INFLUENCE OF CAREER INTERESTS ON CHOICE OF DEGREE PROGRAMME AMONG REGULAR AND SELF-SPONSORED STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, KENYA

Jane Njeri Gacohi* (*Corresponding author)
Department of Psychology, Counselling and Educational Foundations, Egerton University,
P.O. Box 536-20115, Egerton, Kenya
Tel: +254 722 269 685 E-mail: gacohinjeri@yahoo.com

Prof. Aggrey M. Sindabi
Department of Psychology, Counselling and Educational Foundations, Egerton University,
P.O. Box 536-20115, Egerton, Kenya
Tel: +254 722 749 586 E-mail: masindabi@yahoo.com

Prof. Micah C. Chepchieng
Department of Psychology, Counselling and Educational Foundations, Egerton University,
P.O. Box 536-20115, Egerton, Kenya
Tel: +254 721 288 238 E-mail: mchemobo@yahoo.com
Abstract

The undertaking to choose a degree programme to study in the university is a fundamental career task in a student's life. It is a major turning point which not only signifies the start to workplace readiness, but also establishes the student in a career path that opens as well as closes life opportunities. Failure to achieve this task may cause dissatisfaction within the individual and the student may experience difficulties in handling future career tasks. This career task is influenced by various factors. This study aimed at determining the influence of career interests on choice of degree programme among students in public universities in Kenya. The study used the ex post facto design that adopted the causal comparative research technique and data was collected from 500 randomly selected students using questionnaires. Percentages, means and standard deviations were used to describe the quantitative data and independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data and to test hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that career interests had a high influence on the choice of degree programme of students in public universities. Further analysis of the results indicated that no statistically significant differences existed between the mean scores of influences of career interest between regular and self-sponsored students. The study concluded that provision of career interests was a significant factor in influencing the choice of degree programme of all the students in public universities. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education (MoE) ensures that in all secondary schools in Kenya, the career guidance department is functional with adequate career resources and activities that will facilitate students to discover and develop their career interests. The study also recommended the training and equipping of career guidance counsellors in schools to enhance their competence in assisting the students in career self-awareness and decision making.

Keywords: Degree programme, career interests, career tasks, public university, regular and self-sponsored students.
1.0 Introduction

Career guidance is an inclusive term that is used to describe a range of career interventions including career education, career information and career counselling (Kidd, 2007; Savickas, 2005). The major goal of offering career guidance is to help people move from a general understanding of life and work to a specific understanding of the realities of life, learning and work options that are open to them (McMahon, 2014). Career guidance is often offered to people who are continuing with education, those transitioning to the labour market, those changing careers, during periods of unemployment, and during transition to retirement. Career guidance enhances the career development of an individual throughout the life span (Brown & Associates, 2002).

The career guidance services provided to students should focus on provision of career information through a variety of resources and activities (Mutie & Ndambuki, 2004). These services enable the student to learn about careers, develop interests and values about certain occupations and prepare for entry to those careers. Career interests play a major role in influencing an individual’s career choice. Gaffner and Hazler (2002) state that career interests form the basis of the career values, attitudes, competencies and behaviours that one uses in choosing a suitable career (Zunker, 2006). These career interests can be expressed as preferences for activities or options such as school subjects, occupational titles, roles, and other career-related stimuli. Dawis (2002) acknowledges that career interests do predict satisfaction, performance, and tenure in a given occupation.

According to Adell (2002), some of the students’ career choice is embedded in their perceptions of the ‘ideal job’ and their career decision-making maturity which is enhanced by access to adequate and appropriate career information. Career guidance resources and activities enable students to develop their own career aspirations and goals and thus make informed career decisions (Patton & McMahon, 2014). This will ensure that students make career decisions that are in line with their career interests and the choices made will engender satisfaction and productivity in their future careers.

