

**FACTORS AFFECTING CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF GIRLS;  
EMERGING ISSUES AND CHALLENGES: A CASE OF  
THIKA WEST DISTRICT, KIAMBU COUNTY**

**BY**

**MUNG'ARA ELIZABETH**

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**DECLARATION**

This project report is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other university.

.....  
**MUNG'ARA ELIZABETH**  
**E55/CE/11685/07**

.....  
**DATE**

This project report has been submitted for examination with our approval as the university supervisors.

.....  
**DR. NOBERT O. OGETA**

.....  
**DATE**

Lecturer,  
Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies,  
Kenyatta University

.....  
**DR. GEORGE A. ONYANGO**

.....  
**DATE**

Lecturer,  
Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies  
Kenyatta University

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my dear husband Mr. Mung'ara, our children Anthony, Mark and Benjamin. Thank you for your love and support throughout this study.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Special thanks to the Almighty God for His love, providence and for giving me wisdom to accomplish my work. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisors Dr. Nobert O. Ogeta and Dr. George A. Onyango for their guidance throughout my research.

I wish also to thank my respondents: the Principals, career masters and students from Thika West District for availing their time to respond to the questionnaires, without whose co-operation this work could not have been completed. Special thanks go to my colleague students and friends for their moral support and encouragement during my studies. God bless you all.

## ABSTRACT

The way that girls see their future beyond form four is a central influence on what subjects they choose to take at this pivotal decision point in their schooling. Previous studies indicate that girls are poorly represented in most careers that are considered prestigious and especially science-based careers. Similarly, although girls are well represented at the primary school level, the number of girls completing secondary education is far less than that of boys, and declines even further at the tertiary level of education. This shows that girls could be having low levels of career aspirations than boys. This study therefore sought to find out the factors affecting career aspirations of girls and emerging issues and challenges in Thika West District. The objectives of the study were to: establish the career aspirations of secondary school girls in Thika West District, find out the socio-economic factors that influence career aspirations of secondary school girls, find out the cultural factors that influence career aspirations of secondary school girls, find out the school-based factors that influence career aspirations of secondary school girls, and establish ways through which career aspirations of girls in secondary schools can be enhanced in order to increase the number of girls pursuing higher education. The study was carried out in Thika West District of Central Province, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used as the main tools for data collection. The study participants comprised of 320 secondary school girls, 8 principals, and 8 career masters who were selected from 8 secondary schools in Thika West District. Simple descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. These included means, percentages and frequency counts. The analysis results were presented in summary form using tables, frequency histograms and pie charts. The study established that students aspired to go to university after completing form four. It was also established that the parents were involved in their children's welfare in school and wanted them to further their studies. The study revealed that socio-economic factors and cultural practices, to some extent have a negative influence on girls' career aspirations. However, it was established that school-related factors positively influenced girls' career aspirations. It was also established that individual factors like self efficacy had an influence on girls' career aspirations. The study recommends that there is need for awareness campaigns targeting the community, parents, local leaders, administrators, teachers and students on the importance of education and the benefits of education especially of the girl child. This should be done through public barazas, seminars, school parents' days and other community functions; the girls should also be empowered and encouraged to say no to those cultural practices that affect their educational aspirations. They should be educated on the dangers of female genital mutilation and early marriages. The Non-Governmental Organizations should be involved in this education. The school administrators should also organize trips outside the school for exposure. This will change the attitude of the girls gradually; among other recommendations

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CBS</b>	-	Central Bureau of Statistics
<b>DEO</b>	-	District Education Officer
<b>DFID</b>	-	Department for International Development,
<b>FGM</b>	-	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>FPE</b>	-	Free Primary Education
<b>FSE</b>	-	Free Secondary Education
<b>MoE</b>	-	Ministry of Education
<b>MOH</b>	-	Ministry of Health
<b>NGOs</b>	-	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>ORC</b>	-	Opinion Research Corporation
<b>SCCT</b>	-	Social Cognitive Career Theory
<b>SPSS</b>	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>UNICEF</b>	-	United Nations International Children's Education Fund

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Education is one of the most important tools of empowerment for a woman. It enhances her ability to access knowledge, acquire skills and accept changes. It also increases her employment opportunities. Empirical evidence exists to show that educated women provide better for the health, nutritional and care needs of their children, have fewer children and have delayed marriages. However, women and girls have many roles they are expected to perform, and which often militate against their access, participation, retention and achievement in education (Mullu, 2004).

