

## Original Paper

# Student Awareness of their Future Careers in Tanzania: A Case of One Private and Two Public Universities in Dar es Salaam

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### **Abstract**

*Career awareness is important in ensuring that individuals choose right career and are motivated in their studies. This study assessed career awareness among university students in Tanzania. Specifically, the study assessed the nature of students' awareness about career choices; the effect of lacking career awareness and strategies of overcoming the challenge of lack of career awareness. To address these objectives, the study utilized 88 university students and 5 lecturers selected from three universities in Dar es Salaam region. Clustered and purposive sampling approaches were used in selecting respondents. They responded to a questionnaire and data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents acquired career awareness at secondary level of education. Role models and professionals were the main source of career awareness to students. Poor performance and suppression of inborn talents were among the effects of lacking career awareness. To overcome the challenge, higher learning institutions should initiate career awareness programmes, the government should review curricula and parents should provide career guidance to their children. It is concluded that, a collaborative role from different stakeholders in ensuring young generations are well guided on their future careers could yield better results.*

### **Keywords**

*career, career awareness, career choice, future career*

### **1. Introduction**

The choice of a right career at the right time is the most important aspect of life and a proper basis for career development (Ali et al., 2014). Career choice is not a straightforward task, and involves difficult

processes of decision making. Others perceive it as a complex science (Hooley, 2012). Students at a certain stage of life have to make a choice regarding their future careers (Nyamwange, 2016). Career choice is one of the biggest dilemmas and challenge for many students since it involves, interplay of many factors, awareness being among the factors (Fizer, 2013). As an important part of any nation, students should possess a broad knowledge of various careers through processes that acquaint them with various career options (Baloch & Shah, 2014).

There are several factors that influence career choices and these can either be intrinsic or extrinsic (Hewitt, 2010). Most people are influenced by their parents and other family members (Bossman, 2014), whereas others are influenced by peer groups' interactions (Wu et al., 2015), policy influence (Abe & Chikoko, 2020), financial potentials (Fizer, 2013; Bakar et al., 2014), work environment and conditions (Lent et al., 2003), cultural background (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018), daily responsibilities and activities of certain professionals and social media (Cooper, 2013). Others are driven by their interests in certain professions, and employments that are personally satisfying (Gokuladas, 2010; Kunnen, 2013).

Studies indicate that there is a correlation between career choice, effectiveness and efficiency in the workplace (Mbalamwezi, 2015). Poor career choice results in ineffective employees and complaints from employers about the poor performance of some employees. In Tanzania, like any other East African countries, employers have been complaining about the ability of graduates to perform the activities (URT, 2010). Some of the lacking skills observed include, adaptability, team work, teachable, honest, attitude, hardworking, code of conduct or ethics (Mbise, 2016).

## **2. Method**

The study was conducted following a cross-sectional survey design. It was conducted in three (3) higher learning institutions, namely, Kampala International University in Tanzania (KIUT), University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), all located in Dar es Salaam region, Tanzania. The selection of private and public universities was due to the fact that students at both universities have limited career awareness and there are no programs focusing on providing career awareness to them (Mbalamwezi, 2015).

### *2.1 Data Collection and Analysis*

Data for this study was collected using both primary and secondary sources. A sample size of 88 clear respondents was used for this study. The distribution of respondents included 20 (23%) respondents from the University of Dar es Salaam, 29 (33%) respondents from Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences. It also included 39 (44%) respondents from Kampala International University in Tanzania and 5 key informants. Primary data sources included questionnaires for students and in-depth interviews with lecturers, while secondary data was collected through document review. The reviewed documents included other people's research, articles and books that focused on career awareness.

The sampling techniques included both probability and non-probability. In probability sampling, simple

random procedures were employed specifically for students. While in non-probability, purposive sampling was used to select lecturers.

## 2.2 Characteristics of the Sample

In this study, it was expected to collect data from 150 respondents including students and lecturers. However, a total of 88 respondents, both males and females, participated effectively in providing data.

