



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Factors affecting student choice of programme of study at a university: A study of School of business students at Kwame Nkrumah University

Mulinda Mulenga Mpolokoso^{1,*} and Charity Miyoba²

¹ Department of community education and lifelong learning, School of Education, University of Zambia, Zambia.

² Department of home economics, Caritas Convent Secondary School, Ministry of Education, Zambia.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 23(03), 2312–2319

Publication history: Received on 07 August 2024; revised on 17 September 2024; accepted on 19 September 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.23.3.2848>

Abstract

Students from secondary schools are always talking about their career path ways but in most cases they find it difficult to make the right decisions. The problem of students making choices not based on aspirations, interests or making a choice based on concrete reasons has made a good number of students who have been accepted in the school of business at Kwame Nkrumah University change the programme of study as observed from first year Open and Distance Students changing from one programme to another. Students changed programme of study from bachelor of economics or marketing to bachelor of business administration. In addition, low numbers in other programmes had made few students who made choices to study in those programmes move to other programmes within the school of business. The decisions were influenced by their friends in the programmes they were joining. The main objective was to determine factors that influence students when making a choice of programme of study at a university. The study used a sampling design of a mixed study approach with closed and open ended questionnaire. Purposive sampling method was used to collect data. Sampling frame were school of business studies students at Kwame Nkrumah University. Sample size of 96 respondents was considered. The study was analysed using SPSS IBM version 20. Data was presented in tables and discussion was done with reference from both primary data set and secondary data set, from which conclusions and recommendations were done. The findings showed that; social-economic factors, grade 12 results and parents were significant in influencing student programme choice and in conclusion personal interest were not significant in the study as a factor. The study recommends to the department of marketing to ensure they visit secondary schools and market the various programmes to arouse personal interest in students in different programmes of study so that they learn to choose programmes of study on merit.

Keywords: Factors; Students; Choice of Programme; Programme of Study

1. Introduction

Students from secondary schools are always talking about their career pathways but in most cases they find it difficult to make the right decisions. It is mostly the school's subject electives that sometimes forces graduating students at O'Level to make such decisions to choose a particular programme of study. Based on (M'siska, Pers com 10th April, 2024) who observed as a careers and teacher of guidance at Caritas Convent Secondary School that pupils visited her office to seek guidance of the programme of study and in most cases learners had challenges identifying the programmes that were suitable for them to study at the university. Further challenges of knowing which university had the best programme, with the right course content. In understanding choice of programme of study with the opportunity cost of making alternative choices due to points taken at both O'Level and A' level, students have ended up doing programmes that they did not like. According to Cook and Cook (2016) students from secondary schools during career choice projections, their career choices, felt stressed due to so much expectations from their families, friends and the society

* Corresponding author: Mulinda Mulenga Mpolokoso

as a whole. In addition, students face challenges when selecting career pathways and they seem to experience making choice between programme based on salary they will earn after completion of study or their passion for the programme.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Garrahy (2001) affirmed by saying “the main players in the choosing of subjects at secondary level that shapes the knowledge of students for successful university entry are career guidance teachers.” However, this has greatly impacted on the retention of students once they are enrolled as evidenced in the increased number of dropouts. It must be noted that student low enrolments have been cited as indicated by the study done by Talbert (2012) in United States of America that addressed Strategies to Increase Enrolment, Retention, and Graduation Rates. Kwame Nkrumah University has introduced new programmes which are none educational in nature in the school of business. The programmes such as Bachelor of Human Resources, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Accountancy and Finance, Bachelor of Economics, Bachelor of Marketing, and Bachelor of Procurement are all new programmes. To increase the choice of programme of study there is need to understand factors that influence the choice of programme which will be the basis for recommendation for universities to use in their way to promote programme awareness at the university.

The problem of students making choices not based on aspirations, interests or making a choice not based on concrete reasons has made a good number of students who have been accepted in the school of business at Kwame Nkrumah University end up making change of programmes from one programme to the other as observed by the author (Mpolokoso) from first year Open and Distance Students making changes from bachelor of economics or marketing to bachelor of business administration. In addition, low numbers in other programmes have made few students who made choices to study them move to other programmes within the school of business due to influence from their friends in the programmes they were joining.

