



Parental Influence as Predictor of Career Choice among Undergraduate Students of Lira University: A Mixed Method Study

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Abstract: This study explored parental influence on career choice among undergraduate students of Lira University, Lira City West Division, Lira City using a mixed-methods approach. Guided by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the research employed a correlational research design to assess the effect of parental influence in shaping students' career choice. Quantitative data were gathered from 370 students using structured questionnaires and analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data from 30 selected participants were thematically analysed. The findings indicate that there's statistically insignificant relationship ($r = -0.094, p > .072$) between parental influence and students' career choice. Much as some students appreciated their parents' involvement, many reported pressure and misalignment between parental desires and personal aspirations. The study concludes that the role of parental influence on student's career choice is minimal, suggesting that other factors such as increasing role of personal interest, role models, peer influence, and labor market could play a role in shaping student's career choices. Therefore, the recommendation include; strengthening career guidance services in universities, fostering constructive parent student dialogue and promoting policies that empower students to make informed career decisions in relation to modern career options.

Keywords: Parental influence, career choice, undergraduate students, Social Cognitive Theory, mixed method

How to cite this work (APA):

Ojok, S. & Kemeza, I. (2025). Parental Influence as Predictor of Career Choice Among Undergraduate Students of Lira University: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(4), 1 – 16. <https://doi.org/10.59765/lpv84g>.

1. Introduction

Career decision-making is a vital developmental milestone for young adults and has significant implications for their future socio-economic mobility, identity formation, and satisfaction (Gati & Asher, 2001). In developing countries like Uganda, the family, particularly parents, continue to exert a powerful influence on career choices (Kyokunda, 2023). While this influence can be supportive, it also presents challenges when parental expectations conflict with the student's career aspiration.

The influence takes hold at the time when the young adolescents join secondary school education, and parents dictate certain subjects that the child should focus on or improve upon. This has a bearing on the choices of courses offered in higher institutions of learning, for the intending students are faced with conflicting loyalty (Anne et al, 2018).

The role of parental influence is best understood through Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that behaviour is shaped through dynamic interactions between personal factors, behavioural patterns, and environmental contexts (Bandura, 2001).

Parents, as a core environmental factor, contribute to their children's career paths through modelling, verbal persuasion by shaping self-efficacy beliefs.

Despite growing discourse on career autonomy, few studies have systematically examined how parents influence career choices among undergraduate students in Lira University. This study fills that gap by using both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the influence of parental involvement, expectations, and socioeconomic background on students' career decisions.

1.1 Research objectives

The study was divided into general objective which generalized the interest or the aim of the study and the specific objectives, i.e., the breakdown of the main objectives into achievable units.

1.1.1 Specific Objectives

For the achievement of the main objective, therefore the study was guided by the subsequent research objective:

To examine the effect of parental influence on the career choice of undergraduate students of Lira University.

1.2 Research Question

The study answered the following research question:

What are the effects of parental influence on the career choice of the Undergraduates of Lira University?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

According to Bandura (1986, 2001), human functioning is the product of the dynamic interplay among personal, behavioural, and environmental determinants. Within this framework, parents play a critical environmental role by serving as models, providing feedback, and shaping career self-efficacy.

2.2 Parental Influence on career choice of undergraduate students

Research on parental influence has increased rapidly during the last couple of years, yet an understanding of parental influences on career choices remains sparse. Most studies found that family is the main social agent that plays significant roles in students' career choice (Mhlongo, 2009). Specifically, a number of them revealed family culture, socio-economic status,

members' educational level and family composition, acted as a catalyst for most undergraduate students' career choice (Njenga, 2019). Hereby, this section reviewed the parental variables from various scholarly works that influence the career choice of most university students.

Studies that have investigated parental influences have found that family socio-economic status take account in students' career related choice (Wachira, 2018; Osa-Edo & Alutu, 2011; Muola, 2010; Ozdemir & Hacifazlioglu, 2008; Pimpa, 2005). A study by Pimpa (2005) sought to investigate family influences on Thai students' professional aspiration. Socio-economic status was found to be an influential factor mentioned by most participants in the study, here the researcher analyzed and concluded that most students who choose to study abroad do so with the encouragement that the socio-economic position of their families is capacitated to render support for tuition fees, living expenses and other related costs. The choice taken to study abroad is itself linked to career choice as this comes with advantages over the aspiration of the student, (Pimpa, 2005) argues.

Osa-Edo et.al (2011) reported that parents' socioeconomic status directly affects the vocational aspiration of their children. Meanwhile, a study by Ozdemir et.al (2008) investigated 2,459 final-year high school Turkish students' expectations of their prospective universities and their perceptions of whether or not family background or social status affected their career choice. The results suggested that the family's financial background had a major effect on these students' professional aspiration.

In Tanzania, Mhenga (2011) found that parents' socio-economic background influenced the career choice of secondary school students. Parents with a good income were able to enrol their children in high quality schools, thus was influential in career aspiration of their children. In Kenya, Wachira (2018) conducted a study among secondary school students and the study revealed that parent's socio-economic status had a positive and statistically significant influence on student's career choice.

