

Research Article

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Factors influencing uptake of career counselling services among university students in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract: Failure to take up career counselling services among university students continues to be a concern for learning institutions and policy makers. The concern has been marked by policy interventions aimed at ensuring graduates access career information. In Kenya, universities have

developed policies and programmes that encourage uptake of career counselling services. Despite these attempts, there has been minimal uptake of the services among students. The purpose of the study was to assess the level of uptake of career counselling services in Kenyan universities. The target population was fourth-year undergraduate students. A stratified simple random sampling method was used. Standardized instruments were used to collect data. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented using tables. Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 24. The level of uptake of career counselling services was low. The study recommended clear policies and guidelines that would reinforce career counselling programmes in universities in Nairobi City County.

Keywords – Career centres, Career counselling, Career, Guidance and counselling, University students

1. INTRODUCTION

University life is associated with significant stressors as scholars try to adjust to new environments. Triggers to such stress may be linked to unpredicted challenges and adjustment difficulties such as homesickness, personal relationships, financial and academic demands, as students have been reported to hurt from a number of psychological health problems and considerable distress (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Adams (2012) argues that university life is characterized by significant decision-making processes such as choice of a college major and other academic concerns. Career counselling is an approach that is used to induct students to making a career choice in both formal and informal learning institutions (Eurydice, 2019). According to the University of California (2015), most students face career-related worries, mental and health problems that need special attention by the university administration in order to ease some of the unexpected struggles when they join university. Among the significant



resources that could help decrease student anxiety is university career counselling facilities, which is the most critical facility any university should have (Maree, 2019).

According to Akareem and Hossain (2016), career counselling enables students to find a decent job—which is the ultimate goal of all universities since career counselling centres play a key role in this effort. Universally, universities have policies of incorporating career counselling services among the academic facilities with the aim of providing adequate information regarding courses offered and employment opportunities. The prominence of career counselling services in universities has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in their handbook on career counselling (UNESCO, 2002). The handbook clearly outlines guidelines for developing, implementing and assessing career services in higher education settings. The prominence of career counselling is further reflected in The United States National Career Development Association (NCDA) (2016), which states that every individual has freedom of occupation and career choice as an important birthright.

In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has stressed the significance of university education in training a qualified and adaptable labour force (World Bank, 2019). This is in line with the Kenya Higher Education Policy Note of 2019, which recognizes the role played by universities in providing unique education—including services such as career counselling. This is further reflected in the initiative by the Ministry of Education through the Inter-University Council for Eastern Africa (IUCEA) (IUCEA, 2018), which recommended the establishment of career services in all academic institutions.

The purpose of career counselling services in universities is to offer career and counselling support to students as these seem to be core in providing jobs suitable to students' capabilities, interests and needs (Chireshe, 2013). These are facilitated through career workshops, consultations, mock interviews, resume critiquing, internships and career fairs. This practice is one of the key strategies universities have put in place to improve academic achievement and personal development of their students by alleviating students' problems in decision making (Oluremi, 2014; Smith, 2014). However, despite the availability of career counselling services in universities it has been recognized that only a minority of university students use professional counselling (Khan & Williams, 2003; Raunic & Xenos, 2008). Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton and Benton (2003) argue that between 17% and 22% of college students reported they have had vocational problems. According to the study, only 6.3% of students utilize career counselling. This outcome indicates the importance of examining reasons for the low uptake of career counselling services in universities. .

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Global studies indicate the significance of career counselling services in helping individuals to successfully transition from one stage to another (Byars-Winston & Fouad, 2006). Fischer and Turner (1970) showed that help-seeking behaviours refer to the extent to which a person utilizes different resources against a situation that threatens their normal function in order to re-establish equilibrium. Vogel, Wade and Hake (2006) carried out a study on Measuring Perceptions of Stigmatization by Others for Seeking Psychological Help at Iowa State University in the United States of America. The study noted that fear of being stigmatized was the most cited reason why individuals avoided psychotherapy. The study established that such fear was likely to be strong when students considered reactions from their peers. Heppner, Multon, Gysbers, Ellis and Zook (1998) found that there was a lack of creativity employed in career counselling and thus a lack of dynamic and creative methods that would lead to utilisation of services by students with unique emotional and cognitive patterns. Chireshe (2013), who explored this in a South African university, revealed inadequate career services. It is due to this that Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2011), on reassessing career counselling in Africa in the 21st century, affirmed that employability is significantly related to one's satisfaction with career preparedness and the support received.

