influence career maturity. These include career self-efficacy, socio-economic status, self-concept; demographic constructs such age, gender, level of education and culture (Sneva, 2011; Chui, 2007; Gonzalez, 2008). Depending on the factors and resources available career maturity can see moderate growth, stagnation and sometimes intense development. Crites (1976) postulates that career maturity can be enhanced through counseling and didactic treatment. However, it is worth noting that career development is a life span activity and choice of occupation is continuous action that happens through the entire life (Hassan, 2006).

3. Career Maturity and Self-Concept

Self-concept is defined as how individual view himself or herself in public and private (Duane Brown, 2002, Hamacheck, 1987; Hassan, 2006). It involves developing cognizant view of persons values, beliefs, feelings, abilities, intellectual, capacity, educational status, socio-economic status, emotional that make part of his/her traits and characteristics. Super (1953) contends that people choose specific career so that they implement their self-concept. This construct changes with time and experiences. Self-concept steadily increases with age and experiences consequently improving career maturity. Furthermore, social treatment particularly from parents, guidance and significant others influence self-concept which in turn influences career maturity. Studies indicate that self-concept has a strong relationship with career maturity (Lawrence & Brown, 1976). A growing body of research reveals that individuals with high self-concept also exhibit high level of career maturity (Hassan, 2006; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Impact of self-concept on career maturity of senior secondary school students from low-income environment is part of the inquiry of this research.

4. Parental Support

Parental support is contextual factor that influence occupation development. Parental support in this respect is the involvement of both parents in education and career planning of their children. Support from parents come in several ways including: career support, modelling (vicarious learning), verbal encouragement and emotional support (Tunner et al., 2003). Perceived parental support particularly of father was related with educational plans and vocational expectation of Mexican high school girls (McWhirter, Hackett & Bandalos, 1998). In Somali culture which is the context of the current study parental support stems from educational support and verbal encouragement particularly from the father. It is worthwhile to explore the influence of parental support of career maturity from low-income environment.

5. Purpose of the Study

Choosing career pathways is a great concern of secondary school students. Career maturity is the stage that person attain in the continuum of vocational development (Super, 1953). Thus, it is important to know career maturity and influencing factors. One major limitation of studies investigating career maturity and its correlates is the focus on only college students and adults (Powell, Darell, Luzzo & Anthony). The purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which career maturity varies on the predictors including parental support, decision-making self-efficacy and self-concept for senior secondary students from low-income environment.

6. Decision-Making Self-Efficacy and Career Maturity

Self-efficacy is a key component in social cognitive theory. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994) suggests that career aspiration is manifestation of self-efficacy belief and outcome expectations (Gore Jr & Lauwerke, 2000). Self-efficacy is the belief one has about the outcome of performance or actions he/she undertakes (Leong & Brown, 1995). Perceived self-efficacy is, therefore, a major influencer in occupational choice and development (Bandura, 1997; Lent et al., 1994). Career self-efficacy is conceptualized as the confidence someone exhibit in regard to choosing a certain career or making career adjustment (Lent & Hackett, 1987). People tend to compromise occupations beyond their capabilities even though they are lucrative and attractive. Self-efficacy belief is developed by gaining experiences, appraisal from others and through modelling. SCCT hypothesizes that outcome expectations influence interest and choice goals (Gore & Leuwerke, 2000). Fouad and Smith (as cited in Gore Jr & Lauwerke, 2000) reported that self-efficacy belief and outcome expectation predict academic persistence and perceived career options. Career maturity has two domains: cognitive and affective. Career decision-making self-efficacy is cognitive domain of career maturity. attaining high career self-efficacy belief increases level of career maturity (Ma, P.W.). Part of the inquiry of this research looks into the impact of career decision-making self-efficacy among secondary students from low-income areas.

7. Methods

7.1 Subjects

Participants were 552 senior secondary school students (379 male and 173 females) ranging in age from 16 to 24 years (M= 18.1, SD =1.34) years. Participants were drawn from five secondary schools in Wajir County in northern part of Kenya. Senior secondary school students in this context are those who are in form three and four. Participants reported following class standing: Form threes (45.8%), Form Fours (52%) and 4.5% did not specify their level of study. Participants were sampled from two mixed day schools and three boarding schools. Majority were from boarding schools (424 respondents) while 128 were from mixed day schools. Majority of the participants were from science streams with 227 (41.1%) participants; business and commerce 35 (6.3%) participants and arts 22 (4%) participants. However, 4%. 174 (31.5%) did not specify their stream of choice.

7.2 Instrumentation

Parental support was measured using Career-Related Support Scale (CRPSS) by Turner, Alliment-Brisset, Lapan, Udipi, & Ergun (2003). CRPSS scale is composed of 27 items and is divided into four subscales: instrumental assistance scale, career-related modeling, verbal encouragement and emotional support. Turner et al., (2003) reports CRPSS internal consistency of .78 to .85 among the subscale. In addition, Ma Pei-Wen, (2006) reports overall alpha coefficient of .91 and the alpha coefficient for the subscales ranging from .77 to .86. Participants were asked to respond to a 5-point Likert scale composed of 27 items.