On the other hand, some parents in low-income families are likely to have a 'getting-by' core value as referred to by (Marjoribanks, 1979a), where little or nothing is exerted on changing the situation; they simply accept it and live each day as it comes. Under the socio-economic hardship, it is unanticipated that there would be enormous attention and effort from the parents to show interest in or even get involved in student's career choice. The 'getting-by' parents commonly demonstrate lack of will and ambition and relatively, they do not expect much academic effort from their children. Therefore, under such circumstances this will tend to

keep the academic self-esteem of their children, a feeling that will enhance the career choice of their children.

Every student at a certain juncture in their life has to make a choice regarding their career because it is incumbent that students make the correct career choice. Hearn (1984) identified educational level of parents as a very important factor which influences the choice of career of the students. According to Hearn, these parental factors always make students more poised, stable and endowed with a pleasant countenance.

To explore other scholarly writings Udoh and Sanni, (2012) investigated the influence of parental background variables on the career choice of secondary school student in Uyo Local Government Area of Nigeria. Their findings significantly pointed out that parents' level of formal education exert imperative influence on the career choices of secondary school going children. This finding is in countenance with the finding of Kitivo (1989) which showed a significant relationship between parental level of education and achievement motivation of the students. Achievement motivation is therefore a final influential factor that contributes to the child's ability to choose a career to pursue.

However, Hezlina Mohd Hashim and Abdul Mutalib Embong (2013) conducted a study among parents and discovered that parent's educations have no influence over their children's choice of career. Likewise, according to a study conducted by Roach (2010) among college students in the northeast region of the United States, found that the parental highest level of education did not have an impact on the career selection self-efficacy of college students. Daniel (2011) too found that a high parental academic achievement did not necessarily influence the career aspirations of college students.

Kristen (2008) observes that, while it is likely that parental values and expectations are conveyed within each household, the strength of their influence may be reliant upon the parent-child relationship. This includes parental attachment over time and daily interactions in the home. Both of these factors play a role in children's identity development and their career aspirations.

Andrew (2008) examined student-parent interactions about academic and career decisions. Students attending Brown University and Brown University Office of Institutional Research participated in semi-structured interviews. In the interviews, students reported that they rely on their parents for general support and for advice about academic and career choice. Relatively, Korir and Wafula (2012) noted that secure parent-child relationships are associated with progress in career decision making, affirmative career self-efficacy beliefs, and career selection in Eldoret. Therefore,

parents' influence on career choice stems from the continuous process of relationship with their children (Gathigia, 2011).

Avugla (2011) testifies that middle school students and their parents have significantly different views about family relationships and parent behaviours. This stems from the results which revealed that students whose views about family relationships were contrary from their parents' views had low levels of career decision-making self-efficacy an indication that absence of parent-child relationship deprives a child from support, love, communication and honesty from their parents which are on the other pivotal for the career choices of the adolescents.

Hewitt (2010) conducted a study which investigated how parents influence African American students' decisions to prepare for vocational teaching careers, noted that respondents whose parents are educators were strongly influenced to enter teaching because they were helped by their parents to gain an understanding of the field through direct, frequent, and early exposure to the profession such that they gained deeper understanding of the duties, responsibilities and life style of a teacher thus shaping them into teaching career. Meanwhile in Nigeria, Udoh and Sanni (2012) conducted a similar study in Uyo, Nigeria and reported that parent's occupation showed positive significant relationship with the career choice of their children.

However, Njenga (2019) in the study conducted on influence of parental factors on children's career choice, a case study of public secondary schools, in Isinya subcounty, Kajiado in Kenya, shows that there is no significant relationship between parent's occupation or a relative's occupation with the career choice of students.

Parents are primarily responsible for supporting and providing the student with resources and care as they develop vocationally (Jones & Palmer, 2004). Murray-Harvey and Slee (2007) conducted a study aimed at understanding the effects of support, as well as stressors that family, teachers and peers exert on students and how these factors contribute to the school experience. The results showed that the assistance and encouragement received from the family was acknowledged by students as a positive influence and was reported to give them a sense of direction and confidence on their career choice, on the other hand, students feeling discouraged and neglected by family members reported feelings of inadequacy and confusion thus causing setback on their career aspirations.

Existing literature underscores that family context, particularly parental involvement, plays a significant role in career decision-making (Esther, 2019; Pimpa, 2005; Osa-Edo & Alutu, 2011). Socio-economic resources and parental education level are found to

shape children's educational and occupational aspirations (Hearn, 1984; Mhenga, 2011). However, some studies (e.g., Hashim & Embong, 2013; Roach, 2010) argue that academic background does not always translate into direct influence on career paths, suggesting that emotional and relational dimensions must also be examined.

Bladeless cited in Nyarko-Sampson (2013) found that parents exert emotional pressure on their children regarding the choice of careers. They make independent consultations regarding the career they think is most suitable for their children. The child's preferences are never a matter of concern for them. Meanwhile, Slovacek, Jacob and Flenoury (2015) assessed the study on "Dynamic Influence of Family on College and Career Choices of Underrepresented Minorities in the Biomedical Sciences" a study which focused on the importance of family influence on the student academic decisions changing from time to time during school and college. The results revealed a heavy dependency of the student on their parents. (Tella et al., 2009).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a correlation study design to determine the relationship between Parental Influence on career choice. Quantitative data provided measurable patterns of parental influence, while qualitative data explored lived experiences and nuanced perceptions.

