

AN EXPLORATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' CHOICE OF CAREER PATHS IN COMMUNICATION DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

Some students make wrong choices in specialisations once enrolled in Communication Design programmes, which affects them while they are studying and goes a long way to affect them negatively in their careers in the future. It is based on this choice-making challenge that this study was conducted to explore the factors that affect students in making career path choices in Universities. The study used a quantitative approach and used questionnaires to collect data from 348 former students of the Communication Design Department of one University of Technology. The gathered data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was discovered that personal interest, personal skills and competencies, personal values and mentorship/work experience were the four most influential factors that affect the career path and choices of the students. Social and cultural factors and educational institutions, do affect the career choices of students, but not much. The major challenges to career choices identified by this study was a lack of guidance and counselling. This was followed by a lack of self-awareness, social expectations, lack of, or limited information and financial constraints.

Keywords: communication design, SPSS, career path, self-awareness

INTRODUCTION

Communication Design offers students several career paths (Meyer *et al.*, 2020). One such path is Multimedia, which serves a huge industry that offers several career opportunities to students, whether they are employed in a corporate organisation or have decided to become self-employed, especially in times when social media presents endless job opportunities (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2020; Susanna, 2022). Students of Multimedia could choose careers such as animators, video editors, sound engineers, virtual reality (VR) developers, web developers, content creators, and several others. Graphic Design, another aspect of Communication Design, also offers students several career opportunities, where they could work as creative directors, packaging designers, branding experts, UI/UX designers and others (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2020; Wragg, 2020). According to Cezzar (2020) and Wragg (2020), most students pursue career paths based on their interests in specific specialisation in Communication Design programmes.

Heinze (2020), Kasmana *et al.* (2023) and Maulina (2023) add that other factors could significantly influence the career paths and choices of students of Communication Design, which include market trends, mentoring/internship, work experience, industry exposure, industry reputation, geographical factors, and several others. Despite the numerous career path options offered, the students are influenced by several factors that may lead to right choices, wrong choices or pose challenges to making choices in communication design specialisations. The key aim of this paper is to investigate the factors that influence the students' choices and the challenges they encounter in making their choices.

It is therefore necessary that we explore the situation in the case of Communication Design in Ghanaian Universities. Even

though students have been admitted into Communication Design programmes over the years, no comprehensive study has been conducted to assess the factors that affect the career choices of the students. This implies that most Communication Design Departments have scanty scientific evidence to back why students make the choices they do in Communication Design disciplines and the challenges they encounter in making their choices. These contextual knowledge gaps need exploration attention to help students make the right choices, which may lead to a successful career. This research is therefore driven by the following objectives, which are:

1. to determine the career path choices of the students;
2. to determine the factors that influence the career path choices of the students;
3. to identify the challenges to selecting career path choices by students.

Literature Review

Several theories seek to explain how individuals make their career choices. One of these is the trait-factor theory (Batool *et al.*, 2022). Also known as the person-environment fit theory (Hassan *et al.*, 2022a). This theory focuses on matching an individual's traits and characteristics with the requirements and characteristics of the career path they wish to take (Agunzi *et al.*, 2020). It is a career development theory that assumes that an individual has unique abilities, interests, values and other personal traits that are stable over time, and that significantly influence the decisions made by the individual (Batool *et al.*, 2022; Hassan *et al.*, 2022a). The main premise of this theory is that career satisfaction and success are more likely to occur when there is a good fit between an individual's traits and the demands of the work environment they wish to enter (Agunzi *et al.*, 2020; Batool *et al.*, 2022). Going by this theory, the students

of Communication Design are expected to match their traits and characteristics with the career path they wish to take. Thus, they would be expected to choose careers (offered in Communication Design) that match their traits, such as their interest in a particular career, their ability to accomplish tasks they would be assigned and whether they possess the skills and knowledge needed to accomplish such tasks, something which DECODE must provide for them.

