



Personal Interest as A Determinant of Career Choice in Home Science Education Programme Offered in Kenyan Universities

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Abstract

The process of choosing a career path has been a difficult task to students. Students pursuing Home Science Education programmes in the universities have faced difficulties of choosing careers. This study sought to establish whether personal interest is a determinant on choice of careers in Home Science Education programmes in the Universities in Kenya. This is because students always face challenges when making their choices. Therefore, this study specifically sought to determine whether students chose their programme as a result of their personal interest. The study was guided by the Social Cognitive Career Theory that explores how career choices are made by self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals. This study adopted the Convergent Parallel mixed method design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu and Kiambu counties which have universities with programmes that train Home Science educators. This study adopted purposive sampling technique to select two universities offering the Home Science education programmes where 254 students were selected from a population of 420 students and 2 Heads of Department/Chairs of Department took part in the study. Data for the study was obtained by using questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussion guides. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and then presented using distribution tables and graphs. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically then used to compare with that of quantitative data. Respondents in this study chose Home Science Education programme because of their personal interest in the programme which emanated as a result of its relationship to their career interests 93.3%, availability of wide careers in Home Science 94.9%, their background in Home Science subject 85.8% and passion of enrolling in the programme at the university 85.8%. The study recommends that personal interest among students and in particular individuals should be cultivated early on in life and in schools right from the onset of schooling. Home science educationist should be at the forefront in nurturing students to help them realize their potential thus developing their interests in the course.

Keywords: Personal interest, Determinant, Career Choice, Home Science Education

INTRODUCTION

Students exiting secondary schools for tertiary institutions many at times experience uncertainties. choice of career is usually surrounded by different factors. Ooro (2017) in her study noted that career development is among the weighty decisions that students make in shaping their forecasts and future which will have an impact on them throughout their lifetime. It is therefore one of the most delicate stages that needs to be approached with a lot of diligence. As indicated by Maina (2013) the development of a person's occupation is most likely to be steered by varied issues like cultural ideas, conditions within the family, career prospects among others. Bikse, Lusena-Ezera, Libkowska and Rivza (2018) documents that an individual has to take note of their professional interest and the matched identification of

their character, interests, abilities and their own skills. This they posit that there is a need for an individual to have in mind the challenges experienced in the 21st century and the market trends. This is particularly important if at all the most suitable and qualified work force is to be produced.

This study orients itself to the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) that explores how career choices are made by self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals. Personal goals in the SCCT variable *are* the intention of an individual to engage in a particular activity or to produce a particular outcome (Lent, 2005). In this case, behaviour will most likely occur as a result of the personal goals envisaged by the individual. Leung (2008) postulates that by setting ones' personal goals, the concerned individual would most likely persist in tasks and end up sustaining their behaviour for long without tangible external rewards or reinforcement.

Presence of personal goals in an individual may greatly contribute to career choice decisions as they will be catapulted to engage in areas that they have a great desire in. This will in the long run drive the individual in putting more emphasis in behaviour and choices that will positively contribute towards their desired career.

Interest in a given field together with activities associated with it form a basis for its choice. In addition to this, lack of the said interest in a career influence one not to select a particular career (Bright, 2005). In this respect, it is evident that personal interest may or may not influence an individual to make a career choice. Ones desire to pursue a certain field is a key factor in selecting careers. It has been established that interest is one of the most powerful factors in the choice of a career as indicated by Mishkin, Wangroicz, Dori and Dori (2016); Downey, McGaughey and Roach (2009); Kim, Markham and Cangelosi, 2002 and Zhang, (2007). In reality, students in institutions of higher learning will choose to pursue fields that are of interest to them. Downey, McGaughey and Roach (2011) established that personal interest influenced students to choose a major in their career path.