3.2 Sampling Technique

The researcher collected quantitative data from 370 undergraduate students at Lira University. Simple random sampling was employed to select from the population which included first year, second year and third year students. A random number was used to select first year students out of the continuing students to form the sample.

For the qualitative phase, the researcher acquired names of the students from the registrar's list using a random number table. Simple random technique was employed on the sample to choose 30 interviewees to make the sub sample, where every 30th respondent on the randomized list where chosen that led to the attainment of the numbers of respondents who took part in the interviews.

3.2.1 Pilot Testing Procedures

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was carried out to evaluate the suitability, clarity, and reliability of the research instrument. The pilot involved 50 undergraduate students from across all years of

study. However, there was low response rate from the final year students.

The pilot study assessed clarity and wording of items where questions were reviewed for comprehension, flow, and ease of response. Ambiguous items were rephrased to ensure respondents could interpret them correctly. Relevance to objectives was done where each item was evaluated against the study objectives (parental influence and career choice) to ensure content validity.

3.3 Instruments and Data Collection

The researcher employed self-administered questionnaire to collect data. A questionnaire based on Likert scale was administered to the respondents (students) through hand distribution.

In the first section, demographic information was collected, which included age, gender, course name, year of study, current CGPA, and the number of siblings and relatives dependent on the family. It further gathered data on parents' marital status, father's and mother's highest educational levels, family socioeconomic status, and parents' occupations.

In the second section, 40 items were adopted from the literature review derived from (Wangari, 2018; Mwaa, 2016). The items measured the extent of parental influence on undergraduate students using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), with a minimum possible score of 40 and a maximum of 160.

Reliability was tested using data from the pilot study, where the internal consistency of the instrument was tested. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient showed a value of 0.841. This exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), confirming the tool was highly reliable.

A structured questionnaire assessed parental influence in terms of socio-economic status, support, occupation and parent child relationship.

The researcher collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with 30 undergraduate students. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 80 minutes. The researcher recorded the interviews using a digital audio device and transcribed them verbatim. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained ethical approval from MUST-REC.

These interviews followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for establishing trustworthiness. To ensure credibility, the researcher engaged participants over an extended period and conducted member checks, allowing participants to review and validate their responses. To establish dependability, the researcher

maintained an audit trail documenting the processes of data collection, transcription, and analysis. Peer debriefing with research supervisors supported confirmability by minimizing researcher bias and validating coding decisions. The researcher enhanced transferability by providing thick descriptions of the research context and participants' demographic characteristics, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar contexts.

Validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data phenomena under study. The pilot study was used to identify those items that could be misunderstood, and such items were modified accordingly, thus this helped to increase the face validity (Wilkinson, 1991). Expert opinions, literature searches, and pre-testing of open-ended questions helped to establish content validity (Wilkinson, 1991). The researcher prepared the instruments in close consultation with his supervisors, whose expert judgment improved content validity. For this study, face validity, content validity, and construct validity were evaluated.

Face validity was evaluated through expert judgment. The instruments were reviewed by the research supervisor of the department of Educational Psychology. This expert evaluated whether each item appropriately reflected the construct it aimed to measure. Based on the suggestions, adjustments were made for clarity, question order, and language simplicity to ensure the instruments were suitable for undergraduate respondents.

Content validity was evaluated by aligning each questionnaire and interview item with the study objectives and theoretical framework of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). The items were a 4-point and 5-point relevance scale to ensure that the content coverage of the instruments was both sufficient and relevant to the constructs under investigation.

Construct validity was assessed through a pilot study involving 50 undergraduate students from a nearby institution with similar demographic and academic profiles. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed to determine whether items grouped appropriately under their respective constructs.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Clearance was attained from the Mbarara University Research Ethics Committee, MUST-REC. Then, an introductory letter was issued from the Dean of Faculty of Science MUST. This enabled the researcher to gain permission to carry out research. Permission was granted by the City Education Officer and then from Lira University Vice Chancellor. The participants were briefed by the researcher on the purpose of the study to encourage their participation. Informed consent was

issued to the participants before participating in the study. This was done by enabling each participant to sign informed consent form to ensure that they were not coerced into the study but rather participated willingly. Self-administered questionnaires with serial numbers for future reference were issued to the participants and it contained a preamble explaining the purpose of the study. The participants were informed of their rights and obligations, and then guided on how to fill the questionnaire considering all ethical issues. For instance, the researcher emphasized highest level of confidentiality that the information provided were strictly considered for academic purposes only. Respect for the Participants' privacy was abided by when they were guided not to indicate their names on the questionnaires. Participation in this research was completely voluntary. Therefore, the participants had the right to participate, refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any stage in case one felt that he or she could not continue in the participation for the reasons best known to him or her. The researcher was present when the respondents were filling the questionnaire to rectify any issues and concerns that would come up. Considerable time was given to participants to fill the questionnaire after which they were collected and screened to check for any unanswered items. The questionnaires with incomplete items were eliminated and the rest considered for data analysis.