Access to education for the girl-child in Africa is poor. Statistics by the Department for International Development (DFID, 2007) reveal that although girls' primary school figures are improving in most countries in Africa and Asia, in absolute terms, 44 million girls worldwide remain out of school. Kenya is cited by DFID (2007) as among the countries with the highest numbers of out-of-school girls (that is, children of school-going age not enrolled in primary or secondary school). A number of factors have been attributed to lack of access to education for the girl-child, including early marriages, community attitude towards girl-child education, and female genital mutilation (FGM) (Kagunye, 2004). Girls are also affected by violence, gender discrimination in the classroom and poor enforcement of policies and laws regarding issues such as corporal punishment, child labour, school charges/fees and re-entry into school especially when girls have become pregnant.

School sanitation is another factor that is associated with girl-child's access to education. The Ministry of Health recommends a minimum of 1 toilet to 25 girls and

1 toilet to 30 boys. An assessment by Kirimi (2007) in a sample of public schools in Nairobi, Machakos, Kajiado and Kiambu districts found that on average 64 children shared one toilet. Kirimi noted that poor sanitation conditions are reflected in low enrolment, poor school performance and low retention rates. In most schools, the toilets for girls and boys are semi-separated (back-to-back design), shared or constructed close together. Kirimi (2007) argued that when girls reach puberty, they drop out of school due to the embarrassment of having to share latrines with boys, or because the facilities do not give them privacy and dignity. He cited a UNICEF report which shows that 1 in 10 school-age girls do not attend school during menstruation, in part due to lack of proper sanitation and lack of sanitary towels for girls from poor households.

Home conditions do not favour girl-child education either. Girls assist their mothers in carrying out all the household chores which include, for example, caring for the young ones, fetching water and fire wood, cooking, cultivating and washing. If the mother is sick or is away from home, it is the girls who miss school to attend to these chores. In the evening, the girl has less time to study because she has to assist the mother. This adversely affects her participation and achievement in school. Absenteeism may result in poor performance in school which will lead to repetition and finally dropping out of school, sometimes before the girl achieves basic literacy. For the majority of those who reach the end of their education cycle they often perform poorly in their promotion examinations hence they are forced to drop out of school (Njenga, 1999).

Since independence the number of women in wage employment has risen from 12% in 1964 to 21% in 1987 (Kenya National Development Plan, 1989-93). This is mainly due to increased participation of women in formal education. However, a comparison

of men and women in wage employment reveals that women are significantly underrepresented in all sectors of wage employment (Njenga, 1999), and especially in science-related courses.

Career aspirations of girls of girls can be affected by vocational guidance in schools. Efficient educational and vocational guidance services are more and more necessary to guide young students and professionals to the choice of suitable learning paths. In the contemporary society, many young people have to face the problem of the career choice: this can often lead to offhand and wrong decisions, with negative consequences for the single individual as well as for society, either from an economic and a social point of view. The career choice of an individual is obviously related to the development of professional skills belonging to a specific didactic area and for this reason students must select at first a learning subject (Ricci and Boccardi, 2010). The process of developing personal and vocational identity often requires monitoring by a specialized professional, able to discriminate the various components of the process of choosing a profession, above all, within a socio-cultural reality such as the current one, where transformations in the world of work are continuous and rapid. For Müller (2001), to carry out an effective Vocational Guidance process within this reality demands specialized training, an appropriate theoretical framework, and additional technical instruments, beyond continuous reflection on the emerging signals in each session. Without this, time may go by without appropriately reaching the intended goals, or rather, without adequate stimulus to assume a professional/occupational option within the individual's socio-cultural context. This is especially so for girls, whom have for long been disadvantaged especially in science and technology careers (Njenga, 1999; Royal Society of Chemistry, 2000; Mullu, 2004).