Another of such theories is the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Tetteh *et al.*, 2022). This theory emphasises the role of self-efficacy, career outcome expectations and personal goals in career development (Međugorac *et al.*, 2020). The theory posits that an individual's career choices are influenced by their self-efficacy: their beliefs in their abilities to succeed in specific careers (Mohd-Rasdi *et al.*, 2020; Tetteh *et al.*, 2022). This therefore significantly influences their choice of specific careers. The theory therefore emphasises the interplay between an individual's traits (specifically self-efficacy), personal goals, career outcome expectations, and observational learning (Međugorac *et al.*, 2020; Mohd-Rasdi *et al.*, 2020). By understanding the relationship between these factors, an individual can make career choices that they eventually find fulfilling and satisfying (Tetteh *et al.*, 2022). This theory therefore implies that students of the Department of Communication Design are likely to make career choices based on their understanding of these factors. Their ability to succeed in making good career choices would be influenced by their traits, their personal goals, and what they expect to achieve in the future as far as the career choices offered by the study of Communication Design are concerned. These would influence their career choices.

Per the foregoing theories, it is obvious that several factors influence the career paths

and choices made by students. According to Lent and Brown (2020) and Sahu *et al.* (2021) for instance, one of the major factors that influence the career paths and choices of students is personal interests. Many students choose their career paths based on their interests. In other words, a student of Communication Design may choose a career in Graphic Design or Multimedia based on what aspect of the course they like, what they are passionate about, and what they enjoy doing (Sahu *et al.*, 2021). For instance, a student who is passionate about the internet and web design might choose a career path in Graphic Design, while a student who is passionate about 2D and 3D animation may choose a career path in Multimedia.

Closely related to personal interests are personal skills and competencies (Hassan *et al.*, 2022b). To accomplish a specific Communication Design task, one must possess the skills needed to accomplish that task. In other words, a student of Communication Design does not have the personal skill to achieve the required goals in a specific aspect of Communication Design but may not be able to choose a career path in that sector. For instance, 2D and 3D animation requires quite some skill in drawing; thus, even if a student wishes to pursue a career in animation but is poor at drawing, they may not have the opportunity to choose a career in that field.

It is also asserted by Karimi and Makreet (2020) and Santos *et al.* (2021) that personal values usually influence the career choices of students. A student might have the opportunity to pursue a specific career path but may choose a different path due to their values and beliefs (Santos *et al.*, 2021). Thus, a student may choose a career that ensures they contribute to such issues as education, social justice, morality, sustainability and others that they may be passionate about (Karimi & Makreet, 2020; Yashchenko *et al.*, 2022).

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Market trends are another factor that influences the career choice of students (Yushchenko *et al.*, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Mostly, trends in the job market tend to influence what students of Communication Design choose to major in. For instance, in modern times, the designs of user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) are common job opportunities for Multimedia students, due to the increasing popularity of virtual reality (VR), mobile technology and other modern technologies. The growth of social media also offers Communication Design students a host of career opportunities. A student could also be influenced by the level of exposure they have in an industry – in this case, the Communication Design industry – in choosing their career paths (Mwantimwa, 2021; Yoel & Dori, 2021). When students have the opportunity to get more information about a particular industry, through such means as internships, projects, guest lectures and others that expose them to the nitty-gritty of a specific industry, they become well-informed about what they are likely to encounter if they choose a particular career. This influences their career path choosing decisions (Mwantimwa, 2021; Yoel & Dori, 2021).

The career choice of students of Communication Design could also be influenced by mentorship/internship or work experience (Mwantimwa, 2021; Yoel & Dori, 2021). The extent to which students of the course are exposed to the industry through association with such people as their tutors, former students, industry experts, customers and other players in the communication design industry could influence the decision of a student to choose a particular career path as a student of Communication Design.

It is also asserted by Aleshkovski *et al.* (2020) and Rax *et al.* (2020) that the educational institution in which an individual trains and the curriculum it offers could affect the career choice of students when it comes to

Communication Design. For instance, even though Communication Design comprises both Graphic Design and Multimedia, if the institution in which a student is being trained does not offer courses related to say, Graphic Design, a student who wishes to choose a career in the Graphic Design industry will be denied that chance. Also, different educational institutions may have unique specialisations, industry connections and alumni networks that provide students with needed information that influences the career choices of students (Aleshkovski *et al.*, 2020).

Other factors that may influence the career choices of students include educational background of the student (Aleshkovski *et al.*, 2020), geographical location (Debta & Patra, 2023), family influence (Chaleeraktragoon & Taesilapasathit, 2022; Aslan & Koçak, 2023), social and cultural factors (Ray *et al.*, 2020; Rasak *et al.*, 2023), financial considerations (Park & Coles, 2022), industry reputation (Tsakissiris & Grant-Smith, 2021), and evolving trends (Aziz *et al.*, 2020).