3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

The collected data was entered into SPSS version 26 for Windows for statistical processing. Descriptive statistic was used to measure percentile and correlation coefficient (in order to show the magnitude of the relationship among variables in the study) was calculated. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test relationships between variables and their significance, and the results were presented in tables and figures. Regression analysis was also used to test for the mediating effect of self-concept between independent variable (family influence) and dependent variable (career choice).

The researcher recorded the interviewer using audio recorder, the recorded data was then transcribed and coded by identifying ideas that related to research questions and objectives. The coded data was categorized before a theme was formed out of it.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured voluntary participation by allowing the participants freely opt in or out of the study at any point in time without being prejudiced. Secondly, the researcher ensured that the purpose, benefits, risks, and funding behind were known to the participants before they agreed or declined to join. For the purpose of anonymity, the researcher ensured that

identities of the participants were hidden by not requiring them to state their names and but employed the use of codes the differentiate on participant from another. The researcher enabled confidentiality by ensuring that information from the participant were kept hidden from everyone else. This was done through anonymizing personally identifiable data so that it wouldn't be linked to other data by anyone else and through use of computer password. Potential for harm, the researcher ensured that the physical, social and psychological and all other types of harm were kept to an absolute minimum as far as results communication were concern, the researcher also ensured that the dissertation was free from plagiarism and the results accurately presented.

4. Results And Discussion

Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation,

and multi-linear regression. Qualitative data was analysed through thematic analysis, involving coding, categorizing, and interpreting emerging patterns related to parental influence on career choice among undergraduate students.

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This study considered age, gender, year of study, cumulative grade point average, name of the course taken, number of siblings and relatives who depend on their parents as the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The respondents were also required to fill in information regarding their parents, which included; the marital status, level of education achieved, the socio-economic status and their occupations. To analyze this data, frequencies and percentages were used and the results are shown in tables below;

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Bio data of the respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender			
Male	194	52.4	52.4
Female	176	47.6	100
Total	370	100	
Age Bracket			
(20-25)	325	87.8	87.8
(26-30)	45	12.2	100
Total	370	100	
CGPA Range			
2.89 below	10	2.7	2.7
2.99 to 3.59	86	23.2	25.9
3.6 to 4.39	228	61.6	87.6
4.4 or higher	46	12.4	100
Total	370	100	
Courses			
BMS	63	17	17
BBA	57	15.4	32.4
BSE	110	29.7	62.2
BMW	30	8.1	70.3
BCPP	31	8.4	78.6
BPA	25	6.8	85.4
BCS	31	8.4	93.8
BPH	23	6.2	100
Total	370	100	
Siblings			
None	62	16.8	16.8
Below 3 (few)	184	49.7	66.5
Above 3 (many)	124	33.5	100

Total	370	100	
			Relatives
None	168	45.4	45.4
Below 3 (few)	174	47	92.4
More than 3 (Many)	28	7.6	100
Total	370	100	

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The Table 1 above shows a fairly balanced gender distribution, with a slight male dominance of 52.4% (194) to 47.6% (176) female. A significant majority (87.8%) of the respondents is between 20 and 25 years old compared to 12.2% (45) in the age bracket between 26-30 years old hence suggesting that most respondents are in their early university years of study. The majority (61.6%) of students have a CGPA between 3.6 and 4.39, indicating strong academic performance. Only a small percentage (2.7%) has a CGPA below 2.89, showing that most students are academically competent. The most common course is BSE (Bachelor of Science in Education), which has 29.7% of respondents. The least common course is BPH (Bachelor of Public Health), accounting for 6.2%. This distribution suggests that students are more inclined towards professional teaching programs. 49.7% of respondents have less than three siblings, while 33.5% have more than three. 45.4% reported having no close relatives, whereas

47.0% have fewer than three. This suggests that many students come from small to medium-sized families, which may influence their career aspirations and choices.

In conclusion, the demographic data provided a useful profile of the respondents, showing a young, academically competent group with balanced gender representation and a diverse course selection. In addition, family structure and social environment have also been presented as seen in the distribution of siblings and relatives of the respondents.

4.1.2 Demographic Characteristic of Respondents' Parents

The bio-data provides insight into the background characteristics of the respondents' parents, including their marital status, income level, occupation, and education level as presented in the table below;

Table 2: Shows the Demographic Characteristic of Respondents' Parents

Bio data of respondents' parents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Marital status			
Married/ living together	289	78.1	78.1
Divorced	51	13.8	91.9
Widowed	30	8.1	100
Total	370	100	
Level of Income			
Low income	200	54	54
Middle income	145	39.2	93.3
High income	25	6.8	100
Total	370	100	
Occupation of the father			
Professional occupation	158	42.7	42.7
Non-professional occupation	88	23.8	66.5
Others	124	33.5	100
Total	370	100	
Occupation of the mother			
Professional occupation	107	28.9	28.9

