

**THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AMONG PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the impact of mass media on career choice of students in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was used. Through stratified, systemic and purposive sampling, 460 participants comprising 377 Form Four students, 36 principals, 36 career guidance teachers and 11 form four parents' representatives were selected from 364 schools respectfully. Results showed that media personalities and celebrities; mobile phones, internet and televisions influenced career path of secondary school students to a great extent. The study concluded that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between mass media and the career choice of public secondary school students in Meru County. Results have implications on career guidance practices in secondary schools in Kenya. Principals, career guidance officers, parents and MoE should concertedly champion and promote mass media literacy, and put up measures for assisting secondary school students to become aware, navigate and gainfully select mass media content for appropriate career guidance information.

Key words: Career choice, career information, mass media influence, career guidance sources

1.0 Introduction

Sullivan and Baruch (2009) define career as an individual's work-related and other relevant experiences, both inside and outside an organization that form an individual's lifespan. According to Pam (2013), career choice is the act of deciding what one wants to do in life that determines ones success in the next stages of life. Choosing a career is a defining phase in life of secondary school students yet a difficult task to many (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Nong (2016) opines that there are many job opportunities available but limited access to reliable information hinder career choice. Mass media has been found to bridge this gap by transforming the way people think and make decisions since it contributes to character development, language and habit formation (Noshina, Mian, Irfaan & Rao, 2014). Consequently, its power of influence on career choices among secondary school students cannot be underestimated. Wanyama (2012) describes mass media as all media technologies (internet, television, newspaper and radio) used for mass communication.

Notably, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has elevated the influence of mass media on career choice (Kaaria, 2014; Wanyama, 2012). For example, the impact of internet in education has made students to access career information that has raised their career awareness (Denniston, Swahn, Hertz & Romero, 2017). Career information attained through school career programs, has shown that interaction with TV and other media personalities can equip the students with ideas to make the appropriate decisions in their careers and pursue the precise subject combinations needed for their dream careers (Denniston, Swahn, Hertz and Romero, 2017).

While countries like Singapore and Australia provided useful website links that can help parents, career guidance teachers and students to obtain relevant information on career choice (Ministry of Education [Singapore], 2012; Dana, 2017), in Kenya utilization of ICT in teaching and learning in secondary schools is not fully embraced; as both teachers and students were adequately incompetent in the use of ICT (Kaaria, 2014; Mbugua, Gori & Tanui, 2015).

Although previous studies have documented a link between media characters and children occupational beliefs (Wanyama, 2012; Adedeji, Ojelabi, Lekan and Adefarati (2017; Dana, 2017), few studies have examined the extent to which mass media affects career choice. This study aimed to investigate the impact of mass media on the choice of careers among students in public secondary school in Meru County. It hypothesized that Mass media does not significantly influence choice of

career among students in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. The investigation was guided by the following specific objectives:

- Analyze forms of mass media available to public secondary students in Meru County
- Assess how Media personalities/celebrities impact career choice
- Analyze TV programs viewed by public secondary school students in Meru County
- Examine how mass media influence career choice among public secondary school students in Meru County.

2.0 Literature Review

Media and communication technology has engulfed modern lives by influencing ones perception of the world and mediating personal interactions with individual and society (Hoag & Grant, 2017). According to Wanyama (2012), all media technologies including the internet, television, newspaper and radio which are used for mass communication are collectively referred to as mass media.

Research has shown that mass media influence career selection process by shaping personal choices since it contributes to character development, language and habit formation (Noshina, Mian, Irfaan & Rao, 2014; Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Wanyama (2012) asserts that information technology, mass media and communication systems have resulted to high acceleration in globalization and career trends as people try to realign themselves to cope up with the effects of globalization.

Studies conducted in countries like United States of America, Australia and Nigeria indicated that media such as TV, radio, internet, newspapers and social media sites have contributed to students' choice of career in librarianship and journalism (Borchert, 2010; Dana, 2017; Busayo, 2017). Further studies by Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) and Adedeji, Ojelabi, Lekan and Adefarati (2017) assert that high school students' career choice was influenced by notable personalities in certain professions as seen on television, heard on radios as well as read on print media. These results corroborates with Wanyama (2012) who observed that 76.7% of secondary school students in Kisii County indicated that career of people seen or read on media had influenced them a lot on the choice of career that they had purposed to pursue. Despite the tremendous steps made by Ministry of Education in Kenya towards the implementation of the ICT policy since its publication in 2006, illiteracy in technology has been found to impede use of technology in teaching and learning (Mbugua, Gori & Tanui, 2015; Kaaria, 2014). This is likely to hinder objective guidance to secondary schools students on how to deal with extant mass media and the underlying potentials in influencing career decisions.