Globally women tend to be under-represented in science and technology (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2000). This could be partly due to the choice of subjects they make at primary and secondary school levels of their education. In Kenya women constitute about 55% of the population (CBS, MOH, and ORC, 2004) and although an equal opportunity education policy exists in the country, the under-representation of women and girls in mathematics, science and technology oriented careers at tertiary levels of education is far too low (Mullu, 2004). A number of studies have been carried out on career aspirations of boys and girls.

In a study in primary schools in Guinea, Anderson-Levitt et al (1994) found that although primary school pupils showed fewer gender stereotypes in the first grade, by the fifth grade both boys and girls gave in to the gender stereotypes that generally favoured boys and that girls accepted self images of inferiority. Serpell (1993), while analyzing what school meant to parents, teachers and students in a rural area of Zambia found that at initial enrolment many students, teachers and parents agreed that any child could succeed in school. However, by the fourth or fifth grade at age 12 to 15, most girls drop out of school. The girls interviewed in the study felt that girls do not have the intellectual ability to cope with the curriculum. One girl felt that the most important challenge at that stage of her life was to get married and start a family and further schooling would be fruitless in attaining those goals.

Kibera (1993) carried a survey on career aspirations and expectations of secondary school students in Kajiado, Kiambu and Machakos Districts, Kenya. She found that male students have higher educational and occupational aspirations than females. Job attitudes of girls differed from those of boys. Girls largely preferred service jobs involving working with people than working with things, while boys preferred scientific fields. Her reason for lower educational aspirations and expectations of girls

was that they are expected to be homemakers rather than full time workers. This could be influencing the low choice of physics by girls in form three.

According to the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), one's background (or contextual factors) and individual characteristics influence one's learning experiences and, consequently, self-efficacy. Self-efficacy then influences one's interests and outcome expectations, which eventually influence one's career aspirations. Factors such as parental level education, home environment factors, girls' motivation to learn, discipline and academic performance could have an impact on their career aspirations. The study aims at determining the effectiveness of vocational guidance services in career aspirations for secondary school girls in Thika West District.

### **1.1.1 Role of Vocational Career Guidance in Secondary Schools**

Kilonzo (1980) observes that career masters in Kenya do not have the time or facilities to provide any career or psychological guidance to the students. Kilonzo associated this problem with the fact that the career masters are teachers who provide counseling in addition to their full teaching loads. Up until recently, most of the secondary schools in Kenya did not have career masters. Recently in 2007, the Kenya Government published a book to assist students to select subjects appropriate for post-secondary courses and career options. The book, *Careers Guide Book for Schools 2007*, comes at a time when many people are being employed in areas that are neither in line with their professional training nor with their career interests. This leads to constant job frustrations coupled with low job satisfaction, the book reveals. In addition, the book will help students access their personal characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, dislikes and likes and relate them to selection of subjects (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Vocational guidance is important in schools as it informs students of the changes taking place in the curriculum. Kenya has experienced many changes in the school curriculum, with a major change in the educational system and the curriculum occurring in 1985 when the 8-4-4 system was introduced as a result of the recommendations of the Mackay report (Republic of Kenya, 1981). The introduction of the new subjects into the existing secondary school syllabus made the secondary curriculum too broad which was not easy to implement since students could not manage the whole load of all the 32 subjects (Regulations and Syllabuses, 1985). In order to facilitate the implementation process, the 32 subjects were organized into five major groups. The purpose of grouping the subjects was to put together core subjects in one group and electives of similar characteristics such as humanities or sciences in their own group.

Group one subjects, which also formed the core (compulsory) subjects, were English, Kiswahili and Mathematics. Group two combined all the science subjects thus: Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Biological Sciences and Physical Sciences (Physics taken with Chemistry). The humanities were in-group three and they included such subjects as Geography, History, Religious Education and Social Education and Ethics. Group four was composed of the applied subjects such as Home Science, Agriculture, Wood-Work, and Electricity among many others while group five was composed of “other subjects” that include Commerce, Economics, and Accounting (Regulations and Syllabuses, 1985).