Non-professional occupation	77	20.8	49.7
Others	186	50.3	100
Total	370	100	
Educational level of the Father's respondent			
Less than high school diploma	110	29.7	29.7
High school diploma	68	18.4	48.1
Some college education	58	15.7	63.8
Bachelor's degree	112	30.3	94.1
Master's degree	20	5.4	99.5
Doctorate	2	0.5	100
Total	370	100	
Educational level of Respondent's mother			
Less than high school diploma	160	43.2	43.2
High school diploma	72	19.5	62.7
Some college education	69	18.6	81.4
Bachelor's degree	58	15.7	97
Master's degree	9	2.4	99.5
Doctorate	2	0.5	100
Total	370	100	

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 2 above shows that the majority of respondents' parents (78.1%) are married or living together, suggesting a stable family structure for most students. A smaller proportion (13.8%) is divorced, while 8.1% are widowed. This distribution indicates that most students come from households with two parents, which may play a role in parental influence on career choices. More than half of the respondents' parents (54%) belong to the low-income group, indicating financial constraints for many students. 39.2% belong to the middle-income group, while only 6.8% are in the high-income category. This suggests that financial limitations may impact students' career choices, as higher-income families might have more resources to support diverse career options.

42.7% of fathers are in professional occupations (for example doctors, engineers, teachers), 23.8% hold non-professional jobs (for example clerical work or manual Labor), 33.5% fall into the "others" category, possibly self-employed or unemployed. Fewer mothers are in professional occupations (28.9%) compared to fathers, 20.8% are in non-professional roles, while a majority (50.3%) fall under "others", likely homemakers or self-

employed. This suggests that traditional gender roles may still be influencing the career choices of students, as mothers are unemployed or doing informal jobs. 30.3% of fathers have a bachelor's degree, the highest proportion among education levels. 29.7% did not complete high school, showing a significant educational gap. Only 5.4% hold a master's degree, and 0.5% has a doctorate. A higher percentage of mothers (43.2%) did not complete high school, which is more than the fathers' percentage (29.7%). Fewer mothers hold a bachelor's degree (15.7%) or a master's degree (2.4%) compared to fathers. This suggests that fathers generally have higher educational attainment than mothers, which may influence the level of academic support given to students.

In conclusion, the bio-data of respondents' parents revealed important socio-economic and educational patterns that can impact students' career choices on the account of, parental education, occupation and financial challenges played a significant role in shaping students' career choices.

4.2 Results

Table 3 Below Shows the Descriptive Statistics of Parental Influence on Career Choice among Undergraduate Students in Lira University.

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
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Parental Influence	370	1.00	4.08	2.6803	0.42935
Students Career Choice	370	1.17	4.00	2.5938	0.50136

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The table 3 above provided descriptive statistics for parental influence and career choice based on a sample of 370 participants. The means for both variables are fairly close, indicating that on average, students perceive a moderate level of parental influence and a moderate level of determination in their career choice.

The standard deviation for Students' Career Choice is slightly higher, suggesting a bit more variability in how students perceive or make career choices compared to how they perceive parental influence. The ranges show that both variables span almost the entire rating scale, indicating diverse responses among the participants.

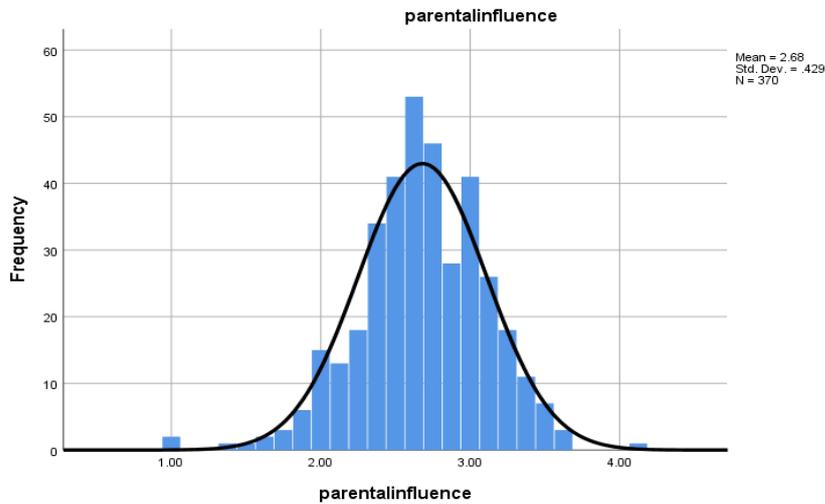


Figure 1: Histogram showing the distribution of Parental Influence among Undergraduate Students in Lira University.

The histogram appears normally distributed with a slight skew. The peak is around 2.5-3.0, suggesting most students reported moderate parental influence. Few students reported very low (1.0) or very high

influence (above 4.0) with most values clustering around the mean (2.68). This suggests that parental influence is fairly consistent among students, with few extreme values.