Despite its significance, there is a gap in the common programs viewed in different forms of mass media. Further, studies have revealed increased access to mobile phones by secondary school students (John, 2013; Wanyama, 2012), yet not much was gathered on how the students were using this garget bearing in mind that mobile phones are nowadays used as a medium to accessing all other forms of mass media. Therefore, this study had embarked on addressing these gaps by investigating the impact of mass media influence on students' career choice in secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study was conducted in public secondary schools in Meru County. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Questionnaires and structured interview schedules were used to collect data from form four students, career guidance teachers and principals and parents respectively. Stratified random sampling was used naturally existing sub- counties (strata) in Meru

County. Public secondary schools were categorized into sub-strata; girls boarding, boys boarding, mixed boarding and mixed day secondary schools. In total, 36 secondary schools were sampled and equal number of principals and career guidance teachers. Systemic sampling was used to sample 377 form four students while 11 parents were sampled using purposive sampling technique, resulting to 460 respondents. Through pre-testing, questionnaires were tested for content and construct validity while reliability was computed where Cronbach's Alpha value (correlation coefficient, $r=0.760$) was noted. Data was then analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 and Microsoft Excel where, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistic, that is, linear regression analysis was computed accordingly.

4.0 Results and Discussions

The overall response rate in this study was 92.1%.

4.1 Forms of mass media available to public secondary students in Meru County

A list of different mass media was provided to principals of public secondary schools in Meru County requiring them to indicate how each was likely to influence career choice of students in their schools. Responses from principals were summarized and arranged in a descending order based on mean score as shown in Table 1

Table 1

Principals responses on likelihood of mass media influencing career choice of students of public secondary schools in Meru County

Types of Mass Media (N=33)	Not Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Mean	SD
TV	3(9.1%)	17(51.5%)	13(39.4%)	2.30	.637
Career books	4(12.1%)	16(48.5%)	13(39.4%)	2.27	.674
Newspapers and magazines	4(12.1%)	19(57.6%)	10(30.3%)	2.18	.635
Mobile phones	8(24.2%)	11(33.3%)	14(42.4%)	2.18	.808
Internet	8(24.2%)	12(36.4%)	13(39.4%)	2.15	.795
Radio	4(12.1%)	24(72.7%)	5(15.2%)	2.03	.529
Aggregate mean				2.19	

The results in Table 4.1 indicate that the majority of principals of public secondary schools in Meru County, (24, 72.8%), with a mean aggregate score of 2.19, agreed with the various assertions that aimed to investigate how each stated mass media was likely to influence career choice of students. TV with a mean of 2.30 and career books (mean = 2.27) were the top most influential mass media in influencing career choice of students of public secondary schools in Meru County. It was also clear that radio with a mean of 2.15, and Internet (mean = 2.03) were least influential mass media on matters of career choice among students. Interview data from parents indicated that students also access TV, mobile phones, radio, and prints media (newspapers) while at home, which was rarely monitored. John (2013) had also observed that secondary school students in Mukaa Sub-County Makueni County had access to mobile phones and radio (38% and 36.7%) respectively. However, the students indicated that only 21% used the media devices to seek education related information.

4.2 Media personalities / celebrities and their impacts on career choice

The study was further interested in knowing whether the career path of student is also influenced by media personalities or celebrities to which many answered in affirmative as shown in Figure 4.1

