Determinants of Selection of A-Level Subject Combinations for Future Career Choice among Private Secondary School Students in Dodoma City Council, Tanzania

Alfonsia Nyambuya
Teacher, Department of Kiswahili, Huruma Girls Secondary School, Tanzania

Dr. Daniel Oduor Onyango
Senior Lecturer, Department of Education Foundations, St. Augustine University of Tanzania, Mwanza, Tanzania

Abstract: This study investigated the determinants of selection of A-level subjects’ combination for future career choice among private secondary school students. The study was guided by four specific objectives: to establish how personal interest determine the selection of A-level subjects combination for future career choice, to determine whether parents’ economic status influences the selection of A-level subject combination for future career choice, to do determine how parents level of education contributes to the selection of A-level subject combination for future career choice, to find out whether peer pressure determines the selection of A-level subject combinations for future career choice. The study was guided by Self-Concept Theory of Career Choice and Development as well as Social Cognitive Career Theory. The study employed mixed research approach whereby the researchers used both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Convergent parallel research design was used to guide the researchers’ right from the data collection stage through data recording and finally data presentation. The researchers used questionnaires to get information from teachers and students, while the heads of schools were interviewed. The researchers used both probability and non-probability sampling to get the sample size from the population. Lastly, the researchers conducted a pilot study in one of the secondary schools in Dodoma City Council before the real study to test the reliability of the research instruments. The findings of the study revealed that parents have a big influence on their children’s selection of subject combinations as teachers guide students according to their performance to select their subject combination. This study recommends that another study needs to be carried out to find out the causes and solutions of the determinants of selection of A-level subject combination for future career choice among private secondary school students.

Keywords: Determinants, selection, subjects, combination, career choice, private, secondary, schools, city and council

1. Introduction
Career is the sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout his lifetime. Everyone has to make choices at different stages in their lives. Career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interest, self-concept, culture identity, globalization, socialization, availability of resources such as the availability of information and finances. There was a need to conduct this study on determinants of selection of A-level subjects’ combination for future career choices to provide a data base of the knowledge required in selection of subjects’ combination for students and teachers too, in order to avoid wrong selection of subjects’ combination and subsequent careers.

1.1. Influence of Personal Interest in Selection of A-Level Subject Combination
Ramachandram et al. (2015) in their study of factors affecting career choice of undergraduate students found that personal interest significantly influences student’s career choice. This is contrary to what Bandura et al. (2001) found in their study on self-efficacy, beliefs, aspirations and career trajectories that individual process of choosing a career is influenced by several factors like social contacts, role models, and educational attainment. A major factor however, is personal interest. Ramachandram et al. (2015) and Bandura et al. (2001), view that personal interest in career choice is the last factor from factors that influence choice of career among secondary school students. Contrary to that Dediamko (2005)and Perrone et al. (2001) in their studies about gender and ethnic differences in career goal attainment reported that students’ interests provide the main motives for their career choice. This result shows that when choosing careers most students consider their interests. Therefore, matching personal interest with career choice often leads to job satisfaction.

It is true that secondary school students lack adequate knowledge on career choice in the level of education they are in. This leads them to select the subject combination by considering their personal interests which may lead them to make the wrong future career choice in the world work market. Kinganzi (2006) noted that the individuals need to
understand what exists in the employment market so that they can examine their selection of subject combination and future career options and decide their relevance to their personal characteristics.

The literature discussed above focuses on the influence of personal interests on career choices for students of colleges and universities. Ramachandram (2015), for instance, conducted a study on factors affecting career choice of undergraduate students. The researcher therefore, observed that there exist limited studies conducted on the determinants of selection of A-level subject combination for future career choice among private secondary school students in Dodoma City Council, Tanzania.

1.2. Parents’ Level of Education on Selection of A-Level Subjects Combination

Students have two main educators in their lives these are parents and teachers (Patrikakoo, 2008). Parents are said to be the primary educators of their children. Mbagwi and Ajaegbu (2016) added that teenagers whose parents are from highly educated are most consistent and do not have much difficulty in making a career choice when compared with those whose parents have low levels of education. Majority of teenagers whose parents had high educational attainment made professional career choices, while those whose parents had low educational attainment made more business-centred career choices.

In another study, Widman and Torres (2002) said that family and friends are considered to be an influential part of students’ choice of career. Parents with an agriculture background most often have an impact on where students go to college. The study also found that role models of respective families have more influence on the career preferences of the students. To cement on that, Olamide and Olawaiye (2013) noted that students whose mothers have high educational status have a significant influence on the career preferences of students when compared to the students whose mothers have low educational status.

