



Original Research Article

The role of teachers and parents on students' career choice preparedness based on gender: A case of Secondary Schools in Arusha District, Tanzania

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This study sought to establish the role of teachers and parents on students' career choice preparedness based on gender among Secondary Schools in Arusha District, Tanzania. The study employed the descriptive research design. The sample was 314 extracted from 2200 form three students through simple random sampling. The validity of the questionnaire was done through expert review and reliability results were above 0.7 Cronbach's Alpha for each variable. Ethical considerations were achieved through obtaining permit from the government authority before data was collected. The study concluded that female students were more prepared for career than the male students. While both male and female students agreed that teachers and parents prepared them for career choice, female students had a significantly higher mean score than the male students on the role of teachers and parents in preparing them for career. There is a significant positive yet moderate correlation between students' career preparedness and the role of teachers. Furthermore, there is a significant positive yet moderate correlation between the role of parents and students' preparedness. The more the teachers and parents did their role, the better the preparedness of students. The study recommends that teachers and parents should do their role equally in preparing both male and female students for career. Teachers and parents should maintain their role in preparing students for career so that students can be more prepared for future career.

Keywords: Career choice, teachers, parents, preparedness, gender, disparity, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that career choice preparedness is of great importance to learners of secondary schools regardless of their gender differences (Ngussa and Charless, 2019). According to Callahan (2015), career choices are among the most important choices made by individuals in the lifetime. Therefore the identification of one's career goals and objectives need to be well established from early stages of schooling. Due to this reality, both teachers and parents have a great role to play toward students' career choice preparedness. According to Career Development

Institute (2017), career is the sequence and variety of work roles that individuals undertake throughout their lives but it is also the construct which enables individuals to make sense of valued work opportunities and how their work roles relate to their wider life roles. Furthermore, Arnold (2011) defined career as the individual's development in learning and work throughout life. Individual ability, environment and community guide someone to a certain work while the environment shapes a person to do a certain task.

Therefore, it can generally be said that carrier is what individuals opt to do for their entire life. Carriers are individually chosen depending on the number of factors including capability, interest, family background and influence of the peers.

This study investigated on the roles of teachers and parents on students' career choice preparedness based on gender.

Gender difference is defined as biological variations between sexes (Shannon, 2019). Cassie and Chen (2012) consider gender difference as the variation in roles of a male or female in society, school inclusive. These variations define what girls and boys are expected to do in the society.

Some girls in the society are affected psychologically especially when they witness gender difference practices toward career and employability. This is because some boys believe that they are strong and girls as weak. Boys who see differences in these areas tend to believe that biology is the driver thus whatever they do will be based on how they feel against girls. In some schools, for instance, boys believe that they are capable of doing science subjects than girls, and this creates some sort of inferiority complex among the female students (Parker et al., 2017; Gyansah and Guantai, 2018).

Gender difference begins at the early stages of schooling. For instance, during the first two or three years of elementary school, gross motor skills develop with some variation between boys and girls. As a group, both sexes can run, jump, throw a ball and the like with about equal ease, though there are wide significant differences among individuals of both sexes. These differences are in terms of perception, thinking and doing things. Toward the end of elementary school, however, boys may pull ahead of girls at these skills. The most likely reason is that boys participate more actively in formal and informal sports because of expectations and support from parents, peers, and society (Hyde, 2015).

According to Shannon, (2019), gender differences observed from the early stage of schooling, applies in career choice as well. For example, in some cases, boys become comfortable to choose the carriers that involve activeness such as vocational than girls. According to Martínez and Gil (2019), there are social, structural and behavioural factors that reveal a disparity in the attitude and expectations towards studies among students that cannot only be explained by the family and social context, but by factors that attract female students to a greater. The gender differences in schools are evident from physical behaviours, styles of social interaction, academic motivations, behaviours and choices (Webb-Williams, 2014).

According to Sutter and Glätzle-Rützler (2015), there are various sources of the gender differences including parents who are regarded as a primary source, peers, and the media. While teachers may certainly not be the primary cause of gender role differences in schools, they may influence learners during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, both teachers and parents occupy a very

significant role to play in societies in connection with gender difference and career preparedness.

Studies have been conducted all over the world on gender difference and carrier choice preparedness in secondary education. For instance, Kawamoto et al (2016) assessed gender difference in preference of specialty as a career choice among Japanese medical students with a total of 368 medical students who completed the survey giving an 88.2 % response rate. The subjects comprised 141 women aged 21 ± 3 and 227 men aged 22 ± 4 . The study indicated that women significantly preferred more on paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology and psychology while men significantly preferred surgery and orthopaedics than the women. This choice was attributed to the perception of students and the family influence. This suggests that gender differences have an influence on career choice preparedness.