### 2.2.1 Gender

Both males and females were involved in this study. Their distribution is summarized in Table One:

**Table 1. Respondents' Distribution by Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	50	57
Female	38	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Table one reveals that the majority of respondents involved in this study were males (57%) while females were (43%). This is not far from the national enrolment data of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) 2012-2016, which show the average enrolment rate of 36% female and 64% male (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2016). Similarly, the admission, enrolment and graduation statistics from the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) 2017-2018 indicate that about 39% of females and 61% males were enrolled (TCU, 2018).

### 2.2.2 Place of Domicile

The distribution of the sample based on the place of domicile is presented in Table 2:

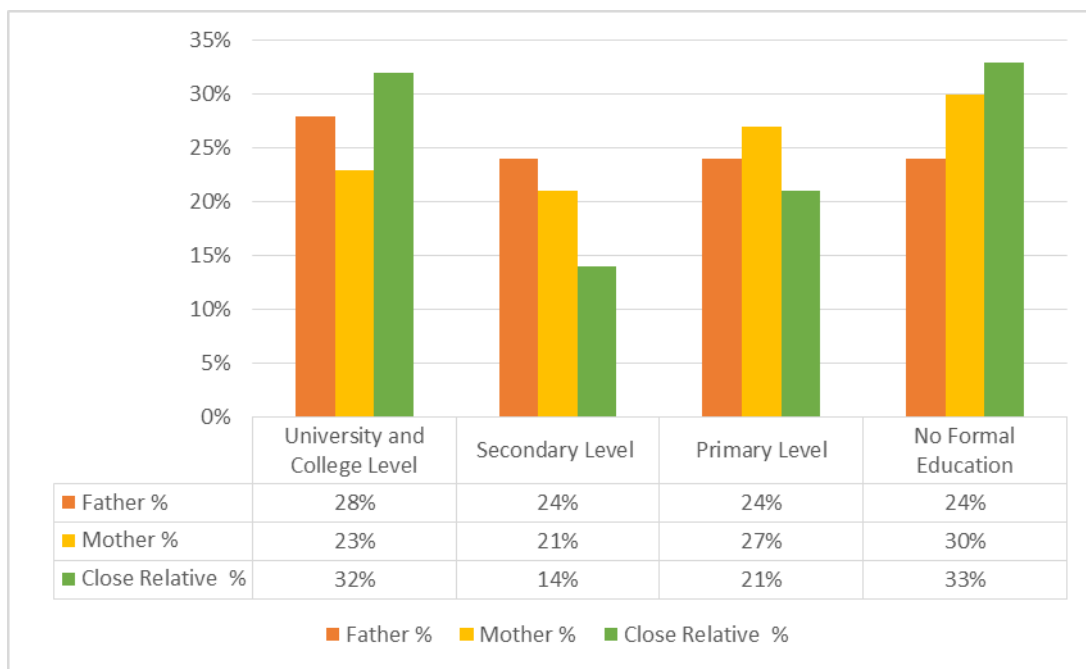
**Table 2. Respondents' Distribution by Place of Domicile**

Place	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	30	34
Urban	58	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings above revealed that, 66% of the respondents were from urban areas and 34% from rural areas. This implies that there is a limited number of students entering into professions from rural areas than in urban areas, which is caused by a lack of career awareness. These findings are in line with those of Quintero and Gu (2019) who found that students from rural areas lack readiness to develop their career and also have fewer opportunities for career exploration than their urban counterparts. This is attributed to the isolated geographical locations, lack of exposure, lack of counsellors and limited access to the media (Quintero & Gu, 2019).

### 2.2.3 Parents and Close Relatives Education Background

The educational background of both parents and close relatives have impacts on students’ career awareness (Bossman, 2014). Normally, parents with a certain profession tend to influence their children to opt for the same profession. However, for uneducated parents, students rely on the advice they get from peer groups and their role models on career choice. It was similarly important to ask respondents about the education level of their parents or close relatives. Results are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Parents and Close Relatives Education Background**