Besides, Hewitt (2010) classified factors influencing career preference as either intrinsic or extrinsic or both, most of the students are influenced into careers that their parents’ favour. The study further posits that parents’ educational background may also play a big role and influence students’ views on career choice. This is because most secondary school students look at their parents as their role models. Parents too, influence their children’s career by dictating what they should choose; such as insisting that they opt for the Sciences and not the Art subjects. There is a significant relationship, therefore, between parents’ educational background and selection of A-level subject combinations for future career choices. This is because parents can give the right guidance to the children. A parent who is aware of the different types of careers can advise their child or children on the right choice of career by looking at different factors. However, if parents have a lower educational attainment, it is not easy to guide their children on appropriate career choices.

Udoh and Sammi (2012) in their study investigated the influence of parental background on the career choices of secondary school students in Nigeria. In their study, they found out that parent’s level of formal education exerts a significant influence on career choices of secondary school students. Aswani (2012) too, noted that parental level of education had a significant influence on pupils’ education and occupational aspirations.

Various studies have been conducted on the role of parents’ education on students’ career choice (Patrikakoo, 2008; Mbagwi & Ajaegbu, 2016; Torres, 2002; Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013; & Hewitt, 2010). Mbagwu & Ajaegbu (2016) conducted a study on secondary school students in Oweri, Nigeria. The gap observed from the reviewed literature was the driving force for the researcher to conduct this study.

1.3. Parents’ Economic Status on Selection of A-Level Subject Combination

Munyingi (2012) conducted a related study on the selection of subject combination in Kenya the study cites economic factors such as economic status of students’ families as a major determinant of subject selection among students. Besides, pressure from family for financial support influence the career preferences among students as supported by Shumba & Naog (2012) who conducted a study in South Africa. In their study, they discovered that low family income is the most common obstacle towards career choices. From the above views, students who belong to the family of low level of economic status are compelled to make selection on arts subjects than science subjects compared to students from rich families who have the ability to pay for the expensive science subjects.

Kibera (2012) studied the career aspirations and expectations of secondary school students in Kenya. His study gives more information that secondary school students with parents in the middle and high socio-economic status (SES) have higher educational and occupational aspirations and expectations than students whose parents have low socio-economic status (SES). It is clear that the parents’ socio-economic status has a big impact on secondary school students as it guides the students to choose the career which is in line with their parents’ economic status. Kibera (2012) further noted that secondary school students with parents in middle and high socio-economic status (SES) had higher educational and professional ambitions and opportunities than students whose parents were in the low socio-economic status.

Thus, the socio-economic status enables them to choose the careers which are costly and of better quality. The parents’ economic status is therefore very important to a student’s career choices because in the family where parents have high economic status students choose careers of high professional related subjects whereas students whose parents have low economic status choose their careers based on their parent’s economic status. This is shown in most families from rural areas whereby most peasants and pastoralists cannot afford adequate finances to make their children select those high-cost science subjects.

The literature reviewed reveals that there are few studies related to the determinants of selection of A-level subject combination for future career choice, a finding that informed this study that was conducted in Dodoma City
Council, Tanzania. Lastly, the researcher observed that all the studies were done outside Tanzania. Therefore, there was need to conduct this study.

1.4. The Influence of Peer Pressure on Selection of A-Level Subject Combination

Naz et al. (2014) conducted a study in Pakistan entitled ‘Peers, friends and career decision making: a critical analysis’, and reported that friends and peers seem to have an influence on decision making in one’s future career. This is based on the influence of peer pressure during selection of subjects in secondary schools, since the selection of class, sitting location and learning materials are affected by peers and friends. The findings seem to be relevant to what was observed by Kaneez & Medha (2018) in the study on factors influencing grade 10 students’ career choice in Mauritius that, students in Mauritius are being affected by friends in selecting subjects and career since they are not given guidance on choosing their subjects and careers. This influences many students to choose subjects that may be irrelevant to their future careers. One way to help students in their future careers is to guide them in choosing the best subjects that will help them to develop their future careers. This study revealed that there are some Grade ten students who have no idea what their future career will be.

In addition, Shumba & Naong (2012) conducted a study on factors influencing students’ career choice and aspirations in South Africa. The study revealed that the choice of career has been influenced by peers and friends, which results in wrong career choices; and many students who choose their career by following their friends do not succeed. Therefore, Shumba and Naong acknowledged that parents and teachers should pay attention to the choice of career by advising students to choose the best career. The advice will help the learner who should make the final decision on which career to take.

Zotorvie (2016) conducted a study in Ghana on determinants of career choice among students of the institute of chartered accountants. He noted that, students’ interest in the accounting field, high earnings expectations, availability of jobs, prestige, and teacher influence were the main factors that influenced learners to take accounts as a subject of study. The researcher does not identify peer pressure or friends influence to be one of the factors influencing students to choose accounting. This implies that in Ghana teachers and parents play a very good role in guiding students in choosing the right subjects for their future career. In relation to what was observed in Ghana, Ogutu et al. (2017) came up with different findings in a study conducted on the effectiveness of peer pressure on students’ career decision making in secondary schools in Kenya. The study reported that, there is influence of peer pressure among secondary school students in Kenya and students were selecting subjects by following what their friends were taking. This automatically affects their academic performance and their future career since the subjects they may not be necessarily good in the subjects they are selecting do not help them in their future career or sometimes lead them to failure. Therefore, there is need to guide secondary school students in selecting subjects for the benefit of their future careers.