Nachiappan et al. (2012) on the other hand revealed that gender differences is seen in Malaysian education system from elementary to middle schools in various aspects including academic performance and choice of career. Evans et al. (2020) indicated that improving girls' education is an important goal in its own right because of the significance of the roles both girls and boys play in the society. From this study, it was recommended that parents, teachers and the community at large should discourage gender differences in schools especially when students choose the careers.

While career choice is defined as an interest toward certain professional fields, such aspirations and preferences are formed early in life and may be a product of genetics, socioeconomic status, gender, personality and learning history. These early ambitions are modified positively or negatively by forces from parent's interests and peers' influence in society that act upon individuals and groups of individuals as they make career-related decisions (Kazi and Akhlaq, 2017). In Tanzania for instance, there are some parents who decide for their children's careers (Mwalongo, 2018). This gives an expression that parents may play an important role in their children's career choices.

Studies have revealed that gender disparity in connection to employability and career choice preparedness is a concern that has attracted the attention of scholars. For that matter, Mozahem et al. (2018) examined the gender differences in career choices among students in secondary school in Lebanon. Results found that gender differences exist in the model parameters in all categories such as creative, medical, child mentoring-rehabilitative, clerical-sales, and technological aspects. These differences suggest that gender can influence career choice preparedness.

Furthermore, Kang et al. (2017) examined gender and relationship between science interest and future career perspectives in Finland. The study found that biology was preferred by females while males preferred physics and chemistry. With regard to future career perspectives, female students' science interest was positively correlated

with personal time and innovation oriented career perspectives. In Turkey, Kiziltepe (2015) examined career choice, motivations and perceptions of the students of education in higher learning institutions. The study pointed out that the main motivations towards career preparedness of the freshmen students were having a worthwhile career, a stable salary, personal satisfaction and improvement. Moreover the study affirmed that the respondents tended to perceive teaching as a profession that is ideal for women, comfortable, sacred, yet relatively low-paid. Therefore, career preparedness should be one of the essential task a school and the entire community should have.

Ngussa and Charles (2019) from Tanzania argued that career choice preparedness is mostly significant because it creates in the mind of the learners a sense of informed decisions with regard to future jobs. Therefore, both girls and boys in schools should be prepared for their future careers effectively. However, career choice preparedness is not gender sensitive in Tanzania. This is revealed by the study findings of Nicolao (2014) who investigated on the effect of gender stereotyping on career choice among secondary school students in Dar es salaam, City and established that gender differences in career choices among secondary school students were significant. While boys demonstrated hard work, girls demonstrated soft works. Moreover, it was found that traditional beliefs or culture had a great impact on career choices among boys and girls. The study of Chuwa (2014) assessed what determines career choices in mathematics and science among secondary school female students focusing on home environment, the quality of school and the ways of teaching mathematics and science related subjects in ten secondary schools in Ilala District. The study established that the desire of the female students to take up science and mathematics subjects and later related carriers was very low and thus attracting the attention of the learned community to think on what is really going wrong on gender differences and employability.

According to Women and Men in Tanzania (2017), the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania recognizes that Gender Equality and Women Empowerment are important for poverty reduction and sustainable development. This commitment is reflected in national strategies, plans and policies such as the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, National Five Year Development Plan 2011/12–2015/16, National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGR) and Women and Gender Development Policy of 2000. The study of Badstue et al. (2020) on continuity and change: performing gender in rural Tanzania established that while local discourse appears to embrace the idea of gender equality in the country, practice remains quite different. This background provides a study gap on what is yet to be revealed regarding gender disparity and career choice preparedness among learners of secondary schools in Arusha District, thus, the justification of this study.

Previous studies have not exhausted in combining the role of teachers and parents based on the gender of

students. Angelista (2018), for instance, examined the challenges facing secondary school teachers in implementing career guidance and its implication on student's future job choices in secondary schools in Kilimanjaro Region but did not involve gender differences. Ngussa and Charles (2019) investigated on perception of students regarding the role of teachers and parents on career choice preparedness in Meru District but the current study was done in Arusha District. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in career choice preparedness by secondary school students categorized according to gender?
2. Is there significant difference in the role played by teachers and parents toward students' career choice preparedness?
3. Is there significant relationship between students' career choice preparedness and the role played by teachers and parents?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section describes the research methodology which includes research design, population and sampling procedures, statistical treatment of data, validity and reliability and ethical considerations. This study employed the quantitative research approach in that the questionnaire had options for respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement of items. Responses were in five options in numbers as follows: 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=neutral, 2=agree and 1-strongly agree.

