

Influence of Parents' Expectations on Course Choice in Vocational Training Centres in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between parental influences and a young person's job decision, particularly in the context of choosing courses before enrolling in higher education institutions like Vocational Training Centres (VTCs). The research aims to understand how trainees' perceptions of parental influential factors predict their career choice intention in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. The study analysed data from 2,386 trainees and 29 principal managers in Taita Taveta County VTCs in 2022 using a descriptive survey design. Data was collected using structured interviews and questionnaires. Male trainees comprising 63.1% were more than female participants 261 (36.9%) ($\chi^2= 6.76$, d.f.=1, $p = 0.0093$). In 2022, 21-year-old trainees in Taita Taveta County VTCs enrolled in car repair, with 18.9% choosing this course, while 0.1% chose agriculture. Parents were the most influential factor, with 58.50% of trainees agreeing with this statement (35.70%) ($\chi^2= 139.95$, d.f.=4, $p < 0.0001$). When asked if other family members had the most impact on their decision to enrol in a course, the majority of respondents 351 (49.60%) agreed with the statement ($\chi^2= 93.53$, d.f.=4, $p < 0.0001$). In relation to opinion that counsellors had greatest influence in their course choice, majority of the respondents agreed 384(54.30%) while the rest disagreed ($\chi^2= 93.53$, d.f.=4, $p < 0.0001$). Also, when the trainees in the VTCs were asked whether the teachers had influence in their course choice, most of them 405(57.1%) agreed, with a significant difference ($\chi^2= 122.93$, d.f.=4, $p < 0.0001$). Parents' expectations significantly predicted course choice, $F_{0.05 (1,706)} = 6.381$, $p < 0.05$, which indicates that parents' expectations play a significant role in shaping the course choice ($b= 0.599$, $p < 0.05$). The study found trainees' course selections influenced by parents, relatives, counsellors, and instructors, but their personalities, intellectual capacities, and practical and theoretical skills limited their participation. Parents, family members, counsellors, and trainers should influence trainees' course selections based on personalities, intellectual prowess, KUCCPS needs, and course management capacity, ensuring beneficial outcomes.

Keywords: Expectations, course choice, Vocational Training Centres.

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INTRODUCTION

Course choice is selecting one vocation career over another (Chakravarty & Gupta, 2021). Career may be defined as the progress and actions taken by a person throughout a lifetime, specially related to that person's occupations. Choosing a career globally is an extremely important decision that impacts an individual's entire future. TVET is one of the best strategies adopted by nations that lack a performing labour market to train the workforce and increase productivity of the informal sector. Proper course choices in TVET institutions produces human labour that satisfies the industry needs (Kerdpitak & Jermsittiparsert, 2020). In China, proper course choice is one of the biggest challenges. There is a thorough grasp of the motivating factors driving

young people to select particular career paths (Ziaian *et al.*, 2021). Navin (2009) suggested that parents influence career options for their children before committing to a career to increase future career success and satisfaction. Thus, variables that influence career exploration in trainees should be identified and acknowledged. In many industries across Africa, course selection is a major aspect of focus (Saravanan & Kavitha, 2020). Courses are most significant components particularly when choosing the path in any profession for developing counties.

Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) offer a directive of creativeness, distinctiveness, status and way into the social system (Anovunga *et al.*, 2021). It attracts the labour market, all the way to employment

opportunities presented to them. When a trainee selects a correct subject that blends well towards the correct vocation, it leads to gratification and helps in their professional growth. On the other hand, choosing a course that is unattainable can result in frustrations. The ability of each trainee is determined by several issues which include the environment they live in, their ability, and academic achievement (Kerdpitak & Jernsittiparsert, 2020). Sociologists stress the forces in our society as the major determinants of vocational choice. Due to the fact that birthright determines one's family, color, country, social status, and access to educational opportunities, sociologists contend that it has a substantial impact on job choice. The variety of careers that a person considers is mainly influenced by their aspirations for their social position. Parents are tremendously influential in many facets of a young person's life, including crucial life decisions like picking a job. Some children choose careers that are compatible with their parents' expectations and beliefs, while others choose careers that are passed down from their fathers. Others contravenes their parents will as in the case of India (Iyer & Siddhartha, 2021).