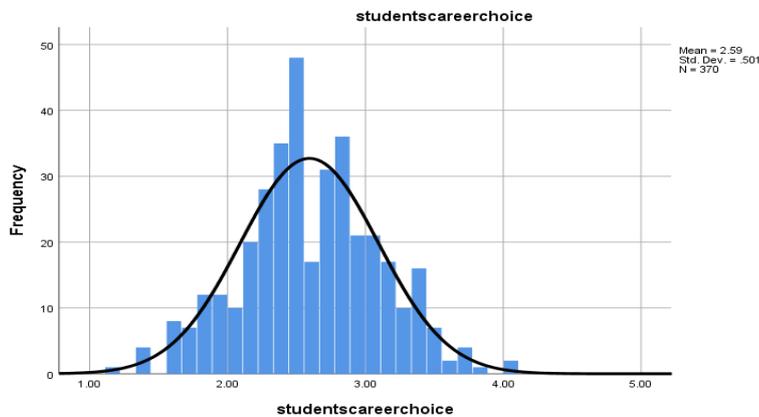


Figure 2: Histogram Showing the Distribution of Students' Career Choice among Undergraduate Students in Lira University.

The distribution appears slightly left-skewed and follows a normal pattern but slightly. Most students score around 2.5-3.0. Some students scored below 2.0, indicating uncertainty about career choices, meaning a higher concentration of responses toward the upper range. This implies that fewer students strongly lack confidence in their career choices. Additionally, the left-skewed distribution of career choice scores indicates that most students have some level of clarity in their career paths.

4.2.1 Quantitative Findings

This study employed quantitative data analysis on the relationships between Parental Influence and Student's

Career Choice. By using statistical techniques like descriptive and correlation. The study aimed at understanding the extent to which parental influence impacts students' career choices.

Tests for normality were conducted on both variables. Histograms with overlaid normal curves showed that scores for parental influence and student career choice were approximately normally distributed, with no evidence of significant skewness or outliers. Therefore, a Pearson correlation coefficient was performed to examine the effect of parental influence and career choice of Undergraduate Students of Lira University, Lira City West Division, Lira City and this yielded the results shown in table below:

Table 4: Below Shows the Pearson Correlations Results on Parental Influence and Career choice of Undergraduate Students

		Parental influence	Student's Career Choice
Parental influence	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	370	
Student's Career Choice	Pearson Correlation	-0.094	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.072	
	N	370	370

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The results in Table 4 above indicated that there's a very weak negative correlation between parental influence and career choice. However, the findings also indicate that there's statistically insignificant relationship ($r = -0.094$, $p > .072$) between parental influence and career choice among undergraduate students of Lira University, Lira City West Division, Lira City. Hence H_1 was supported because the P value is greater than 0.05. This shows that parental influence has minimal or weak effect on the career choice of undergraduate students of Lira University, Lira City West Division, Lira City. The weak and statistically insignificant negative correlation between Parental Influence and Student's Career Choice among Undergraduate students of Lira University, Lira City West Division, Lira City, suggests that parental influence does not have a strong or meaningful effect on students' career choice. Therefore, the marginal p-value calls for further investigation.

4.2.3 Qualitative Findings

Data were collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews. The interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions focusing on various aspects of parental influence, such as emotional and financial support, parental expectations, and autonomy on self-concept and career choice of undergraduate students in Lira University. Interviews lasted between 60 and 80 minutes and were audio-recorded with informed consent from the participants. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

To explore how parental involvement shaped the academic and career development of students, participants were asked the following question: So, way back while you were in your secondary school life, were your parents able to provide you with relevant educational opportunities for your career? For example, visiting friends or people about career, sponsoring your trips, or even perhaps supporting you morally?"

This question aimed to uncover the extent to which parents contributed to students' career exploration and growth through tangible support such as exposure to

opportunities, encouragement, and financial sponsorship. From the interviews, a prominent finding emerged:

Supportive parents encourage their children to explore careers based on their strengths and interests. Therefore, students who received consistent support whether financial or moral, even within modest means felt more prepared and confident in pursuing their academic and career goals as shared by one of the participants; *“What I can say is my parents have been supportive in everything despite their moderate financial status.”* (Participant 2, personal communication, November, 2024).

This statement was drawn from a participant who described their parents as consistently supportive across emotional and financial domains, placing them in the supportive parents’ category. This response reflected that although the family was not wealthy, the intention and effort to support the student’s academic journey were clear and consistent. This type of steady and value-driven support aided the student to choose a career.

Additionally, in exploring how students made choices regarding their career paths and how parental influence factored into those choices, participants were asked, how did you get to choose what you want to do after high school?

This question was designed to reveal whether students made independent choices, were guided or encouraged by their parents, or felt pressured to follow paths imposed upon them. The findings showed that some parents-imposed career expectations, particularly in science-related fields, believing they were superior to arts, where students resisted parental pressure to pursue careers, they had no interest in. One participant provided a reflection from a personal experience:

“I made the decision myself, because of the love I have for law as a profession. No one in my family influenced me, they just encouraged me. However, in my O-level, I realized my parents were going to force me to do sciences, to do medicine. So, I made sure by all means I failed science subjects and passed only mathematics so that I wouldn’t do any science combination,” (Participant 4, personal communication, November, 2024).

