

# Gender Differences in the Predictors of Career Indecision of Secondary School Students in Kenya

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the predictors of career indecision by gender. A sample of 359 (162 male and 197 female) secondary school students were surveyed on career indecision, career readiness, locus of control, vocational identity, self esteem, social support and career decision making self efficacy. Using multiple regression analysis, the predictor variables were able to account for 32.9 % of variance in males and 32.8% variance in females. Career readiness and vocational identity emerged as the strongest predictors of career indecision for female students while career readiness, external locus of control and vocational identity emerged as the strongest predictors of career indecision for male students. The results demonstrate the importance of providing students with adequate career information, encouraging them to explore and engage in activities related to career decision making and helping students come up with clear career goals.

**Keywords:** Career Indecision, Career Readiness, Locus Of Control, Secondary School Students, Gender

## Introduction:

Career indecision has been defined as the inability to make decisions about the career one wishes to pursue (Guay, Senecal, Gauthier, & Fernet, 2003). It has also been defined as the inability to select and devote one's self to a career choice (Tokar, Withrow, Hall and Moradi, 2003). It is therefore a reflection of a person's career readiness or maturity. It is also viewed as a developmental process within the greater career maturation process and it results from the lack of information about the self and the world of work (Prideaux and Creed, 2001).

Making a career decision is an important task for young people. It begins to emerge when children are in primary school. During this time, children develop interests and begin to understand how their ability relates to the world of work (Hartung, Porfeli & Vondracek, 2005). The ever evolving technology and changes in the job market are some of the primary reasons for complexity in career decision making. The variety of career opportunities available to individuals now are more than those that existed decades ago (Sharf, 2009). This comes as a challenge for most individuals who are in the process of making career decisions. It has been estimated that as many as 50% of students experience career indecision (Gianakos, 1999; Creed, Patton & Prideux, 2006). Thus, career indecision is an important topic in career development. The assessment of career indecision provides information about specific problems that prevent adolescents from making career decisions. Despite its status as a significant career related problem, career indecision has not been a central construct in career development theories (Kelly & Lee, 2002).

According to Creed, Patton & Prideaux (2006) career indecision is a normal response when young people are required to make career related decisions. It may occur at any moment when individuals are contemplating on their careers but especially during transition points such as when choosing school subjects or university programme. Creed et al. (2006) point out that career indecision is a developmental appropriate experience which may fluctuate depending on a variety of situational factors but is likely to be resolved with the assistance of appropriate interventions such as appropriate career related information.

Santos & Ferreira, (2012) identified two main categories of career indecision: Developmental Indecision which is a normal developmental phase or stage in career development that is temporary and chronic indecision which is an on-going inability to make decisions because of psychological problems such as high levels of anxiety, low self esteem, lack of well defined self identity and external locus of control. Guay et al (2006) proposes that, students characterized by developmental indecision should experience a decrease in career indecision over time as they gather information on themselves and the world of work, whereas students who are chronically undecided should remain undecided over time.

#### *Correlates of career indecision*

Career indecision has been studied over time and has been associated with personal variables such as age (Schmidt et al, 2011), grade (Creed & Patton, 2007) and gender (Patton & Creed, 2001; Patton & Creed, 2007; Schmidt et al, 2011; Zhou & Santos, 2007). Studies have linked career indecision to variables such as trait anxiety (Lopez & Ann-Yi, 2006), Social support (Schmidt, Miles & Welsh, 2011; Constantine, Wallace & Kindaichi, 2005) and self-esteem (Germeij & DeBoeck, 2002). It has also been associated with career related variables such as Decision Making Style (Mau, 1995); career barriers (Patton, Creed & Watson 2003, ), Locus of control (Perry, Liu & Griffin, 2011; Santos 2001), Vocational identity (Talib & Aun, 2009; Santos, 2001; Santos & Ferreira, 2012), decision making self-efficacy (Creed, Patton and Bartum, 2004; Guay et al, 2003; Prideaux, Creed & Muller, 2000; Prideaux, Patton & Creed 2002). It is important to determine the predictors of career indecision.

#### *Current study*

The current study aims to determine the predictors of career indecision and whether the predictors of career indecision scores vary across gender. It is anticipated that there would be gender differences on the predictors of career indecision. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether selected predictors made similar or unique contribution to career indecision for male and female students.

