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Mitigating Mental Well-Being (Self –Esteem) Challenges Caused By Wrong Career Choice Among High School Students. A Case Of Bungoma County; Kenya.

¹WAFULA ROBERT WEKESA, ²RASHID FWAMBA
^{1,2}KIBABII UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT: Studies reviewed indicate that youths who are not being able to make satisfying career choices may regard self as fail-ures in their own eyes and also in the eyes of the outside world. This perceived failure may also impair one from fulfilling their most important developmental task to meet the expectations of parents and others resulting in low self-esteem and psychological problems. Poor career selection condemns a student to not only having a negative self -image but also harboring harmful thoughts that could easily lead to psychological and physical harm to self as well as socio-economic inequalities that may persist well beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life.Hence this study was to conducted in Bungoma County among high school students with the aim of to establishing the causes of wrong career choice, influence of wrong career choice on students mental well -being or self -esteem and ways of mitigating wrong career choice on students personality and mental well- being. The study adopted the **descriptive Survey Design** that allowed collection of a large sample of **multi variant sample** data from a wider population in a fairly short span of time. A multi sampling technique was employed. **Stratified sampling** to have fair representation of the population (National, Extra County and Sub County schools). **Simple Random** was used to collect real sample of schools and learner participants. **Purposive sampling technique** was used to select Career masters. Five (5) schools were sampled from all the strata. A hundred (100) students were selected as follows; Fifty (50) ideal form for subjects selection, twenty (20) form three and form four students who had already selected cluster subjects were sampled randomly then ten (10) form one students. The total sample frame became giving a total of four hundred (400) students and Five (5) career masters; one from each school giving a total **sample population of (405)** participants. A self-administered questionnaire was given out to the participants. The questionnaire had two sections; one; demographic information and two; seven questions on a Likert scale related to study. Clarifications were made. Respondents filled and returned the tools to avoid dropout rates. The data was coded and analyzed using SPSS version 20. **The key findings of the study were;** Lack of identifying and nurturing talent among students or aligning them in the correct pathways. There is need to offer good models or mentors to students for career exposure, conduct academic clinics as one of ways of promoting good career choice. Poor career choice could lead to; anxiety, low self-esteem, stress and depression, and unhappy career life and High self-esteem/confidence, more happy, more creative and productive, High Job Satisfaction, Looks Happy and Looks more confident are among the merits of good career choice.**Recommendations fronted included;**The need for all schools to embed career guidance in normal teaching time table, Hire or train career advisors for schools and ensure all schools register their students with KUCCPS for placement.

KEY WORDS: WRONG CAREER CHOICE, MENTAL WELL BEING, MITIGATION, CAREERS, PROFESSION, SELF ESTEEM.

I. INTRODUCTION

Studies reviewed revealed that youths who wereunable to make satisfying career choices ended regarding themselves as fail-ures in their own eyes, parents' and to some extent to the outside world. This perceived failure could easily impedethe students from fulfilling their most important developmental task of professional growth to meet their expectations, parents' and others resulting in low self-esteem and psychological problems. Further still, poor career selection could easily condemn a student in not only having a negative self -image but also harboring harmful thoughts that could easily lead to psychological and physicalharm to self as well as socio-economic inequalities that may persist well beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life. This perceived failure may also impair one from fulfilling their most important

developmental task to meet the expectations of parents and others resulting in low self-esteem and psychological problems.

Therefore, youth career decision-making requires one to go through a process of understanding self fully by defining what they can do well and thus explore a variety of appropriate career options with the aid of guidance and planning (Porfeli and Lee, 2012). As a matter of fact, proper handling of the process of career selection affirms an individual's identity and fosters wellbeing, job satisfaction and stability (Kunnen, 2013). Further literature further revealed that the complexity of career decision-making increased as age increases (Gati and Saka, 2001). For instance, younger children in primary or Elementary Grades were more likely to offer answers about their ideal career which may represent their envisioned utopia and phenomenal perceptions about what they want to do when they grow up (Howard and Walsh, 2011) whereas those from high school or late adolescents struggled with career choice problems at this level and often exhibited high levels of psychological problems such as; low levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and low cognitive abilities (Feldman, 2003). Other results of poor career selection included; anxiety, low productivity, stress and depression leading to death as well as high job turn overs. Hence the need to start career selection process early during the primary school years to enable children blend their self-awareness and aspirations.