1.2. Study Objective

To determine and rank factors that influence students when making a choice of programme of study at a university.

2. Literature Review

It must be noted that a number of situations are at play in influencing pupil’s programme selection process and different scholars have alluded to a few of them such as: proximity to home, economic aid, expenses, scholarships available, environment, selectivity and parents (Kinzie et al., 2004). In another study Litten and Brodigan (1983) stated that pupils from O’Level who graduated looked at future academic needs and programme use before making a choice of programme of study. In another study by Croll (2008) students who had parents in manual occupations looked forward to having professional, managerial and technical related programmes of study. It is from this understanding that there is need to undertake a study to look at factors that affect choice of programme of study especially for would be school leavers. Parents Influence, Scholarships Available, Cost of Living, Reputation of Institution, Location, Variety of Courses Offered, Reputation of Programme, Grade 12 Results, Institutional Facilities and Teachers.

According to Arcinas et.al (2018) “making a choice to study in a college or university come with difficulties because of multiple variables that influence student’s decision. It is from this that there is evidence of the problem from graduating students at O’Level.” Further, Martin, (2010) continues to say “student academic performance is affected negatively when students have not made the right choice when making decision concerning the programme of choice.”

A study by Talbert (2012) that addressed Strategies to Increase Enrolment, Retention, and Graduation Rates with a problem being the low college completion rates among students of color deserved attention. The study addressed a number of theoretical views that brought an understanding on major factors that influence student success in academia, factors such as sociological perspectives, organizational perspectives, psychological perspectives, cultural perspectives and economic perspectives were addressed. The finding of the research recommended that tracking systems to review students’ failures, achievements and successes, expand advertising techniques that is use of radio, online ads, and annual open house events were to be used to promoted educational programmes and increase enrolment.

According to Scot (1999) universities must conduct their marketing strategies in line with promoting the institutions as the best and provide reasons why parents, guardians must continue to choose the university. This can be done through creation of institutional awareness programmes. Barone, (2023) states that for universities to continue existing, the universities and colleges depend on their effectiveness to retain current students (satisfied students), recruit new ones (student choice of programme of study). Gasparl and Soares (2021) did a study on factors influencing the Choice of higher education institutions in Angola. The following were outlined as factors: student characteristics which included education level aspiration, and school performance also evidence by Chapman (1981), External factors

which included significant people: friends, relatives, teachers, Institution established factors: financial support, location, and programme availability, school effort to communicate with students, written information, campus visit and admission procedures, other factors grouped as indicated by Rudhumbu et.al. (2017) were institutional factors: academic programmes, institutional image and reputation, staff quality, classrooms, fees, scholarships and job prospects for graduating students, then the last group was marketing factors which included: Advertising, school tours from employees, careers fairs and future student campus visits.

3. Methods and Materials

Non-probability sampling design was used and the research was both quantitative and qualitative in nature that is a mixed study approach. The study used purposive sampling method because the researcher needed a sampling frame of respondents from Kwame Nkrumah University school of business students to provide precise responses to the intended outcome.

A sample size of 96 was used calculated using the formula $n = z^2 * p * (1 - p) / e^2$ (Cochran (1977)).

Data was collected using both secondary tools and primary tools. A semi-structured questionnaire was used comprising open ended and closed ended questions.

Further, data was analysed using IBM SPSS version 20 because the strength of this package is that, it is used to analyze data collected using a questionnaire (Kothari, 2004). The quantitative data analysed was descriptive in nature which included percentage distribution, and cross tabulations so as to arrive at concluding points.

4. Results

Table 1 Student choice of Programme Ranked using Beta Coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.393	0.237		5.888	.000
	Grade 12 Results Influenced choice of Programme of Study	-0.190	0.020	-0.460	-9.572	0.000
	Personal Interest Influenced Choice of Programme of Study	0.000	0.002	-0.010	-.205	0.838
	Parents Influenced Choice of Programme of Study	-0.292	0.024	-0.596	-12.212	0.000
	Social Economic Factors influenced choice of programme of study	1.037	0.055	0.954	18.981	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Programme Choice Influenced by Various Factors						

Table1.0 shows beta coefficients of grade 12 results with -0.460 with P-value of 0.00, personal interest -0.10 with P-value of 0.838, parents with -0.596 and social-economic factors with 0.954 with P-value of 0.00.

