

Influence of Economic Factors on Female Students' Career Choice in Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) Science Programmes in Technical Training Institutes in Siaya County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study sought to establish the influence of economic factors on female students' career choice in TVET science programmes in Siaya County, Kenya. The study was based on social Cognitive Theory. It adopted descriptive survey design. It is based on the conceptual framework whereby choice of careers in TVET by female students is assumed to depend on economic factors. Test-retest method was used to test reliability of the instruments. The research instruments were questionnaires. The sample size was 316 female students sampled using census method. Census, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to sample respondents in different strata and TTIs. Tools in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used to analyze data. Frequencies, percentages and means were computed. Inferential statistics such as regression coefficients, T-statistics, F-statistics, correlation of coefficients shall were derived. Charts, graphs and tables were used to present the findings. Results indicated that there exists a negative and non-significant relationship between Economic Factors and Female Students' Career Choice in Science TVET Programmes ($r=-0.34$; $p>0.05$). The significance of this study is that the findings could be used to come up with policies on how to increase the number of female students choosing careers in TVET. This could guarantee employment opportunities for women in the country which in turn could raise their standard of living.

Keywords: Economic Factors, Career Choice, Tvet Science Programmes.

INTRODUCTION

According to Coombs [1], gender imbalance is unequal proportion of males to females in a given population, usually expressed as the number of males per 100 females. It is particularly strong in the areas of science and technical oriented courses. The widest gap by gender is seen in South Asia, the Middle East and Africa [1]. United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO [2] recorded that in Arab states, 35% of students are women and that in India access to higher education is restricted to girls, while in Indonesia, there are fewer women in college yet there are more 19-29 year old age group women than men in the country. In South pacific, girls are outnumbered 3:1 in all courses and 4:1 in degree courses. In Peru, women accounted for 42% in institutions of higher learning in 1981. In Finland, women tend to dominate in social science and humanities while men dominate in science courses. In France, participation of female is 40% in science courses and the under-representation of women in the traditional male fields of mathematics, engineering and technology is widely held to be the result of gender stereotyping [3].

A closer look at the courses young women choose and the career opportunities these fields open up shows that a gender gap still exists in the field of technical courses such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Women opt for language, literature and arts when they have to choose their major. The proportion of female students in the field of engineering at universities in Germany is only 14%, and the same trend, although not as pronounced, can be identified in other countries in the EU, for example, the percentage in Poland is 24%, and in France 27%. The proportion of women in the fields of science, mathematics and computing is only slightly higher (35% in Germany and 37% in France). Poland, however, is one of the European countries with a relatively high percentage of females (57%), exceeded only by some other, mostly former socialist, countries like Romania, Slovenia, Cyprus and Lithuania. This situation is similar in countries outside Europe [4].

In developing countries, broad spectrums of economic and social constraints create barriers to female entry into the realm of higher education. In a study of the Middle East and North Africa on female enrolment in science and technology courses,

Psacharopoulos [5] noted that religion and socio-cultural traditions such as early marriages and child bearing and the unwillingness to expose girls, help to explain low participation in formal education and to get grades necessary for science related programs in the technical training institutions. A number of studies carried out in African countries have provided data that illustrates the gross under representation of females in Science subjects and careers. At a conference organized by the Federation of African Women Educationists (FAWE), it was acknowledged that in many African states, women are still restricted to studying what is perceived to be “soft option” subjects, which has limited their access to scientific and technical disciplines in institutions of higher learning [6].

A study on subject enrolment in Ethiopia by Addae-Mensah [7] indicated that the students had an external locus of control and believes that there are numerous external factors which influence their career choices. External influences help to shape an individual’s career aspiration. According to the Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS) student’s subject enrolment is also influenced significantly by support from peers. Gender inequality is pronounced in Africa where socio-cultural factors contribute to the achievements and attitude differences. In Tanzania, reports indicate that very few females qualified for admission into engineering and science programmes in tertiary institutions even after lowering of cut off points [8].

According to Hanson [9], career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and finance. Socio-cultural influences and gender-role stereotyping with regard to women enrolment and performance in technical courses are well documented by Byrne [10]

and Kelly [11], but the focus is on a Western culture and not on an African culture. According to Catsambis [12], gender inequality in science and technology is a widespread phenomenon. Many intervention programmes need to be implemented to address the differences in enrolment and performance in science courses by female students.

Kenya recognizes the role of education and training in contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with particular emphasis on TVET [13]. The subsector has been identified as one that will be able to spur economic development within the next 13 years and help achieve Vision 2030. Recently, Kenya revitalized the TVET subsector in order to locate herself strategically in the international scene [14]. In spite of global initiatives by UNESCO to enhance access, equity, retention, quality, completion rates and gender parity in education and training, the Technical, Vocational, and Education Training (TVET) subsector in Kenya continues to experience low enrolment among female students and especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) based courses leading to the creation of TVET Authority Board of Kenya.