The choice of degree programme that young people make when joining public universities is one of the series of decisions made in the process of career development. This is a major turning point in the students’ lives which not only is a start to workplace readiness, but also establishes the student in a career path that opens as well as closes opportunities (Gibson & Mitchell, 2003). This decision is influenced by many factors, including the student’s family, career interests, socio-economic factors, educational policies, peers, personality, academic potential, career information, employment opportunities and life context (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Ghose (2002) states that some individuals find themselves later in occupations never understanding what propelled them in that particular direction. According to Gaffner and Hazler (2002), lack of proper knowledge of one’s career interests was related to indecisiveness and career indecision among students entering college (Gitonga, 2013).
Students apply for admissions to public universities in Kenya through the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement service (KUCCPS), formerly known as Joint Admission Board (JAB). The students admitted through the service get funding from the government and study under module I (regular module) in the public universities (Mulongo, 2013). Qualified students who miss out admissions by KUCCPS apply for their degree programmes and admission directly to the public university as self-sponsored or module II students (Nyaigotti-Chacha, 2004). According to Onsongo (2011) the self-sponsored module offers the student the advantage of pursuing degree programmes related to their career interests and also study in their preferred university with the possibility of earlier completion of their programmes as compared to those in the regular module. A study by Lugulu and Kipkoech (2011) found out that 63.3% of students admitted in public universities were dissatisfied with the degree programmes because they were placed in degree programmes they did not choose nor had a passion for.

Taking into consideration the apparent increase in youth unemployment, mid-life career changes, frequent job lay-offs, restructurings and high job turnovers, a major concern is what might be the long term implications of unsuitable career choices on the Kenyan students and consequently on the job market. It is against this background that the study sought to establish the influence of career interests on students’ degree choice in public universities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem
After completing their secondary education, the students select and apply for degree programme to study in public universities in Kenya. The students who complete this career task successfully are able to handle future career tasks effectively, while those who fail are discontented and experience difficulties in handling future career tasks. Some of the difficulties that can be experienced may be observed when several years later the students graduate and find no jobs related to their degree programmes or take up jobs for which are not related to their career interests. In public universities, not all students admitted under KUCCPS get the degree programmes they had selected. Consequently, some students are either satisfied or dissatisfied with the outcome of their degree choices. Various factors have been known to influence students’ degree choice. Thus, the study sought to find out the extent to which career interests influence students’ choice of degree programmes among the regular and self-sponsored students in public universities.

1.2 Objective of the Study
The objective of this study was to determine the influence of career interests on choice of degree programme among regular and self-sponsored students in public universities in Kenya

2.0 Current Concern for Career Guidance in Schools
Young people need career guidance to be able to discover abilities, inclinations and to outline their future. Mihaela and Cristina (2015) state that the insufficiency of career guidance in the pre-university education, determines the high rate of disorientation of the potential students in choosing the degree programmes they want to pursue in university, or worse, determines school dropout. The need for career guidance is clearly evident in the increasing difficulties in career decision making, the underutilisation of human resources, job
dissatisfaction, and such perennial and persistent problems of youth unemployment problems (Walsh & Osipow, 2014; Lenz & Sampson, 2008). The world of work has changed considerably and significantly and many young people are facing challenges in selecting a suitable and relevant career. Ponge (2013) attests that graduate labour market has changed noticeably with more university graduates experiencing difficulties in entering the labour market. Kigotho(2015) asserts that the greatest challenge for graduates in Kenya is not only lack of employment, but unemployability.

Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities; and helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves (Makinde, 2006). Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning (Gysbers, 2008). Career guidance activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). According to Capuzzi and Stauffer (2012), career guidance services include provision of career information (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services. These services play a vital role in helping students discover, develop and utilize their career interests in career choice.

A study by Orenge (2011) on the status of career guidance in public secondary schools found out that majority of schools implemented different of career guidance and counselling programmes. The study also found out that the career guidance and counselling teachers were available but not adequately empowered with career guidance skills, knowledge and facilities to carry out effective career guidance services, and the career guidance and counselling resources available were inadequate. In another study by Gitonga (2013) on factors influencing career indecisiveness among students in Kiambu showed that insufficient occupational knowledge, poor self knowledge with students and ill equipped careers education resources in schools as major factors. The study further revealed that the career counsellors had inadequate knowledge and training on career counselling. The findings were also affirmed in a study by Ombaba, Keraro, Sindabi and Asienyo (2014) in secondary schools whereby the findings showed that not all schools had adequate career guidance resources and career information materials. The findings indicated that the students did not attribute their career choices to the effectiveness of the guidance activities and services offered in the school. The study recommended that the school resource centre should be more equipped to support the guidance programme.