This may help solve the current perennial problem of career mis-match. For instance the June (2020) KCSE as cited by Wafula (2020) concerning career placements revealed that some 280 candidates who had scored a B plain and above in KCSE and were highly qualified for University admission opted for diplomas in TVET colleges, snubbing some of the most competitive degree programmes in both public and private universities. These students joined the band wagon of more than 2,000 other students who despite qualifying for university admission the previous year opted to pursue diploma courses in technical and vocational institution. However, some of the decisions taken by some of these students did not indicate full knowledge on qualifications needed for placement at diploma colleges or Universities. For instance, a certain student who had scored an A- opted for a diploma in chemical engineering; a course the student could easily get at University level and do it at Bachelors' level. Another student applied to Kagumo Teachers Training College to study a diploma in education despite scoring an A- (minus) that would easily earn them a degree slot at the university level. These two cases among others raised doubts as to whether there was proper or effective career Guidance at the high school level. On the other hand, the KUCCPS chief executive actually explained that the placement board was concerned about low participation by schools in helping students select courses early. To address this concern, the board recommended to the Ministry of Education to consider issuing a policy guideline to all schools, especially those with candidates eligible for placement to TVET institutions, to ensure that they submitted the applications on behalf of their KCSE candidates for university and TVET placement.

A critical analyses revealed that most preferred courses such as; Engineering, Building and Civil options, Information Technology, Architecture, Electrical and Megatronic Engineering, Aeronautical Engineering, Pharmaceutical Technology, Computer Science and Building Economics (Quantity Surveying), among others. All these courses seemed entrepreneurial in nature and hence students could easily establish own businesses. Inadequate career guidance made students who joined University lack clarity of purpose in Career selection making the students take too long to settle in a particular course of study. Other students are forced to change courses as late as end of second year not mentioning those who start pursuing completely new courses after graduation. Other adverse effects of poor career selection include; condemning a student in not only having a negative self-image but also harboring harmful thoughts that could easily lead to psychological and physical harm to self as well as socio-economic inequalities that may persist well beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life. Perceived failure may also impair one from fulfilling their most important developmental task career selection and development to enable them realize their personal expectations and those of parents and other society members resulting in low self-esteem and psychological problems. Other dire consequences include stress, depression, career abandonment and at worst suicide. Hence the need for this study

FINDINGS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE STUDY

Table 1. Ways of boosting proper career selection and esteem among high school students

KUCCPS to avoid forcing courses on students	3 5%	1 2%	7 12%	13 22%	34 59%	4.28 (86%)	1.089	0.000	
Avoid Societal Pressure	1 2%	2 3%	7 12%	25 43%	23 40%	4.16 (83%)	0.894	0.000	
Nurture Good Self-Awareness in Learners	1 2%	0 0%	1 2%	17 29%	39 67%	4.60 (92%)	0.699	0.000	
Consider own Ability and interest	1 2%	4 7%	1 2%	14 24%	39 66%	4.46 (89%)	0.953	0.000	
Avoid Learning for earning to solve problem	8 14%	7 12%	10 17%	15 26%	18 31%	3.48 (70%)	1.405	0.104	
Empower Career Masters	3 5%	2 3%	4 7%	16 28%	33 57%	4.28 (86%)	1.089	0.000	
Average Level of Promoting Proper Career (Secondary School Students)		Mean	%Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	Test Value (Average)=2.5 (50%)	t	df	p-value
		4.1824	84%	0.45648	0.05893		28.550	59	0.000
Average Level Promoting Proper Career (Career Masters)		Mean	%Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error of Mean	Test Value (Average) = 2.5 (50%)	t	df	p-value
		4.5439	91%	0.45637	0.26348		7.757	2	0.016

Clearly, the findings in table 1. shows that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the proper ways of boosting/promoting career choice is by; identifying and nurture talent, offer good models and by career exposure as indicated by 69%, 71% and 58% respectively which were found to be all significant as indicated by (Mean=4.67, std. dev=0.526, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 93% rated high, (Mean=4.54, std. dev=0.608, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 93% rated high and (Mean=4.42, std. dev=0.778, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 88% rated high.

Apparently, equal number of the respondents agreed and other strongly agreed that academic clinics is one of ways of promoting good career choice as indicated by 24% and was found to be significant as shown in table 4.6 (Mean=4.19, std. dev.=0.847,p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 84% rated high. Similarly, 57% and 58% respectively strongly agreed that proper career guidance and proper career mentorship are among ways of promoting good career choice. These two sentiments were found to be significant as indicated by (Mean=4.50, std. dev=0.707, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 90% rated high and (Mean=4.53, std. dev=0.601, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 91%. Also, 38% agreed that teachers being not coercive but advice might help in promoting good career choice as indicated by (Mean=3.93, std. dev=0.953, p=0.001<0.05) with a mean score of 79% which was found to be a significant way.