It was reported at a workshop organized by Kenyatta University and the World Bank on gender mainstreaming in public universities in Kenya, that although gender disparities in students’ enrolment exist at all levels of tertiary education, they are particularly wide in sciences programs, with special reference to mathematics and technical disciplines. It was also reported that women are concentrated in what is perceived as traditional female social science and education disciplines [15]. Enrolment in TVET programmes also show the same trend whereby fewer female students enroll in TVET science programmes. A typical case is that of Siaya County, Kenya.

Table-1: Students’ Enrollment in TVET Science Programmes by Gender

Technical Training Institute	Enrolment								
	2015			2016			2017		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Siaya TTI	490	186	676	510	191	701	550	195	745
Bondo TTI	210	46	256	242	53	295	262	56	318
Nyang’oma TTI	289	59	348	303	67	370	324	65	389

Source: Institutional Records 2015, 2016 and 2017

Table-1 show that female students choosing careers in TVET science programmes were fewer than their male counterparts. In view of the low enrolment in TVET science programmes by female students that the researcher seeks to conduct find out factors influencing female students’ career choice in science TVET programmes in Technical Training Institutes in Siaya County, Kenya. Taking into consideration the significance of science and technology in today’s

societies, and the growing demand in the labour market – and thus the promising career perspectives – in the technical course fields, it is particularly important to identify possible factors which can explain the existing gender gap in enrollment [16].

Economic Factors Influencing Female students' Career Choice

UNESCO [2] reports that since the early 1970s when the first Institute of Technology was established in Kenya, fees (tuition, boarding, and examination) and other charges have increased tremendously. Many institutes charged between Ksh.1, 000 and 2,000 per year when they first started. In 1993, many were charging between Ksh. 11,000 and 15, 000 per year excluding examination fees. The increasing financial burden has affected girls more than boys as parents have to make hard choices in the distribution of meager family resources. The UNESCO [17] report further notes that the expectation that women will eventually marry off and leave the household, discourages investment in girls education to the extent that some parents force their daughters to be married against their will so that the dowry paid can be used to educate their brothers.

Abdulahi [18] reported cases affecting girls in Maasai land. He noted that fathers do not wish to pay fees for their daughters; instead they would rather have them married. This has forced several of them to run away from home to seek refuge elsewhere. Otunga [19] argues that the more popular theory advanced for the high dropout rates among girls is that parents still see boys as fetching greater financial gain upon successful completion of school and that culturally they are entitled to family land as they remain in their birth homes. Additionally, boys are also given preference by parents when it comes to purchasing core textbooks. There is a deficiency of research on the influence of costs of education on female students' choice of careers in TVET science programmes.

Female students drop out of technical and science related courses compared to male counterparts due to economic returns expected from by the family members and society at large [20]. In addition to financial constraints, the perceived link between education and employment in an economic system in which males have better prospects for wage jobs in the formal sector may provide additional considerations for women's' choice of career. It is therefore necessary to look into the influence of economic factors on female students' career choices in science TVET programmes.

METHODOLOGY

Surveys were used for this study. Surveys aim at obtaining information, which can be analyzed and comparison made [21]. The study was carried out in Siaya County which is located in western part of Kenya. The study was conducted in 3 Public Technical Training Institutes in Siaya County that offer TVET science programmes. Siaya, Bondo and Nyangoma TTIs have totals of 386, 109 and 132 female students respectively who chose careers in TVET science programmes in 2016 and 2017. Therefore, the target population of female students is 627. The study targeted female students enrolled in the year 2016 and 2017 who are persisting in the programme given the length of the certificate and the diploma programs. It also targeted lecturers in the 3 public Technical Training Institutes in Siaya County.

Sample Size

Kerlinger [22] advises that 30% of a population is good enough to be used as a sample in surveys. This study used bigger percentages as shown in Tables-1.

Table-1: Sample Size for Female Students and Lecturers per TTI

Siaya TTI	Bondo TTI	Nyangoma TTI	Total
Sample size allocation for female students 196	Sample size allocation for female students(109)	Sample size allocation for female students 132	437
Sample size allocation for lecturers 44	Sample size for lecturers 36	Sample size allocation for lecturers 41	121

Table-1 show that Siaya, Bondo and Nyangoma TTIs had totals of 386, 109 and 132 female students respectively who chose careers in TVET science programmes in 2016 and 2017. Table 1 shows how sampling of female students was done. Census method was used to sample 109 and 132 female students from Bondo and Nyangoma TTIs respectively. In the case of Siaya TTI, Table of Determination of Sample Size was used to sample 196 students from a total of 386 shown in Table-1. This study used Questionnaires to collect data.

