



# Career Choice and Psychological Well-being of Undergraduate Students of Universities in Langata Sub-County Nairobi, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *In recent times, students are experiencing some imbalances between their chosen career and attaining their dream life which inversely affects their psychological wellbeing. To this end, this concern cannot be overemphasized as it determines satisfaction and fulfillment in career life. Thus, this study examined career choice and psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Langata sub-county, Nairobi, Kenya. Concurrent mixed method design was used to explain the context and the generalizability of the outcome. The target population was the undergraduate students in the universities in Langata Sub-county Nairobi. Stratified random procedure was used in selecting the participating universities. A sample size of 270 was used for the study. Data was collected using questionnaire and semi structured interview. Quantitative data analysis was conducted using Pearson correlational analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed in themes. This study established there is a significant relationship between environmental mastery, purpose in life and parental influence. The study also established a weak negative correlation between the parental influence and three psychological well-being subscales (autonomy, self-acceptance and positive relationship with others)*

**Keywords:** Career Choice, Psychological Wellbeing, Undergraduates, Population, Langata

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## 1. Introduction

Choosing the right career plays essential role not on the rationale that they focus on the wage but the fact that they influence the individual identity beliefs and mental well-being. There is a growing concern on the numbers of young people, in nearly all countries and regions who are having difficulty entering the workforce and establishing themselves in sustainable careers (United Nations, 2012).

About 75.8 million youths worldwide compared to other age brackets are without work, as a result of career incompatibility. According to Olawale (2014), in his research in South Africa, the effects of career choice on psychological well-being among university students in Africa have been seen as a major concern. Kunnen (2014) argues that University students who made a career

decision had less mental concern than those who were unresolved.

In the Netherlands Trendrapport (2010, as cited by Kunnen, 2014), the figures of drop out in higher education show that about 30 percent of all students stop at the first year, mostly because the students feel they have made the wrong choice. When a right choice of career or profession is made, it may either lead to fulfillment or dissatisfaction. Igere (2018) noted that many youths in Nigeria go into incompatible careers due to, inexperience, advice from friends, parents and teachers or as a result of the reputation attached to certain occupations without sufficient career guidance or counseling.

Lack of satisfaction in one's dream life go far beyond youthful age and affects the mental health if not addressed. When choosing a career, it is pertinent to also consider

how it will affect the psychological well-being of the person for a balanced life. Ryff and Burton (2008) notes that psychological well-being is an essential element of credence which provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life. According to (Nyamwange, 2016), currently in Kenya career have not gained substantial attention. However, deciding on a right career is vital as it ensures individuals attain satisfactory in life, are motivated at their jobs and are able to leverage their potential. Career choice decision is subjective to numerous factors such as parents, peers, relatives, role models, and teachers especially career counselors as a result of socialization. Most academics and psychological theorists suggested that a sense of control over our behavior, our environment, and our own thoughts and feelings is essential to attain fulfillment and mental well-being Maddux (2012).

## 2. Literature Review

Parental influence is greater on young people who have not completed their degree or lived independently from their parents. Abdo et al., (2016) in their study on factors affecting career choice among undergraduate students in universitas Indonesia reports that children whose parents' are always supportive in their choice of career may emulate their parents in their career choice by obtaining valuable information and learning from their experience about their prospective career.

Previous experiences of entrepreneurship in practice among Pakistani direct and indirectly emanated from the family experience in business. This to a great extent is related to their approach regarding an entrepreneurial mind-set. A child could have a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship if his or her parents have their own businesses or are otherwise self-employed but parents who had disappointing situations with their own businesses may discourage their children from to becoming entrepreneurs (Aslam et al., 2012, as cited in Mtameri, 2017).

In the United State of America, Hairstone (2000, as cited in Mtameri, 2017) revealed that, even if schools possess the resources with which to meet young people's career needs, the influence parents have on their children cannot be replaced. A different study in Indonesia by Abdo et al., (2016) on factors affecting career choice among undergraduate students in universitas Indonesia indicated that children whose parents' are always supportive in their choice of career may emulate their parents in their career choice by obtaining valuable information and learning from their experience about their prospective career. By giving supportive ideas, parents can give their idea in picking a certain career for their children.