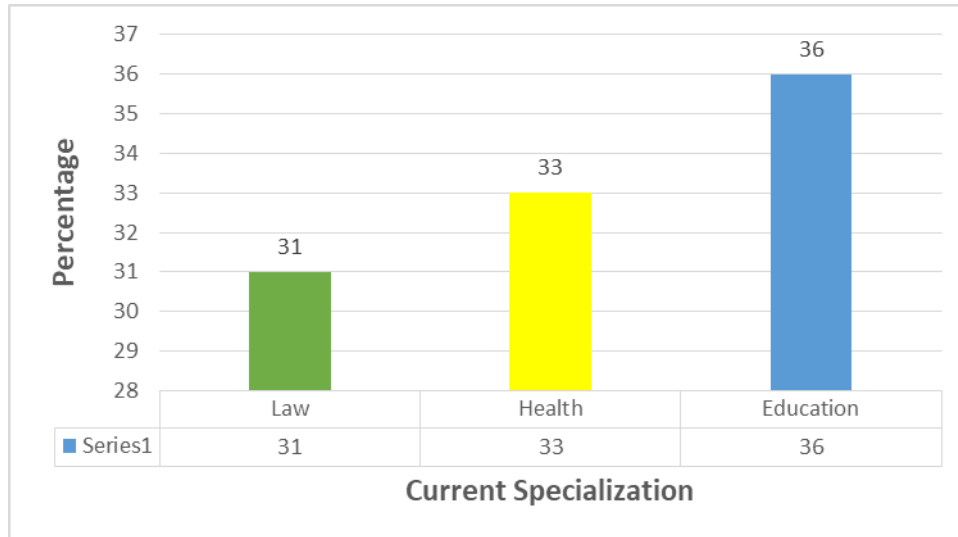
## 3. Results

### 3.1 Nature of Students’ Awareness of their Future Career

In this section, results on the nature of students’ awareness of career choice are presented and discussed. It includes students’ career fields of specialization, a student’s dream career versus their career fields of study, the level at which students acquire career awareness and lecturers’ views on a student’s career awareness.

#### 3.1.1 Students’ Career Fields of Specialization

Respondents were asked to indicate their current specializations and state whether they were related to their dream careers. Responses are summarized in Figure 2.

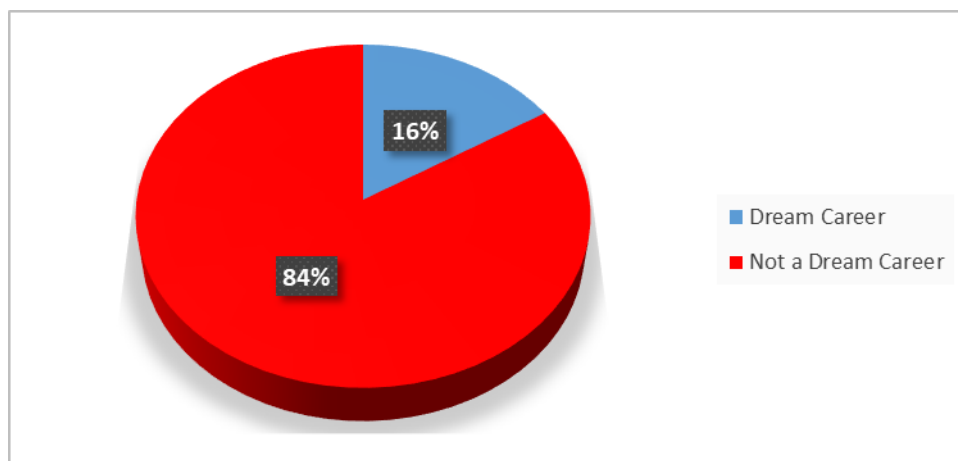


**Figure 2. Students' Career Fields of Specialization**

The findings revealed that 36% of respondents specialized in education, 33% specialized in health and 31% specialized in legal studies.

### 3.1.2 Student's Dream Career Versus their Career Fields of Study

Respondents in different fields of study were asked if their studies are related to their dream career. Results are summarized in Figure 3:



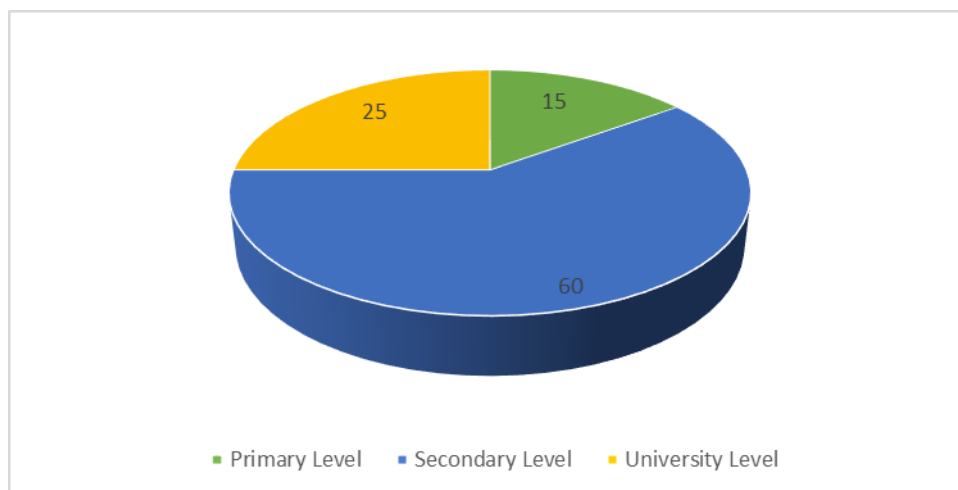
**Figure 3. Student's Dream Career Versus their Career Fields of Study**

Findings presented in Figure 3 indicate that respondents (84%) were in fields which were not related to their dream career, while 16% of the respondents specialise in their dream careers. For instance, among the factors mentioned by the respondents for enrolling in different career studies included employment opportunities, securing loans from Higher Education Students Loan Board (HESLB), lack of specific

entry qualifications for a dream career and influence from family members. Such students had their dream careers including engineering, computer science, agriculture and business studies, but they couldn't make their dreams come true due to the mentioned factors. Sethy (2017) argues that being in the wrong career studies or path can be challenging for students during studies.

### 3.1.3 Level at which Students Acquired Career Awareness

Career awareness is usually acquired at different levels of education. Students acquire it at primary, secondary or university education level. Figure 4 summarizes the responses.



**Figure 4. Level at which Career Awareness Was Acquired**

Figure 4 shows that the majority of respondents (60%) acquired career awareness at secondary level while 25% acquired it at university level. Few of them, 15%, acquired career awareness at primary level. The findings above imply that the majority of respondents became aware of their career of interest at the secondary level of education. This is due to a number of reasons, including level of maturity and the opportunity to select subjects of preference. These findings are in line with those of (Sethy, 2017) who also found that students in most cases become aware of their careers of interest at the secondary level of education. Those who get career awareness at university level have a limited chance to change from what they are studying into their dream careers. This results in stress and poor performance during studies. This is supported by (Algadheeb, 2015) who revealed that students who are late exposed to career awareness encounter several challenges during their studies when compared to those who get career awareness during primary or secondary education.

### 3.1.4 Lecturers' Views on Student's Career Awareness

The nature of students' awareness of career choices can be determined by lecturers who always interact with them. The interaction between students and lecturers is mainly in terms of teaching and consultations. In this study it was imperative to ask lecturers about the nature of students' career awareness.

During an interview with a lecturer from Kampala International University, he had this to say;

*“...career awareness for some students is obviously low. Among the reasons for poor performance is low career awareness. One day, I asked students who had a poor performance the reason behind such a performance, from their responses some of them said they were on a wrong career path”.*

### 3.1.5 Means of Developing Career Awareness

Career awareness can be perceived from different sources. Some of them include peer groups, parents, relatives, the media, professionals and so forth. Respondents were requested to indicate the way they became aware of their future career. Their responses are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Means of Becoming Aware of Career Choice**

Way	Frequency	Percentage
Peer groups	16	18
Parents	18	21
Relatives	5	6
Media	6	7
Role Models and Professionals	39	44
Others	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings in Table 4, show that the majority of the respondents (44%) perceived career awareness from role models and professionals. Others (21%) perceived career awareness from parents. Similarly, peer groups contributed to perceiving career awareness by 18%. Media and family members contributed to perception of career awareness by 7% and 6% respectively. On top of that, the working environment, dressing codes, nature of responsibilities and financial status were other ways of becoming aware of career choice (4%). The findings concur with (Ferreira et al., 2006; Fizer, 2013; Kamuhabwa, 2019) who found that, role models and professionals contribute much in making people aware of their career of choice. Likewise, peer groups and parents contributes significantly in making students aware of the career they would like to join. It is therefore imperative for career development subjects to be included in the curricula of all levels of education so as to enrich students' awareness of their interests at a very basic level of education.