The career guidance programme’s role in the school setting must be one of facilitating and enhancing the school’s contribution to the learning, growth and development and preparation for work of the young people (Mumuikha, 2011). Together with the availability of career information resources, the career counsellors should be competent in helping students discover and develop their career interests and help in their career development issues. Taking into consideration these findings, this research sought to find the extent to which career interests influence the choice of degree programmes of students in public universities.
2.1 Career Awareness and Exploration

Career awareness helps the student to be conscious of the relationship between self, educational opportunities, and the world of work as an important aspect of career planning (Ellis, 2009). Counsellors may use group activities, educational awareness inventories, games that relate hobbies to recreational activities and guided activities to help the students understand the relationship between desirable school habits and good worker traits (Gibson & Mitchell, 2003). Career awareness involves providing the students with adequate and appropriate career information that fosters continuous expansion of the student’s knowledge of their career interests and awareness of the world of work (Lenz & Sampson, 2008). This is achieved by provision of accurate, understandable and usable facts that describe, explain, and interpret entrance requirements, opportunities for employment, working conditions, nature of work done, duties performed, opportunities for advancement, rates of pay, health hazard encounters, trends and outlook (Zunker, 2006).

2.2 Career Choice and Development

Career choice is process involves comparing available career options, narrowing down the choices and coming up with what suits a person best at that point in time (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2012). This step is based on the knowledge from self assessment and occupational exploration. It is the outcome of the synthesis of career and self-assessment, that is, a match between an individual’s academic potentials, attitudes, talents, interests, personality, values, expectations and available resources (Super, 1996; Kidd, 2007). Career choice is the outcome of a series of decisions, transactions, and adjustments which are made over a period of years, and in the context of many influencing factors (Savickas, 2005; Leung, 2008). Patton and Creed (2001) describe career choice as a process of growth reflecting a phase or stage of development in a person’s career development rather than a simple or single event.

Career development is a continuous lifelong process of developmental experiences that focus on seeking, obtaining and processing information about self, career interests, occupational and educational alternatives, life styles and role options (Mutie & Ndambuki, 2004; Brown & Lent, 2005). Thus, Career development can be defined as the life long process of developing beliefs, values, skills, attitudes, interests, personality characteristics and knowledge concerning the world of work (George & Cristiani, 2012). It is the aspect of one’s total development that emphasizes learning about, preparation for, entry into, adjustment and progress into the world of work. Career development begins with an individual's earliest awareness of the ways in which people make a living (Gibson & Mitchell, 2003). For example when a child observes that some people are doctors, others are police officers and some are teachers, it signals the start of career development process, which continues as that person begins to role play, explores and ultimately decides on what career to pursue.
2.3 Career Interests

Career interests, preferences and competencies develop over time and also change with time and experience, thus making career choice and adjustment a continuous process. A study done by Dietrich and Nurmi (2011) showed that the persons who were stable in their jobs showed interest patterns most suitable to the work of their choice. According to Santrock (2005), the two determinants of interests are nurture, which emphasizes socialisation and learning and includes numerous environmental and psychological influences; and nature, which emphasizes genetics and hereditary interests. When the students know their interests, they are able to develop career aspirations related to their interests. Hewitt (2010) concurs that interest has become the most important factors in determinant and measures of occupational selection.

Findings from a study by Omari (2014) with university students found out that most of the students would like to work at something they enjoy. Research findings indicated that university students put self-interest before societal interest and rate and value money and power as primary motivators in finding a job. According Hooley (2012), interest inventories have been developed to help identify interests and relate them to career and occupations. Interests inventories tall ranking for specific career and occupational preferences. By measuring interests of successful and satisfied people in an occupation, researchers have developed scales that compare the interests of individuals to the interests of people who are certain about what they want to do.

Values are important in career choice and career satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Sometimes people’s attitudes, beliefs and world view can impede good career choice. Ferry (2006) attests that a job may likely bring much personal fulfilment or sense of satisfaction even if the salary is not high if the person regards it as very important. Wagner and Fard (2009) did a study on factors influencing Malaysian students’ intention to study at higher educational institutions and found out that the desire to pursue their career interests was a significant factor. The students had attached importance to certain career which they desired to pursue at higher educational institutions. Consequently, the value that an individual assigns to work itself as well as the reward it offers is presumably internalised in their career development and influence choice of career and institution to study in (McFadden, 2015).

On the contrary, studies have shown that career interests are not a major determining factor in career choice or university of study. A recent research done by Lugulu and Musoga (2013) with students of University of Eldoret found out that students' degree programme decisions were guided by other factors rather than interest or what they have passion for. The findings indicated that their degree programme and university placement were assigned to the students by the placement board of public universities in Kenya. Lugulu and Kipkoech (2011) recommended that career guidance and counselling provided in schools should be equipped with adequate career information to help the students make informed choices on degree programmes. The studies do not show whether differences in the influence of career interests among self-sponsored and regular students. This is the gap that this study sought to fill.
3.0 Methodology

The study design was *ex post facto* in approach that adopted the causal comparative research method. This design allows a systematic empirical inquiry, in which the researcher is not able to control or manipulate the independent variables, because their manifestations have already occurred (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Kerlinger 2010). The research design also allows a comparison of groups without having to manipulate the independent variables (Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2003; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The comparison groups comprised the students in regular and self-sponsored study modules in public universities. Student’s career interests were the independent variable.