Research Design

This study employed the descriptive research design. The design was used to explain the differences and relationships among variables under investigation. According to Cohen et al. (2005), descriptive design is conditions or relationships that exist, practices that prevail or attitudes that are held in the area under investigation.

Population and Sampling

In this study, the targeted population was the form three students from 5 out of 31 secondary schools in Arusha District through simple random sampling as reflected in Table 1. The total number of students in the selected secondary schools was 2200. The actual sample of respondents was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s table of determining sample size. According to this table, when the population is 2200 then the sample should be 327. The respondent rate was 314 students which is 96.02%.

Validity and Reliability

Since the questionnaire was self-constructed by the researchers, it was necessary to subject it to validity and

Table 1. Population and Sampling

SN	Sampled School	Population	Sample
1	Olmotonyi Forest Secondary School	480	71
2	Osiligi Secondary School	391	58
3	Kiranyi Secondary Schools	506	75
4	Kimnyaki Secondary School	303	46
5	Mringa Secondary School	520	77
TOTAL		2200	327

Table 2. Reliability Test

SN	VARIABLE	CRONBACH ALPHA	RESULTS
1	Students' Preparedness	.846	Reliable
2	Teachers' Role	.880	Reliable
3	Parents' Role	.878	Reliable

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender of Respondents	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Male	118	37.6
Female	196	62.4
Total	314	100

reliability test. The validity was done through expert review whereby three experts from the University of Arusha reviewed the questionnaire against the research questions that guided the study. The recommendations were incorporated before the researchers went to the field to collect data. The study ensured reliability of research instrument by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha through the Statistical package for Social Sciences as indicated in Table 2. The Cronbach's Alpha for students' preparedness was .846, for teachers' role was .880 and for parents' role was .878. Therefore, all the questionnaire items were considered reliable, yielding consistent results.

The questionnaire instrument was pretested for reliability before data analysis took place. The benchmark for acceptable reliability was set to be .07. Since all the reliability results were above 0.7 Cronbach's Alpha, the questionnaire was considered reliable.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data was treated through various ways. Demographic characteristics of respondents were presented through frequencies and percentages. The first two research questions were analyzed through mean scores, standard deviations and t-test while the last research question was analyzed through Pearson Correlations.

Ethical Consideration

In this study, the following ethical issues were observed; first, the researcher sought data collection permit from The University of Arusha and the respective government

authorities. Secondly, the researchers ensured that all respondents voluntarily participate in the study and the information collected were kept confidentially and were used for the purpose of study only. Finally, the researchers ensured anonymity of respondents so as to safeguard their identity.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents data analysis, interpolates and then discusses the findings in the light of related literature and previous studies. The analysis begins with presentation of demographic factors of respondents and then descriptive and correlation results are presented with the help of tables.

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 3. This was about gender, which was one of the major variables in the topic.

As seen in table one, both males and females were involved in the study as respondents. However, male respondents (118=37.6%) were outnumbered by the female respondents (196=62.4%).

Descriptive Analysis

The study was guided by two specific research questions that called for descriptive analysis in terms of mean scores based on the five-point Likert Scale. The questionnaire had

Table 4. Career Choice Preparedness Based on Gender

SN	Item in the Questionnaire	Gender	Mean	Sig	Sig (2-tailed)
1	I'm fully aware about career choice preparedness	Male	4.1949	.510	.028
		Female	4.3846		
2	I always seek information about career choice	Male	3.8220	.008	.000
		Female	4.2154		
3	I have chosen the subjects that will lead to my career	Male	4.2500	.000	.000
		Female	4.6615		
4	I'm behaving in a way that I practice my career	Male	4.1525	.046	.011
		Female	4.4235		
5	I'm working hard in academic as a preparation for my career	Male	4.1724	.005	.000
		Female	4.5969		
6	I get advise on various issues related to the career of my choice	Male	3.9915	.821	.009
		Female	4.2769		
7	I have a role model from the career of my choice	Male	3.8974	.021	.035
		Female	4.1563		
8	I have a mentor model from the career of my choice	Male	3.6667	.001	.059
		Female	3.9124		
9	I always do career exploration	Male	3.4298	.000	.000
		Female	3.9626		
10	I use technology to seek information about the career of my choice	Male	3.4600	.000	.000
		Female	4.1747		
OVERALL MEAN BASED ON GENDER		Male	3.9044	.000	.000
		Female	4.2770		

five options from which respondents had to choose ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). The following criteria were used to interpret the mean score results of respondents: 1.00 to 1.49= strongly disagree, 1.50 to 2.49 =disagree, 2.50 to 3.49 =Neutral, 3.50 to 4.49= agree and 4.50 to 5.00 = strongly agree. The use of mean scores was in harmony with what Kothari's (2004) advises that the important statistical measures that are used to summarize the research data include measures of central tendency or statistical averages. He also adds that amongst the measures of central tendency, the most important ones includes the arithmetic average or mean score.