Course choices services are crucial to the trainees joining Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions (Anudo & Orwa, 2020). Hence, course offices should be made active in learning institutions to help solve some of the challenges facing our trainees such as unemployment, lack of skills among the youth and friction among parents and trainees in Kenya, trainees joining TVET institutions are chosen by the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) on the basis of their academic qualification. The trainees select the courses when they are in high school and in this period, they have not been exposed to the industries, so they base their choices on weak reasons. Taita Taveta County has 29 Vocational Training Centres which offer various courses leading to various opportunities in the diverse course fields. It is for this reason the researcher sought to study on the determinants of course choice in vocational training centres in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

Kenyan parents are tremendously influential in many facets of a young person's life, including crucial life decisions like picking a job. However, there is a dearth of research on the relationship between parental

influences and a young person's job decision, particularly in terms of the choice of courses made before enrolling in a higher education institution like VCTs. With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to examine how the perceptions of VCTs trainees about parental influential factors on them predict their career choice intention. In other words, this study was to assess the influence of parents' expectations and trainees' personality on Course Choice in Vocational Training Centres in Taita Taveta County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive survey design. The study focused on the parents' expectations as a determinant of course choice in Vocational Training Centres in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. All the trainees in Taita Taveta County VTCs were considered. Considering trainees in the four sub-counties produced a homogenous characteristic that was explained with an in-depth analysis. The target population for this research were 2,386 trainees and 29 principal managers in Taita Taveta County VTCs in the year 2022. Through questionnaires and interview schedules respectively, the trainees and principal managers in Taita Taveta County VTCs provided information on the determinants of course choice. The trainees and principal managers were chosen because of their availability and accessibility. They would be found in the VTCs during normal working hours and thus give the researcher an easy time in data collection. The trainees would also give reliable data since they are the ones who are pursuing the courses they selected.

This study focused on trainees and Principals of VTCs in Taita Taveta County. Sampling was carried out in order to enable the extensive study of a subset rather than the entire target population. According to Kothari (2017), a decent sample should comprise 30% of the population that is easily reachable. 714 trainees, representing 30% of the 2,386 trainees in each of the four sub counties of Taita Taveta County VTCs, were randomly chosen for the study in order to get a more representative sample. Additionally, the survey included 7(30%) of the VTCs principals in each Sub County. Stratified sampling technique was used to stratify the VTCs according to the four sub-counties as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Target Population and Sample Size

Code	Trainees per Sub-County	Population		Sample	
		Trainees	Principal Managers	Trainees	Principal Managers
A	Mwatate	807	9	242	2
B	Wundanyi	607	7	182	2
C	Voi	643	9	192	2
D	Taveta	329	4	98	1
Total		2,386	29	714	7

Source: Author (2022)

For the purpose of gathering data for this study, the researcher employed structured interview questions and questionnaires. Both open-ended and closed-ended surveys were employed. Interview guides were used, focusing in particular on Principal Managers of Taita Taveta County VTCs, to gather in-depth information for this study. The researcher was careful to only use official school documentation from the Taita Taveta VTC's office's Principal Managers. Validity is described as the appropriateness, accuracy, and meaningfulness of specific conclusions drawn from study findings (Bolarinwa, 2015). In order to evaluate the validity of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted in Kilifi County using questionnaires and an interview schedule. Kilifi County was chosen because it had political traits with Taita Taveta County and has vocational training centres as well. To direct and advise the Study appropriately, the researcher spoke with supervisors and education specialists at the University of Eldoret. The pilot study established concept validity by allowing for the identification of item misunderstandings, ambiguities, and deficiencies. Cronbach's alpha is commonly used to describe this dependability statistic. This assesses the consistency with which respondents reply to questions. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80 was obtained which was deemed good and reliable as advised by Scott *et al.*, (2016). Data was analysed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 21). Both inferential and descriptive statistical methods were used to summarize the quantitative data. Percentages and frequencies were employed as descriptive statistics, whereas Regression analysis was utilized as inferential statistics.