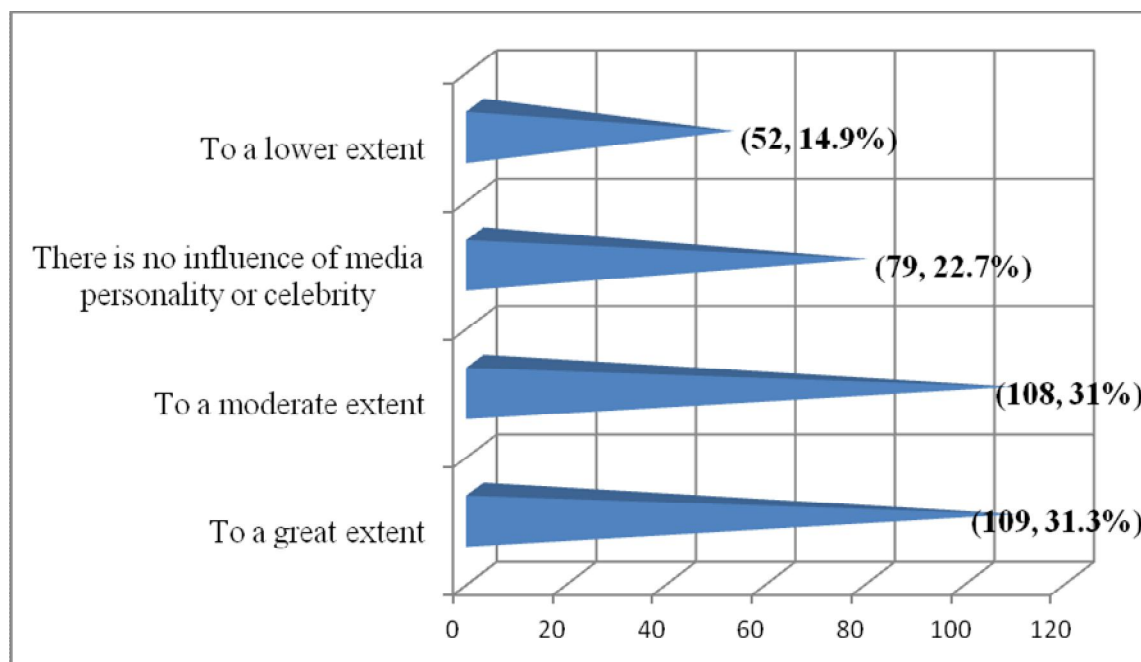


Figure 4.1 Response on whether media personalities or celebrities influence future career path of public secondary school students

Information gathered from students indicated that media personalities and celebrities influences career path to a great extent (109, 31.3%). Slightly above quarter of students (108, 31%) also said that media personality and celebrities have a moderate influence on their future career path. This solidifies the notion that, what people see and hear has capacity to influence ones attitudes and perception. These findings are consistent with Adedeji, Ojelabi, Lekan and Adefarati (2017) who observed that notable personalities in a certain profession had a significant influence (mean =4.03) on career decision of secondary school students in Nigeria.

4.3 TV programs viewed by public secondary school students in Meru County

Public secondary school students are usually allowed access some famous TV programs. As heads of academic leaders in public secondary schools, principals were asked to rate the importance of such TV programs where, 1 = Not Important; 2 = Of Little Importance; 3 = Of Average Importance; 4 = Very Important; and 5 = Absolutely Essential. Their responses were summarized and arranged in a descending order based on mean score as shown in Table 2

Table 2

Principals' responses on importance of programs aired on Television set (TV) to public secondary school students in Meru County.

Programs (N=33)	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Sports	2(6.1%)	2(6.1%)	7(21.2%)	15(45.5%)	7(21.2%)	3.70	1.075
Drama	1(3.0%)	2(6.1%)	14(42.4%)	13(39.4%)	3(9.1%)	3.45	.869
Game shows	0	7(21.2%)	10(30.3%)	10(30.3%)	6(18.2%)	3.45	1.034
Reality shows	1(3.0%)	4(12.1%)	13(39.4%)	10(30.3%)	5(15.2%)	3.42	1.001
Music	3(9.1%)	6(18.2%)	8(24.2%)	7(21.2%)	9(27.3%)	3.39	1.321
News Bulletin	1(3.0%)	9(27.3%)	10(30.3%)	6(18.2%)	7(21.2%)	3.27	1.180
Comedies	1(3.0%)	6(18.2%)	10(30.3%)	16(48.5%)	0	3.24	.867
Soap Operas	7(21.2%)	7(21.2%)	5(15.2%)	6(18.2%)	8(24.2%)	3.03	1.510
Documentaries	4(12.1%)	10(30.3%)	8(24.2%)	8(24.2%)	3(9.1%)	2.88	1.193
Movies and series	5(15.2%)	8(24.2%)	11(33.3%)	9(27.3%)	0	2.73	1.039
Aggregate means score						3.26	

According to the majority principals of public secondary schools (21, 65.0%), the TV programs that are usually accessed by students were termed as moderately important (mean = 3.26). The most important program according to principals were sports (mean = 3.70) followed by drama (mean = 3.45), game shows (mean = 3.45), and reality shows (mean = 3.42) in that order. Documentaries with a mean of 2.88, and movies & series (mean = 2.73) were the least important TV programs.