Research Question 1: What is the level of career choice preparedness based on gender among secondary schools students in Arusha District in Tanzania?

As indicated in Table 4, there were ten items that measured the preparedness of students for career. The overall mean score on career preparedness for female students was 4.2770 while for the male students was 3.9044. The Sig of .000 which is lesser than the critical value indicates that the mean score difference is significant meaning female students were generally more prepared for future career than the male students. While this finding is contrary to what Ngussa and Charles (2019) who established no significant difference in career choice preparedness by students characterized according to sex, it is in harmony with previous study findings which showed gender imbalances in various aspects. Webb-Williams (2014), for instance, established that gender differences in schools are evident from physical behaviours, styles of social

interaction, academic motivations, behaviours and choices. Furthermore, Nachiappan et al. (2012) revealed gender differences in Malaysian education system from elementary to middle schools in various aspects including academic performance and choice of career readiness.

It is good to note that the mean scores for both male and female students in eight items ranged between 3.50 and 5.00 which means both male and female students either agreed or strongly agreed with such items. However, in all eight cases, the mean scores of female students were higher than that of male students and the sig of below 0.05 in all cases leads us to come up with an inference that the mean scores for female students was significantly higher than that of the male students. This suggests that the female students were more prepared for career than the male students.

Research Question 2: What is the rating of secondary school students in Arusha District on the role of (a) teachers and (b) parents in their career choice preparedness?

(a) The Role of Teachers Based on Gender

Nine items were used to determine the role of teachers toward students' career choice preparedness based on gender as seen in Table 5. The overall mean score on the role of teachers for female students was 4.2213 while for the male students was 3.9681. Both of these mean scores suggest that students agreed that teachers are doing their role very well in preparing them for career choice preparedness. This finding is commended by Oliveira et al. (2017) who argue that schools should be responsible for

Table 5. Role of Teachers on Career Choice Preparedness

SN	Item in the Questionnaire	Gender	Mean	Sig	Sig (2-tailed)
1	Teachers guide me on career choice	Male	4.2203	.497	.104
		Female	4.3938		
2	Teachers trigger interest in careers to me	Male	3.7350	.053	.040
		Female	3.9688		
3	Teachers plan for extra-curricular activities as a preparation for career choice	Male	3.8448	.959	.387
		Female	3.9635		
4	Teachers help students find their career path	Male	4.0342	.663	.002
		Female	4.4000		
5	Teachers sharing their own career stories	Male	3.9915	.789	.093
		Female	4.2021		
6	Teachers help students make the right subject choices	Male	4.0427	.391	.069
		Female	4.2781		
7	Students get enough knowledge from their teachers on careers	Male	3.8644	.889	.005
		Female	4.2031		
8	Teachers support students in building a career project	Male	3.8696	.481	.046
		Female	4.1414		
9	Teachers help students to set academic goals for careers of their choice	Male	4.1043	.094	.002
		Female	4.4574		
OVERALL MEAN BASED ON GENDER			Male	3.9681	.079
			Female	4.2213	.003

Table 6 Role of Parents on Career Choice Preparedness

SN	Item in the Questionnaire	Gender	Mean	Sig	Sig (2-tailed)
1	Parents guide me on career choice	Male	4.1102	.001	.000
		Female	4.6062		
2	Parents trigger interest in careers to me	Male	3.8190	.022	.012
		Female	4.1244		
3	Parents help students find their career path	Male	4.0169	.010	.000
		Female	4.4740		
4	Parents are sharing their own career stories	Male	3.8051	.297	.001
		Female	4.2211		
5	Students get enough knowledge from their parents on careers	Male	3.6695	.084	.001
		Female	4.1244		
6	Students get enough knowledge from their parents on careers	Male	3.6864	.098	.000
		Female	4.2434		
7	Parents help students to set academic goals for careers of their choice	Male	3.9224	.005	.000
		Female	4.4301		
OVERALL MEAN BASED ON GENDER			Male	3.8600	.000
			Female	4.3182	.000

student's career choice preparedness. Particularly, teachers have a significant role to play regarding career choice preparedness of the learners regardless of their gender. The Sig of .003, however, which is lesser than the critical value, indicates that the mean score difference is significant meaning, female students had a significantly higher mean score than male students on the role of teachers in preparing them for career.