Ndalichako and Komba (2014) conducted a study on students’ subject choices in secondary schools in Tanzania. The findings revealed that peer pressure was not a factor influencing secondary school students to select certain subjects. They identified that students were influenced by their environment since many students in Tanzania prefer art subjects than science and business subjects. Their study further revealed that the shortage of teaching and learning materials, teachers and other facilities is an obstacle to students selecting science subjects in secondary schools. Ndalichako and Komba further posited that many students would like to take the science subjects but the problem is the shortage of teachers as well as insufficient learning resources in the school laboratory and library; factors that will be an impediment to their passing of the national examinations.

From the above reviewed literature, the researchers noted that many scholars have investigated the issue of career choices, and not subjects combinations. Therefore, the researchers in the current study dealt with the selection of subjects’ combination among secondary school students for their future career, an area that needs more investigation. Consequently, previous studies have not shown how the right choice of subject combination influences future career among secondary school students. Therefore, this study made a clear relationship on how the choice of subject combination affects the future career among secondary school students.

1.5. Statement of the Problem

Selection of A-level subject combinations in Tanzania is very important as it gives direction to an individual’s future career choice if one can make the right selection of A-level subjects’ combination. Despite the importance of A-level subject combination selections, it seems students do not get proper guidance in the selection of subject combinations, which leads them to the wrong selection of A-level subject’s combinations, academic failure, frustration and depression, leading to future career mismatch. Ndalichako and Komba (2014), in their study, realized that many students in Tanzania, especially from ward secondary schools, are denied the opportunity to select subjects according to their wishes, abilities and interests because of shortage of teachers and teaching and learning materials. Therefore, there is a need to conduct this study on determinants of selection of A-level subjects’ combination for future career choice so as to make clear knowledge in selection of subjects’ combination for students and teachers to avoid wrong selection of subjects’ combination.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

Time limit was the major problem during the data collection process. This is because private secondary schools have fully occupied school calendars that made it very difficult for the researcher to meet the respondents as had been planned. The researcher therefore had to ask the heads of schools to offer break time and weekends to enable the
researcher meet with teachers and students to fill the questionnaires. The availability of heads of schools for interviews was a huge challenge too. Most of them were not available when the researcher visited the schools. Therefore, to solve the problem the researcher made an appointment through telephone.

2. Research Methodologies

The study used mixed research approach to achieve the research findings. Mixed research approach is defined as a research approach in which the investigator collects data, analyses it and draws conclusions by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). In this study, a convergent parallel research design was applied as a guideline in the data collection, analysis and presentation. Convergent parallel design is a method whereby quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed separately and the two databases are compared for a better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2012).

The targeted population of this study included 800 students from private secondary schools, 287 teachers and 19 heads of A-level secondary schools in Dodoma City Council, which makes a total of 1,106 targeted population. The sample size for this study was 293 respondents. The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling procedures whereby under probability sampling procedures there are simple random sampling procedure, systematic, cluster and stratified. This study collected data through two different methods which are; questionnaires and interview. The questionnaire helped the researcher to get information from a large number of people within a short period of time, whereas interviews helped the researcher to get more clarification according to the information needed to meet the demands of the study.

Data recording and analysis were done through two different ways whereby qualitative data was done through descriptive narratives while quantitative data were computed through computer software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 and then the computed data were analysed by using descriptive statistics. The analysis involved breaking down the data into small related parts to answer the research questions. Statistical procedures helped the researcher to relate the scores of one variable and other variables, show the differences between the variables and finally to interpret the general findings of the study based on research questions. The data was presented through tables and figures and then explained using descriptive narratives.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion of the determinants of selection of A-level subject combination for future career choice among secondary school students in Dodoma City Council based on the research objectives namely; to establish how personal interests determine the selection of A-level subjects combination, determine whether parents’ economic status influence the selection of A-level subject combination, determine how parents level of education contribute to the selection of A-level subject combination and find out whether peer pressure determines the selection A-level subject combinations for future career choice.

3.1. Influences of Personal Interest on selection of A-level Subject Combination

The first objective of this study was to find out the influence of personal interest on selection of subject combinations in private secondary schools in Dodoma City Council.

| Items                                                                 | P | P | P | P | P | P |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| You decided on your subject combination because                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| You have an interest in it                                            | 71.2 | 23.1 | 5.8 | - | - | - |
| because you believe you can do it                                     | 63.0 | 31.7 | 3.8 | 98.6 | 1.4 | - |
| I would like to take after my father's/mother's occupation because I admire it. | 59.1 | 24.5 | 9.6 | 4.8 | 1.9 | - |
| My academic ability will determine my career choice                   | 26.4 | 31.3 | 17.3 | 14.9 | 10.1 | - |