## Methods

### *Participants*

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Kisumu Municipality Kenya. The sample for the study consisted of 359 secondary school students from year one to year four. The sample consisted of 162 male and 197 female students. The age of participants ranged from 13 to 28 years. The mean age of the participants was 16.5. Year one students represented 25.4%, year two represented 24.3%, year three represented 31.9% and year four students represented 17.0% of the total sample.

### **Instruments**

*Demographic Questionnaire.* Demographic questionnaire was used to gather basic information about the students such as age, gender, type of school, and year in school.

*Career Indecision.* The Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow et al, 1976) was used to measure career indecision of the students on a 4-point likert scale (1=Not at all like me, 4=Exactly like me). The scale contains 19 items which consists of two subscales. 16 items form the indecision subscale while 2 items measure the degree of certainty felt in having made a career decision. Osipow et al 1996) reported a two week test retest reliability of .90 and .81. Wang et al (2006) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .91. Patton and Creed (2007) reported .89. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .74.

*Career Readiness.* Career Maturity Inventory – Adaptability form (CMI; Savickas & Porfeli, 2011) was used to measure the career readiness of the students. The readiness subscale which has a total of 18 items measuring concern, curiosity and confidence was measured on a 5-point likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree). Sample items include: 'I am not going to choose a career until I am out of school' and 'I don't know what subjects to take in school'. Savickas and Porfeli (2011) reported a coefficient alpha of .86 measuring readiness which were used in the current study. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .71.

*Career Decision Making Self Efficacy.* The Career Decision Making Self Efficacy Scale (CDSES-SF; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) was used to assess the career decision making self efficacy of students the study. This instrument measures an individual's degree of belief that he/she can successfully complete tasks necessary for career decisions. It consists of 25 items measured on a 5-point likert scale (1=Complete confidence, 5=No confidence at all) and has five subscales which measure self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, career planning and problem solving. Sample items include: 'How much confidence do you have that you could accurately assess your abilities' and 'How much confidence do you have that you could determine the steps you need to take to successfully complete your chosen career'. Nilsson, Schmidt, and Meek (2002) reported reliability coefficients of .83. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .82.

*Vocational Identity.* Vocational identity of the students was measured using the Vocational Identity Scale (VIS; Holland, Daiger & Power, 1980) which consists of 18 items measured on a 4-point likert scale (1=Very true, 4=Very false). This scale measures the possession of clear and stable picture of one's goals and interest. Sample items include: 'I am uncertain about what occupations I would enjoy' and 'making up my mind about a career has been long and difficult'. Holland, Daiger & Power (1980) reported internal consistency reliability ranging

from .86 to .89. Wang et al reported .85 and Koumoundourou reported Cronbach's alpha of .75. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .71.

*Self Esteem.* The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965) was employed to assess the students' self-worth. The scale consists of 10 items with 5 of the items positively oriented and the other five negatively oriented. Internal consistency reliability have been reported as follows: Creed Patton and Bartum (2002) .85, and Santos and Ferreira (2012) .89. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .77.

*Social Support.* The 12 item scale of Multidimensional Scale of Social Support (MSSS; Zimet et al, 1988) was used to assess the sources and level of social support of students in the study. The items were measured on a 5-point likert scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree). Sample items include: 'My family is willing to help me make decisions' and 'I can talk about my problems with my friends'. Zimet et al (1988) reported an internal consistency coefficient of .88. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .81.

*Career Locus of Control.* The Career Locus of control Scale (CLCS; Millar & Shevlin, 2007) was used to measure career locus of control of the respondents. The scale consists of 20 items measuring both internal and external locus of control. The items were measured on a 5-point likert scale. Santos and Ferreira (2012) reported an internal consistency coefficient of .69. The reliability coefficient for the current study was .77.

## Results

### Summary Statistics

Summary data and bivariate correlations among independent and dependent variables are presented in Table 1. For females, career indecision was significantly positively correlated to external locus of control and significantly negatively correlated to Vocational identity, career decision making self efficacy, perceived social support and career readiness. For males, career indecision was significantly and positively associated with external locus of control and negatively associated with vocational identity and career readiness.

### Predicting career indecision

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis in relation to predicting career indecision scores by gender. Career indecision was entered as the dependent variable and external Locus of control, internal locus of control, vocational identity self esteem, and perceived social support, career decision making self efficacy and career readiness were entered as the independent variables. The summary data are presented in Table 2.