Another study in India by Agarwala (2008, as cited in Twumasi et al., 2018) suggested that the mother and father were seen as the most significant individual influencing the career choice of Indian management students. Mothers

(52.50%) were regarded as the most significant family member that impacted positively on students' career choices, Fathers (18.75%) were the second most significant individual, followed by siblings or guardians (16.25%). Thus cordial relationship and effective communication among family members is central for setting a solid base for career choice. Higher career congruence with parents also increased career confidence and self-efficacy.

A study in America by Middleton and Loughead (1993, as cited in Maina, 2013) examined parental influence on career development of their children and observed that "parents, who were positively involved with their children's career development and career choice, were enthusiastic about their children's career exploration and were emotionally and or verbally supportive of the young adult's individual goals. Non-supportive parents, on the other hand, were unaware of what to do, how to help, or that their involvement is desired". A negatively involved parent was in a much more precarious situation where the adolescent felt anxiety or resentment, regarding career decisions based on parental attitudes. Parents in the last category may mandate their children to focus on a particular career path which went against what the child believed was best for themselves.

In the study of Maina (2013) on factors influencing career choice of undergraduate students in public universities in Kenya using census survey design, findings showed that high parental involvement, including an active interest in children's school subjects, homework, grades, activities, emotional well-being and future aspirations, predict positive attitudes towards school and the future, better grades and better career decision making skills. This study therefore, aimed to help parents and other influencers to consider the psychological effects of their involvement in the choice of career of the students.

## 3. Methodology

The research was carried out in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. Langata is one of the Sub-Counties in Nairobi County, Kenya. The researcher used concurrent mixed-method design. Three universities participated in the study. The target population comprised of all the undergraduate students in universities in Langata sub-county Nairobi Kenya. The researcher used sample size for infinite population by Mensah (2014). A sample size of 270 was used for the study. The study adopted a questionnaire for quantitative and a semi structured interview for data collection. The questionnaire was self-administered and interview was carried out over the telephone.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### Parental influence on career choice

The study examined parental influence on career choice and psychological well-being of the undergraduate students in Langata Sub-County Nairobi Kenya. The findings were discussed below.

**Table 1: I chose a career like that of my parents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Agree	26	11.0	11.0
Strongly agree	36	15.3	15.3
Disagree	88	37.3	37.3
Strongly disagree	77	32.6	32.6
Don't know	9	3.8	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

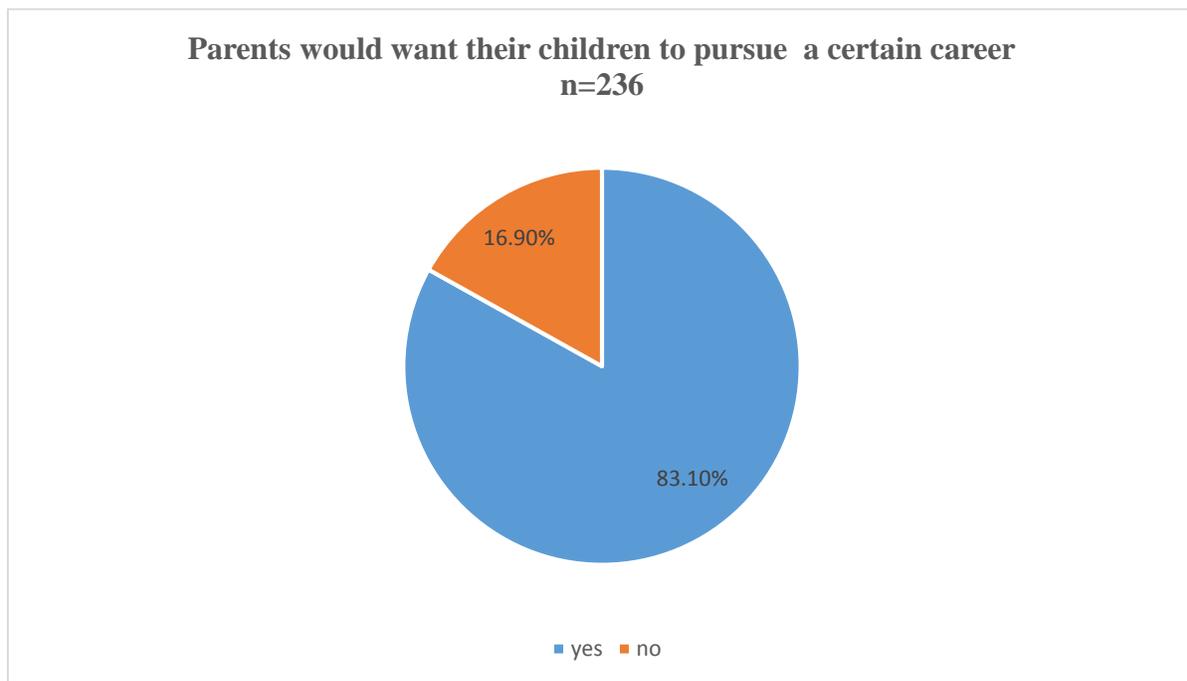
From the finding, most of the respondents 69.5% disagree and strongly disagree that they did not choose a career like that of their parents. Below half of the respondents 26.3% of agree that they chose career like that of their parents. This finding also relates to the response of one of the interviewed parents, who said, *“My daughter wanted to choose a certain career but I discourage her because her age does not qualify her to do the career she chose. However, I convinced my child that her chosen career could be done later on in years”* (Personal communication, November, 2021).