Personal interest according to Liaw, Wu, Lopez, Chow, Lim, Holroyd Tan and Wang (2017) is the students' individual interest in their chosen profession. It is that personal initiative that makes a student choose his/her preferred profession. This emanates from Hollands career typology (1966) where he attests that people usually make career choices in unison with to their personality and interest. Personal interest in a given field is an important motivating factor in doing things that one likes which translates to boosting their morale in it (Humayon, Raza, Khan, and Ansari, 2018). Further, Canaga and Sempele (2019) in their study factors motivating students to pursue hospitality education established that majority of their respondents pursued Hospitality education as a result of their own choice. They further indicated that their respondents were driven by some intrinsic motivating factors like personal interest, dreams, aptitude, values and competence.

Bakshi, Gandhi, Shah, and Maru (2012) posit that as much as there are varied factors that influence career choice of young people, they make choices that have an impact on their development. Here, the aspect of personal interest is what actually takes the center stage and they would most likely head to careers where they have a higher preference. Further, Amani (2016) and Amani (2013) in Tanzanian studies revealed that a higher percentage of respondents in the field of engineering were mostly influenced by personal interest. Further, Mberia and Midigo (2018) in their study established that students' skills, interest and values played a major role in determining their career choices.

Meddour, Abdo, Majid, Auf, and Aman, (2016) confirmed that personal interest on the mind of a student plays a great role on career decision in choosing the kind of profession they

wish to join as they will try hard in putting all efforts to realize their career aspirations. With this concept in mind, many at times students tend to rededicate all their energy in activities that will catapult them into their career aspirations. Gacohi (2017) established that most of her respondents showed that career interest was a very significant reason leading them to make their choice on most preferred programme of study.

Similarly, Walaba and Kiboss (2013) established that respondents in their study chose the career subject based on the interest of pursuing it later on in the career ladder. In addition, Okiror and Otabong (2015) in their study revealed that their respondents chose Agriculture as a result of their personal interest in the field. They further argue that the choice is one that is genuine since they are catapulted by the innermost motive. In addition, Gitonga, Kigen, Wangeri and Orodho (2013) established that students experience satisfaction as an immediate outcome of the match between their personal characteristics and their choice of a degree programme. This implies that students would choose programmes that interests them and the same time satisfy their immediate outcome expectations.

Further, Owino and Odundo (2016) in their study, ranked personal interest as the most outstanding factor on the choice of History as a career subject. Specifically, they noted that individual factors were the key elements in the selection of careers where personal interest is an example. Coming closer to Home Science related programme, Korir and Wafula (2012) argue that personal interest was one of the most influential factors. The authors further pin point a closer relationship between personal interest with the choice of the course to have arisen way back while they were in secondary school. Personal interest could also stem from lifestyles depicted by those already in the Hospitality profession.

Besides other competing factors on career paths to be followed by a student, personal interest will be the key component to consider. For instance, Adams (2014) confirmed that personal interest was the highest rated variable and was the main cause used to make career choices in a motor retail industry in South Africa. Similarly, a systematic review of literature around the globe established that personal interest was also the major factor that influenced career choice in an individualistic setting (Twumasi, Emeto, Lindsay, Tsey, & Malau -Aduli, 2018). Further, their study revealed that the youth who were drawn from the individualistic setting were more independent even as they chose their major based on their personal interest.

Omari (2014) confirmed that personal interest played a significant role in the choice of careers. Similarly, Al-Abri and Kooli (2018) confirmed that interest had a positive affiliation with career trail and was one of the most significant influencing factors. Bikse et al. (2018); Zotorvie (2016); Kochung and Migunde (2011) and Borchet (2002) established that personal interest was an influencing aspect as their respondents wanted to understand their own interest at the same time exploring on their capabilities. Therefore, this study intends to establish whether personal interest in Home Science Education was also one of the influencing factors among the undergraduates in the university.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted the pragmatic worldview that enabled the use of mixed methods design which involves the combination of qualitative and quantitative research data (Creswell, 2014). This study adopted the convergent parallel mixed method where both the quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently followed by analyzing them separately. The main assumption of using this type of mixed method is that both the quantitative data and qualitative data provide different types of information and gives a detailed view of respondents qualitatively which has the ability to make scores on instruments quantitatively.