The implication is that the more prepared students were in terms of career goals, the more positive and satisfied they would likely be in terms of employability. There was a high expectation from friends and family that university students were knowledgeable and able to make autonomous decisions, hence did not require career counselling services. This is why a study by Palo and Drobot (2010) found that people were less likely to take up career services if they expected to receive negative reactions from their families and friends.

Mgosha et al. (2009) carried out a study on the evaluation of uptake and attitude to voluntary counselling and testing among health care professional students in Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania, using a cross-sectional study among health care professional students aged 18–25 years. A sample of 309 students were recruited, among these 197 (63.8%) were females. Results showed that all respondents were aware of the benefits of voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), however, its uptake was low. This finding agrees with the study findings by Gacohi, Sindabi and Chepcheng (2017), whose study revealed student's reception of career counselling services yet uptake remained minimal. There is scant information particularly on uptake of career counselling services, hence studies on uptake of other services were analysed in order to shed light on general factors that commonly influenced uptake of career services.

Museve, Gonngera and Labongo (2013) analysed the uptake of HIV voluntary counselling and testing services of Mount Kenya University in an effort to assess the factors affecting the utilization of VCT services among students. They found that the uptake of VCT was higher among the students who had knowledge of VCT services than among those without. Sanga, Kapanda and Mwangi (2015) studied factors influencing the uptake of voluntary HIV counselling and testing and also found a low uptake of VCT services among young people, mainly due to the fear of HIV test results, a lack of knowledge and poor attitude towards VCT services, stigma, and long distances to the VCT centre. The researchers recommended friendly VCT services to increase VCT uptake. Mohlabane, Bomkazi, Peltzer and Mwisongom (2016) did a study on barriers and facilitators associated with HIV testing uptake, and found the major barrier to uptake was fear of what people may say, or embarrassment. This is why Oguegbu (2016) found that awareness eliminated fear and uptake of services.

A Kenyan research by Ogutu and Muango (2012) was carried out on the Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies - an evaluation of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in public universities in Kenya. The study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology by adopting a descriptive survey design with a sample size of 204 university students. Results showed that guidance and counselling services at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology were effective among students who utilised the services and recommended that the guidance and counselling department should focus more on social, health and financial issues affecting students. It may be due to this finding that Ogutu and Muango (2012) argued that effective counselling services were only beneficial among those students who utilised the services. Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) however, argue that young adults use professional sources of support such as career counselling centres, career counsellors, and other non-professional sources such as parents, teachers and mentors when faced with career challenges.

Nationally, studies on career counselling carried out in Kenya mainly focused on secondary schools. However, not much has been done regarding the uptake of career services among university students in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to find out the level of uptake of career counselling services in universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya, and identify strategies to increase uptake of career counselling services.

2.4. Theoretical Perspectives

The social learning theory of career counselling

The Social Learning Theory of Career Counselling proposed by Krumboltz & Mitchell (1996) comprises two related parts. The first part focuses on explaining the origins of career choice and it is known as the social learning theory of career decision-making (SLTCDM). There are four factors that influence career decisions: genetic endowments

and special abilities; environmental conditions and events; instrumental and associative learning; and task approach skills. The four factors influence career decisions in a number of ways. First, through self-observation generalizations, where students draw conclusions about their performance compared with the performance of others and draw conclusions about their capabilities. Secondly, through worldview generalization, that is, the nature and functioning of the world which they derive from their learning experiences.

Thirdly, through task-approach skills, cognitive, performance abilities and emotional predispositions necessary for coping with the environment. This includes decision making, problem solving, and goal setting; thus, when students attend workshops, resume writing and interviewing sessions, they learn task-approach skills that foster career development and finally, actions through internships expose students to occupational role models that enhance learning experiences. The essence of Krumboltz & Mitchell (1996)'s observation was that certain basic processes, such as learning experiences, affect the career development of all persons regardless of their cultural affiliations (Lent & Worthington, 2000). Therefore, there is a need to explore factors that influence students' learning experiences which could have implications on uptake of career counselling services.