The researcher considered below half of the respondents 26.3% that agree they chose career like that of their parents. The response from the small percentage could be

related to the finding from Humayon et al., (2018), parents’ influence on certain profession and the children’s economic dependency on them have also compelled children to comply with their parents’ choices.

### Parents Would Want their Children to Pursue a Certain Career

The study sought to find out if parents would want their children to pursue a certain career. This was to compare with the previous studies which opined that parent assign certain career for their children, hence a mismatch in career and psychological well-being.



**Figure 1: Parents Would Want their Children to Pursue a Certain Career**

Majority of the respondents (83.10%) indicated that parents want their children to pursue a certain career. Most of the interviewees when asked why they chose their career asserted that it was out of parental advice on careers with good prospects. An interview from a parent disclosed that she chose her daughters career study because upon discussion with friends, they said that she is too young to study her desired choice. The mother has to choose for her, *“My daughter felt reluctant initially but I had to explain to her and she picked up”* (Personal communication, November, 2021).

The findings from the study anticipate the nature of Social Cognitive Career Theory which is one of the most influential new approaches in career development as it recognizes that a variety of personal, contextual, and

behavioral variables play a key role in the development of career interests, abilities, goals, and choice (Rogers et al., 2009). The findings however, confirms the study done by Kazi et al., (2017) which states that personal liking of an individual towards a particular subject contributed to his career selection decision. Findings also agree that families always have a strong impact on a person’s life as cited in Abdo et al., (2016).

***My Parents encouraged seeking information about my career***

The study sought to find out if parents encourage their children to seek for information about their career. The findings were shown below.

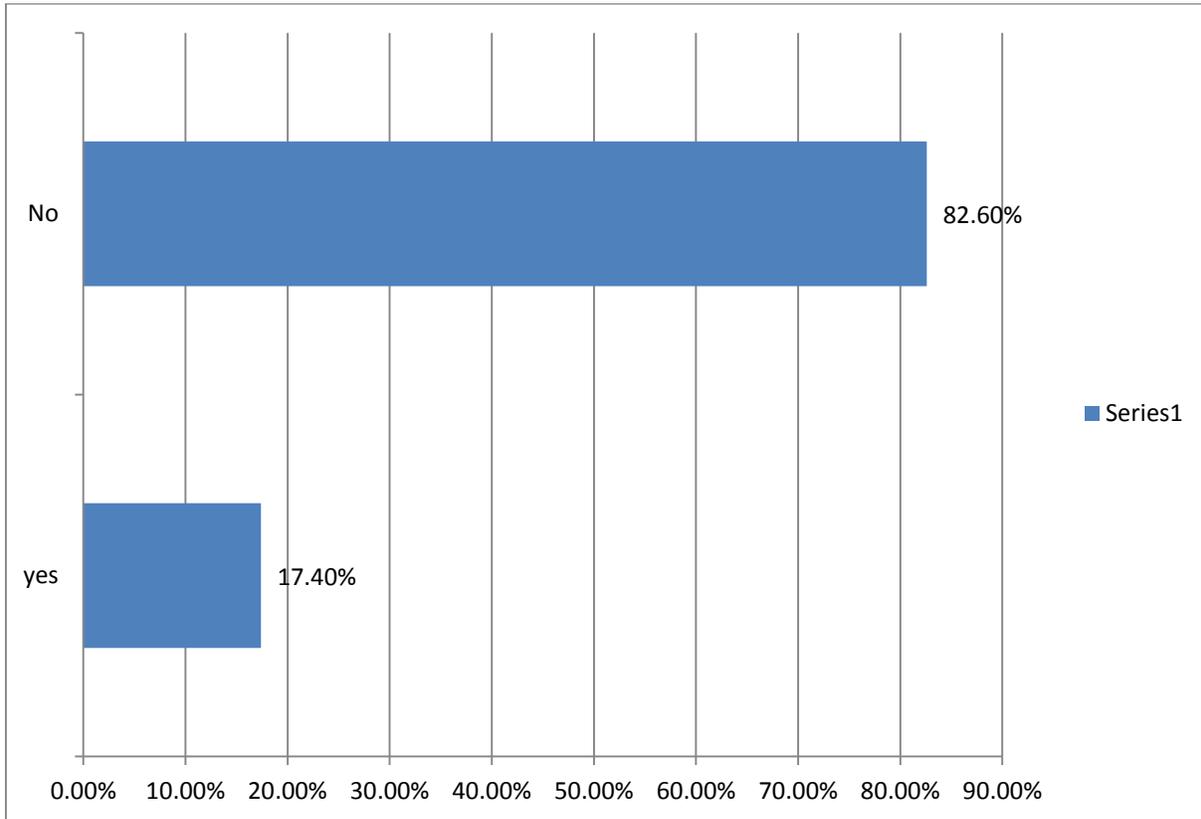
**Table 2: Parents seeking information about my career**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Often	104	44.1	44.1
Never	14	5.9	5.9
Rarely	46	19.5	19.5
Frequently	66	28.0	28.0
Undecided	6	2.5	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Majority of the respondents (72.1%) often and frequently received encouragement from their parents to seek for information on career. This was in disagreement with an interviewee who said *“I do not interfere with my children’s decision because they are old enough to know what they want in life. Even if I try to do that, they will still find a better option when they go out there”* (Personal communication November, 2021).