*Table 1: Influences of Personal Interest on Selection of A-Level Subject Combination (N=76)*

Source: Researcher, 2019

Table 1 shows the influence of personal interest on selection of A-level subject combination. From the table, 71.2 percent of the respondents strongly, 23.1 percent agreed and 5.8 percent were neutral that they decided on subject combination. On the other hand, 63.0 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that the student subject selection was made based on their belief that they could do it, 31.7 percent agreed to this while 3.8 percent were neutral and 1.4 percent strongly disagreed that the selection was because they had interest in it. In addition, the results from table 1 show that 59.1 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that students’ choice was based on the fact that they wanted to take after their parents’ occupation because they admired it; 24.5 agreed while 9.6 percent were neutral. However, 4.8 percent disagreed and 1.9 percent strongly disagreed that students wanted to take after their parents’ occupation. On the other hand, results in table 4.6 also shows that 26.4 and 31.3 percent of the teachers respectively strongly agreed and agreed that their students’ selection of A-level subjects was influenced by their personal academic ability. Similarly, 17.3 percent were neutral while 14.9 and 10.1 percent strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that the student subject choices was on
the basis of their personal ability. This is an indication that the students do not select advanced secondary subjects’ combinations due to their academic ability and performance. Through it all, most students were influenced by their personal interest when choosing their subjects for future careers.

The findings about the students’ interest influence on A-level subjects’ combination correspond with that of Ramachandram et al. (2015) who recognized that student’s personal interest significantly influence student’s career choice. Similarly, the findings agree with those of Perronen et al. (2002), who observed that students’ interest provides the main motives for their career choice. With this knowledge students are in a position to go for educational opportunities that meet their needs.

On the contrary, Bandura et al. (2001) opined that personal interest in career choice is the least factor from factors that influence career choice among secondary school students. The finding implies that to select the subject combination by considering personal interest leads them not to meet the right future career choice and the world work market. A study conducted by Kinganzi (2006) observed that students need to understand what exists in the employment market so that they can examine their selection of subject combination and future career opportunities that are available. This study is consistent with the Social Cognitive Career Theory which maintains that an individual makes career decisions by considering both internal and external factors.

One head of school reported that,

*Personal interest helps students to choose the right subject combination depending on the background of the students. Most of them like something that they feel they can do, according to their capability, understanding and ability. However, most children believed in their teachers, peers and technology* (HoS2, March 20, 2019).

The other remarks indicated that students had ideas concerning the education and future of their academic life, the major challenge being the limited knowledge on careers which affects them currently as most of the students only know the commonly well-known careers like teaching and nursing. This shows that students need guidance and clear understanding on their future careers so as to enable them to make the right selections of A-level subject combinations.

The findings about personal interest being an influence in the selection of A-level combination resonated with Ramachandram et al. (2015) who recognized that students found that personal interest significantly influences a student’s career choice. It is important for the parents, heads of schools, teachers and guardians to know the impact of educational interest, outlook and attitudes of the students on their career choices. These findings imply that personal interest has a big and positive impact on students’ selection of subject combinations. This therefore calls special attention so that it can bring out a positive outcome. Teachers, parents and guardians must guide their children to select the subject’s combination according to their personal interests and ability so as to make them to do better and bring out the best possible performance; as shown in this study that the majority of the students are pursuing science subjects due to their personal interest and others are studying business subjects and arts subjects according to their personal interests.

### 3.2. Influence of Parents’ Economic Status on Selection of A-level Subject Combination

Economic status of a parent is considered important in influencing students’ selection of A-level subject combinations. The four aspects were given to the students to indicate their level of agreement. The results are presented in Table 2.

| Items                                              | SA | A   | N   | D   | SD   |
|----------------------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|------|
|                                                   | F  | P   | F   | P   | F    |
| The family business is a factor                    | 83 | 39.9| 74  | 35.6| 25   | 12.0 |
| Parents economic status                           | 67 | 32.2| 63  | 30.3| 31   | 14.9 |
| My parents can afford to provide the educational opportunities | 67 | 32.2| 62  | 29.8| 31   | 14.9 |
| My parents are able to fund me in which ever combination I choose. | 53 | 25.5| 52  | 25.0| 48   | 23.1 |

*Table 2: Students’ Views/Level of Agreement on Parents Economic Status’ Influences*

*Source: Researcher, 2019*

Table 2indicates the distribution of responses on parents’ economic status influence on the selection of A-level subjects’ combination. It was found that a high number of students (39.9 percent) strongly agreed that family business is among the contributing factors for students’ choice of A-level subject combinations. 35.6 percent agreed, while 12.0 percent of students were neutral. On the contrary, 6.3 percent of students disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that the availability of family business has no influence in the selection of A-level subject combination. These findings show that the majority of the respondents were of the view that middle class families with business bases have positive contribution on selection of A-level subjects’ combination among secondary school students in Dodoma City Council. Students from higher socio-economic groups consult higher sources of information in choosing A-level subject combination. This was supported by 32.2 percent of students who strongly agreed and 30.3 percent who agreed. This is more than half of the respondents, while 14.9 percent of students were neutral. Yet, 13.0 and 9.6 percent of the students strongly disagreed that their choice of A-level subject combination was not influenced by the availability of higher sources
of information for consultation. Therefore, the majority of the respondents were of the view that the parents in the middle-class income bracket would be in a better position to provide education opportunities and buy resources for their children.