The Learning theory of career counselling

The second part of the Learning Theory of Career Counselling (LTCC) proposed by Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) focuses on career counselling and explains what career counsellors can do to help people make effective career decisions. This theory offers useful interventions for fostering college student career development since it is rich in practicability. The theory particularly describes the strategies career counsellors can use to help college students in career development. The theory also assumes that, "human beings are intelligent, problem solving individuals who strive at all times to understand the reinforcements that surround them and who in turn control their environments to suit their purposes and needs" (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). It emphasizes that people's personal experiences around others influences how individuals choose their careers, the places people live, the careers of people they know, and things they have heard about different careers all playing a role in guiding them to make decisions about their careers. This has implications to university students as they are surrounded with lecturers, counsellors and coaches who are likely to share personal experiences that may influence students' career choices and decisions. In this case the counsellor's use strategies such as reinforcements, role modelling, role playing and simulation as they guide students with career-related issues.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Career counselling has been found to play a key role in the successful transition of graduates to the workplace (Swanson & Arnold, 1996). This view has been supported by Ludwikoski, Vogel and Armstrong (2009), Kahn and Williams (2011) and Raunic and Xenos (2008), showing the importance of career counselling in universities. This is further reinforced by IUCEA (2018), through a policy shift in instituting career centres in all institutions of higher learning in Kenya in an effort to close the skills gap between graduates and employers. There is evidence that many students do not use the career services as stated by Harry, Chinyamurindill and Mjoli (2018). This calls for research into findings leading to insignificant use of services provided by the institutions. There is a possibility that career concerns are often distressing to students, as personal counselling is associated with disclosure of self and may induce feelings of depression and a lack of self-confidence. Several of these unexploited services appear essential to students' social and academic development. This study sought to establish variable factors that influence the uptake of career counselling services among university students in Nairobi City County.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Study area

This study was confined to selected public and private universities within Nairobi City County which is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. Nairobi City County was ideal due to its easy accessibility with several public and private campuses. The selection of the county was determined by the researcher's interaction with students in the course of her line of work in the county that exposed the lack of use of career counselling services among students. The study targeted fourth-year university students because they were expected to be relatively mature in terms of career knowledge and hence able to conceptualize career concerns. Additionally, career counsellors were involved in the study as they often worked with students on career - related activities. The study confined itself to uptake of career counselling services.

4.2. Methods

Several research methods were used. These included questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The study employed a triangulated comparative research design blending quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from the fourth-year undergraduate students, the career counsellors were targeted since they closely interacted with students in the course of duty and a focus group discussion among a group of fourth - year students. Four universities (two public and two private) were selected for the study. This was done by firstly preparing a list of the private and public universities in Nairobi City County as the sampling frame.

Secondly, a simple random - sampling technique was employed using a lottery method to pick two universities from each category. Each member of the universities was assigned a number, after which numbers were selected at random. In this case four universities: two public and two private; were chosen out of the 22 public universities and 17 private universities on the list. The Simple random sampling technique gave each university an equal chance to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select the career counsellors as key informants to provide an expert opinion from each university. Purposive sampling was preferred because it allowed the researcher to select samples with the required characteristics of the study (Bell, 1999). According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), the sample size depends upon the purpose of the study and the nature of the population under investigation.

The targeted population for the study was 4,835 final-year undergraduate students from four universities and two career counsellors from Nairobi City County. Purposive, proportionate and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select respondents. The sample size of the study was 369 final-year undergraduate university students from two public and two private universities chartered in Kenya by the year 2015. The desired students sample size for the study was computed using Slovin's (1960) formula. This is because the population of fourth-year students in the selected universities was large and therefore required sampling to select representative subjects from the target population. The sample size of the students was determined as follows:

Slovin's (1960):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where "n" - is the desired sample size,