Table 2 Social-economic characteristics verses choice of programme

		Social Economic Factors influenced choice of programme of study		Total
		Agree	Disagree	
Programme Choice Influenced by Various Factors	Agree	26	15	41
	Strongly Agree	0	45	45
Total		26	60	86

Table 2.0 shows the social economic characteristics. The data shows that from a total of 41 respondents, those who said choice of programme was influenced by social economic factors where 26 (30%) and those who disagreed were 15 (17%). Meanwhile a total of 45 respondents who strongly agreed that choice of programme is influenced by various factors also disagreed that social economic factors influence choice of programme.

Table 3 Grade 12 results verse choice of programmes

		Grade 12 Results Influenced choice of Programme of Study				Total
		Disagree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Programme Choice Influenced by Various Factors	Agree	7	0	0	34	41
	Strongly Agree	13	18	14	0	45
Total		20	18	14	34	86

Table 3.0 shows that a total of 20 (23%) respondents disagreed that grade 12 results influenced choice of programmes, 18 (20%) respondents moderately agreed, 14 (16%) respondents agreed and 34 (40%) strongly agreed.

Table 4 Parents verse choice of programme

		Parents Influenced Choice of Programme of Study				Total
		Disagree	Moderately Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Programme Choice Influenced by Various Factors	Agree	19	0	7	15	41
	Strongly Agree	0	18	27	0	45
Total		19	18	34	15	86

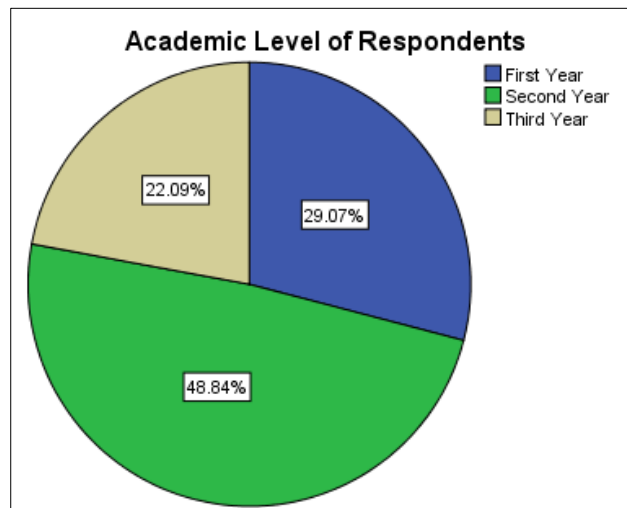
Table 4.0 clearly shows that 19 (22%) respondents disagreed that parents influenced their choice of programme, 18 (21%) moderately agreed, 34 (40%) Agreed and 17% strongly agreed that parents influenced choice of programme of study.

Table 5.0 Shows that 19 (22%) of respondents moderately agreed that personal interest influenced student programme choice, 40 (46.5%) of respondents said they agreed and 14 (16%) of respondents strongly disagreed, 13 (15%) disagreed

Table 5 Student Personal Interest Verses Choice of programme

		Personal Interest Influenced Choice of Programme of Study				Total
		Moderately Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	
Programme Choice Influenced by Various Factors	Agree	19	22	0	0	41
	Strongly Agree	0	18	14	13	45
Total		19	40	14	13	86