3.1 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in the six (6) public universities in Kenya which already had been established by 2001. These are: University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Egerton University, Moi University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and Maseno University. The study was done in the main campuses of the selected public universities. The main campuses of the public universities were presumed to have a wider variety of degree programmes in both regular and self-sponsored modules of study. The study was conducted in public universities and not in private universities because all students in private universities were self-sponsored.

3.2 Population of the Study

The study population constituted university students in the 6 public universities in Kenya. The target population was 160,110 first year students who completed secondary education in 2012 and are in their second semester. The first year students have a better understanding of the degree programme they are undertaking and the university they are studying in, and those who wanted to change degree programmes or university placement had done so. According to the Joint Admission Board (JAB) (2013/2014) and Commission for University Education (CUE) (2014), the population of first year students in all the public universities was approximately 160,110 students.

4.0 Results and Discussion

This study was guided by two objectives. The study sought to:

1) Establish the influence career interests on choice of degree programme of regular and self-sponsored students in public universities.

2) Establish whether differences exist in the influence of career interests on choice degree programme between regular and self-sponsored students in public universities.
4.1 Influence of Career Interests on Choice of Degree Programme

The first research objective sought to establish the influence of career interests on the degree programme of students in public universities. The study analysed statements that assessed how this factor influenced choice of degree programme of students. Influence of career interests on degree programme was measured by five items on a likert scale scored as follows; strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). Item 5 (‘Had I known my career interests earlier, I would have taken a different degree programme’) was negatively keyed and scoring reversed prior to the analysis. The results obtained are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My career interests made me choose the degree programme that I am studying</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My degree programme is related to my career interests</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My degree programme offers me a wide variety of careers related to my interests</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After graduation, I will pursue another degree programme related to my career interests</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had I known my career interests earlier, I would have taken a different degree programme</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 1, majority (87.5%) of the respondents agreed that their degree programmes were related to their career interests; 80.6% of the respondents agreed that their degree programmes offered them a wide variety of careers related to their interests. Majority (48.2%) of the respondents disagreed that after graduation, they would pursue another degree programme related to their career interests and 32.2% agreed. Only 13% of the students agreed that they would have taken a different degree programme if they had known earlier their career interests, whereas the majority (78.3%) disagreed with the statement. These findings imply that the students’ career interests were a significant factor when choosing their degree programmes. Majority (73.3%) are contented with the degree programme they are undertaking which means that the students had considered their career interests in selecting the degree programme. Thus, career interests influenced the career choices of the students in public universities in Kenya.
In order to determine the influence of career interests on choice of degree programme, the means of the responses was calculated. The maximum possible mean score was 5 while the minimum possible mean score was 1. The mean scores of the influence of career interests on degree programme of students were presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Means of Influence of Career Interests on Degree Programme of University Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2038</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1558</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>955</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of Table 2 indicate that the influence of career interests on student’s choice of degree programme was quite high. The computed average mean score of the influence of career information on degree programme was 3.50. Three levels of influence were created to represent the magnitude of the influence on the dependent variable (degree programme) based on the range of the calculated mean as indicated in the Table 3.

Table 3

Influence Levels and the Mean Score of the Influencing Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Influence</th>
<th>Low (1.5 – 2.4)</th>
<th>Moderate (2.5 – 3.4)</th>
<th>High (3.5 – 4.4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 3 indicates that low levels of influence will have a mean score that ranges between 1.5 and 2.4, moderate levels of influence with mean score ranging from 2.5 to 3.4, while high levels of influence will have mean scores ranging between 3.5 and 4.5. Comparing this mean score with the three levels of influence created to represent the magnitude of the influence on the dependent variable (Degree programme) in Table 3, the results clearly show that the mean score of the influence of career interests on degree programme lies between 3.5 and 4.5. This entails that the influence of career interests on degree programme of students in public universities was high. This implies that knowledge of career interests is a significant factor in influencing the choice of degree programmes of students in public universities in Kenya. The lowest value of standard deviation (0.979) indicates the majority (87.5%) of the students in both modules agreed with the
statement that the degree programme they were studying was related to their career interests. These results accentuate the importance of appropriate knowledge of career interests by the students to help them choose suitable degree programmes. The highest value of standard deviation (1.421) indicates that the students had varied views on the fact that they would pursue another degree programme related to their career interests after graduation. Some students strongly agreed and others disagreed strongly with the statement. This means that students who are aware of their career interests are in a better position to choose degree programmes that relate to their interests, than students who have no knowledge of their career interests.