"N" - is the population size (in this case 4,835) and "e" - is the margin of error (in this case 0.05) to determine the sample size of fourth-year students who participated in this study. According to Israel (2013), Slovin's formula is appropriate in determining the study sample size where the target (available) population to be studied is finite (known). Therefore, the sample size for the study was 369 fourth year university students. The sample size for each university was proportionately determined. The data collection instruments were self-administered questionnaire and interview schedules.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both open and closed ended questions. The researcher conducted interviews with the career counsellors using a structured

interview guide. The interview was conducted on a one-on-one basis and a total of two career counsellors were interviewed. Finally, the researcher, using focus group discussion guidelines, conducted focus group discussions involving six to 12 students from each of the four universities. This provided in-depth information and insight about student uptake of career counselling services in universities..

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Copy and paste from your manuscript Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data were analysed thematically. Descriptive statistics and percentages were used and presented using tables. The level of uptake of career counselling was determined by exploring the frequency, benefits and impact among students in the sampled universities. Data on the levels of uptake and of impact were solicited using Likert scale 1-5. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data captured on the Likert scale. According to Boone and Boone (2012), the mean and standard deviation are suitable descriptive statistical methods for analysing Likert-scale data. A mean score of above 3 was considered significant since the composite score falls under "Often" and "Very often". The responses on frequency, usefulness, and frequency of career counselling are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

5.1. Frequency of career counselling uptake among students

Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of the uptake of career counselling. This was necessary in order to determine how regularly they utilised the career counselling services. Findings are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of Career Counselling uptake among Students (8)

Statements on Frequency of Career Counselling among Students	Count	Mean	SD
I have received guidance on career matters	334	2.06	0.949
I have attended career counselling sessions	335	2.64	1.340
I have received training on job interviewing skills	336	2.30	1.391
I have received training on job search strategy sessions	325	1.91	1.288
I have attended university career affairs	328	2.69	1.423
I have received help with CV writing	323	2.47	1.417
I have participated in internships / attachments	322	2.22	1.490
I have attended Alumni meetings	342	1.59	1.137
I have made career-related inquiries	320	2.76	1.497
I have taken psychometric assessment tests at the career centre	328	1.54	1.086

Source: Research data (2020)

Likert Key: 1- Never, 2- Rarely, 3- Somehow, 4- Often and 5- Very often

The respondents disagreed on all the statements posed regarding the frequency of career counselling among students. The respondents indicated that they rarely ($M=2.64$, $SD=1.340$) attended career counselling sessions. The respondents also indicated that they rarely ($M=2.30$, $SD=1.391$) received training on job interviewing skills. From the above findings, to a large extent university students do not take up career counselling services in universities in Nairobi City County.

The low uptake of career counselling services confirms the findings of other studies, which indicate that people were less likely to take up career services if they expected to receive negative reactions from their families and friends (Robertson, 2013). In addition, Nyaga (2011) stated that university life is associated with stress due to psychological, personal and vocational needs that need support from counsellors. However, Ogutu and Muango (2012) argued that such help is effective through guidance and counselling—among students who sought the services. It is due to this that Ogutu and Muango (2012) reiterated that authentic counselling was tangible only among those students who essentially and regularly used the services.

A statement by one female respondent, "Student 1", summarises this:

"Personally, I dread visiting the career offices because other students may think I am not able to think for myself. In fact, I am a fourth-year student graduating soon and my family knows that I will get a job sooner than later. Do I really need career counselling? I will look for a job just like the others".

On the same issue, one of the career counsellors, "Career Counsellor 1", had this to say:

"The level of uptake of career counselling services by students is alarming, to say the least. During Career Fair, these students flock to the employment stands of companies they presume to be offering talks regarding employment, unlike in the walk-ins to the counsellors' offices".

A different staff member, "Career Counsellor 2", shed further light, stating,

"Students who are about to graduate will readily take up the career services by reading the notice board job offers advertised, unlike the first and second-year students who do not seem to be interested in any job applications."

These verbatim reports indicate that few students take up career counselling services, and those who do certainly have a reason to do so. Additionally, using career counselling is an individual decision; it seems that only those respondents who experienced difficulties and truly needed help sought the services, while those who did not experience any challenge may not have found the services useful and hence did not seek them. It is also probable that certain students did not use career counselling consistently because they were just lazy or did not have any intention using the services.