The obtained results are then compared to see whether the findings confirm or disconfirm each other. This study was conducted in Uasin Gishu and Kiambu counties with focus on the two universities that train Home Science educators. The sample size of 254 was conveniently selected from a population of 420 students that were willing to take part in the study. The university is the most suitable target because it is the institutions of higher learning mandated to train Home Science educators to handle the secondary level of education where Home Science is currently one of the subjects offered. Two universities were chosen for this study because they were the only public universities offering Home science education programme where the use of homogenous variable was considered most suitable. Data was analyzed descriptively and thematically. Quantitative and qualitative data that was obtained from the questionnaires were first coded and then analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analyzed quantitative data was then presented by use of graphs. Qualitative data from the focus group discussions and the interviews were transcribed, coded, and created/grouped into themes. The analyzed qualitative data was used in explaining the quantitative results by giving more insights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Home Science Studied as a Subject in Secondary

Respondents were asked whether they did Home Science as a subject in secondary schools. The responses are presented in Figure 1 which indicates that majority of the respondents 247 (97.2%) studied Home Science as a subject in secondary school. On the other hand, 7 (2.8%) did not take Home Science in secondary school. This finding is important because it sheds more light to the present study with regards to identifying determinants which may have led to career choice. This finding corroborates with those of Wildman and Torres, (2001); Walaba and Kiboss, (2013) and Fabea (2014) who indicated that the subjects pursued in secondary education by students would form the leading factor as they choose their programmes of study at the university. They believe that having a prior knowledge in a certain field will most likely make them choose that field.

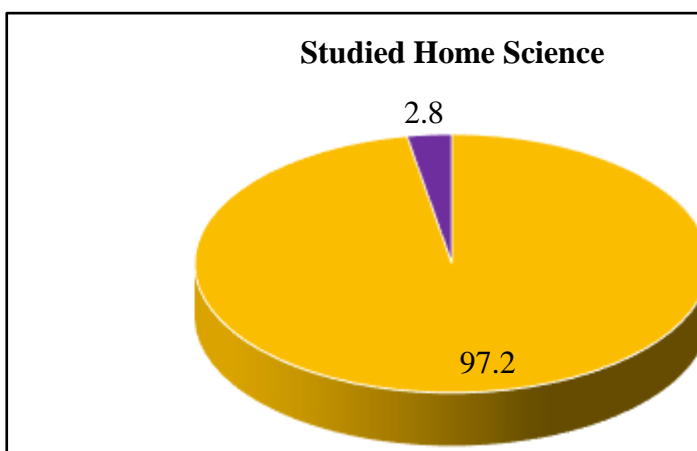


Figure 1: Home Science Studied as a Subject in Secondary

Optional Subject Studied in Secondary

A further inquiry was made to establish the optional subjects that respondents studied in secondary schools. This inquiry was important with an aim of establishing whether one can choose a career in Home science education without necessarily having taken Home science subject in secondary education. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Optional Subject Studied in Secondary

Optional Subject	Frequency	Percent
None	4	1.8
Electricity	1	0.4
Business studies	1	0.4
Agriculture	1	0.4
Home Science	247	97.2
Total	254	100.0

The first item in Figure 2 showed that 92.9% of the respondents agreed that their own personal interest in the program made them choose a career in Home Science education programmes while 5.5% disagreed. In the focus group discussion, it was evident that they chose the programme because of personal interest in their preferred programme of study, that is Home Science Education. Some excerpts were as follows;

I chose Home Science because of the passion in me. I loved the way Home Science fills you. At least the areas in Home Science for instance clothing and construction could boost me. I just love Home Science and everything around it. (FGD 2, Respondent 5, 3/12/2020)

Personal interest for me is paramount. I didn't do Home Science because I didn't know what to do or because I was to get a job. I enjoy doing it as I get to interact with what I'm doing, for example, fashion, its unique. (FGD 1, Respondent 1, 3/12/2020)