This finding agrees with the study of Maina, (2013) who observed that “parents, who were positively involved with their children’s career development and career choice, were enthusiastic about their children’s career exploration and were emotionally and or verbally supportive of the young adult’s individual goals.

The study also sought to find out if students are confident about their career because their parents chose it for them. The finding is presented in the figure below.



**Figure 2: Confidants on career n = 236**

From the finding, a high percentage of the respondents (83.1%) indicated they do not have confident in the career they have chosen as a result of parental influence. This finding agrees with the study of Hakim (2018), who noted that a BscN student who was forced into the nursing profession by her own parents showed sign of depression despite all efforts to help her adapt to the course. This also resonates with personal encounter with some students who ended up not graduating from the university because they felt they are not studying what they desired. Such students

spend time in the school with a lot of carry over and apportioning blames on their parents/guardians.

**Age Differences in Career Choice Factors on the Psychological Well-being Items**

The study sought to find out the effects of age differences on career choice and psychological well-being of the respondents. Age differences are of important too to understand psychological well-being of the respondents

**Table 3: Age differences in career choice factors on the psychological well-being items**

age of participants		Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive relationship with others	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance
18-22	Mean	4.60	5.34	4.25	2.19	4.46	2.38
	N	181	181	181	181	179	180
	Std. Deviation	1.136	1.322	.712	1.147	1.658	1.138
23-26	Mean	4.79	5.10	4.47	3.26	3.86	2.96
	N	46	46	46	46	46	46
	Std. Deviation	1.306	1.413	.572	1.530	1.471	1.226
27-30	Mean	3.70	5.30	4.30	3.13	4.20	2.93
	N	5	5	5	5	5	5
	Std. Deviation	.671	.274	.570	1.121	1.605	.894
36>	Mean	5.00	4.67	3.50	4.11	3.33	3.00
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Std. Deviation	.500	2.021	1.000	1.347	1.607	2.333
Total	Mean	4.62	5.28	4.29	2.44	4.32	2.51
	N	235	235	235	235	233	234
	Std. Deviation	1.165	1.333	.695	1.314	1.633	1.185

The researcher considered the differences between the participants' age group in choosing career and psychological well-being. The findings were as follow.

Autonomy: 18--22years (Mean 4.60), 23-26years (Mean 4.79), 27-30years (Mean 3.70), 36years> (Mean 5.00)

Environmental mastery: 18-22 years (Mean 5.34), 23-26 years (Mean 5.10), 27-30 years (Mean 5.30), 36 years > (Mean 4.67).