There are likely to be several factors contributing to this situation. Kamunyu, Ndungo and Wango (2016) noted that gender of the counsellor was a significant consideration in students' failure to seek career counselling services. This study claimed that male students do not seek help from female counsellors, lest they be seen as "weak". This is probably due to the socialisation process, where males are socialized to believe they are strong (Carter, 2014). Other factors included social mistrust in counselling, a lack of confidence in counsellors, location of the counselling centre, and general perception of students regarding the counselling service. Other factors that inhibit the frequency of use of the services may be attributed to lack of creativity, as noted by Heppner et al. (1998). The current study revealed boring and archaic programmes that did not interest students and, therefore, called for up-to-date and fascinating programmes.

According to "Career Counsellor 3", students needed to be supported by members of staff who were innovative and ready to communicate at their level:

"University students need challenging and exciting staff that keep them engaged throughout. If such services are not provided, they are unlikely to frequent the centres."

The findings in the current study showed that several universities have poor and inadequate facilities. For instance, lack of psychometric testing was a concern to those respondents who did not take up the services. Some respondents reported that they might not make frequent visits if they did not understand their personality types, strengths or weaknesses in line with career progression. There was meagre advertisement and poor awareness programmes, coupled with a lack of professional career counsellors. This inadequacy imperilled other sources of assistance, such as the use of teachers and student volunteers.

This finding agrees with Chireshe (2012), who revealed inadequate career services—particularly in many African universities. It is due to this that a study by Maree (2019) noted that career counselling in Africa in the 21st century was insignificant, and thus employability of Africa's graduates was significantly related to their satisfaction with career preparedness and support received. This finding calls for revamping of career counselling programmes in Kenya and Africa as a whole.

A male student's verbatim response captures part of the problem:

"I have been to the career centre a few times, but those career counsellors are boring and do not offer anything new. I already know the entire thing they keep telling me to do. I need something challenging. I failed to attend the last



alumni meeting because the information was sent to the school email, which I rarely open. I wish they could use WhatsApp.”

The researcher is of the opinion that in such a technological and globalisation age, university students have their inclinations on an institution’s awareness programmes. Generally, students prefer social media platforms, which are the fastest means of communication. Such students are unlikely to use the traditional approaches of announcements such as noticeboard advertisements or emails. The students, therefore, expect career counsellors to adopt innovative methods appropriate in communicating with modern youth and hence improve awareness and utilisation of the services they offer.

Wanjau (2011) studied determinants of students’ uptake of reproductive health services, and noted that confidentiality was likely to influence the uptake of reproductive health services (Godia et al., 2013). The study found that the information students shared with reproductive health providers in various programmes influenced their uptake of reproductive health services, if it was not kept confidential. Consequently, this assertion may be concluded in the current study. Respondents were not enthusiastic about receiving assistance from some career counsellors—and, therefore, the current study approves that confidentiality is key in ensuring students seek help. This may be valid in both health services as well as career services in the university. Career counsellors and other health workers in universities must conceal their clients’ issues since it is a student’s right to privacy and confidentiality. This is the basis for an effective counselling relationship that may determine if students will continue seeking these services in universities.

Studies by Mbeba et al. (2012) revealed that a majority of students see the lack of confidential services as a significant barrier to their utilization of sexual reproductive health (SRH) services. This perception may also be true in the area of career counselling—that is, there will be a backlash when career counsellors do not maintain confidentiality in student matters, especially for those who may perform poorly or have certain mental health issues that affect their academic lives in ways that may include repeating of courses and dismissals.

Despite the improvement of career services—including solving confidentiality issues coupled with employing professional counsellors—some respondents still did not take up the services offered. This calls for further research in understanding the factors that lead to a lack of, or low uptake of career services among students. For students to fully utilise the services provided—whether the services are adequate or not—there is a need for students to have personal initiative or drive, which is an innate motivation that pushes one to explore, search, and discover avenues that would help them achieve appropriate career goals and thus use services that they consider likely to be of help to them. Based on this model, coupled with whatever the university offers, these measures may eventually lead to uptake of career services among students.