The short version of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) with 25 items by Taylor and Benz (1983) was used to measure career decision-making self-efficacy. CDMSE measures how people perceive their ability to make educational and vocational decisions (Alessandro Lo Pretsi, 2013). CDMSE is subdivided into five areas of competencies: self-appraisal, collecting sufficient occupational information, ability to select career goals, making an accurate future career plan, and ability to solve problems. Chui (2007) reports overall reliability coefficient of 0.97 and subscales reliability coefficient that ranges from 0.86 to 0.9

Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept scale (CSCS) by Piers (1984) was used to measure self-concept. CSCS measures children's and adolescent's self-concept of age between 8 -18 years (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman. 2013; Lemley, 2004). The revised version of CSCS is composed 60 items divided over six subscales: behavioural adjustment, physical appearance and attributes, intellectual and school status, satisfaction and happiness, popularity, and freedom from anxiety. Lembey (2004)

reports reliability coefficient of .90 for internal consistency, split-half reliability of .91 and test-retest reliability ranging .69 to .96. Robinson et al., (2013) reports coefficient of .88 to .96.

A 50 item Career Maturity Inventory-revised (CMI-R; Crites & Savickas, 1995) was utalised to assess career maturity. CMI-R is a revision of the original Career Maturity Inventory (CMI; Crites 1973). Career Maturity inventory is divided into two subscales: the attitude scale (CMI-AS) of 25 items and the competency scale (CMI-R) of 25 items. Sneva (2011) posits that the attitude scale (CMI-AS) is the most used and well researched. Crites (1973) reports reliability coefficient of .72 to .90. And argue the reliability and validity of the original scale can be applied to the revised version. CMI can be used in various setups including schools, colleges and universities industries, business, hospital and other organizations.

7.3 Procedures

Data was collected during regular school term. Permission was sought and granted by school authority to collect data. The purpose of study and its significance to better understand career domains of students in rural setup was sufficiently explained to participants. Students' consent was sought to participate voluntarily and issues related with confidentiality was discussed. The researcher notified participants that anonymity of the respond will be upheld and the data will be used only for research purposes. Survey composed of four standardized instruments were administered to the participants, the Career Inventory (the attitude scale), Piers Harris Children's Self-Concept scale (CSCS), Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSE) and Likert Career-Related Support Scale (CRPSS). Participants also responded to short demographic questions capturing their background information including gender, grade, stream, parents' level of education and socio-economic status.

8. Results

Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine if self-concept, career decisionmaking self-efficacy and parental support were predictors of maturity. There were moderate correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variable (shown in table 2). Using the enter method, the result shows a significant model R2 = .287 (*F* =55.58, *p* < .000). The model was significant and explained 29% of the variance. Assessing contribution of individual independent variable reveals all variables were significant predictors of career maturity (parental support β = .174, *t* = 3.8, *p* = .000; selfconcept β = .278, *t* = 6.4, *p* = .000 and career decision-making self-efficacy β = .285, *t* = 6.2, *p* = .000). (See table 2). Of all predictors career decision-making self-efficacy was perceived to be the strongest predictor of career maturity (β =.29).

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Table 1: Correlation Matrix for Career Maturity, Parental Support,							
Self-concept and	l Career Decisio	n-making	Self-efficac	zy –			
Variables	Μ	SD	1	2	3	4	
Career maturity	158	24	1				
Parental support	95	16	.368	1			
Self-concept	174	20	.383	.288	1		
Decision-making self-efficacy	88	16	.408	.398	.191	1	

Variables	В	Standard error	В	Sig.
Parental support	.255	.068	.174	.000
Self-concept	.338	.053	.278	.000
Decision-making self-efficacy	.430	.068	.285	.000

Note: *p<.05, **p<.001

8.1 Implications

This study suggests that career decision-making self-efficacy, self-concept and parental support all affect career maturity of senior secondary students from low income environment. The outcome is in line with Bandura's (1997, 1999) view that individuals are proactive, self-organizing and regulate their themselves in order to attain psychological development. Self-efficacy is greatest agency of achievement among mechanism for achievement (Bandura et. al., 2001; Hackett, 1995; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Perceived self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in achieving career maturity and occupational development. Positive and high efficacy ensures proper career development and pursuit of occupation of choice. It is suggested therefore career counselors and educationist assess and consider self-efficacy in the process of career guidance. It is very vital to guide students along occupations they prefer and which they believe they have high efficacy and that they can perform well.

The results also revealed importance of self-concept in attaining career maturity. Super (1953) argues people pursue careers they prefer in order to implement their selfconcept. Self-concept is developed at homestead and nourished or compromised outside environs such as at school and work-place. It is vital in this context to nourish self-concept of this population who are from remote and less provisioned areas through motivations and trainings. It is suggested that students should be motivated that they can pursue careers of their dreams no matter the challenges and obstacles they face. This will enhance their self-concept and ultimately enhance their career maturity.

The results also indicate parental support was significant predictor even though contributing the list variance. The finding is also in support of growing body of research that contends parents exert significant effect on career choice and development of their children through appraisal of self-efficacy (Lembey, 2004; Bandura et. al, 2001). Lembey (2004) noted that parental support and attitude toward their children can significantly impact on their self-concept. Social connectedness especially that of parents, siblings and relatives immensely contributes to people's psychosocial well-being (Bandura et. al,

2001). This study recommends involvement of parents in career guidance activities, career fairs and when students choose future occupation.

9. Conclusion

The findings of this research study will contribute to growing knowledge of career development. Specifically, it is hoped that the findings are valuable to educationalist, career counselors, policy makers and teachers involved in the provision of career guidance in the rural setup.

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