

Career Stereotypes and Aspirations as Predictors of Students Career Choice at Education
Transitional Levels in Uganda

Abstract

The study examined the extent to which career stereotypes and aspirations predict career choice decisions among students at different levels of education. The study employed a mixed methods research design, which combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches that were respectively anchored on the positivism and interpretivism paradigms. Data for the quantitative study were collected from 1126 (620 male and 506 female) students aged 15 -21 years and above. For qualitative study the sample comprised of 83 (42 male; 41 female) students aged 16-26 years. The findings revealed that two dimensions of career stereotypes were statistically significant predictors of both independence in career choice decisions, (Gender Stereotypes, $\beta = -.08$, $t(1107) = -2.24$, $p = .03$; Family Stereotypes, $\beta = -.12$, $t(1107) = -2.61$, $p < .01$), and fact-based career choice decisions (Gender Stereotypes, $\beta = -.11$, $t(1107) = -3.38$, $p < .01$; Family Stereotypes, $\beta = -.16$, $t(1107) = -3.70$, $p < .01$). On the other hand, independence in career choice decisions was significantly predicted by all the three career aspiration dimensions (i.e. Financial Remuneration, $\beta = .08$, $t(1108) = 2.35$, $p < .02$, Professional Development, $\beta = .10$, $t(1108) = 2.67$, $p < .01$, and Employment Prospects, $\beta = .29$, $t(1108) = 8.49$, $p < .01$), while the statistically significant predictors of fact-based career choice decisions were aspiration for careers with professional development, and employment prospects. However, the independence in career choice decisions, fact-based career decisions, and all dimensions of career stereotypes, did not significantly differ, while only aspiration for careers with employment prospects differed across the education transitional levels. Qualitative findings were largely supportive of quantitative results. Overall, the results revealed that independence in career choice decisions, is decreased by the prevailing career stereotypes, and this is consistent across all the levels of education in Uganda. This can potentially result in an increase in the number of students, who pursue careers that are inconsistent with their career aspirations or interests, and there is need for measures aimed at addressing the prevailing career stereotypes.