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Where:

y = Course choice

α = Y Intercept

$\beta_1 \dots \beta_4$ = the changes caused by the various independent variable constructs

e = error

X_1 = parent influence

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender, age and the year of enrolment formed the general information of trainees in Taita Taveta County VTCs. Regarding the proportion of male and female trainees, the total percentage of male trainees,

447 (63.1%), was more than the total percentage of female participants, 261 (36.9%) with a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2 = 6.76$, d.f.=1, $p = 0.0093$); this indicates that enrolment of females in Taita Taveta VTCs was low compared to their male counterparts. This shows that there is still insufficient female enrolment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programmes, resulting in low female completion rates from the TVET institutions as observed by Najoli (2019). Struthers & Strachan (2019) further confirm the findings that the majority of the courses are dominated by male trainees. This is explained by the fact that several obstacles prevent female students from enrolling in TVET programs and trades that are dominated by men, as a result of insufficient public awareness of the issue and legislative initiatives to address it. Within male-dominated forestry facilities, the entry of women into forest management has created opportunities and challenges (Johansson *et al.*, 2020).

Most trainees (44.2%) were aged between 15-19 years, while 39.7%, 5.8%, and 10.3% were between 20-24 years, 25-29 years, and 30-34 years, respectively ($\chi^2 = 46.88$, d.f.=3, $p < 0.0001$). The mean age for the trainees was 21 years. These findings indicate that most of the trainees were in their youthful stage which is supported by (Makato *et al.*, 2022). This shows that trainees in TVET institutions are young. Most of the trainees (52%) had enrolled in 2022, the same year the research was conducted with a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 93.75$, d.f.=4, $p < 0.0001$). According to the year of registration, 29.4% had registered the previous year, 2021, 17.1% in 2020, 1.1% in 2019, and 0.4% in 2018 and below. These results demonstrate that trainees enrol in VTCs as soon as they graduate from high school or from elementary school (Tsui *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, these results demonstrated that the success rate of the artisan courses was fairly good, given that just 0.4% of students registered in 2018 and below. By helping trainees pay their tuition on time and encouraging them to enrol in VTCs and finish their courses on schedule, bursaries and scholarships increase success rates (Syme *et al.*, 2022). The majority of the trainees (52%) had joined in the VTCs the same year the research was being conducted and so had vivid and exact information on their enrolment, which allowed the researchers to realize the right facts. Also, the rest of the trainees had recently joined the VTCs, having vivid memories of their experiences.

Table 2: Data on Sampled Trainees in the Taita Taveta VTCs (n=708)

		Frequency	Percentage	Chi square (χ^2)
Gender	Male	447	63.1	$\chi^2 = 6.76$, d.f.=1, $p = 0.0093$
	Female	261	36.9	
Age	15-19 years	313	44.2	$\chi^2 = 46.88$, d.f.=3, $p < 0.0001$
	20-24 years	281	39.7	
	25-29 years	41	5.8	
	30-34 years	73	10.3	

		Frequency	Percentage	Chi square (χ^2)
Year of enrolment	2018 & below	3	0.4	$\chi^2= 93.75$, d.f.=4, p<0.0001
	2019	8	1.1	
	2020	121	17.1	
	2021	208	29.4	
	2022	368	52.0	

Source: Author (2022)

Nature and Characteristics of the Artisan Courses Undertaken (n=708)

The majority of VTC students (18.9%) chose to specialize in car repair, while the smallest percentage of students (0.1%) chose to specialize in agriculture. Among the other well-liked courses, Artisan in Motor Vehicle Mechanics had the highest enrolment rate

(18.9%) among trainees, followed by Artisan in Electrical Installation (16.5%) ($\chi^2= 66.09$, d.f.=11, p<0.0000). The findings of Odondi *et al.*, (2020), corroborate the results, which show that trainees in the Taita Taveta VTCs preferred technical courses over business or secretarial ones.