Based on studies regarding stigma, self-esteem and self-discovery are very important to students. If one clearly undergoes a self-inventory, and arrives at a conclusion that there has been personal under-performance in certain areas of career assessment, the person is likely to change positively and attempt to mend their inadequacies by using the career services available in the universities. This study used the Krumboltz and Mitchell (1996) theory of career counselling, where counsellors have a variety of methods of helping students achieve their career goals. However, they may lack the personal responsibility aspect based on initiative, which is a big part of an individual’s drive in the uptake of services they believe are important to themselves. This is why studies on VCT, HIV, and uptake of other health services displayed stigma—which is a fear of being labelled—and therefore this calls for personal responsibility in making one’s changes.

Literature on the uptake of career services appears scant; however, universal and local lessons on the uptake of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) services were compared with the current findings. For example, Museve et al. (2013) found that the uptake of VCT was higher among students who had knowledge of VCT services than among those without that knowledge. This finding disagrees with the current study: the finding in Table 2 illustrates that only a few respondents used the services frequently, although a

majority of them had knowledge of career counselling and consequently agreed that career counselling was vital. It may be likely that the impacts associated with knowledge of VCT are different from career counselling, and hence there is a need for further interrogation.

Similarly, Sanga et al. (2015) in a study on factors influencing uptake of voluntary HIV counselling and testing, also found a low uptake of VCT services among young people due to fear of HIV test results, lack of knowledge and poor attitude towards VCT services, stigma and distance to the VCT centre. Likewise, Mohlabane et al. (2016), who studied barriers associated with HIV testing uptake, found the major barriers to uptake as being the fear of what people may say, as well as embarrassment. These undertones may also be attributed to uptake of career counselling and agrees with the current study, since many undergraduate students dread embarrassment by peers.

The current study agrees with the assertion that fears of the results, stigma, and distance of the VCT centres may likewise deter the use of career services. The current study found that respondents had problems with where the career counselling centres were situated. This discouraged some students from visiting the centres, because they could be exposed to ridicule and therefore respondents were not free to visit the centres. Further factors that were problematic to students were long queues due to an insufficient number of counsellors. If students in the current study were aware of the position career counselling plays, uptake of career services would likely be high. This is supported by Oguegbi (2016), who found an association between awareness and uptake of services. This assertion is not supported by this study, since the current study did not interrogate the relationship between awareness of career counselling services and uptake of the services. The implication is that studies on awareness of services in universities are inevitable in order to help counsellors define the programmes and market the services to students in all institutions of higher learning in the expectation that this will increase the frequency of career counselling uptake among students.

5.2. Frequency perceived usefulness of career counselling among students

Respondents were asked to indicate how useful they perceived career counselling services to be. This was important in order to assess the benefit of career counselling among students. Findings are as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Perceived Usefulness of Career Counselling among Students

Statement on benefits of career counselling among students	Count	Mean	SD
I have received guidance on career matters	232	2.06	0.665
I have attended career counselling sessions	209	3.09	1.318
I have received training on interviewing skills	184	3.16	1.412
I have received training on job search strategy sessions	177	2.84	1.413
I have attended university career affairs	197	3.35	1.375
I have received help with CV writing	198	3.54	1.387
I have participated in internships / attachments	192	3.36	1.628
I have attended alumni meetings	156	2.73	1.596
I have made career related inquiries	182	3.40	1.452
I have taken psychometric assessment tests at the career centre	147	2.67	1.559

Source: Research data (2020)

Likert Key: 1- Not helpful; 2 - Not so helpful; 3 - Not sure; 4 - Helpful; 5- Very helpful.

Results in Table 2 show that there was mixed reaction on the benefits of career counselling among students. On the benefits of receiving guidance on career matters ($M=2.06$, $SD=0.665$), the students were of the view that they did not benefit. It was also noted that the students did not benefit from receiving training on job searching strategies ($M=2.84$, $SD=1.412$). This was the case for participation in alumni meetings ($M=2.73$, $SD=1.596$) too, and taking psychometric assessment tests at the career centre ($M=2.67$, $SD=1.559$). However, students indicated that they

benefited by attending career counselling sessions, training in interviewing skills, and university career fairs, to mention a few. This finding resonates with those made by student respondents.