Several factors could negatively influence the career choices of students. In other words, factors that prevent students from making the best career choice decisions. According to Mwantimwa (2021) and Yoel and Dori (2021), one of these factors is the lack of information. Insufficient access to comprehensive and accurate information about specific careers may result in a student's inability to make informed choices about their career paths and choices (Sart & Aslan, 2022). If a student is not aware of the career opportunities available to them in various industries and fields, and the requirements of such careers in terms of educational and work requirements may make it difficult for a student to choose a career that best fits their skills and interests, a situation which may result in the choice of the wrong career (Yoel & Dori, 2021; Sart & Aslan, 2022). A student may also make a poor career choice due to limited opportunities (Ndoye-

Upoalkpajor, 2020). Lack of job opportunities and limited career opportunities in a particular field can force a student to choose careers they otherwise might not choose.

As well, financial constraints usually force students to make poor career choices (Enibe *et al.*, 2020; Lent & Brown, 2020). A brilliant student may have high aspirations in terms of career, but such hopes may be dashed if the student is unable to afford the cost of higher education needed to achieve such aspirations. Aside, from this, the cost of education and certificates can force students to settle for lower-paying jobs in which they can afford to train themselves (Enibe *et al.*, 2020; Lent & Brown, 2020).

Personal circumstances could also influence the career choices of students (Giang & Nhung, 2021; Lubega, 2022). Personal issues such as personal responsibilities, family obligations, or health issues could also force individuals to choose careers they typically could not have chosen. Closely related to this factor are personal fears and self-doubt (Giang & Nhung, 2021). Self-doubt and fear of failure or lack of confidence could also cause individuals to settle for careers other than ones they could succeed in (Giang & Nhung, 2021; Lubega, 2022).

Social and cultural expectations from students could also result in situations where students choose careers that are not the best fit for them (Görgülü, & Bozgeyikli, 2022). Based on social and cultural stereotypes and expectations, students might be forced to choose careers that they otherwise may not have chosen; in many ways, limiting the student's ability to pursue careers they truly have an interest in (Görgülü, & Bozgeyikli, 2022; Lubega, 2022). In many instances, this satisfies the social and cultural expectations of society but not that of the individual (Lubega, 2022).

While the foregoing may be some of the factors that influence the career choices of students and people in general, other factors explicitly cause people to make wrong career choices. These are usually challenges, which people face that eventually force or cause them to make wrong career choices. According to Lubega (2022) and Zulfqar *et al.* (2022), lack of self-awareness is one of the major factors that causes people to make wrong career choices. When people struggle to have a clear-cut understanding of their own personal interests, values, strengths and weaknesses, they are likely to be unable to make informed decisions including regarding their career choices.

It is also asserted by Chaleeraktragoon and Taesilapasathit (2022) and Aslan and Koçak (2023) that the influence of external factors especially from family, friends and society could cause individuals to make wrong career choices. In many instances, this is due to pressure from such external influences for an individual to pursue a career that such external influences find to be more fulfilling even if the individual does not think so (Aslan & Koçak, 2023).

Lack of, or limited information could also cause students and other individuals to make uninformed career choices (Lent & Brown, 2020; Sart & Aslan, 2022). Information is a very valuable resource and a lack of it could be devastating. If an individual does not have enough information about career opportunities available to them, they may end up making a poor career choice (Chen *et al.*, 2022). People may also choose a poor career as a result of their poor knowledge of what that career entails. They may end up finding themselves in a career they do not find fulfilling (Sart & Aslan, 2022).

Uncertainty or fear of failure may also cause people to choose careers they are sure not to at least fail in, even if they do not find such careers fulfilling (Dutta & Sobel, 2021; Tubadji

et al., 2021). Some people, especially those who fear taking risks, usually settle for careers they hope they will not fail in. Such people usually choose to stay in their comfort zone, even if they wish they were in a different more fulfilling career.

Personal incompetence also usually forces people to choose the wrong careers (Lent & Brown, 2020; Park & Park, 2020; Lubega, 2022). Sometimes, people may desire to pursue a particular career but may find that they lack the knowledge and skills, or the education or qualification required to pursue such careers. This usually deters such people from pursuing their dream careers (Park & Park, 2020; Lubega, 2022).