Students with well-connected parents tend to have a good selection of A-level subjects’ combination as it was reported by 32.2 percent and 29.8 percent of the students who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the other hand, more than 14.9 percent of students were neutral, however 13.9 and 9.1 percent of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The results show that the majority of respondents agreed that their parents with middle class income provided them with relevant educational opportunities and resources for their career development. The findings therefore show that the ability of parents to finance their children largely plays a major role in the students’ selection of subject combinations as well as the subsequent career choice in the future.

The responses on the middle and high economic status of parents show that students with parents in higher economic status had higher professional ambitions and opportunities than students whose parents were in the low economic status. These findings are consistent with those of Munyingi (2012) and Shumba & Naog (2012) who found out that family financial support influences career preferences among students. In their study, they observed that low family income is the most common obstacle towards career choices.

This is further supported by Kibera (2012), who discovered that the socio-economic status of parents enables students to choose careers of high costs and of better quality. Thus, parent’s economic status is very important in student’s selection of A-level subject combination because in the family where parents have high economic status their children choose the subjects of high profession than who’s from low economic status. Similarly, the findings agree with Social Cognitive Career Theory which states that individuals make career decisions by considering both internal and external factors. Thus, parents’ economic status and education level are considered as the external factors that have an impact on students’ selection of A-level subject combination as it forces students to select subjects as dictated by the economic status of their parents.

The heads of schools said that the parents’ socio-economic statuses were of middle class and above and few of them were of low-class income. During the interview with the heads of schools, it was evident that financing of their students and future career aspirations offered no difficulties. One of the interviewees commented that:

Economic status of parents affects the selection of subject combination for students because some parents have the notion that their children must inherit their economic statuses or jobs; like if they are business people or doctors. By so doing, parents want them to take subject combinations which will fit in with such occupation without thinking of their ability and interest (HoS1, March 14, 2019).

In addition, another head of the school explained that:

We have not yet proved hundred percent that economic status contributes to selection of A-level subject combination. As some teachers in these schools are aware of the issues to do with future career choice such that once in a while, they do find time to talk to their students and peers about the world of work and which subject combinations would make someone manage to go through such a desired career preference (HoS3, March 27, 2019).

These findings show that students from private secondary schools have parents from middle and high economic status where by the majority of them are found in the middle class. This implies that economic status has influence on student’s selection of subjects’ combination due to the fact that students from higher economic status have accessibility to all educational materials which make them to be free in selecting subjects’ combination. Students from families belonging to middle and high economic statuses have good educational foundations and this also has influence in selection of A-level subjects’ combinations.

3.3. Parents’ Level of Education and Selection of A-Level Subjects Combination

Regarding the effectiveness of the influence of parents’ education level on the selection of A-level subjects’ combination of their children; teachers and students indicated different responses:

| Through interaction and advice | Teachers Frequency | Percent | Students Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|
|                               | 40                | 53.4   | 81                | 38.9   |
| Through education experience  | 19                | 25.3   | 66                | 31.7   |
| Through educational guidance  | 6                 | 8.0    | 29                | 13.9   |
| Through educational aspirations and expectations | 6 | 8.0 | 16 | 7.7 |
| Through parent’s interest     | 4                 | 5.3    | 16                | 7.7    |
| Total                         | 75                | 100.0  | 208               | 100.0  |

Table 3: Influence of Parents Educational Level on Subject’s Selection
Source: Researcher, 2019

Regarding the influences of parents’ education level on subject selection of their children, Table3 presents that, 53.3 and 38.9 percent of teachers and students respectively confirmed that there was a positive interaction between parents and their children from childhood up to the time when children completed high school. This bond is very, very helpful and has an influence on students’ career choice.
Similar results were also noted from 25.3 percent of teachers and 31.7 percent of students who recognized that during their interaction, educated parents gave their children more education and ideas about career choices in relation to their own experiences and remarks from what their friends and family members have achieved in such particular careers. Educated parents also encouraged and supported their children in all their academic activities in order to help them develop higher self-esteem and courage to do things they were capable of doing.

Table 3 shows that teachers and students with 25.3 percent and 31.7 percent respectively pointed out that most of the educated parents influenced subject choices of their children through positive guidance to higher prospects in terms of jobs, out of their experiences, and what they observe in the society they live in. This result may suggest that this kind of influence depends on whether a parent is educated and knowledgeable enough to guide their children about subject choices. As such, findings showed that parents who were uneducated and lived-in isolated areas had no or less influence for they only had partial or limited examples of subject to advice their high school children.