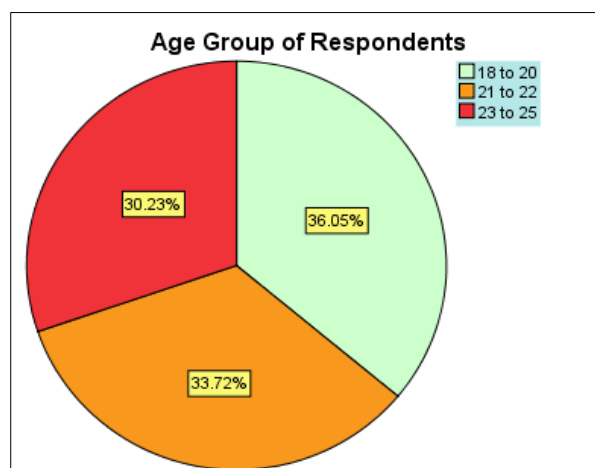
4.1. Respondents Characteristics



Source: Author

Figure 1 Academic Level of Respondents

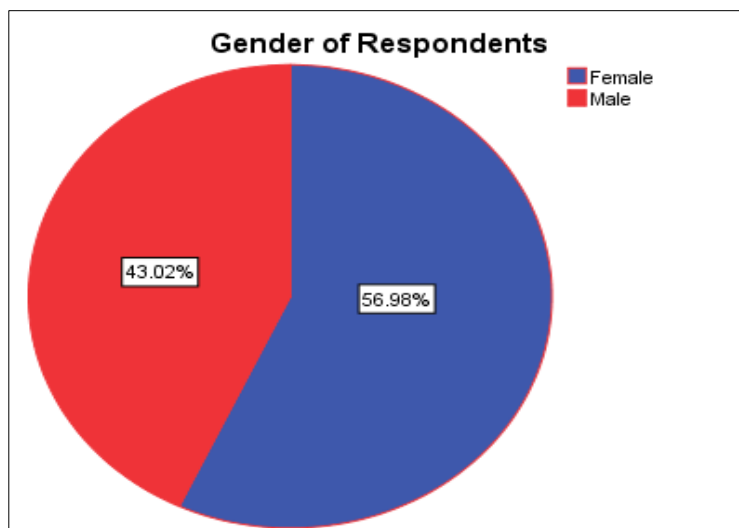
Figure 1.0 shows the academic level of respondents that's the year of study of the respondents. In this research 48.84% of respondents were second year students, 29.07% were first year students and 22.09% were third year students. This validates the results as authentic and reflect reality of what students expect.



Source: Author

Figure 2 Age Group of Respondents

The diagram below shows the age group of the respondents. From the study it can be seen that 36.05% of respondents were between 18 to 20 years of age, 33.72% were between 21 to 22 years of age and 30.23% were between 23 to 25 years of age. This purely indicates that the respondents were young and within the age group of students.



Source: Author

Figure 3 Gender of Respondents

In this study it can be seen that 56.98% of the respondents were female and 43.02% were male participants. This shows that the information is gender sensitive and not biased to one gender.

5. Discussion of Findings

Ranking the factors, based on beta coefficients: it can be seen that social-economic factors were ranked first as having a greater influence on choice of programme of study and it is a significant factor in the study, other factors ranked based on absolute standardized coefficients are: parent's factors ranked second, Grade 12 result factors ranked third and were all significant to the study. However, personal interest was ranked fourth and was not significant to the study.

Literature has shown through Foskett et.al (2006) that apart from economic and social factors students must consider financial difficulties even before selecting or making a choice on the university to enroll. This implies that social-economic factors like city center proximity student accommodation, friends (influence from friends studying in the same institutions) and relatives' advices, education cost, advertising, influence of friends who studied in the same institution or teachers were found not relevant in influencing student choice of programme in a study by Foskett et.al (2006), Grade 12 results had strongly influenced student choice of programme at Kwame Nkrumah University with a total of 77% of the total participants. This great revelation could be supported by Cokgezen (2014) who said in a study conducted in Turkey that academic performance and class language were decisive factors for higher education institution selection.

Parents influencing student programme choice. It could be seen from the findings in this document that indeed parents had a greater stake in influencing students to make a choice of programme of study at Kwame Nkrumah University. Hendriani et.al (2022), did a study which focused on recruiting new students, the study used cross-sectional design and closed ended questionnaire was used. The finding on the study reviewed that 62.5% results of the research showed that, the most dominant factor in influencing student decision to choose a university of study were parents. This is a greater indication that parents have influence over their children. In addition, a study by Cook and Cook (2016) stated that students from secondary schools during career choice projections, their career choices, felt stressed due to so much expectations from their families, friends and the society at large.