Other factors that could influence people to make wrong career challenges include financial constraints (people may prioritise their immediate financial needs over-investing in their long-term career interests) (Enibe *et al.*, 2020; Lent & Brown, 2020), personal circumstances (personal issues such as health issues, family responsibilities and others may lead to poor career choices) (Giang & Nhung, 2021; Lubega, 2022), social expectations (Görgülü, & Bozgeyikli, 2022), lack of guidance and counselling (Dislere *et al.*, 2020; Orewere & Ojochogu, 2020; Okolie *et al.*, 2020) and limited exposure to different career opportunities (Mwantimwa, 2021; Yoel & Dori, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study, a quantitative research method was adopted. This decision was to ensure that enough data was collected from as many respondents as possible. It is also to ensure that the data collected can be analysed without researcher bias. The population of this study comprised the former students of the Department of Communication Design at one University of Technology. The decision to choose former

students as the population assumed that they were the most qualified to share their experiences on the career choices they made. The population of the study at the time of the research was the entire graduate cohort from 1990 – 2022, from the Department. However, it was difficult to reach them in person so the available email addresses of most of these graduates were used to contact them. The total email addresses retrieved were 384. A questionnaire, developed based on the literature review, was administered to the former students via their emails.

Though the questionnaire was administered to 424 students online, only 348 of the questionnaires (representing 90.6%) were successfully retrieved. According to Sember *et al.* (2020), a survey that collects data from more than 50% of respondents could be considered valid and thus reliable, as was the case with this study. A Cronbach's alpha analysis for data validity revealed a coefficient of 0.82, which according to Ravinder and Saraswathi (2020), indicates that the data collection instrument was reliable. Computer software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), designed for the analysis of quantitative data was used for the analysis of the data collected. Microsoft Excel was used for the calculation of Borda Count scores for rank aggregation (Crisman, 2014). Statistical scores, basically frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations, as well as Borda Count score rank aggregation, were used for the data analysis. These scores, according to Samuels (2020) and Schoonenboom (2023), are always appropriate for the analysis of quantitative data. In addition, ethical issues such as informed consent, anonymity of respondents, and other rights of respondents were strictly observed during the collection of the data.

Findings

The results from the data analysis are presented in this section. Firstly, the

demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	242	69.6
Female	106	30.4
Year of Completion		
1990 – 2000	14	3.9
2001 – 2010	78	22.5
2011 – 2020	206	59.2
2021 – present	50	14.4
Employment Status		
Employed with a Company	252	72.5
Self-employed	58	16.7
Freelancing	7	2.0
Unemployed	31	8.8
Total	348	100

Validity and Reliability Test

A Cronbach’s alpha test (Bujang et al, 2018) was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. The results, presented in Table 2, indicated that the data collection was valid, and thus reliable, as the test returned a Cronbach’s alpha of .82. According to Ravinder and Saraswathi (2020), a data collection instrument with a Cronbach’s alpha of .7 and above can be considered valid and reliable.

(representing “very dissatisfied” or “strongly disagree” to 7 representing “very satisfied” or “strongly agree” with 4 representing “neutral”. With these, means and standard deviation were calculated. This implies that a calculated mean which is above 4 indicates agreement with each statement, while a calculated mean which is lower than 4 indicates disagreement with the statement. In other words, the higher the mean, the higher the level of agreement with each statement, while the lower the mean, the higher the disagreement with a statement. With regards to standard deviations, it is asserted by Kozak & Piepho (2020) and Zenkov et al. (2021) that a standard deviation that is less than one is considered a low standard deviation while above one is considered a high standard deviation. A low standard deviation implies that the views expressed by the respondents are very similar

Table 2: Validity and Reliability Test

Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of items
.77	58

Parameters of Data Analysis

The data collection instrument asked respondents to express their responses using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1

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while a high standard deviation implies that the views expressed by the respondents are quite unsimilar. These were the parameters on which the results of this study were analysed.