The results show that although TV is the most accessed and influential mass media in public secondary schools, although programs watched are moderately important to students. This implies that most programs that are aired via TV are not completely essential to public secondary school students and hence their influential role on career choice and their reliability as sources of information on careers may not be guaranteed. A similar study by John (2013), revealed that TV was highly available to students at 65% while at home and available at 35% while in school, yet a majority of the students used it for music and plays, movies and news bulletins (76.7 %, 67.3%, and 32.3%) respectively. The news bulletins scored lowest according to this study while music and play had highest score, yet these were least essential as far as career guidance matter is concerned. However, in programs such as music, plays and movies, there are media personalities and celebrities involved and this explains the reason why these programs drew a high rating. This observation relates with Kershwa (2018) in UK who noted that children aspirations were based on gender stereotyping or what they had seen in the media, TV and films.

Apart from the aforementioned mass media, the use of mobile phones was also noted to have gained popularity among students of public secondary schools; either at schools or at home. This study took cognizance that mobile phones are nowadays used as a medium of accessing all other mass media. Subsequently, the influence of mobile phones on career choice could not be under estimated. In this study, students were asked to indicate how much time they spent on mobile phones in carrying out each activity that was provided. Their responses were summarized and arranged in a descending order based on mean score as shown in Table 3

Table 3*Use of mobile phones by public secondary school students in Meru County*

Activities (N=348)	Not much	Little	Somewhat	Much	A great deal	Mean	SD
Listening to music	33(9.5%)	62(17.8%)	45(12.9%)	100(28.7%)	108(31.0%)	3.79	1.242
Chatting on WhatsApp	25(7.2%)	61(17.5%)	43(12.4%)	102(29.3%)	117(33.6%)	3.65	1.299
Taking pictures / photos	49(14.1%)	63(18.1%)	35(10.1%)	90(25.9%)	111(31.9%)	3.43	1.448
Chatting on Facebook	77(22.1%)	68(19.5%)	57(16.4%)	69(19.8%)	77(22.1%)	3.00	1.473
Making calls	67(19.3%)	99(28.2%)	43(12.9%)	77(22.1%)	62(17.8%)	2.91	1.429
Betting	81(23.3%)	85(24.4%)	45(12.9%)	80(23.0%)	57(16.4%)	2.85	1.429
Accessing you-tube and videos	99(28.4%)	73(21.0%)	50(14.4%)	59(17.0%)	67(19.3%)	2.78	1.498
Playing games / gaming	94(27.0%)	93(26.7%)	43(12.4%)	56(16.1%)	62(17.8%)	2.71	1.464
Recording videos	97(27.9%)	92(26.4%)	59(17.0%)	58(16.7%)	42(12.1%)	2.59	1.365
Listening to the radio	111(31.9%)	67(19.3%)	60(17.2%)	77(22.1%)	33(9.5%)	2.58	1.378
Surfing the Internet	131(37.6%)	65(18.7%)	58(16.7%)	57(16.4%)	37(10.6%)	2.44	1.404
Searching information on careers	118(33.9%)	113(32.5%)	54(15.5%)	29(8.3%)	34(9.8%)	2.28	1.121
Doing School Assignment	140(40.2%)	75(21.6%)	55(15.8%)	56(16.1%)	22(6.3%)	2.27	1.306
Chatting on Twitter	160(46.0%)	83(23.9%)	57(16.4%)	21(6.0%)	27(7.8%)	2.06	1.251

Results are showing top three priority uses of mobile phones among students of public secondary schools in Meru County. These are: listening to music with a mean of 3.79, chatting on WhatsApp (mean =3.65), and taking pictures / photos (mean = 3.43). It was clear that many students moderately use mobile phones for chatting on Facebook (mean = 3.00), making calls (mean = 2.91), and betting (mean = 2.85). The least uses of mobile phones among students of public secondary schools are in searching information on careers (mean = 2.28), doing school assignment (mean = 2.27), and chatting on Twitter (mean = 2.06). These results agreed with David, Brickman, Ran, and

Curtis (2015); Kuznekoff, & Titsworth (2013) who observed that mobile phones have become distractive devices to learners.