It is good to note that the mean scores for both male and female students in all the items ranged between 3.50 and 5.00 which means both male and female students either agreed or strongly agreed that the teachers are doing their best to prepare them for future career. The mean score of female respondents for all item was higher than for male students. With an exception of item number 3, 5 and 6, the Sig of below 0.05 signifies that female students had a

significantly better perception than the male students on the role played by teachers in preparing them for future career.

(b) Role of Parents Based on Gender

According to Table 6, Seven items were used to determine the role of parents toward students' career choice preparedness based on gender. The overall mean score on the role of parents for female students was 4.3182 while for the male students was 3.8600. The mean scores suggest that students agreed that parents are doing their role effectively in preparing them for career. This trend is commended by Ngussa and Charles (2019) who suggested that parents should continue to give career guidance, as the practice yields positive results toward students' career

Table 7. Correlations between the Internal Audit Function and Independent Variables

		PREPAREDNESS	TEACHERS	PARENTS
PREPAREDNESS	Pearson Correlation	1	.678**	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	314	312	311
TEACHERS	Pearson Correlation	.678**	1	.583**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	312	312	311
PARENTS	Pearson Correlation	.507**	.583**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	311	311	311

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

choice preparedness. The Sig of .000, however, which is lesser than the critical value indicates that the mean score difference is significant meaning female students had a significant higher mean score than male students on the role of parents in preparing them for career.

It is good to note that the mean scores for both male and female students in all the items ranged between 3.50 and 5.00 which means both male and female students either agreed or strongly agreed that the parents are doing their best to prepare them for future career. The mean score of female respondents for all item was higher than for male students. The Sig of below .05 signifies that female students had a significantly better perception than the male students on the role played by parents in preparing them for future career.

Correlations

The third research question called for a hypothesis testing and therefore was analyzed by Pearson Correlation with the help of the Statistical package for Social Sciences in order to establish whether there is a significant relationship between students' career preparedness and the role played by (a) teachers and (b) parents.

Research Question 3: Is there significant relationship between students' career choice preparedness and (a) parental role and (b) teachers' role?

This research question called for testing of a null hypothesis which stated: there is no significant relationship between students' career choice preparedness and (a) parental role and (b) teachers' role. The nature of possible correlations would be either positive or negative and its interpretation based on the Cohen's formula as follows: $\geq .70$ = strong relationship; $\geq .50$ = moderate relationship and $\leq .50$ = weak relationship.

Table 7 indicates that there is a significant positive yet moderate correlation between students' career preparedness and the role of teachers (Sig=.000, $r=.678$). This means that the more the teachers do their role, the better the preparedness of students. Similarly, there is a significant positive yet moderate correlation between the role of parents and students' preparedness (Sig=.000,

$r=.507$). This means that the more the parents do their role, the better the preparedness of students. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, maintaining that there is a significant and positive relationship between students' career choice preparedness and (a) parental role and (b) teachers' role. The finding relates to that of Ngussa and Charles (2019) who conducted a similar study in Meru District and established a significant and positive relationship between parents and teachers' involvement in career choice guidance and students' career choice preparedness.

Conclusions of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that female students are more prepared for career than the male students. While both male and female students agreed that teachers prepared them for career choice, female students had a significant higher mean score than the male students on the role of teachers in preparing them for career. Therefore, teachers' role for students' career preparedness was more directed to female than male students.

While both male and female students agreed that parents prepared them for career choice, female students had a significant higher mean score than the male students on the role of parents in preparing them for career. Therefore, parents' role for students' career preparedness was more directed to female than male students.

There is a significant positive yet moderate correlation between students' career preparedness and the role of teachers. Therefore, the more the teachers do their role, the better the preparedness of students. Furthermore, there is a significant positive yet moderate correlation between the role of parents and students' preparedness. Therefore, the more the parents do their role, the better the preparedness of students.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the conclusions from the findings, the researcher came up with the following recommendations. While female students had a significant higher mean score than the male students on the role of teachers and parents in

preparing them for career, it is recommended that teachers and parents should do their role equally in preparing both male and female students for career.

Since there is a significant positive correlation between students' career preparedness and the role of teachers and parents, it is recommended that teachers and parents should maintain their role in preparing students for career so that students will be more prepared for their future career.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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