I chose Home Science because of interest. I loved Home Science practicals in high school. I was called to pursue Education Science and I thought, why should I study Biology and Chemistry yet I don't like them. I changed my course to Home Science because I was interested and loved it. (FGD 4, Respondent 3, 18/12/2020)

Despite the challenge of discrimination and scrutiny, I chose Home Science out of my personal decision. I stood firm to my decision. I was not advised by anyone. I just loved it and had a vision, I believed in the programme. (FGD 4, 18/12/2020).

Findings in this study (fig 2) are in unison with other works. For instance, it has been documented that personal interest in a given field is an important motivating factor in doing things that one likes which translates to boosting their morale in it (Humayon et al., 2018). The interview with the Heads of Departments/Chairs of Departments had indications that personal interest portrayed by their students may have been boosted by the good grades they got in Home Science in high school. In addition, the focus group discussion indicated that some students developed interest in Home Science education because of the good performance they had in the subject way back in the secondary education. This aspect of good performance was also similar to the works of Canaga and Sempel (2019) that students are motivated to pursue Hospitality Education due to the ease of getting good grades. Further, other works by Twumasi et al, (2018) Liaw et al, (2017); Mishkin et al, (2016); Owino and Odundo (2016); Amani (2016); Adams (2014); Omari (2014) and Amani (2013) established that their respondents were largely influenced by personal interest in choosing programmes of study in institutions of higher learning.