5.1. Implication of Findings

The implication of the findings to universities would be that, they must package their marketing programmes not only based on a few factors like grade 12 results but on many other factors such as creation of institutional awareness programmes that brings out holistic information on their institutions. Which must then be rolled out in secondary

schools to prospective students. Most universities are failing to bring out such information like, institutional accreditation, institutional ranking compared to other universities in the country, programme accreditation and also programme satisfaction levels must all be put in place. In addition, there was need to ensure that those programmes that can help learners get to choose them must be given by universities to secondary schools on occasional basis as a way of giving back to the community by conducting free trainings on different programmes to arouse the interest in the students in the various programmes that institutions offer.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion of the study showed that, Grade 12 results was ranked first in influencing student programme choice at Kwame Nkrumah University which can be generalized to other institutions using descriptive cross-tabulation, meanwhile third and significant using standardized beta coefficient, the social-economic factors were considered to be influencing the dependent variable more than the other three factors at Kwame Nkrumah University using standardized beta coefficient while parents were ranked second in terms of absolute values. In addition, other factors such as personal interest comes out to top the list. Therefore, for purposes of student satisfaction, interest of students despite this factor not being significant in the study as regression output reviews, it must be encouraged as the basis of choosing a programme of study other than encouraging parents to be the core influencer in student's program choice of study because of the unshared views of the parent in encouraging and influencing students programme choice.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

References

- [1] Arcinas R.J., Balindong A., Gamos C. J., Grumo B., (2018). *Students Perception on Choosing a Course: The Faculty of Senior High School Department International Philippine School in Jeddah* Research Gate
- [2] Barone A. (2023). *Marketing Strategy: What it is, how it works, how to create on.* <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/marketing-strategy.asp>
- [3] Chapman D.W., (1981). *A model of student college choice.* The Journal of Higher Education 52(5):490-505
- [4] Cochran W. G. (1977) *Sampling Techniques* 3rd edition by John Wiley & sons
- [5] Çokgezen M., (2014). *Determinants of university choice: a study on Economic Departments in Turkey.* Journal of Higher Education 4(1):23-31.
- [6] Cook B.G., and Cook L (2016) *Research designs and special education Research: Different designs address different Questions. Learning disabilities Research and Practice Vol. (31) (4)*
- [7] Croll, P., (2008). *Occupational choice, social-economic status and educational attainment: A study of the occupational choices and destinations of young people in the British Household Panel Survey*, Research papers in Education, Vol. 23.
- [8] Foskett en.al (2006) *Post graduate study in the UK: International Students Guide.* SAGE Publication
- [9] Garrahy, D.A. (2001) *Three third grade teachers' genders beliefs and behaviors.* Journal of Career Development, 102(1), 81-94
- [10] Gasparl S. C and Soares C. A (2021). *Factors influencing the Choice of higher education institutions in Angola: Lisbon School of Economics and Management International Journal of Education Administration and Policy studies* Cok, C., (2016). The difficulties in choosing career path. www.theodysseyonline.com
- [11] Hendriani S., Kasmuri K., Susanti R., Putra F.K., (2022) *New Students Recruitment System and Factors Influencing Their Choice: A Study at a University in West Sumatera.* Al-fikrah Journal Manajemen Pendidikan 10(1).

- [12] Kinzie, J., Palmer, M., Hayek, D., Hossler, D., Jacob, S.A., and Cunnings, H., (2004). *Fifty Years of College Choices, Social, Political and Institutional Influences on the Decision Making Process*. Indianapolis, IN: Limina Foundation for Education.
- [13] Kothari C., R., (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (2nd Revised Edition) New Age International Publishers
- [14] Litten, L. H., Sullivan, D., and Brodigan, D.L (1983). *Applying Market Research in College Admissions*. New York: College Entrance ...<http://dl.lib.uom.lk>
- [15] M'siska M., (Personal Communication, 10th April, 2024) *Career and Guidance at Caritas Convent Secondary*: Unpublished
- [16] Martin, F. G., (2010) *The Factors that Affect Student's Decision in Choosing their college courses* retrieved from www.academia.edu
- [17] Rudhumbu N, Tirumalai A, Kumari B (2017). *Factors that influence undergraduate students' choice of a university: a case of Botho University in Botswana*. International Journal of Learning and Development 7(2):27-37.
- [18] Scot. S.V., (1999). *The academic as service provides: Is the customer always right?* Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management Vol.21(2)
- [19] Talbert. P. Y., (2012) *Strategies to Increase Enrolment, Retention, and Graduation Rates*: Journal of Developmental Education Vol. 36 (1)