More than a half of the respondents strongly agreed that parents not to force children to careers might help boosting good career choice as represented by 64% and was found to be significant as indicated by (Mean=4.42, std. dev=0.969, p=0.000<0.05). Avoiding big titles (29% agreed with this), avoiding salaries but skills (31% strongly agreed with this) and Avoid learning for earning to solve problem (31% strongly agreed with this) were found to be insignificant ways of promoting good career choice as respectively indicated by (Mean=3.19, std. dev=1.304, p=0.374<0.05) with a mean score of 64% rated moderate, (Mean=3.32, std. dev=1.467, p=0.326<0.05) with a mean score of 66% and (Mean=3.48, std. dev=1.405, p=0.104<0.05) with a mean score of 70% rated moderate.

Avoiding Societal Pressure(47% strongly agreed with this), Change Passion to profession(41% strongly agreed with this sentiment), Avoid Competition with peers(49% strongly agreed with this), avoid pressure from social media (44% strongly agreed with this sentiment), KUCCPs to avoid forcing courses on students(59% strongly agreed with this), avoid societal pressure(43% agreed with this), nurture good self-awareness in learners(67% strongly agreed with this), consider own ability and interest(66% strongly agreed with this), and empower career masters(57% strongly agreed with this) were all found to be significant ways of promoting/boosting good career choice among the high-school students of Bungoma County. This was as clearly and respectively indicated by (Mean=4.14, std. dev=1.043, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 83% rated high, (Mean=4.12, std. dev=0.930, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 82% rated high, (Mean=4.21, std. dev=1.044, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 84% rated high, (Mean=4.07, std. dev=1.116, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 81% rated high, (Mean=4.28, std. dev=1.089, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 86% rated high, (Mean=4.16, std. dev=0.894, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 83% rated high, (Mean=4.60, std. dev=0.699, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 92% rated high, (Mean=4.46, std. dev=0.953, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 89% rated high and (Mean=4.28, std. dev=1.089, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 86% rated high.

Similarly, 41% of the respondents agreed that they prefer courses that has online opportunities as indicated by (Mean=4.07, std. dev=0.926, p=0.000<0.05) which was found to be significant and with a mean score of 94% rated high. Apparently, 37%, 72%, 50% and 51% respectively strongly agreed that; the preferred courses should be most current and trendy, has chances to go abroad, easy to commute to work and has flexible schedules-Not fully occupying time. These sentiments were found to be significant as indicated by (Mean=3.88, std. dev=1.115, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 78% rated high, (Mean=4.55, std. dev=0.852, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 95% rated high, (Mean=4.42, std. dev=0.645, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 88% rated high and (Mean=4.22, std. dev=0.984, p=0.000<0.05) with a mean score of 84% rated high.

conclusively, the proposed ways of promoting/boosting good career selection by the secondary students of Bungoma county is significantly high as indicated by 84% mean score (mean =4.1824, std. dev. = 0.45648, t =28.550, p-value = 0.000 < 0.05). Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the observed mean of the proposed promoting proper career ways variable is statistically significant different from the hypothesized mean. this is a clear indication that the discussed significant ways of promoting good career selection by the secondary students of Bungoma county have a great influence in boosting career choice as these findings could be corroborated with the career masters' that also showed that the proposed ways of promoting career selection significantly boost career choice as indicated by 91% mean (mean = 4.5439, std. dev. = 0.45637, t =7.757, p-value = 0.016< 0.05) rated high.

II. MERITS/OUTCOME OF GOOD CAREER CHOICE

This objective of study was to describe the outcomes of good career choice. The study discussed the consequences for poor career choice under descriptive and inferential statistics before the main objective. The findings were as presented in table 4.7.

The findings are as presented below.

Table 2. Descriptive/Inferential Statistics for Consequences for Poor Career Choice