For females, the results indicate a significant model fit,  $F(11.54) = 13.16$ ,  $P < .05$  with the independent variables in the model accounting for 32.8% of the variance. The standardized beta weights show that career readiness was the strongest predictor followed by vocational identity. All of which produced significant individual prediction over and above the group prediction.

For males, the results indicate a significant model fit,  $F(7.64) = 10.81$ ,  $P < .05$  with the independent variables in the model accounting for 32.9% of the variance. The standardized beta weights show that career readiness was the strongest predictor followed by external locus of control and vocational identity. All of which produced significant individual prediction over and above the group prediction.

### Discussion

The current study examined multiple predictors of career indecision scores for male and female students. The study hypothesized no differences in the variables that predicted career indecision scores for males and females. The results however show that different combination of variables predicted career indecision scores for the male and female students. The analysis indicated significant model fit for both males and females which accounted for 32.9% and 32.8% of the variance respectively. The strongest predictor in both samples was career readiness implying that students who were actively engaged seeking career information, exploring and planning were less undecided when it came to making career decisions. It was also noted that students who had clear career goals were less undecided in both samples. There was however a major difference in external locus of control. In males, external locus of control was a stronger predictor than vocational identity while in females; external locus of control scores did not predict career indecision scores. Other variables such as career decision making self efficacy, self esteem, perceived social support and internal locus of control did not predict career indecision in both samples. It is important to note that, there were significant correlations between career indecision and the independent variables of career decision making self efficacy, external locus of control and perceived social support for female students. Higher career decision making self efficacy and social support was associated with lower career indecision scores while higher external locus of control was associated with higher career indecision scores.

### Conclusions

Students should be provided with adequate career information; they should be encouraged to explore various careers and consult widely so as to improve their levels of career readiness. As their career readiness increases, their level of career indecision decreases. Career counsellors, parents and teachers should encourage students evaluate themselves and have a clear sense of their interest and clear career goals. They should also be encouraged to stop believing that their career outcomes are dependent on factors out of their control such as luck, chance and other powerful people.

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Table 1:

*Mean, Standard Deviations and Person Product Moment Correlation for Dependent and Independent Variables*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1</b> ILoC	36.05	10.64	1	-.15	.09	.13	.21**	.34**	.04	-.07
<b>2</b> ELoC	21.11	3.74	-.20**	1	-.23**	-.26**	-.17**	-.07	-.35**	.39**
<b>3</b> SE	22.36	5.22	.13	-.06	1	.14	.09	.04	.23**	-.07
<b>4</b> VI	47.18	7.01	.04	-.29**	.01	1	-.04	.08	.28**	-.37**
<b>5</b> CDMSE	91.65	15.23	.24**	-.23**	.05	-.01	1	.19*	.24**	-.03
<b>6</b> PSS	45.91	8.70	.28**	-.10	.19**	.15*	.28**	1	.09	-.05
<b>7</b> CR	60.16	9.38	.02	-.31**	.06	.22**	.23**	.13	1	-.46**
<b>8</b> CI	35.53	7.02	-.09	.27**	.09	-.43**	-.21**	-.18*	-.49**	1

Key: Coefficients above the diagonal are for males and below the diagonal are for females.

ILoC = Internal Locus of Control, ELoC = External Locus of Control, SE= Self Esteem, VI = Vocational Identity, CDMSE = Career Decision Making self Efficacy, PSS = Perceived Social Support, CR = Career Readiness and CI = Career Indecision

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

Table 2:

*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Career Indecision for Male And Female Participants*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Male</i>			<i>Female</i>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>
Constant	50.78	6.65		66.26	5.74	
External Locus of Control	.17	.05	.25**	.04	.04	.06
Internal Locus of Control	-.04	.13	-.03	-.05	.13	-.03
Self Esteem	.13	.10	.09	.08	.08	.07
Vocational Identity	-.22	.08	-.21**	-.24	.06	-.26**
Career Decision Making Self Efficacy	-.04	.03	.09	-.05	.03	-.11
Perceived Social Support	.01	.06	.01	-.05	.05	-.06
Career Readiness	-.29	.06	-.36**	-.23	.05	-.33**

Key: \*\*p < .01.