Hewitt (2010) concurs that interest has become the most important factors in determinant and measures of occupational selection. Career interests, preferences and competencies develop over time and also change with time and experience, thus making career choice and adjustment a continuous process. When the students know their interests, they are able to develop career aspirations related to their interests. According to Santrock (2005), the two determinants of interests are nurture, which emphasizes socialisation and learning and includes numerous environmental and psychological influences; and nature, which emphasizes genetics and hereditary interests. Findings from a study by Ombaba, Keraro, Sindabi, and Asienyo, (2014) on effects of career guidance activities on career development of secondary school students indicated that the schools which had a high frequency and a wide variety of career guidance activities had higher career development than those who had low frequency and limited activities. These activities assisted the students in exploring, understanding and developing their career interests. Appropriate career development enables the students to acquire career interests, attitudes and work values (Savickas, 2008).

There are many reasons why people choose a career. One of the most important factors in making career decisions should be career interests (Hewitt, 2010). A quantitative review study on career interests’ congruence and job satisfaction by Earl (2014) established a strong positive correlation between congruence of career interests and job satisfaction. Congruency was measured by considering how individuals’ career interests matched the characteristics of the job. The studies found that in a working environment, the most prevalent personality types showed the highest level of congruence and scored high on satisfaction than those who were incongruent. Investigating dropout rates from the nursing occupation using interest inventories to assess similarities between nurses’ specialization and vocational interest revealed that there were high levels of satisfaction where subjects were congruent with the career interest. Gitonga, Kigen, Wangeri and Orodho (2013) assert that higher levels of educational stability, satisfaction and achievement have been attributed to congruence. The personal benefits of finding and enrolling in an academic environment that matches one’s interest and abilities include less stress, course retention, while the institutional benefits include less absenteeism, low dropout and high academic productivity and consequently satisfaction. Matching career interests with skill to a career choice is the key to career satisfaction. It can make the all important difference between liking a job and resenting it (Wagner & Fard, 2009). Career congruence can lead to a personal sense of purpose and emotional well-being that come when working in a field of interest and competence (Savickas, 2008). To employers, it means retaining well-trained and motivated employees, who are more productive and a reduction of staff turnover expenses.
4.2 Influence of Career Interests on Degree Programme among Regular and Self-sponsored Students in Public Universities

The second research objective sought to establish whether differences existed in the influence of student’s career interests on the degree choice between regular and self-sponsored students in public universities. The research was guided by the hypothesis that ‘there is no statistically significant difference in the influence of career interests on degree choice between students in regular and self-sponsored modules. The independent samples t-test was used to do the analysis. Independent-sample t-test is used when comparing the mean scores of two different groups of people or conditions. The results of the independent samples t-test for the influence of career interests on choice of degree programme among regular and self-sponsored students in public universities are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of career interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on Degree programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>3.447</td>
<td>0.6257</td>
<td>.03858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-sponsored</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>3.561</td>
<td>0.6833</td>
<td>.04660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 4 indicates that there was a slight difference in the mean scores for regular (M = 3.447, SD = 0.6257) and self-sponsored students (M = 3.561, SD = 0.6833). The mean score of influence of career interests on choice of degree programme for regular students was lower than the mean score for self-sponsored students. These results also show that the self-sponsored students had a higher mean score than regular students, which indicates that the self-sponsored students were influenced more by career interests in choosing their degree programme than the regular students.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of Career Interest Degree Choice</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% confidence interval of Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Variances assumed</td>
<td>2.472</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>-1.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-1.874</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>-.1144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 portrays the results of the independent samples t-tests conducted to compare influence of career interests on choice of degree programme for students in regular and self sponsored modules. The Levene’s test significant value is 0.117, which is greater than α = 0.05; hence we use the values of the first line of the table;
(t (476) = -1.891, p = 0.059), indicating that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of influence of career interests on choice of degree programme.