The findings are presented based on the research objectives. The first objective of this study was to determine the major career paths

and choices of the former students based on their learning experiences at the Department of Communication Design of the University of Technology. The respondents were asked to indicate their top-favoured career choice because of their learning experiences. Their responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 3: Major Career Path and Choices

Major Career Path and Choices	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Video Editor	109	31.32
User Interface (UI) Designer	48	13.79
Art Director	42	12.07
Brand Identity Designer	37	10.63
Animator/Motion Graphics Designer	32	09.20
Graphic Designer	26	07.47
User Experience (UX) Designer	18	05.17
Packaging Designer	14	04.02
Advertising Designer	12	03.45
Content Strategist	8	02.30
Total	348	100.00

The results revealed that video editing was the major career choice of the surveyed former students. A total of 109 respondents, representing 31.32% of total respondents indicated that they wished to pursue a career in video editing. They were followed by those who wished to pursue a career in user interface (UI) design (48; 13.79%), art direction (42; 12.07%), and brand identity design (37; 10.63%). Those who wished to pursue a career in animation or motion graphics designing were 32 in number, respondents or 9.2%, graphic designing (26 respondents or 7.47%), user experience (UX) designing (18 respondents or 5.17%), packaging designing (14 respondents or 4.02%), advertising designing (12 respondents or 3.45%) and lastly, content strategists (8 respondents or 2.3%).

The second objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence career path choices. To achieve this objective, the respondents were presented with several factors identified by previous studies as those that usually affect the career path choices of students. They were asked to select the factors from the one they considered most influential to the least influential. A Borda Count rank aggregation analysis (Grandi *et al*, 2016) was then conducted to determine which factor the students considered most influential. Borda Count is a form of rank aggregation that compiles scores of items based on their rank in the choices of the respondents. For this study, a first choice was awarded nine points, a second choice was awarded eight points, and a third choice was awarded seven points, in that order. Thus, the last choice was awarded one point. Based on this, the total

points a particular factor could accumulate if all respondents chose that factor as their first

choice was 3,132 points ($9 \times 348 = 3,132$). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 4: Factors Affecting Career Path Choice

Factors Affecting Career Path Choice	Borda Count Score	Percentage (%)
Personal interests	2,512	80.2
Personal skills and competencies	2,345	74.9
Personal values	1,948	62.2
Mentorship/Work experience	1,901	60.7
Financial factors	1,576	50.3
Level of exposure	1,293	41.3
Market trends	1,211	38.7
Educational institution	1,132	36.1
Social and cultural factors	984	31.4

The Borda Count rank aggregation showed that personal interest was the factor that most influenced the career path choices of the respondents (2,512 points, representing 80.2% of the total points of 3,132). This was followed by personal skills and competencies (2,345 points, or 74.9% of total points), personal values (1,948 points, representing 62.2%), mentorship or work experience (1,901 points, or 60.7%) and financial factors (1,576 points, or 50.3%). The other factors included level of exposure (1,293 points, or 41.3%), market trends (1,211 points, or 38.7%), educational

institution (1,132 points, or 36.1%) and lastly, social and cultural factors (984 points, or 31.4% of total points).

The last objective of this study sought to identify the challenges to the selection of their career choices. That is the objective sought to determine those factors that prevent students from making good career choices. When the questions were put to the respondents, their responses were revealing and have been presented in Table 6.

Table 5: Challenges of Career Path Choices

Challenge	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of guidance and counselling	6.2987	.72665
Lack of self-awareness	5.8312	.65700
Social expectation	5.7922	.61425
Lack of or limited information	5.7662	.66681
Financial constraints	5.6883	.65413
Personal circumstances	5.6721	.67395
Limited exposure	5.5455	.63960
Uncertainty or fear of failure	5.2597	.95149
Personal incompetence	3.9870	1.17533

The results revealed that lack of guidance and counselling was the first challenge that caused people to make wrong career choices (mean: 6.2987; SD: .72665). This was followed by lack of self-awareness (mean: 5.8312; SD: .65700), social expectation (mean: 5.7922; SD: .61425), lack of or limited information (mean: 5.7662; SD: .66681) and financial constraints (mean: 5.6883; SD: .65413). Other factors included personal circumstances (mean: 5.6721; SD: .67395), limited exposure (mean: 5.5455; SD: .63960) and uncertainty or fear of failure (mean: 5.2597; SD: .95149). The results however dismissed personal incompetence as a challenge to the choice of career (mean: 3.9870; SD: 1.17533).