On the other hand, table 3 revealed that 16.0 percent and 15.4 percent of students argued that subject aspirations of students are influenced by parents’ aspirations and expectations such that those who perceive their parents to have high educational aspirations for them select subjects in line with parent’s expectations. This implies that the support and encouragement of the educated parents have a tendency to influence vocational outcomes in students through contact such as conversation, in which parents convey their influence to students, which in turn affect what students imagine, declare and opt for, about their various future careers.

From table 3, it was further observed that 5.3 percent of the teachers, and 13.9 percent of the students had a view that parents encouraged and supported their children in subject choices which children had interest in. Findings indicated that parents never advised them to follow the path of what they did as parents but to do things they were capable of doing. Thus, the interaction which took place between parents and their children provided parents the chance to talk and share with their children about the world of work. By so doing, the aspiration and subject choices of the students tended to move closer to the occupation levels of their parents even though earlier were closer to the occupational goals common in their various schools.

It was discovered from this study that parental influence also comes in different forms which include parental actions, expectations, parental values and beliefs. This is line with Hewitt (2010) who recognized that parents’ educational background may play a big role and influence students’ views on career choices. This is because most high school students’ look at their parents as their role models and also parents influence their children to choose the career of their choice, such as science and not arts subjects, or vice versa.

These results are similar to Mbagwi and Ajaegbu (2016) who recognized that teenagers whose parents are from high educational background are most consistent and do not have much difficulty in making a subject’s choice compared to those whose parents have low levels of educational background. Majority of teenagers whose parents had high educational background made professional career choices, while whose parents who had low educational background made more business-related career choices.

The study further found that educated family members were also likely to be identified as role models by students. This was also cited by Olamide and Olawaiye (2013), who noted that students whose mothers had high educational levels have a significant influence on the career preferences of students when compared to the students whose mothers had low educational status. This affirmation is in line with previous studies such as Widman and Torres (2002) who found that educated parents are considered to be an influential part of students’ choice of careers. For example, parents with an agricultural background have an impact on where students go to college in most cases.

The findings also conform with the theory of social cognitive career as it emphasizes that individuals make career decisions by considering both internal and external factors. On the other hand, the external factors such as parents’ educational level can influence the student to select science or arts-based subjects because a parent with good educational background leads their children to the most appropriate career choice.

All the heads of schools in an interview reported that parent’s education level influenced their children subject selections, hence resulted into a more promising future. Thus, one head of school narrated;

The educated parents like doctors, engineers, and lawyers like and guide their children to select subject combinations which are appropriate and competitive enough for the job market; whereas those parents who have low level of education like farmers and peasants are only providing school basic needs without any influence concerning subject combinations’ selection (HoS1, March 14, 2019).

Another head of the school added that;

A parent is the one to which most students listen to, so if the level of education of a parent is very low his or her advice has no chance. Cases where parents have low levels of education indicate poor selection of A-level subject combination of their children due to lack of counselling and guidance and lack of experience (HoS2, March 20, 2019).

Thus, the findings would suggest that a high parental level of education significantly influenced their high school children and consequently their future careers. This finding is consistent with previous studies of Udoh and Sanni (2012) in Nigeria; and Aswani (2012), who also discovered that parent’s level of formal education, exerts a significant influence on career choices of secondary school students. Therefore, parents’ level of education had significant positive influence on pupils’ education and occupation aspirations. The findings imply that parent’s level of education has a significant role for students’ selection of A-level subjects’ combination as the educated parents are aware of all educational matters and this helps students towards the right direction in the selection of subject’s combination and ensuring a desirable outcome from their selection.
3.4. Peer Pressure Influence on Selection of A-Level Subject Combination

Another factor that was considered to be important in influencing career choice among students was peer pressure. In this study, the researchers sought to establish how peer pressure influences the selection of A-level subject combinations. The teachers and students were therefore asked to indicate the level of agreement on the extent to which peer pressure influenced their subject selection. The responses are presented in Table 4.

| Peer Pressure Influence                                      | Teachers | Students |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
|                                                              | SA       | A        | N        | D        | SD       | SA       | A        | N        | D        | SD       |
| Career selection comes from other students                   | 32 42.7  | 32 42.7  | 11 14.7  |          | -        | 48 23.1  | 52 25.0  | 43 20.7  | 29 13.9  | 36 17.3  |
| Friends validated the career that fellow students chose      | 14 18.7  | 53 70.7  | -        | 8 10.7   | -        | 51 24.5  | 55 26.4  | 50 24.0  | 38 18.3  | 14 6.7   |
| Students in peer groups are likely to select similar subjects | 14 18.7  | 42 56.0  | 15 20.0  | 4 5.3    | -        | 8 3.8    | 16 7.7   | 11 5.3   | 62 29.8  | 111 53.4 |
| Peer groups are more likely to accept career advice from members | 14 18.7  | 42 56.0  | 15 20.0  | 4 5.3    | -        | 26 12.5  | 52 25.0  | 52 25.0  | 38 18.8  | 39 18.8  |