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Has low Self Esteem	6 10%	5 8%	5 8%	16 27%	28 47%	
Leads to stress and depression	14 23%	3 5%	3 5%	10 16%	31 51%	
Unhappy career life	11 18%	8 13%	1 2%	18 30%	22 37%	
Indesicive career choices	8 14%	8 14%	8 14%	18 31%	17 29%	
Being Unproductive	8 13%	11 18%	8 13%	12 20%	22 36%	
Identity Crisis	10 17%	11 19%	9 15%	20 34%	9 15%	
Not Creative	14 24%	9 15%	6 10%	13 22%	17 29%	
Drugs Addiction	15 25%	6 10%	5 8%	16 27%	17 29%	
Suicide Cases	12 20%	7 12%	4 7%	18 30%	19 32%	
High Job Turnovers	10 17%	9 16%	11 19%	13 22%	15 26%	
Poor Social Relations	14 23%	11 18%	5 8%	14 23%	16 27%	
Under-Utility of Talents	12 21%	6 10%	2 3%	22 38%	16 28%	
Poor Self-Management	9 16%	7 12%	8 14%	15 26%	19 33%	
Work Place Conflicts	10 17%	13 22%	4 7%	10 17%	23 38%	
Promotes low Production Leading to economic Inequalities	10 17%	8 14%	3 5%	16 28%	21 36%	
Average Level of Consequences for Poor Career Choice (Secondary School Students)	Mean 3.4377	%Mean 69%	Std. Deviation 1.25531	Std. Error of Mean 0.16073	Test Value (Average)=2.5 (50%) T 5.834	
					df 60	p-value 0.000
Average Level of Consequences for Poor Career Choice (Career Masters)	Mean 4.2889	%Mean 86%	Std. Dev. 0.89525	Std. Error of Mean 0.51688	Test Value (Average) = 2.5 (50%) T 3.461	
					df 2	p-value 0.004

The study findings as shown in table 2 indicate that generally, the level of Consequences for poor Career Choice by High School students of Bungoma County is significantly above average as indicated by 69% mean score (Mean = 3.4377, Std. dev. = 1.25531, $t = 5.834$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$). These findings could be supported with the Career Masters' that showed that the average level of consequences for poor career choice is significantly high as indicated by 86% mean score (Mean = 4.2889, Std. dev. = 0.89525, $t = 3.461$, $p\text{-value} = 0.004 < 0.05$). This is clearly seen as majority of the respondents strongly agreed that poor career choice could lead to; low self-esteem, stress and depression, and unhappy career life as indicated by 47%, 51% and 37% respectively.

The study findings also shows that 31% of the respondents agreed that indecisive career choices is one of the consequences of poor career choice while 36% strongly agreed that being unproductive is also one of the repercussions. Also, 34% of the respondents agreed that identity Crisis is one of the results of poor career choice. Similarly, majority of the respondents stated that; not creative(lack of creativity), drugs addiction, suicide cases, high job turnovers, poor social relations, poor self-management, work place conflicts and promotion of low production which leads to economic inequalities are among consequences of poor career choice as indicated by 29%, 29%, 32%, 26%, 27%, 33%, 38% and 36% respectively. Lastly, 38% of the respondents agreed that under-utility of talents is also one of the consequences.

In the following sub-section the researcher sought to test for the following hypothesis;
 H_{04} ; *The mean of the Merits/Good outcomes of Good Career Choice is not statistically significant different from the hypothesized mean.*

The findings for the descriptive and Inferential Statistics for Merits of Good Career Choice are as shown in table 1.

Table 3. Descriptive/Inferential Statistics for Merits of Good Career Choice

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.	P-Value (Chi-Square One Sample)
There is reduced anxiety	4 7%	1 2%	11 20%	23 43%	15 28%	3.81 (76%)	1.100	0.000
Leads to high self-esteem/confidence	1 2%	2 3%	3 5%	8 13%	47 77%	4.61 (92%)	0.862	0.000
<u>More happy</u>	0 0%	1 2%	6 10%	23 38%	30 50%	4.37 (87%)	0.736	0.000
More creative and productive	0 0%	0 0%	1 2%	14 23%	46 75%	4.74 (95%)	0.480	0.000
Have High job satisfaction	0 0%	1 2%	5 8%	14 24%	39 66%	4.54 (91%)	0.727	0.000
Looks happy	2 3%	1 2%	10 17%	21 35%	26 43%	4.13 (83%)	0.982	0.000
Looks More confident	1 2%	1 2%	7 12%	20 34%	30 51%	4.31 (86%)	0.876	0.000
More Adoptable	0 0%	5 8%	6 10%	25 42%	23 39%	4.12 (82%)	0.911	0.000
Low job turn over/changes	8 14%	8 14%	13 23%	11 20%	16 29%	3.34 (67%)	1.405	0.382
Low stress and depression	4 7%	5 8%	2 3%	16 27%	32 54%	4.14 (83%)	1.238	0.000
Low job related suicides	8 14%	4 7%	10 17%	11 19%	26 44%	3.73 (75%)	1.436	0.000
Very Adoptable	0 0%	3 5%	12 21%	18 31%	25 43%	4.12 (82%)	0.919	0.000
Contributes well to society	1 2%	2 3%	4 7%	18 30%	35 58%	4.40 (88%)	0.887	0.000
Stable Family Relationships	2 3%	0 0%	8 14%	12 20%	37 63%	4.39 (88%)	0.965	0.000
Stable Emotionally	3 5%	0 0%	10 17%	20 33%	27 45%	4.13 (83%)	1.033	0.000
Average Level of Merits of Good Career Choice(Secondary School Students)		Mean 4.2094	%Mean 84%	Std. Deviation 0.60101	Std. Error of Mean 0.07695	Test Value (Average)=2.5 (50%) t 22.214	df 60	p-value 0.000
Average Level of Merits of Good Career Choice (Career Masters)		Mean 4.3333	%Mean 87%	Std. Dev. 0.57735	Std. Error of Mean 0.33333	Test Value (Average) = 2.5 (50%) t 5.500	df 2	p-value 0.032