DISCUSSION

The results revealed that generally, the Department admits more males than females. This result confirmed the assertions of Shakespeare *et al.* (2020) and Pandang *et al.* (2022) that, around the world, even though females do make inroads into the arts, males dominate the industry. The high participation of respondents who graduated between 2011 and 2020 is most probably explainable as an indication of the increased use of technology (including email) in Ghana starting in that decade, compared to earlier decades. This is most probably due to the increased use of mobile telecommunication technology, which significantly increased internet accessibility to many people, including students in Ghana (Siaw *et al.*, 2020).

Communication Design is a multi-disciplinary course of study that offers students multiple career opportunities (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2020; Susanna, 2022). Students of the course could look forward to careers in various sectors, especially in the arts industry. They could also have career opportunities in several arts-related industries; making the course a very lucrative one for its students (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2020; Wragg, 2020). It therefore is not

surprising that the respondents came up with several career paths that they chose to pursue as a result of their studies. The results of this study only go a long way to indicate that a study in Communication Design is likely to offer several job opportunities for students. In the era of social media where artistic content creation has become the norm of the day, students of Communication Design have dozens if not hundreds of career paths they could pursue. This result also implies that the Department needs to realise its importance in the modern world economy, and therefore create courses that ensure that its students learn the relevant skills that will enable them to pursue any one of the numerous career paths offered by the study of the course.

It has been asserted by several studies including Lent and Brown (2020), Sheldon *et al.* (2020) and Sahu *et al.* (2021) that for most students, personal interest is the major factor that determines their career path and choices, all things being equal. According to these studies, many students choose their career paths based on their interests – what they love to do and are passionate about. It is therefore not surprising that the respondents chose personal interest as the factor that most influenced their career path and choices. Per the result of this study, most students will mostly consider their interests ahead of any other factor in selecting their careers. Besides personal interests, it takes specific skills and competencies to achieve success in every field of work (Hassan *et al.*, 2022b; Presti *et al.*, 2022), including Communication Design. This also most likely explains why the respondents chose personal skills and competencies as the second most influential factor in their career decision-making. As asserted by McIntyre *et al.* (2023), without adequate skills and competencies, an individual is likely to be unsuccessful in a specific field of work. The results of this study confirmed these assertions. Very closely related to personal interest and skills as factors

influencing career choices are personal values (Karimi & Makreet, 2020; Santos *et al.*, 2021; Yashchenko *et al.*, 2022). It is the view of these researchers that what people believe in – their convictions – usually influences what they consider important and what is not. In other words, their values could influence their career choices. For instance, while one photographer may refuse to accept contracts for nude photography, another may have no problems whatsoever with such contracts. These will be based on the personal values of the individual; thus, it is quite convincing that the students chose personal values as the third most influential factor that determines their career choices. Mentorship or work experience can also be a big influencer when it comes to career choices (Mwantimwa, 2021; Yoel & Dori, 2021).

Their mentors including their parents significantly influence most people and superiors at work into choosing future careers and even making important life decisions (Mwantimwa, 2021). This most probably explains why the students chose mentorship and work experience as the next most influential factor that affects their choice of career. Other factors such as financial factors (ability to afford the cost of the education or resources needed to pursue a career) (Park & Coles, 2022), the level of exposure of an individual (the amount of information they have with regards to a specific career) (Mwantimwa, 2021; Yoel & Dori, 2021), market trends (careers that are demanding more professionals) (Yushchenko *et al.*, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2022) are also significant factors that could affect the career choices of students. Even though the educational institution attended by an individual could also influence their career choices (Aleshkovski *et al.*, 2020; Rax *et al.*, 2020), Boldureanu *et al.* (2020) and Guerrero *et al.* (2020) argued that the educational institution in many ways just offers exposure and probably mentorship to a student in choosing their careers, something

which may not necessarily significantly influence career choices of students.