Data was analysed systematically by tallying, coding and tabulating for computer analysis. Data were

analyzed using quantitative methods using tools in the Statistical Package for social Science (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive Statistics computed were: means, frequencies and percentages. ANOVA and T tests were used to test hypotheses of significant differences. Regression analysis was carried out to show the comparative influence of independent variables on choice of careers in TVET programmes.

RESULTS

Factor Loading for Economic Factors

Table-2 shows factor analysis of items on the variable of economic factors

Table-2: Factor Loading for Economic Factors

Item	Factor Loading
High tuition fees influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	.755
The income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes	.698
Cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	.694
Prospects of getting a job influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	.682
High cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	.595

It was observed that since all the items had a factor loading value of greater than 0.4, no items were removed. Primarily, the item "High tuition fees influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes" had the highest loading of 0.755 followed by "The income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes". All the items were retained since they all

had a factor loading between 0.595 and 0.755 and that is why all items were used in the subsequent data analysis.

Influence of Economic Factors on Female Students' Choice

Table-3 shows the frequencies of economic factors reported by female students.

Table-3: Frequencies of Economic Factors among Females

Statement	N	SD	D	A	SA
High cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	13.8%	2.5%	41.1%	42.5%
Cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	2.8%	3.0%	40.9%	53.3%
Prospects of getting a job influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	0.9%	3.7%	54.3%	41.1%
The income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes	435	1.4%	4.1%	45.5%	49.0%
High tuition fees influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	3.2%	3.9%	34.7%	58.2%

Table-3 indicates that 83.6% of female students agreed that high cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes. It means that high cost of the TVET programmes cause fewer female students to choose careers in the area. This finding corroborates that of Essary, Coplan, Cawley, Schneller and Ohsfeldt [23] who posit that choice of career is related to cost of training. According to 94.2 % of female students, cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of careers in science TVET programmes. Kitui [24] also found out that cost of learning materials influences student's choice of careers in science TVET programmes. That prospects of getting a job influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes was reported by 95.4% of female respondents.

It means that few female students choose careers in TVET because of dim prospects getting jobs. Choice of a career depends on prospects of getting a job after training [25]. That the income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes was reported by 94.5%. Family income is a critical factor which influences demand for education [26]. About 93% of female students agreed that high tuition fees influences female students' choice of careers in science TVET programmes. It means that few female students choose careers in TVET because of high tuition fees. According to Omari [27], poverty rate in Siaya County, Kenya is 35.3 %. That could account for the few people who can afford college fee. Munyingi [28] also noted that college fee determines choice of career among students.

Frequencies of Economic Factors (Lecturers and Female Students combined)

Table-4: Frequencies of Economic Factors (lecturers and female students, N=555)

Statement	SD	D	A	SA
High cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	12.8%	2.9%	41.6%	42.7%
Cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	2.9%	4.0%	45.2%	47.9%
Prospects of getting a job influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	1.3%	3.6%	51.5%	43.6%
The income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes	1.3%	4.5%	47.7%	46.5%
High tuition fees influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	3.2%	4.0%	33.2%	59.6%

Table-4 shows the combined percentage responses given by lecturers and female respondents on the economic factors which influence female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes indicates. It is worth noting that responses of female students alone in table 26 are very similar to the responses of lecturers and female students combined in table 27. For instance, that 83.6% of female students agreed that high cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes compares favorably with 84.3% of the combined responses. According to 94.2 % of female students, cost of learning materials influences their choice of careers in science TVET programmes.

Similarly, 93.1% of the both lecturers and female students agreed that cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of careers in science TVET programmes. Other percentages also compare favorably. It means that lecturers concur with female students on the negative influence of economic factors on their choice of careers in science TVET programmes.

Means of Economic Factors Reported by Female Students

Table-5 shows means of economic factors reported by female students.

Table-5: Mean Descriptive for Economic Factors

Statement	N	Mean	SD
High tuition fees influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	3.48	0.72
The income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes	435	3.42	0.64
Prospects of getting a job influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	3.36	0.60
Cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	3.45	0.69
High cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	435	3.12	0.99
Economic Factors Overall Index	435	3.37	0.50
Valid N (listwise)	435		

The means presented in Table-5 indicates that female students agreed that high cost of boarding materials and learning materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes. They also agree that prospects of getting jobs, income level of a family, high tuition fee all influence their choice of career in science TVET programmes. These factors could account for the few

female students choosing careers in science TVET programmes.

Means of Economic Factors (Female Students and Lecturers Combined)

Table-6 shows the means of economic factors as reported by both female students and Lecturers.