This statement not only illustrated a student who resisted parental imposition and reclaimed autonomy through a strategic academic decision but also one with a complex negotiation of autonomy. While the student ultimately exercised independence in choosing law a field, similarly, was passionate about the deliberate opposition to parental pressure.

Interestingly, the method of resistance was strategic when the student under-performed in science subjects to avoid being placed in a science-based academic track which would definitely make him lose the advantage of pursuing his dream career, a recurring theme among respondents in the controlling parents’ category.

While some parents were actively involved in decision-making, others gave their children full independence and duly supported the final decision of their children, even when it was not the original parental preference.

To explore the role of parents’ socio-economic status in shaping students’ career choices, the researcher asked participants questions such as, “What do your parents do?” and “Are they financially supporting you?” These questions aimed to uncover how the parents’ economic background influenced the type and extent of support students received, and whether this support played a role in the career paths they considered. The responses to these questions revealed the following insights:

Responses revealed that many students were highly aware of their parents’ financial struggles and often made decisions to choose to do courses based on what was realistically affordable, rather than what they were most passionate about thus one student gave the following response; *“It is in the low-income status because sometimes the financial support is small and sometimes it is tough that I don’t get solution to the problem and that is why I chose this course.”* (Participant 6, personal communication, November, 2024).

Financial limitations within the family significantly influenced students’ choice of course or career, often leading them to choose more affordable or accessible options over their preferred ones. The participant implies that their current academic path was not entirely a matter of personal interest, but rather a strategic decision made within the constraints of limited financial support. This reflects how economic realities can shape educational trajectories, sometimes at the expense of personal ambition or ideal career goals.

This finding was derived through qualitative coding of interview data, specifically focusing on references to parental occupation and income level and how they were able to financially support the career aspiration of their children. By grouping such responses under the broader theme of socio-economic status of parents, a clear pattern emerged where students from low-income families often internalized financial constraints, leading to practical, rather than passion-driven, career choices.

Assessing the role of parents’ financial support and education background in the development of students’ career choice, was guided by the following questions; Are your parents in a position to support your studies financially? This question was designed to understand

the extent and consistency of financial support from parents, and how such support impacted students' academic choices and overall confidence in pursuing their career goals. The results yielded included the following.

Parents who are more educated were those who were financially stable and could afford to support their children materially, morally and financially, which is why they often guided their children better. Such students with such supportive parents believed in their abilities, were able to make quality and independent career choices. Additionally, students who receive consistent and responsive financial support from their parents feel secure, confident, and focused in their educational and career journeys as shared by one of the participants in the category of a student; *"Yes, they have been supporting me and they have been responding to my request and in everything I have wanted about the career."* (Participant 5, personal communication, November, 2024).

The participant's response highlights a form of reliable and proactive parental involvement, where financial needs are not just met, but addressed in alignment with the student's evolving career goals. This demonstrates that supportive financial engagement plays a critical role in reinforcing a positive self-concept, as students are more likely to feel valued, encouraged, and capable of succeeding when their needs are met without resistance or delay.

This finding was derived through thematic coding and analysis of interview data points to consistency of financial support, alignment of parental support with student aspirations, emotional tone indicating satisfaction and appreciation.

4.3 Discussion

The study finding on examining the effect of parental influence between parental influence and career choice of Undergraduate Students of Lira University, Lira City West Division, Lira City, there was a very weak negative correlation between parental influence and career choice. However, the findings also indicate that there's statistically insignificant relationship ($r = -0.094$, $p > .072$) between parental influence and career choice among undergraduate students of Lira University, Lira City West Division, Lira City. This implies that the role of parental influence in shaping the career choices of university students is minimal justifying that the marginal p-value calls for further investigation. Such is in line with the assertion of earlier scholars like Njenga (2019) and Mhlongo (2009) that the family particularly parents play, a pivotal role in students' career decision-making processes. The influence is multidimensional, encompassing socio-economic background, educational

level, emotional support, occupational exposure, and parent-child relationships.

The quantitative findings of this study reveal that students from families with higher socio-economic status were more likely to pursue careers aligned with their interests and aspirations, whereas those from lower-income families often made career choices based on affordability and accessibility. This aligns closely with prior studies of Wachira (2018); Ozdemir and Hacifazlioglu (2008); Pimpa (2005) which established that a parent's financial capacity strongly influences a student's academic and career aspiration.

Qualitative data provided deeper insight into this dynamic. Participants from low-income families described their career choices as pragmatic responses to financial constraints rather than genuine passion. For instance, one participant stated, *"It is in the low-income status because sometimes the financial support is small, sometimes it can be tough which is why I chose this course."* (Participant 6, personal communication, November, 2025). This echoes the findings of Mhenga (2011) and Muola (2010) who found that socio-economic disadvantage often curtails students' ability to pursue ideal careers, emphasizing practicality over preference.

Conversely, students from economically stable backgrounds, where parents were employed in professional occupations and were well-educated, expressed greater confidence in their career pursuits. One respondent affirmed, *"Yes, they have been supporting me...in everything I have wanted about the career."* (Participant 2, personal communication, November, 2024). Such accounts parallel to Hearn's (1984) view that economic and educational advantage among parents leads to greater poise and determination among students in career choice.