Personal growth: 18-22 years (Mean 4.25), 23-26 years (Mean 4.47), 27-30 years (Mean 4.30), 36 years > (Mean 3.50)

Positive relationship with others: 18-22 years (Mean 2.19), 23-26 years (Mean 3.26), 27-30 years (Mean 3.13), 36 years > (Mean 4.11).

Purpose in life: 18-22 years (Mean 4.46), 23-26 years (Mean 3.86), 27-30 years (Mean 4.20), 36 years > (Mean 3.33).

Self-acceptance: 18-22 years (Mean 2.38), 23-26 years (Mean 2.90), 27-30 years (Mean 2.93), 36 years > (Mean 3.00)

The findings shows that students who are 36 years and above (50%) possess high level of autonomy, positive relationship with others and self-acceptance. The finding is compatible with normal developmental needs in life in terms of age. People in this age bracket have experiences and are able to determine what they want. They have also had experiences that can help them to have self-knowledge.

**Table 5: Correlations between Parental interest and psychological well-being items**

		Parental interest	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal growth	Positive relationship with others	Purpose in life	Self-acceptance
Parental influence	Pearson Correlation	1	-.007	.046	.184**	-.030	.077	-.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.918	.482	.005	.651	.238	.276
	N	236	236	236	236	236	234	235

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation table, the results showed that there is a negative correlation between parental influence and three of the psychological well-being subscales. These were as follows: Self-acceptance ( $r=-0.071$ ) Autonomy ( $r=-.007$ ) and Positive relationship with others ( $r=-0.30$ ). These three indicated a weak negative correlation between the parental influence and psychological well-being. The finding indicated the higher the parental influence in the choice of the students' career, the lower their psychological well-being.

However, there is a weak positive correlation between parental influence and environmental mastery subscale, ( $r=0.046$ ), Personal growth ( $r=0.184$ ) and purpose in life ( $r=0.077$ ). This finding indicates that for these three items of psychological wellbeing, parental influence on career choice is necessary. For significance level of these items, Environmental mastery  $p=(0.482)>0.01$ , purpose in life  $p=(0.238)>0.01$ , thus the relationship between these subscale and parental interest is not statistically significant. However, for personal growth  $P(0.005) < 0.01$  hence the relationship is statistically significant. This finding is in agreement with a response from one of the parents' interviewees, who asserted that,

*“My children are happy when they make decision together; I help them to weigh all the pros and cons in their choices until a point where I do not interfere with their decision making” (personal communication, November 2021).*

The finding suggested the higher the parental influence in the choice of the students' career, the lower their psychological well-being. This is in agreement with the study of Maina, (2013) who noted that a negatively involved parent was in a much more precarious situation where the adolescent felt anxiety or resentment, regarding career decisions based on parental attitudes whereas,

positively involved with their children's career development and career choice, were enthusiastic about their children's career exploration and were emotionally and or verbally supportive of the young adult's individual goals.

However, there is a weak positive correlation between parental influence and environmental mastery subscale, ( $r=0.046$ ), Personal growth ( $r=0.184$ ) and purpose in life ( $r=0.077$ ). For significance level of these items, Environmental mastery  $p=(0.482)>0.01$ , purpose in life  $p=(0.238)>0.01$ , thus the relationship between these subscale and parental interest is not statistically significant. From these results, there is an indication that parental influence is of importance to the personal growth of the students since it has a significant relationship with a positive correlation.

This finding corresponded with Maina, (2013) who posits that parents, who were positively involved with their children's career advancement and career choice, were fervent about their children's career discernment and ardently supported their children's unique goals. This can be related to the Mtameri, (2017) who asserted that parental decision and choices impacts children's development in ways that are meaningful for later success in the world of work. The current research interprets this kind of support to greatly enhance the psychological well-being of the students.

## 5. Conclusion & Recommendations

Career choice and psychological well-being is a growing concern which rises as a result of external influence the students face when making their choice of career. This may lead to mismatch between expectation and actual results in life time. An urgent attention is required in order to address this. This study established there is a significant

relationship between environmental mastery, purpose in life and parental influence. The study also established a weak negative correlation between the parental influence and three psychological well-being subscales (autonomy, self-acceptance and positive relationship with others).

The study therefore, recommends parents/guardians to create a culture of an inclusive decision making to help

their children make an informed decision under the watch of their parents as this will increase their sense of autonomy and relationship with others. The study also recommends parents to provide and encourage their children to seek for valuable information that will help them to choose a career that will enhance their psychological well-being.

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