### 3.2 Effect of Lacking Career Awareness on University Students' Performance

Lack of career awareness poses impacts on students during their studies. According to this study, respondents pointed out various impacts which affect their studies as indicated in Table 4.

**Table 5. Impact of Lacking Career Awareness on Performance in Studies**

Impacts	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of confidence	12	14
Poor performance	35	40
Suppress in-born talent	16	18
Poor cooperation (teamwork)	8	9
Increase of dropout	6	7
Failure to graduate on time	11	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings in Table 5 reveal that lack of career awareness during university studies results in poor performance (40%), suppressing in-born talent (18%), lack of confidence (14%), failure to graduate on time (12%), lack of cooperation (9%) and increase of dropout (7%). These findings are in line with those of (Kamuhabwa, 2019) who reported that performance and confidence levels of students who are in the wrong career due to lack of career awareness are normally poor. Furthermore, this leads into suppression of in-born talents, increases the number of dropouts and failure to graduate on time.

### *3.3 Strategies to Overcome Barriers Emanating from not Being Aware of Career Choice*

In investigating possible strategies to alleviate barriers emanating from not being aware of career choice, the researchers contacted some stakeholders in the areas of training and employment. Table Seven summarizes responses on how barriers brought by ignorance about carrier choice can be alleviated.

**Table 7. Strategies to Alleviate Barriers of Unawareness to Career Choice**

Stakeholder	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Parents	Provision of career guidance	46	52
	Provision of moral and financial support	42	48
Government	Review of Career-related Policy	39	44
	Review of Curricula	49	56
Higher Learning Institutions	Initiating Career Awareness Programmes	54	61
	Carrying out Consultations	34	39

Table 7 indicates that stakeholders are ready to participate in resolving the career awareness dilemma. For instance, respondents (61%) were of the view that higher learning institutions should establish career awareness programmes as part of their curricula. Similarly, respondents (39%) suggested that higher learning institutions should carry out career consultations and make it part and parcel of



students' academic life. On the other hand, respondents suggested that parents (52%) (especially those who are familiar with various careers) need to provide career guidance to their children from early stages of growth and should be progressive in nature. Moreover, 48 % of respondents viewed that parents still hold the responsibility to support their children materially, financially and morally. This will equip them with career knowledge to assist them to discover their potentialities. Additionally, it was suggested that the government should review career related policies (44%) and do regular review of curriculum (56%) so as to ensure that career awareness components are well reflected in all levels of education. These findings are supported by (Kamuhabwa, 2019) who also pointed out that stakeholders ought to collaborate in creating a better environment for students to acquire career awareness through outreach programmes, career guidance (Sethy, 2017), career development plans and strategies (Shuma, 2017) and modifying curricula to reflect career awareness (Di Matteo, 2015). It is therefore essential for stakeholders to put a lot of effort into assisting students with career awareness during academic life (Sabarudin, 2011).

#### **4. Discussion**

In Tanzania, there is a challenge of career awareness and choice among university students. This has forced a number of students to be enrolled into programmes that are not related to their dream careers. Students who had career awareness have attained it at a secondary level of education through role models, professionals and parents. Peer groups and the media also play a considerable role in providing career awareness to students. After being enrolled into universities, students who previously were not exposed to career awareness encounter several challenges including poor academic performance and lack of confidence.

In addressing the challenges emanating from lacking career awareness, it is important for various stakeholders in the field of career choice to put joint efforts into ensuring that students possess relevant career knowledge. Parents ought to provide career guidance to their children through advice, moral and material support, which are necessary ingredients in career development. Likewise, the government should make regular review of career-based policies and curricula so as to enable students from early stages of education to acquire relevant career-based knowledge. Higher learning institutions should initiate consultation services and career awareness programmes in the form of workshops, seminars, and trainings for the purpose of imparting career-based knowledge to students at all levels of education.

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