The implication of this finding is that services such as career sessions, interviewing, and career fairs merged as the most utilized. This could be attributed to the fact that these services were the most available and hence were provided to the students. Services like meeting the alumni and psychometric testing could be deficient in many colleges and therefore were not provided to respondents. In-depth analysis from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on student responses with respect to the usefulness of career counselling services for university students are as follows:

Student 1:

"Yes, career counselling services are useful as they help university students work towards their career goals. For example, if you are pursuing a psychology degree, you are likely to be placed in the counselling environment, after which you acquire skills that help you reach your counselling goals."

Student 2 also agreed that the services are useful, stating,

"Yes, career counselling services are useful as they help university students prepare for their resume and application letters. As one applies for employment opportunities, the career counsellors help them make good applications that are appropriate for each job opportunity."

Student 3 also said the services were useful:

"Yes, career counselling services are useful as they help university students to be exposed to job offers by getting to know the prospective employers and organisations that need to employ. It also helps in understanding different employer's requirements as each employer is unique. This is why I like the career fairs week"

Student 4 further underlined this usefulness:

"Indeed, career counselling services are useful as they help university students to know what to expect in the world of work. When students graduate and go out to the field, many of them are completely confused about career expectation and therefore career counsellors are able to give you some tips on what to anticipate. This is likely to give one a soft landing".

The above findings are in line with Maree (2019), who asserted that career counselling is a beneficial as well as critical facility any university should have to support students in career preparation for the world of work. The findings are therefore in tandem with those of Akareem and Hossain (2016) that career counselling enables students find decent employment. Graduate employment, therefore, remains the ultimate goal of all universities worldwide as an indication that students are putting theory into practice in terms of the knowledge acquired.

In addition, the current study confirms those by Nkechi et al. (2016), who revealed that career counselling has a great impact in helping students realize their potential for employability skills. The verbatim responses from the student FGD are vital and therefore, universities have a duty to establish such centres to play this key role in training students on vocational exploration, career planning, and transition to the job market. This is chiefly because a majority of respondents acknowledge its prominence. Although the study revealed some shortcomings, recommendations on the flaws were presented for improvement.

Similarly, there were varying opinions from the in-depth analysis from the FGD suggesting that the services were not useful, as follows:

Student 5:

"No, career counselling services are not useful to university students in facing the real world as the career counsellors do not talk about job etiquette and the experiences are inadequate to prepare one for the real world of work; I don't even know my strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats."

Student 6:

“No, career counselling services are not useful to university students as many of the services have been watered down. The career counsellors tell students obvious things that students are already aware of. Implementation of the services is a big challenge”

Other respondents did not find all the services useful due to previous experiences, either with career counsellors or poor facilities. This finding disagrees with Chireshe (2013), who found that career services had the capability to streamline services assumed core for a student’s capabilities, including strengths and weaknesses. It is feasible that even though a few students felt this way, some of the career services were essential to students. It is possible that in several universities, the services were unavailable and hence students found them insufficient in attaining their career goals.

For instance, in a public university a respondent, “Student 7”, had this to say:

“We do not have career guidance or counselling in our university. We only have a Dean of Students but these services are not available. We sometimes consult our lecturers, who are willing to listen to us and provide advice.”

The above response showed that not all universities were fortunate to have developed career programmes for students, yet this resource was impactful. According to Nkechi, Ewomaoghene & Egenti (2016), career counselling has great impact on a student’s employability skills. It is therefore a responsibility for universities in Nairobi City County to provide these services due to their significance.