In order to find out the magnitude of the difference in the influence of career interests on degree programme for both groups of students, effect size statistics was computed. Effect size statistics provide an indication of the magnitude of the differences between your groups (not just whether the difference could have occurred by chance) (Pallant, 2005; Cohen, 1988). The eta squared value obtained above is 0.00745 which is less than 0.01. This indicates that that magnitude of the differences in the influence of career interests on choice of degree programme between regular and self-sponsored students was very minimal.

The independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the financial resources’ influence scores for regular and self-sponsored students. There was there was a significant difference in difference in mean scores for regular (M = 3.447, SD = 0.6257) and self-sponsored students [M = 3.561, SD = 0.6833; t (476) = -1.891, p = 0.059]. The magnitude of the differences in the means was very small (eta squared= 0.00745). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected and conclusions are made that there was no statistically significant difference in the influence of career interests on degree programme between students in regular and self-sponsored modules in public universities. Specifically, the results suggest that career interests had similar influence on choice of degree choice for both self-sponsored and regular module students. This also indicates that career interests had a high influence on choice of degree programme made by the students. Mulongo (2013) remarks that self-sponsored students have the advantage of choosing degree programmes which are related to their careers since they have the option of choice since they apply for their desired degree programmes in their preferred universities.

According to Nyamwange (2016), matching what one likes to do (interest) with what she or he does well (skill) to a career choice can make the all important difference between liking a job and resenting it. On the individual level, it can lead to a personal sense of purpose and emotional well-being that come with working in a field of interest (Burdett, 2013). To employers, it means retaining well-trained and motivated employees, who are more productive with a reduction of staff turnover expenses (Savickas, 2008). These findings agree with the results above which indicate that both regular and self-sponsored students had a relatively strong career interests’ influence. Gichuhi and Kibui (2015) assert that people seek for activities and occupations that interest them, and if a job is boring, it is not likely to bring much personal fulfilment or sense of satisfaction even if the salary is high.

Theories on career development suggest that an optimal career choice should be congruent with one’s interests, abilities and values (Savickas, 2008). Research indicates that students put self-interest before societal interest and rate money and power as primary motivators in finding a job. Globally the choice of a degree program or college major is characterized by a need to match a student’s career aspirations, interest, clarity of the nature of work and type of training required. Holland (1997) argues that every individual has the tendency to like or dislike certain activities associated with different careers. Holland further argues that career interest is an aspect of an individual’s personality and this interest describes personality (Brown & Lent, 2005). The activities that a person likes constitute a career interest and one hopes to experience satisfaction if they pursue
that given line. Choosing a career is important in the young student’s life, because it determines the future direction and what our living conditions will be. Career interests simply means, ‘we love what we are good at and we are good at what we love’. Interests will affect our moods in doing our job, and you will barely get dull if you are interested in your job. Moreover, when you are interested in something, it probably is one of your gifts, so this career can bring your talents into full play (Leung, 2008). A suitable career is the key of success. Most important of all, once we chose an occupation, it is a lifelong practice.

Conclusions

Based on the summary findings, the study concludes that student’s career interests had a high influence the choice of degree programme of students in public universities. Therefore the following conclusions are based on the specific objectives of the study:

1) Career interests had a high influence on the degree choice of both regular and self-sponsored students. This implied that student’s career interests were a significant factor in influencing the choice of degree programmes of students in public universities in Kenya. This signified that students need to be aware of their career interests when choosing degree programmes of study in public universities. Appropriate self-knowledge in terms of individual career interests is necessary in helping the students choose suitable degree programmes. The career guidance and counselling in schools should provide activities that assist the students in discovering and developing their career interests.

2) There were no statistically significant differences that existed in the mean scores of influence of career interests between regular and self-sponsored students, although self-sponsored students had a slightly higher mean score than regular students. Therefore, the self-sponsored students are more likely to be satisfied with their choice of degree programme because it is related to their career interests, than the regular students in public universities in Kenya.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made.

i) The study recommended that the Ministry of Education (MoE) ensures that in all secondary schools in Kenya, the career guidance department is functional with adequate career resources and activities that will facilitate students to discover and develop their career interests.

ii) The study also recommended the training and equipping of career guidance counsellors in schools to enhance their competence in assisting the students in career self-awareness and decision making.

iii) The study recommends that all public universities establish career counselling centres to help students solve their career development issues. Career guidance and counselling services should be offered to the first years who have issues concerning the degree programme they were offered and the university placement in order to help them accept, adjust and cope with the outcomes.
References