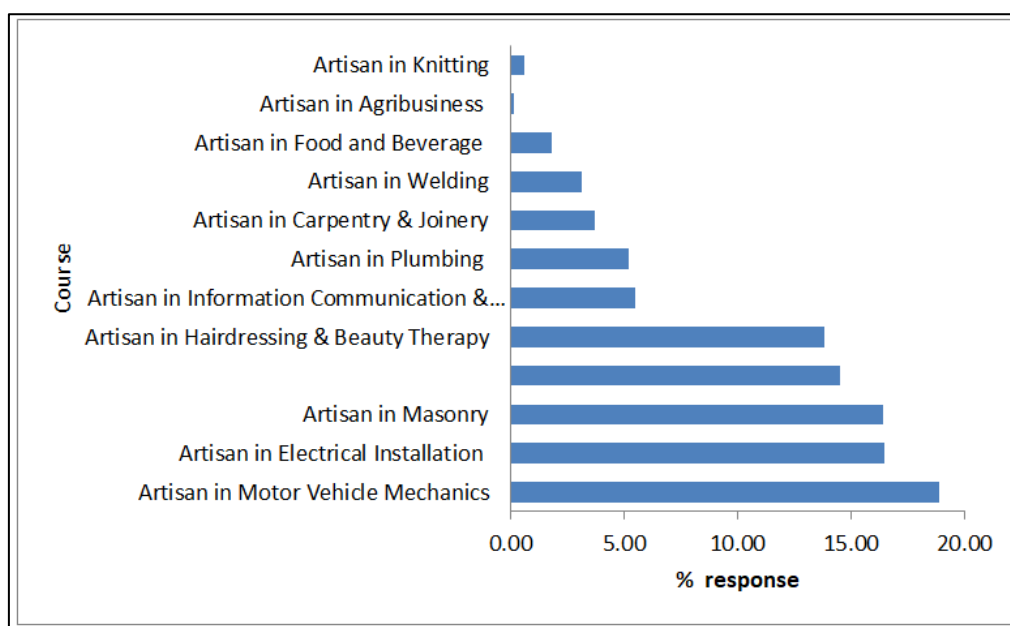


Figure 1: Characteristics of the Artisan Courses undertaken (n=708)

Influence of parents' expectations on course choice in VTCs in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

When asked which factor most influenced their choice of course, trainees in Taita Taveta County's VTCs said their parents. A large margin separated those who agreed with the statement 414 (58.50%) from those who opposed (35.70%) ($\chi^2= 139.95$, d.f.=4, p< 0.0001). The results are consistent with those of a research by the Malaysian Ministry of Education conducted by Iyer & Siddhartha (2021), which found that parental expectations had a substantial impact on students' intentions to pursue STEM fields as careers. The finding disagrees with those of Iyer & Siddhartha (2021) that trainees in India typically choose courses that go against their parents' expectations indication of detrimental parental influence. According to a different research by Oomen (2021), parents and their children discuss courses to be taken before trainees enroll in higher level education, concentrating on the learner's preferences and talents to minimize potential problems. Students now choose employment based on their

educational background and professional goals as a result of this. Saleem (2021) also pointed out that family members may decide to pursue a professional path as a successor, employee, or entrepreneur inside or outside the family company, depending on the positive and negative impacts of family aspects, cultural considerations, and personal considerations.

When asked if other family members had the most impact on their decision to enrol in a course, the majority of respondents 351 (49.60%) agreed with the statement ($\chi^2= 93.53$, d.f.=4, p< 0.0001). Among the key elements indicated by the trainees that affected their course choices were their families and their parents' occupations. This is consistent with the findings of Qureshi *et al.*, (2021) who found that parents should provide their kids the right advice and counselling regarding their course selections in order to help them make the best choices. Oomen (2021) pointed out that, in contrast to the findings, family members occasionally have autonomy over their course selection and make

those selections on their own. However, the chosen courses reflect the family members' employment level, familial ties, and entrepreneurial spirit.