The results of this study seem to agree with these assertions as the students do not deem the educational institution such an important factor that influences their career choices. Social and cultural factors (including family and friends) may influence the career choices of people, according to Ray *et al.* (2020) and Rasak *et al.* (2023). For instance, an individual who lives in a socio-cultural environment where a specific career is the dominant one may be forced to choose the same career. In other words, social and cultural factors could also be an influence on the career choices of students, as revealed by the results of the study. It has been asserted by several studies including Dislere *et al.* (2020), Orewere & Ojochogu (2020) and Okolie *et al.* (2020) that guidance and counselling are one of the most important means through which especially young people's paths in life are directed for them to become successful in making the right decisions in life, including making good career choices. This implies that if a person lacks guidance and counselling, they are likely to make wrong career decisions. These assertions are confirmed by the results of this study, with the respondents citing a lack of guidance and counselling as the first challenge to career choices. It also came as no surprise that the respondents cited a lack of self-awareness as another challenge to career choices. According to Lubega (2022) and Zulfqar *et al.* (2022), lack of self-awareness is one of the major factors that causes people to make wrong career choices. When people struggle to have a clear-cut understanding of their own personal interests, skills, values, strengths and weaknesses, they are likely to be unable to make informed decisions including their career choices. The results of this study confirmed these assertions.

Usually, society has very high expectations of some or all individuals. This causes people to

set for themselves career standards that might be too high or too low for their capabilities, eventually forcing them to find themselves in the wrong career (Görgülü, & Bozgeyikli, 2022). This again highlights how a lack of self-awareness could cause people to make wrong career choices. Lack of or limited information could also cause students and other individuals to make uninformed career choices (Lent & Brown, 2020; Sart & Aslan, 2022). Information is a very valuable resource and a lack of it could be devastating. If an individual does not have enough information about career opportunities available to them, they may end up making a poor career choice (Sart & Aslan, 2022). People may also choose a poor career as a result of their poor knowledge of what that career entails. They may end up finding themselves in a career they do not find fulfilling, or which makes demands of them that they may be unable to provide (Lent & Brown, 2020; Sart & Aslan, 2022). The results of this study are a further confirmation of this assertion. Financial constraints have been known to cause people to miss out on opportunities including making good career choices ((Enibe *et al.*, 2020; Lent & Brown, 2020). In many ways and instances, adequate financial resources are required to pursue careers that suit the interests and values of people. The lack of such financial resources usually implies that the individual is usually unable to pursue their dream career. The results of this study confirm these assertions.

In line with the assertions of Giang & Nhung (2021) and Lubega (2022), the result of this study also revealed that personal circumstances such as personal health and family responsibilities could prevent an individual from pursuing careers, they would have wished for themselves. The health needs of people as well as family responsibilities usually have a significant toll on especially the finances of people, preventing them from pursuing their chosen careers. Even though the study dismisses personal incompetence as

a challenge to the pursuit of the appropriate career, Park and Park (2020) and Lubega (2022) argue that without the appropriate knowledge and skill, an individual is not likely to succeed in some specific careers.

Presti *et al.* (2022) however insisted that it does not make sense for an individual who does not possess the needed skills and competencies in a specific field to seek to pursue a career in that field, and thus, personal incompetence cannot be considered a challenge to making the right career decision. Furthermore, Chon *et al.* (2021) and Carden *et al.* (2022) also expressed the view that it is a lack of self-awareness that will cause an individual who lacks the needed skills and knowledge to pursue a career in a specific field to seek to do so. The results of this study largely seem to support the views of Chon *et al.* (2021) and Carden *et al.* (2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions were made. It was also discovered that major career paths offered to former students include video editing, user interface (UI) design, art direction, brand identity designing and animation/motion graphics designing. The others included graphic designing, user experience (UX) design, packaging designing, advertising designing and content designing. It was also discovered that personal interest, personal skills and competencies, personal values and mentorship/work experience were the four most influential factors that affect the career path and choices of the students. Social and cultural factors and educational institutions do affect the career choices of students but not much. The major challenge to career choices identified by this study was a lack of guidance and counselling. This was followed by a lack of self-awareness, social expectations, lack of or limited information and financial constraints. Even though personal incompetence may be

seen as another challenge to career choices, it was not a very significant factor that caused wrong career paths and choices according to the results of this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is necessary that Communication Design Departments reinvent themselves by equipping lecturers with mentorship skills to guide and counsel students in the selection of their programme of specialisation in Communication Design programmes. Lecturers should also be equipped with the knowledge to help students identify their capabilities and use them as a guide for specialisation programme selection. On the front of further research, studies should be conducted into how students can cope with wrong choices of specialisations they make out of ignorance or other reasons.

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