Table 4: Teachers’ and Students’ Response on Peer Influence on Selection of A-Level Subject Combination
Source: Researcher, 2020

Results in table 4 indicate the distribution of responses on peers influence on students’ selection of subject combination. As reflected by the respondents, 42.7 percent of teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively that other students have an influence on other high school students’ career selection. In a similar way, 25.0 percent and 23.1 percent of students agreed and strongly agreed respectively that peer groups were more likely to accept career advice from other students with whom they value. However, 14.7 percent of teachers and 20.7 percent were neutral. Besides that, 17.3 percent and 13.9 percent of students strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that career selection is not due to other students. The results suggest that students select a particular subject of studies because their fellow students did so.

It was also noted that 70.7 percent and 18.7 percent of teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively that students validated the selection in which their fellow students chose, while 10.7 percent of teachers disagreed. Similar responses were noted from students; with 26.4 percent and 24.5 percent agreeing and strongly agreeing that peer advice and support on careers was essential for their fellow students. However, 24.0 percent of students were neutral. Nevertheless, 18.3 percent and 6.7 percent of students strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that students’ subject combination selection was not influenced by career validation from fellow students. Therefore, the responses reveal that career modification comes from students and that validation of careers comes from fellow peers. In this instance, information given by peers is always reliable and more influential.

As reflected in table 4, peer groups were likely to choose similar subjects as the interaction amongst students was said to be powerful in students’ selection of subject combinations. The majority of teachers agreed and strongly agreed; with 56.0 percent and 18.7 percent, respectively. Not too surprisingly, 53.4 and 29.8 percent of students strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that the advice they received from friends had less value in the selection of subjects’ combination. 20 percent of teachers and 5.3 percent of students were neutral, while 7.7 and 3.8 percent of students agreed and strongly agreed with the fact that students were more likely to be influenced by peers to choose similar subjects. These results also reflect that peer group pressure may be used to encourage students to determine future careers.

As noted in table 4 above, peer groups were more likely to accept career advice from members with whom they value the most. The majority of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed at 56 and 18.7 percent respectively. Half of these...
students agreed with 25 percent strongly agreeing and another 25 percent agreeing that peer groups are more likely to accept career advice from members whom they value the most, while 20 percent of the teachers and 12.5 percent of students were neutral. On the other hand, only 5.3 percent of the teachers disagreed, while 18.8 and 18.8 percent of students strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. These study findings revealed that career education which comes from peers and friends was influential in students’ choices of subject combination. As students interact with peers and friends, they share important information on subject combination for future career choices.

Results of the study showed that a healthy student-peer relationship greatly influences the subjects’ choice. Similarly, the findings agree with those of Naz et al. (2014) in Pakistan, who found that friends and peers seem to have influence of decision making on future career based on the influence of peer pressure during selection of subjects in secondary schools. In this respect, the selection of class, sitting location and learning materials affected by peers and friends.

The study recognized that students in high schools rely heavily on their peers’ support on subject’s selection. These results agree with Shumba & Naong (2012) in South Africa, who identified that the choice of career based on influence from peers and friends results in wrong career choice since many students who choose their careers guided by their friends do not succeed. These results show that despite efforts the students attain, parents and teachers should pay attention on the choice of careers by advising students to choose the best career suitable for them as individuals.

The findings of this study concur with self-concept theory of career choice and development which state that career maturity and self-determination is the main component of career choice because even if there is peer pressure influence, the issue of selection of subject combination needs the student to have self-determination and to make the final decision. The theory also puts it forth that career maturity and self-determination are the product of complex interaction among a number of factors including mental growth, personal experiences, environmental characteristics and stimulation. These findings are also similar to those of Ndalichako & Komba (2014) who postulated that peer pressure was not a factor influencing secondary school students to select a certain subject. In this respect, Ndalichako & Komba (2014) they noted that students’ choices were influenced by their immediate environments; for instance, many students in Tanzania, prefer art subjects than science and business subjects. They further state shortage of teaching and learning materials, teachers and other facilities as some of the obstacles to students in selecting science subjects in secondary schools.

During the interviews, heads of schools reported that peer pressure has a positive influence on career selection. The above observation is also supported by yet another head of school who mentioned that;

*The career education which comes from peers and friends is prominent in students’ selection of careers. As students interact with peers and friends, they tend to share essential information on subject combination for their future career* (HoS1, March 14, 2019)

The above observations are similar to another head of school who maintained that;

*Peer pressure affects much the selection of A-level subject combination because students decide to choose their subject combinations based on advice from their friends and they select without critically assessing whether they are capable of managing, or not, but also because of fear from their friends* (HoS2, March 20, 2019).