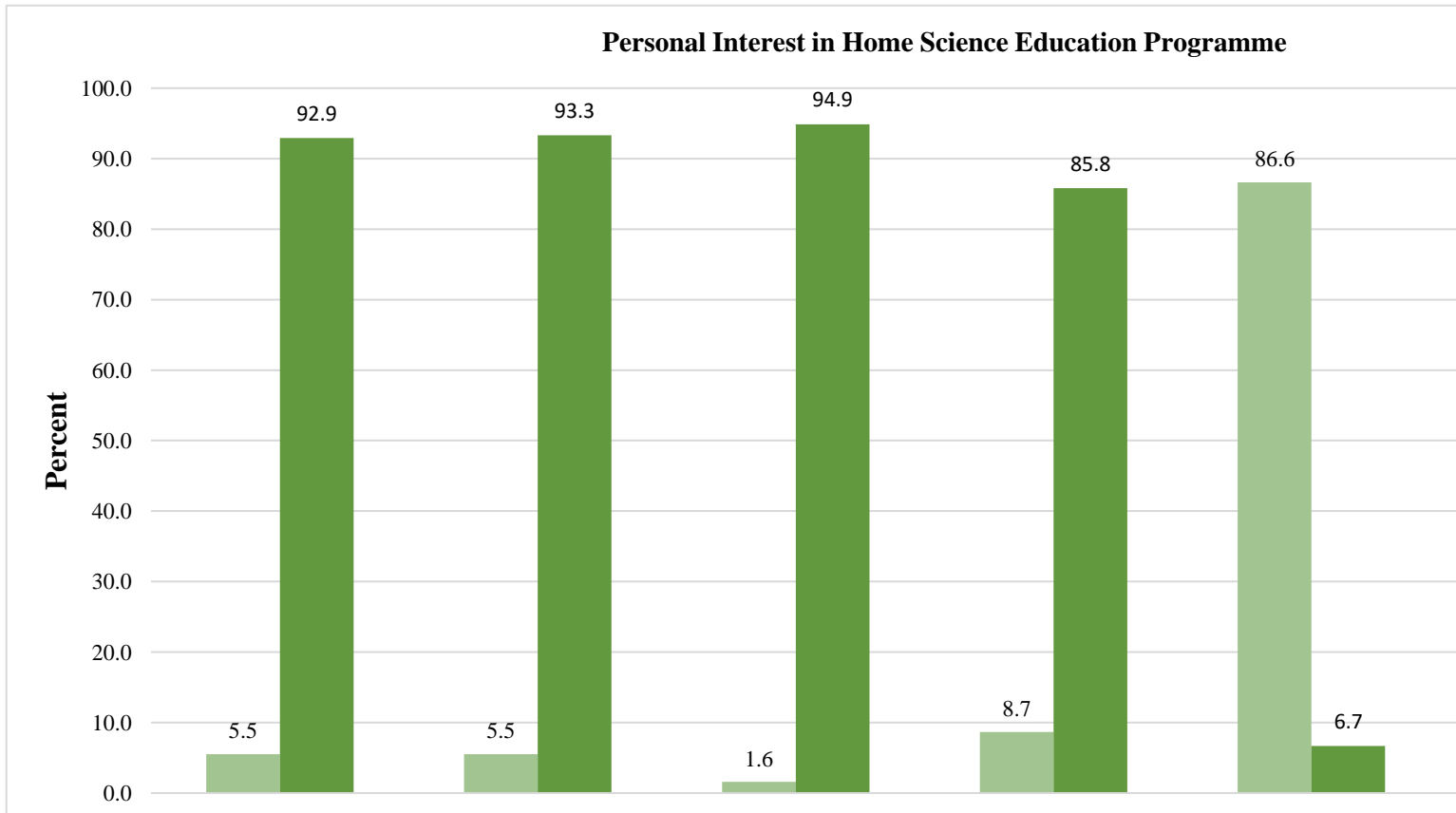


Figure 2: Personal Interest in Choice of Careers in Home Science Education Programme

It is important to note that individual students do develop interest from early stages to pursue certain programmes. It is correct therefore to say that the respondents had that personal interest implying that they had an intrinsic motivation to pursue the programme. For instance, the focus group discussions with respondents in this study indicated that their interest in the programme was ignited early in life particularly in primary and secondary school. Example of the excerpt is as follows;

Interest developed around class 8 when I saw my mum's different designs. She taught me how to crochet and I was like this is a good idea, I learnt how to innovate some new things and in high school my Home Science teacher encouraged me. (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

Findings in this study are similar with those of Korir and Wafula (2012) where they argued that personal interest was one of the most influential factors in their study where they pin pointed a closer relationship of personal interest with the choice of the course to have arisen way back in secondary school. Canaga and Sempole (2019) established that majority of their respondents pursued Hospitality education as a result of their own choice driven by some intrinsic motivating factors like personal interest, dreams, aptitude, values and competence. Therefore, it can be concluded that career aspirations of an individual may stem early in life if they receive the right guidance.

The second item in Figure 2 showed that (93.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that their degree program was related to their career interests, while (5.5%) disagreed. As earlier mentioned in the preceding attribute on personal interest, it can be confirmed that indeed personal interest may lead to career interest thereby leading to the choice of career related to Home Science. Further works by Meddour et al. (2016); Gacohi (2017) corroborates with findings in this study that personal interest on the mind of a student plays a great role on career decision in choosing the kind of profession he/she so wishes to join as he/she will try hard in putting all efforts to realize their career aspirations. Thus, they believed that career interest was a very significant reason leading them to make their choice on most preferred programme of study. In addition, Bikse et al. (2018) argued that an individual has to take note of their professional interest and the matched identification of their character, interests, abilities and their own skills. This aspect is important in the long run as it will ensure the production of a competent work force in the world of work.

The third item in Figure 2 showed that (94.9%) of the respondents agreed that their degree program offered them a wide variety of careers related to their interest, while (1.6%) disagreed. This may have been a reason for the respondents to choose the careers owing to the broad options in terms of selection.