The study noted with concerns the growing trends of betting among students of public secondary schools in Meru County, where, approximately half (198, 57%) use of mobile phones for betting. Similar observations were made by Kershaw (2018) in UK who noted that the place of TV and movie stars have been replaced by online celebrities and you-tube gaming bloggers. Betting is purely non-academic and may lead to a hard-to-abandon behavior among students; something that may give rise to other social problems such as stealing of money, using school fees for betting among others. A study by Mwadime (2017) revealed that 35.5% participants used mobile phones for betting, where, over 72.4% were young adults below 30 years of age. From the same study, 50% were betting once a week and the motivation behind betting were for money, enjoyment and as a way of leisure (70%, 15% & 3%) respectively. However, over 90% lost in the gambling games yet 55% indicated that they had borrowed money and another 26% had stolen from parents and relatives. Further, 58% respondents in the study concurred that the money obtained through betting was used for alcohol, smoking and having funs (Mwadime, 2017). Survey findings reported by Kershaw on the independent newspaper on 19th January, 2018 in UK indicated that social media and gaming was ranked 4th most popular career choice for children since children are influenced by what they see in the media. Going by the figures above, there is a worrying trend that requires urgent intervention to save current and future generations from social and economic problems. This calls for curriculum developers to promote media literacy so that students can critically analyze type of content they expose themselves to.

4.4 The influence of mass media on career choice among public secondary school students in Meru County

In ascertaining the influence that mass media had on career choice among students of secondary schools in Meru County, a linear regression analysis was conducted where dependent variable (career choice) was regressed on the independent variable (mass media). This also helped to determine the prediction value of mass media on career choice by students. The results are presented in three Tables; 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4
Influence of mass media on career choice: ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	.830	1	.830	6.988	.009 ^b
X1	Residual	41.119	346	.119		
	Total	41.949	347			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

b. Predictors: (Constant), X1

Table 5***Influence of mass media on career choice. Model Summary***

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
X1	.141 ^a	.020	.017	.34473	1.890

a. Predictors: (Constant), X1

b. Dependent Variable: Y

Table 6***Influence of mass media on career choice: Regression Weights***

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.321	.072			45.969	.000		
	X1	.064	.024	.141		2.644	.009	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Results in ANOVA Table 4 shows that model is significant in predicting the variations in the dependent variable where, $P = .009$ which is less than the alpha value of 0.05; $F_{(1,346)} = 6.988$, while Pearson correlation results between dependent and independent variable in Table 5 indicates coefficient correlation $r = .141^{**}$. The results show that there is a positive and significant relationship between mass media and the career choice of students of public secondary schools in Meru County. Consequently, the null hypothesis that, *mass media does not significantly influence career choice among secondary school students in Meru County Kenya* was rejected and concluded that mass media statistically and significantly influence career choice among secondary school students in Meru County Kenya.

Table 6 shows a VIF value of 1 which helps to rule out multicollinearity between elements of the study variables hence the model was fit for data analysis and interpretations (Salmerón Gómez, García Pérez, López Martín & García, 2016). The results also show the coefficient values (regression weights) of the predictor variable (mass media) and the corresponding level of significance. These findings correlates with those of Noshina, Ahmed, Irfan and Rao (2014) that observed that a partial but statistically significant correlation of 0.331, ($p < 0.05$) between mass media and career choice of first year university students in Pakistan. A major contributing factor to this influence is the massive transformation in the world of education as a result of digital revolution (Collins & Halverson, 2009). This revolution has altered not just the lives of students but the entirety of modern society.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between mass media and the career choice of students of public secondary schools in Meru County. TV, career books, newspapers, magazines and mobile phones were the most influential mass media. While at home

students have access to TV, mobile phones, radio, and prints media (newspapers), to which parents and guardians rarely monitor. It also emerged that media personalities and celebrities exert great influence on career choice among secondary school students. The emergence of online information and social networks has brought new ideas and world views that have influenced students understanding of themselves and the world of work, and hence, helped them in career decision making. The use of mobile phones to access other mass media peripherals were noted in this study as very influential in career choice. Mobiles phones are distractive to secondary school students and are used for non-academic information. There is a growing trend of betting among students of public secondary schools in Meru County; something that may give rise to other social problems such as stealing of money and using school fees for betting among others. The study noted distractive and persuasive power of mass media hence its significant influence on career choice among students of secondary schools in Meru County Kenya.

6.2 Recommendations

Mass media was not only found to be distractive and persuasive, but also statistically significant in influencing career choice among students of secondary schools in Meru County. Consequently, the study recommends need for all stakeholders to be aware of this development and hence launch campaigns to promote media literacy and gainful utilization of mass media among students of secondary schools. Secondary school management, teachers, parents and MoE should develop measures for monitoring and guiding the use of mass media by students of secondary schools. This will enable students to critically analyze mass media for career guidance information and for gainful academic related information. Results of this study have implications on career guidance practices in secondary schools in Kenya.

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