The findings about the peer influences on selection of A-level subject combination agree with the work of Kaneez & Medha (2018) in Mauritius that friends have power in selecting subjects; but the better way to help students in their future career is to guide them on how to choose the best subjects that will help them develop their future careers. This then, leaves the students in the hands of their fellow students, teachers, guardians and parents to offer the necessary guidance.

### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the summary of the findings, the study concluded that personal interest is a very critical determinant in the selection of A-level subjects’ combination. The study concluded that parents’ economic status influences the selection of A-level subjects’ combination in a way that parents in the high- and middle-class income bracket would be able to pay school fees, buy textbooks and other educational resources as well as access information to share with their children, making them become aware of global changes, demands and expectations. Parents’ educational levels influence the subjects’ choices of students in private secondary schools and lastly the study concluded that students in High schools rely heavily on their peers’ support and opinions for their subject’s selection. The data also shows that the most influential groups are classmates, school mates, home friends and roommates.

### 5. Recommendations

The study recommended that parents, teachers, heads of schools, career guiders and counsellors should be patient and tolerant when advising students on their future subject choices. Also, teachers and heads of schools should inspire students to achieve their supreme potential since parents are economically fit to support any career aspirations of their students. Parents too, should not force students to pursue careers similar to their own which may be against their will and priorities; because majority of the students indicated they do not prefer to choose careers similar to those of their parents.

### 6. References

1. Aswani, J. S. (2012). Some of the Home Environment Factors that Influence Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Standards Eight Pupils. Master of Education Unpublished Thesis, Kenyatta University, Kenya.
2. Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G.V., & Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-efficacy Beliefs as Shapers of Children’s Aspirations and Career Trajectories. *Child Development, 72*, 187-206.
iii. Creswell, J. (2012). Education Research: Planning Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. (4th Ed). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

iv. Hewitt, J. (2010). Factors Influencing Career Choice. Foundations. Mason: Cengage Learning Inc.

v. Kaneez, B.S., & Medha, K. (2018). Factors Influencing Grade 10 Students’ Career Choice in Mauritius. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 7(2), 30-44.

vi. Kibera, L. W. (2012). Career Aspirations and Expectations of Education in Kiambu, Kajiado and Machakos Districts. Master of Education Unpublished Thesis Kenyatta University, Kenya.

vii. Mbagwu, I. M., & Ajaegbu, O.O. (2016). Influence of Parents Educational Background on Career Choice of Teenagers Among Senior Secondary School Students in Oweri. *Edorium Journal of Psychology*, 2, 14-20.

viii. Munyingi, L. (2012). Factors Affecting Career Choice of the Female Students in Kenya Tertiary Institutions. Master of Arts Unpublished Thesis, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

ix. Naz, A., Saeed, G., Kham, S., Sheikh, I., & Khan, N. (2014). Peer and Friends and Career Decision Making: A Critical Analysis. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 22(8), 1193-1197.

x. Ndalichako, J. L., and Komba, A. A. (2014). Students’ subject choice in secondary schools in Tanzania: A matter of students’ ability and interests or forced circumstances. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 49-56.

xi. Ogutu, J. J. P., Odera, P &Maragia, S. N. (2017). The Effectiveness of Peer Pressure on Students’ Career Decision Making in Secondary Schools in Kenya. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 3(3), 16-32.

xii. Olamide, S., & Olawaiye, S. (2013). The Factors Determining the Choice of Career among Secondary School Students. *International Journal of Engineering and Science (IJES)*, 2(6), 33-44.

xiii. Perrone, K. M., Sedlacek, E.W., & Alexander, M.C. (2001). Gender and Ethnic Differences in Career Goal Attainment. *Career Development Quarterly*, 50(2), 168-178.

xiv. Perrone, K. M., Zanardelli, G., Worthington Jr, E. L., & Chartrand, J. M. (2002). Role Model Influence on the Career Decidedness of College Students. *College Student Journal*, 36(1), 109-113.

xv. Ramachandram, R., Abdullah, S., & Asma, A. (2015). Factors Affecting Career Choice of Undergraduate Students. Master of Science Unpublished Thesis, School of Business Management, Kedah, Malaysia.

xvi. Shumba, A., & Naong, M. (2012). Factors Influencing Students’ Career Choice and Aspirations in South Africa. *Journal of Social Science*, 33(2), 169-178.

xvii. Zotorvie, T. & Stephen, J. (2016). Determinants of Career Choice among Students of Institute of Chartered Accountants. *European Scientific Journal*, 12(31), 255-274.

xx. Tashakorki, A., & Creswell, J. (2007) *Introduction to mixed methods*. Retrieved from www.strath.ac.uk/aer/

xxi. Udoh, N. A., & Sanni, M. M. (2012). Parental background variables and the career choice of secondary school students in Uyo Local government area. *Nigeria Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1), Doi: 10.590/mjss.2012.03.01.497

xxii. Wildman, M.L., & Torres, R.M. (2002). Factors Influencing Choice of Major in Agriculture. *NACTA Journal*. 46(3): 4.