Table-6: Means Descriptives of Economic Factors

Statement	N	Mean	SD
High tuition fees influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	555	3.49	0.72
The income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes	555	3.39	0.64
Prospects of getting a job influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	555	3.37	0.62
Cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	555	3.38	0.70
High cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes	555	3.14	0.97
Economic Factors overall Index	555	3.36	0.50
Valid N (listwise)	555		

Table-6 shows the combined means of economic factors which influence female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes as reported by both lecturers and female respondents on the. It is worth noting that responses of female students alone in table 28 are very similar to the responses of lecturers and female students combined in table 29. For instance, female students agreed that high cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes ($M=3.48$) compares favorably with ($M=3.49$) of the combined responses. According to female students, cost of learning materials influences their choice of careers in science TVET programmes ($M=3.42$). Similarly, both lecturers and female students agreed that cost of

learning materials influences female students' choice of careers in science TVET programmes ($M=3.39$). Other percentages also compare favorably. It means that lecturers concur with female students on the negative influence of economic factors on their choice of careers in science TVET programmes.

Difference in Perception of Economic Factors among Females Students by Institute

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there existed a statistically significant difference in perception of Economic Factors among Females respondents of Nyangoma, Bondo and Siaya Technical Training Institutes at 0.05 level of significance. Table-7 shows the finding of the analysis.

Table-7: Difference in Perception of Economic factors among Females respondents

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.556	2	.278	1.104	.332
Within Groups	108.727	432	.252		
Total	109.283	434			

The ANOVA test indicated that there is no significant difference in the means of perception of influence of economic factors on female students' career choice across Nyangoma, Bondo and Siaya Technical Training Institutes female respondents at the 0.05 level, $F(2, 432) = 1.104$, $p > 0.05$. It means that female students in the three institutes had similar perception of the influence of economic factors on female students' career choice in TVET programmes.

This is because the three TTIs are located in the same economic environment.

Difference in Perception in Economic Factors by Respondents Category

The study employed T- test to determine whether there exists a significant difference between two groups; namely female students and lecturers concerning Economic Factors that influence female students' career choice in TVET. Table 8 shows results of the analysis.

Table-8: Difference in Perception in Economic Factors by Respondents Category

Respondent Category	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Females	435	3.37	.502	553	0.753	0.449
Lecturers	120	3.33	.495			

The finding established that there is no significant difference between lecturers and female students' perception of the influence of economic factors on female students' choice of careers in TVET programme at 0.05, $t(553) = 0.753$, $p > 0.05$. That

information authenticates the veracity of responses given by female students.

Difference in Perception of Economic Factors by Institute

ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there existed a significant difference in perception of

economic factors that influence female students' career choice between respondents of Nyangoma, Bondo and

Siaya Technical Training Institutes at 0.05 level of significance. Table-9 shows the findings of the analysis.

Table-9: Difference in Perception of Economic factors by Institution Type

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.246	2	.623	2.504	0.083
Within Groups	137.294	552	.249		
Total	138.539	554			

The test involving ANOVA indicated that there is no significant mean difference in perception of the influence of economic factors on female students' career choice across Nyangoma, Bondo and Siaya Technical Training Institutes at the 0.05 level, $F(2, 552) = 2.504, p > 0.05$

CONCLUSION

Up to 83.6% of female students agreed that high cost of boarding materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes. According to 94.2 % of female students, cost of learning materials influences female students' choice of careers in science TVET programmes. Further, prospects of getting a job influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes was reported by 95.4% of female respondents. Income level of a family determines career choice of female students in science TVET programmes was reported by 94.5%. About 93% of female students agreed that high tuition fees influences female students' choice of careers in science TVET programmes. The means presented indicated that female students agreed that high cost of boarding materials and learning materials influences female students' choice of career in science TVET programmes.

There is no significant difference in the means of perception of influence of economic factors on female students' career choice across Nyangoma, Bondo and Siaya Technical Training Institutes female respondents at the 0.05 level, $F(2, 432) = 1.104, p > 0.05$. It means that female students in the three institutes had similar perception of the influence of economic factors on female students' career choice in TVET programmes. This is because the three TTIs are located in the same economic environment. There is no significant difference between lecturers and female students' perception of the influence of economic factors on female students' choice of careers in TVET programme at 0.05, $t(553) = 0.753, p > 0.05$. That information authenticates the veracity of responses given by female students. There is no significant mean difference in perception of the influence of economic factors on female students' career choice across Nyangoma, Bondo and Siaya Technical Training Institutes at the 0.05 level, $F(2, 552) = 2.504, p > 0.05$.

RECOMMENDATION

The government should rationalize tuition fees, cost boarding facilities and learning materials. More TVET related jobs should be created in Kenya to encourage female students to pick careers in the area.

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