Parental education level was also found to exert a strong influence on career choices. Quantitatively, students whose parents had higher educational attainment reported receiving better guidance and motivation regarding academic and career decisions. This is consistent with Udoh and Sanni (2012), and Kitivo (1989), who pointed out that educated parents often instill achievement motivation and broaden the vocational horizons of their children.

From qualitative interviews, students acknowledged the role of their parents' education in shaping their career path. One of the participants noted that their parents were not only financially supportive but also had good academic achievements which equally caused responsiveness and vested in motivation to the career decision taken. These findings support Gathigia (2011); Korir and Wafula (2012), who emphasized that parental guidance rooted in educational experience enhances children's confidence and decisiveness in career choice.

However, contradictions to this pattern also emerged. Some studies by Hezlina and Embong (2013); Daniel (2011) and Roach (2010) found no significant relationship between parents' educational attainment and students' career choice. This discrepancy might be attributed to cultural and contextual factors, as well as varying levels of parental involvement beyond formal education.

The study also revealed contrasting parental roles of some supportive and encouraging, others controlling and directive. Several participants indicated that their parents encouraged career autonomy, feeding into Bandura's (1986) concept of self-efficacy through emotional and moral support. As one student recounted, *"My parents have been supportive in everything...the finances, because they have moderate financial status."* (Participant 5, personal communication, November, 2024). Such supportive parenting not only validates students' interests but also nurtures a healthy self-concept and career confidence.

However, there were also accounts of parental pressure to pursue specific careers, particularly in science-based fields, perceived as more prestigious or economically rewarding. One participant disclosed, *"I realized my parents were going to force me to do sciences... so I made sure by all means I failed science subjects."* (Participant 4, personal communication, November, 2024). This deliberate resistance highlights the tension between parental control and personal autonomy, a theme also noted by Jungen (2008) and Simmons (2008), who argued that the quality of parent-child interactions shapes the extent and effect of parental influence.

Such findings echo Slovacek, Jacob, and Flenoury's (2015) assertion that parental influence on career decisions can be dynamic, sometimes beneficial and other times restrictive, depending on the relational context and the manner of engagement. Similarly, Wong and Liu (2010) warned that excessive parental control might undermine students' intrinsic motivation, leading to resentment or poor vocational fit.

Another emergent theme from both quantitative and qualitative data was the role of emotional and moral support in fostering career confidence. Students who felt emotionally supported and listened to by their parents expressed higher levels of certainty and satisfaction in their career trajectories. This supports Murray-Harvey and Slee's (2007) findings that emotional support from family correlates positively with school experience and academic motivation. For example, a student affirmed: *"They have been responding to my request and in everything I've wanted about the career."* (Participant 5, personal communication, November 2024). This response illustrates how consistent emotional and financial

backing boosts a student's career self-concept and confidence. Conversely, lack of support led to feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty, as reported by other respondents a finding consistent with Jones and Palmer (2004).

5. Conclusion And Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that parental influence through expectations, modelling, and guidance plays a crucial role in the career decision-making process of undergraduate students at Lira University. The findings highlight both supportive and restrictive dimensions of parental influence, suggesting the need for culturally sensitive career guidance that mediates between parental input and student autonomy.

5.2 Recommendations

The objective was to examine the effects parental influence on career choice of undergraduate students of Lira University. The study found that parental influence plays a minimal role in shaping students' career choices. Quantitative data demonstrated a weak correlation between parental influence and students' career choice. Qualitative interviews revealed that while many students appreciated guidance and support from their parents, excessive control sometimes led to career dissatisfaction or internal conflict thus these led to the following recommendations:

1. Strengthening career guidance and counselling should be done in schools and universities. This can be done by offering career guidance programs that help students make informed decisions based on their skills, interests, and market opportunities. This will also help the students to build self-confidence and independence in making career choices.
2. To address socioeconomic barriers to career aspirations, Governments should revise scholarships programs to consider students from low-income families, improve and strengthen students' loan scheme program. This might help to reduce career mismatches, equal career opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that economic challenges do not limit career choices.
3. Promoting parental education on career trends and opportunities should be encouraged. This might inform them about modern career options, emerging industries, and new opportunities beyond traditional professions. Community workshops or school-led programs can help parents understand the changing job market and

encourage them to support their children's career aspirations. In addition, there is need to promote parental career awareness through parent-student career workshops to enhance their children's career development process. This is because some parents imposed traditional career choices without understanding modern job markets.

4. There should be tailoring of career programs based on parental influence and self-concept career counselling programs to determine the extent of parental influence and how it shapes students' career decisions. This will help to initiate the design of special interventions for students who

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- experience high parental pressure to help them navigate their choices confidently.
- ### 5.3 Further Research
- This study was conducted on the parental influence on career choice and self-concept among undergraduate students. Therefore, similar study may be undertaken to determine how other factors such as peer and teachers can influence the career choice of undergraduate students. Similarly, Further research on career development factors should be conducted on how gender, cultural norms, and psychological factors influence students' career choices.
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