In relation to opinion that counsellors had greatest influence in their course choice, majority of the respondents agreed 384(54.30%) while the rest disagreed ($\chi^2= 93.53$, d.f.=4, $p< 0.0001$). The results are in line with those of Oomen (2021), who claimed that the topic of courses has great importance in family businesses because choosing a course within the family

businesses is typically expected from the incumbent generation while doing so poses a difficult task for family members. Also, when the trainees in the VTCs were asked whether the teachers had influence in their course choice, most of them 405(57.1% agreed, 8.3% were neutral, while 34.5% disagreed with a significant difference ($\chi^2= 122.93$, d.f.=4, $p< 0.0001$). The findings were in line with those of Ziaian *et al.*, (2021) that tutors may have an effect in the choice of subjects by trainees.

Table 3: Respondents Opinions on whether Parents' Expectations influences course choice in VTCs in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Chi square (χ^2)
My parents had the greatest influence in my course choice	194 (27.4%)	217 (30.6%)	45 (6.4%)	154 (21.8%)	98 (13.8%)	$\chi^2= 139.95$, d.f.=4, $p< 0.0001$
Other family members had the greatest influence in my course choice	136 (19.2%)	215 (30.4%)	62 (8.8%)	198 (28.0%)	97 (13.7%)	$\chi^2= 119.52$, d.f.=4, $p< 0.0001$
Counsellors had greatest influence in my course choice	176 (24.9%)	208 (29.4%)	69 (9.7%)	159 (22.5%)	96 (13.6%)	$\chi^2= 93.53$, d.f.=4, $p< 0.0001$
Teachers had greatest influence in my course choice	192 (27.1%)	213 (30.1%)	59 (8.3%)	155 (21.9%)	89 (12.6%)	$\chi^2= 122.93$, d.f.=4, $p< 0.0001$

Key: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, N – Neutral, D – Disagree, SD - Strongly Disagree

The principal managers were interviewed on influence of parents' expectations on course choice. The majority of the principal managers cited *"The parents who own businesses have the job inheritance syndrome and prefer their children to pursue courses that would enable them promote their family businesses. This is a sure way of giving their children direct employment. Other parents come and collect course brochures from the VTCs and single handedly choose the courses for their children basing on their experience on marketable courses. However, most of the parents allow trainees to choose course on their own after giving them career guidance that enables them make correct course choices."*

The study employed regression analysis to establish whether there was a significant impact of

parents' expectations on course choice. Parents' expectations significantly predicted course choice, $F_{0.05(1,706)} = 6.381$, $p< 0.05$, which indicates that parents' expectations play a significant role in shaping the course choice ($b= 0.599$, $p < 0.05$). These findings demonstrate unequivocally that parents' expectations have a major impact on students' course preferences. Additionally, the $R^2 = 0.009$ shows that 0.9% of the variance in course selection is explained by the model. While learners pick their own jobs, some studies on course choice have indicated that their decisions are frequently impacted by the expectations of their parents and other family members (Lee *et al.*, 2019). To assist students in choosing careers, instructors should consider integrating and utilizing both traditional and online methods.

Table 4: Regression analysis to find out whether parents' expectations had a significant impact on course choice of trainees' in VTCs in Taita Taveta County, Kenya

Objective	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	P-value	Research Question supported
O2	PE CC	.227	.009	6.381	.012 ^b	Yes

Note: * $P > 0.001$, PE: Parents' Expectations, CC: Course Choice

CONCLUSION

Parents, relatives, counsellors, and instructors have a positive and significant influence on trainees' course selections. The trainees' personalities, intellectual capacities, KUCCPS requirements, and

capacity for handling the practical and theoretical components of their courses, however, confined them to their courses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By taking into account the trainees' personalities, intellectual prowess, KUCCPS needs, and capacity to manage both the practical and theoretical parts of their courses, parents, family members, counsellors, and trainers should have a beneficial impact on the course selections made by the trainees.

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