Table 3 findings shows that majority of the respondents agreed that reduced anxiety is one of the good outcomes of good career choice as indicated by 43% which was found to be statistically significant as indicated

by (Mean=3.81, std. dev=1.100, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 76% rated above average. Equivalently, 77%, 50%, 75%, 66%, 43% and 51% of the respondents respectively strongly agreed that; High self-esteem/confidence, more happy, more creative and productive, High Job Satisfaction, Looks Happy and Looks more confident are among the merits of good career choice and these sentiments were found to be statistically significant as indicated by (Mean=4.61, std. dev=0.862, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 92% rated high, (Mean=4.37, std. dev=0.736, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 87% rated high, (Mean=4.74, std. dev=0.480, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 95% rated high, (Mean=4.54, std. dev=0.727, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 91% rated high, (Mean=4.13, std. dev=0.982, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 83% rated high and (Mean=4.31, std. dev=0.876, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 86% rated high.

Apparently, 42% of the respondents agreed that being more adoptable is one of the good outcomes of good career choice and was found to be statistically significant as indicated by (Mean=4.12, std. dev=0.911, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 82% rated high. Low job turnover/changes (29% strongly agreed with this sentiment) was found to be statistically insignificant good outcome of good career choice as indicated by (Mean=3.34, std. dev=1.405, $p=0.382<0.05$) with a mean score of 67% rated average. Low Stress and depression (54% strongly agreed with this), Low job related suicides (44% strongly agreed with this sentiment), adoptability (43% strongly agreed with this), contributes well to society (58% strongly agreed with this), stable family relationships (63% strongly agreed with this) and emotional stability (45% strongly agreed with this sentiment) were found to be statistically significant good outcomes/merits of good career choice by High School students of Bungoma County. This is as indicated respectively by (Mean=4.14, std. dev=1.238, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 83% rated high, (Mean=3.73, std. dev=1.436, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 75% rated above average, (Mean=4.12, std. dev=0.919, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 82% rated high, (Mean=4.40, std. dev=0.887, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 88% rated high, (Mean=4.39, std. dev=0.965, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 88% rated high and (Mean=4.13, std. dev=1.033, $p=0.000<0.05$) with a mean score of 83% rated high.

Conclusively, the average level of merits/good outcomes of good career choice for the secondary students of Bungoma County is statistically significantly high as indicated by 84% mean score (Mean = 4.2094, Std. dev. = 0.60101, $t = 22.214$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the observed mean of the Merits/Good outcomes of good career choice is Statistically Significantly different from the hypothesized mean. This is a clear indication that the discussed significant good outcomes of good career choice for the secondary students of Bungoma County is as a result of not making poor career choice as these findings could be corroborated with the Career Masters' that also showed that the good outcomes of good career choice significantly depend on the good choice made during career selection as indicated by 87% mean (Mean = 4.3333, Std. dev. = 0.57735, $t = 5.500$, $p\text{-value} = 0.032 < 0.05$) rated high.

III. SUMMARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Causes of poor career choice-KUCCPS** to avoid forcing courses on students, avoid social pressure, consider your personal interest and abilities.
- **Poor career choice could lead to;** low self-esteem, stress and depression, and unhappy career life, Has low Self Esteem Leads to stress and depression Being Unproductive
- **Promoting good career choice:** Conduct Academic clinics, career fairs, career guidance and mentorship activities, visits to industries.
- **Benefits of good career choice:** High self-esteem/confidence, more happy, more creative and productive, High Job Satisfaction, Looks Happy and Looks more confident are among the merits of good career choice.

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