5.3. Impact of career counselling among students

Respondents were asked to state the impact of career counselling. Data to rate the impact of career counselling was collected using Likert scale on a scale of 1 to 5 in order to assess the influence of career counselling among students. Findings are as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Impact of Career Counselling among Students

Statement on impact of career counselling among students	Count	Mean	SD
I have received guidance on career matters	201	3.13	1.332
I have attended career counselling sessions	178	3.04	1.385
I have received training on job interviewing skills	155	3.07	1.401
I have received training on job search strategy sessions	137	2.67	1.476
I have attended university career affairs	163	3.26	1.405
I have received Help with CV writing	171	3.19	1.499
I have participated in Internships / attachments	156	3.03	1.530
I have attended alumni meetings	145	2.39	1.473
I have made career related inquiries	146	3.42	1.452
I have taken psychometric assessment tests at the career centre	112	2.65	1.558

Source: Research data (2020)

Likert scale Key: 1- Poor, 2- Fair, 3- Good, 4- Very Good and 4-Excellent

Analysed data in Table 3 shows that there was mixed impact on career counselling among students. On the one hand, the positive impact was noted in receiving guidance, attendance of counselling sessions, skills for job interviews, and writing curriculum vitae, among others. On the other hand, the study revealed that career counselling did not have an impact in training on job- search strategy sessions, attendance of alumni meetings, and taking of psychometric assessment tests at the career centre. This implies that the less impacted services – such as alumni meetings and psychometric testing – were not fully applied in the universities. This is likely due to the insufficient career counselling resources available in universities.

The above outcomes agree with Chireshe’s (2013) studies on career guidance and counselling provisions at a South African university. Furthermore, Orange (2014) and Ombaba et al. (2014) portray the need for equipped career counselling centres for effective career guidance services to be realized in universities, especially in Africa.



The impact of career services has been recognised as essential for all universities in Nairobi City County. Therefore, it is a call to refurbish the human and physical resources that make career counselling ideal. This can only be realised if universities begin to benchmark with best practice, both locally and internationally. This model is important since it interprets university ratings the world over regarding graduate employability. For instance, if a university has a high potential in offering employment opportunities to most of its graduates, then such a university is likely to be highly rated and hence, students would be interested in it. Thus, it is vital for universities to benchmark with others in order to increase their ratings and hence their standing in the region.

5.4. Strategies to enhance uptake of career counselling services

Respondents from the FGD, and the career counsellors, provided several solutions for increasing uptake of career counselling services. University students are likely to uptake services that motivate and challenge them and those that infuse some element of enthusiasm. If services are boring and unexciting, students are unlikely to use them. This finding was supported by Heppner et al. (1998), who found lack of creativity employed in career counselling. Likewise, Cheshire (2013) affirmed that African universities displayed inadequate resources.

Industry mentors from the business organisations would be of great help in inspiring and influencing students in their career pursuits. Success stories by industry players and alumni would appeal to students and hence stimulate them for greater impact. This concept agrees with Sharon et al. (1999) model of inspiring persons through past and present career stories. Results showed that to a great extent, there was a need for strategies that would improve services in all the universities in Nairobi City County. These strategies include career awareness programmes, professionalization of career counselling, diversification of career activities, equipping and staffing of career centres, linkage with industry players, and also making the programme compulsory to all students.

Further strategies include contemporary services—including the use of psychometric testing tools, needs assessments for all the services, and exciting and challenging programmes. An important aspect of the strategies also involved the volunteerism of the respondents in helping their institutions assemble creative marketing programmes by use of social media platforms as an effective tool of communication preferred by students. .

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The study has shown the need for further discussions on awareness and improvement of programs and practices that would improve uptake of career counselling services among university students in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Additionally, clear policies and guidelines that would reinforce career counselling programmes in universities in Nairobi City County.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The research has revealed the low level of uptake of career counselling services among university students in Nairobi City County and hence improvements could be made in understanding factors that influence uptake in other counties in Kenya. The study could also be used as a baseline study in informing policies and frameworks for managing university programs. Since the study was restricted to fourth year undergraduate students, generalizations from the findings were limited. It is, therefore, suggested that future studies should incorporate more approaches. The deficiency of studies in this area has been unfortunate especially in Kenya. Such studies could potentially enrich the career counselling literature locally. The study may supplement research understanding of the career counselling process—an area frequently noted as less studied compared with the emotional-social counselling literature.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

The study established that uptake of career counselling services was low. The study recommended improvement of current services and the introduction of stimulating career counselling programmes in universities. It emerged in the study that universities had inadequate services. The study therefore recommended the initiation of publicity of key programmes and recruitment of professional career counsellors in universities..

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