Qualitative data yielded more information in support to this item. For instance, the interview with the Heads of Department/Chairs of Department confirmed that a higher percentage of their students chose Home Science education programme because it offers a wide variety of careers, they were interested in. They indicated that they developed a personal interest in Home Science education because of the entrepreneurship aspect in Home Science course where one can venture into textiles, bakery among others. They further indicated that even as the students pursue their course at the university or teach or work in their institutions, they could easily venture in other activities that they had developed interest in which to some extent were income generating. The focus group discussion with students also confirmed that they had chosen Home Science education programme as a result of the wide career

opportunities that are related to their personal interest. Excerpts from the discussions were as follows;

I didn't want to be a teacher, I wanted to be a doctor. When I received my results, I could only qualify for an education course. They told me, 'When you become a teacher of Home Science, you can start your own boutique, sew your own clothes'. I was not interested in Home Science but the careers made me do it (FGD 4, 18/12/2020) What motivated me most about Home Science is its wide area. Upon the completion of this programme, I will have learnt so many things that I can improve myself. Home Science is important to an individual, the community and even the society. Home Science is very marketable (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

Other scholars established similar findings with those of this study. For instance, Al-Abri and Kooli (2018) and Walaba and Kiboss (2013) indicated that personal interest in the programme of study has affiliations with career trail with a basis of pursuing it later on in their career ladder.

The fourth item in Figure 2 showed that (85.8%) of the respondents agreed that their background in Home Science made them to choose the programme, while (1.6%) disagreed. This implies that the respondents may have been exposed to Home Science in their earlier years thus they were aware of the programme and this may have led to the interest. Findings in this study are in harmony with those of Wildman and Torres, (2001); Walaba and Kiboss, (2013) and Fabea (2014) who indicated that the subjects pursued in secondary education by students would form the leading factor as they choose their programmes of study at the university. They believe that having prior knowledge in a certain field will most likely make them choose that field as it has a profound truth on what is to be studied as a career.

The fifth item in Figure 2 showed that 86.6%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement that had they known their career interests earlier they would have taken a different degree program, while 6.7%) agreed. Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents in this study had made an informed choice pertaining their preferred programme of study early enough and they had no regrets.

The last item showed that 85.8% of the respondents agreed that they have always had a passion to enroll in Home Science education programme, while 8.3% disagreed. From the focus group discussions, elements of enrolling in the Home Science education programme arose as a result of their passion in the programme. They passionately indicated that passion was their driving force. Examples of the excerpts were;

Personal interest influenced me in the choice of this course because I did Home Science in high school, I loved it, I love the arears taught in Home Science. I had passion in cooking and textiles and I chose Home Science course because I'm so interested in it. (FGD 3,18/12/2020)

This implies personal interest may have been a determinant in choice of career in Home Science education programme. Similar results were obtained by Bikse et al, (2018); Zotorvie (2016) and Kochung and Migunde (2011) where they indicated that their personal interest in a programme made them choose it.

It is also worth noting that contrary to the above item, a small number of respondents 21(8.3%) disagreed that they always had a passion to enroll in Home Science education programme. As much as interest plays a key role, they may have chosen the programme as a result of other factors. From the focus group discussions some elements of pursuing the programme may have not stemmed from passion. An example of the excerpt is as follows;

It was not my choice to select this career, my uncle is a teacher, he selected for me the course without my knowledge. Doing Home Science Education was never my desire, I never wanted it. It's not my passion, it's so difficult (laughter)...I struggle, but I trust that it might end up well (FGD 3, 18/12/2020).

The results obtained in this study thus confirms with those of other scholars that personal interest in the field of study is indeed an important factor when it comes to choosing programmes of study in the university.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study established that personal interest in the programme of study played a key role in the choice of Home Science Education programme. Respondents' personal interests emanated from their background in Home Science from high school, passion and the wide scope found in the programme that enables individuals to diversify in the many areas in Home Science discipline.

Personal interests among students should be cultivated early on in life and in schools right from the onset of schooling. The government through the Ministry of Education should make it possible for all schools to offer a variety of subjects from which students can develop and tap their interests into. Streaming policies and other policies that hinder children from learning and benefitting from some subjects should be abolished. The offering of Home Science subject should be open to all learners.

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