In 1991, the curriculum was revised and an attempt made to reduce and reorganize the content in the various subject areas. The number of examinable subjects per student in secondary schools was reduced from 10 to 8. Wangai (2002) argues that despite this, the school curriculum continued to be overloaded in subject content with overlaps

across subjects and levels. It was demanding in terms of books and other materials required implementing the curriculum. The households found it difficult to meet the cost of learning materials for their children.

In 2002 the curriculum was revised again to address the above issues. This new curriculum also addressed aspects necessary for industrial transformation by the year 2020. With these changes in the curriculum have also come frequent changes in the syllabus. For example, in 2002, a new secondary school syllabus was introduced replacing the original 8-4-4 education syllabus which was first introduced in 1986 and revised in 1992 (Ministry of Education, 2002).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The way that girls see their future beyond form four is a central influence on what subjects they choose to take at this pivotal decision point in their schooling. Previous studies indicate that girls are poorly represented in most careers that are considered prestigious and especially science-based careers. Similarly, although girls are well represented at the primary school level, the number of girls completing secondary education is far less than that of boys, and declines even further at the tertiary level of education. This shows that girls could be having low levels of career aspirations than boys. This study therefore found out the factors that affect career aspirations of girls in secondary schools in Thika West District. Previous studies on girl child education have concentrated on factors that influence access to education for the girl child (Gicharu, 1993; Odaga & Heneveld, 1995; Kirimi, 2007). These studies have identified factors like female genital mutilation, gender roles, early marriages, and school sanitation to be associated with access and retention of girls in schools. These studies have not addressed the issue of career aspirations of the girl-child. This is

despite the fact that previous studies have shown that boys have higher career aspirations than girls (Kibera, 1993). Due to lack of research in this area, factors influencing career aspirations of girls in Kenya remain unknown. Consequently, the study will address this research gap by establishing the effectiveness of vocational guidance services in career aspirations for secondary school girls.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to find out the factors affecting career aspirations of girls and emerging issues and challenges.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the vocational guidance programmes available in secondary schools in Thika West district for assisting girls in career choice.
2. To establish the career aspirations of secondary school girls in Thika West District.
3. To find out the influence of vocational guidance on career aspirations of girls in secondary schools in Thika West District.
4. To determine ways of improving vocational guidance for girls in secondary schools in Thika West District.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. Which are the vocational guidance programmes available in schools for assisting girls in career choice in Thika West District?
2. What are the career aspirations of secondary school girls in Thika West District?

3. What is the influence of vocational guidance on career aspirations of girls in Thika West District?
4. Which other challenges influence career aspirations of secondary school girls in Thika West District?
5. In which ways can career aspirations of girls in secondary schools in Thika West District be enhanced in order to increase the number of girls pursuing higher education?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Enrolment of girls and boys in primary and secondary schools in Kenya are almost equal but there is disparity in the enrolment at tertiary colleges and universities that offer courses for skilled manpower in science and technological careers. The study may unearth the factors which hinder girls from aspiring to pursue higher education in Kenya. Such information may be utilized by NGOs and other lobby groups interested in girl-child education and the empowerment of women.

The study may be of significance to school principals, career masters and teacher-counsellors, as it may reveal the factors that influence career aspirations of girls. Such information could be of use while planning career guidance programmes. The study may reveal where the principals and teachers in secondary schools fail to capture the interest of girls in various subjects, especially the sciences. The study may be of significance to stakeholders at the Ministry of Education so that they can come up with policies to help the education institutions to curb the problem.

To the parents, the study may reveal the home related factors that influence girls' career aspirations, such as parental level of education and parental encouragement and

involvement. The findings may form a basis upon which recommendations may be made to parents on ways through which they can enhance career aspirations of girls.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study found out the factors that affect career aspirations of girls in secondary schools. The factors considered included school related factors like guidance and counseling effectiveness, availability of resources, and support from teachers; home background factors like parental level of education, parental support and involvement, and home setting (rural versus urban); and student-related factors such as girls' motivation to study.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

The study was carried out in secondary schools in Thika West District. Due to financial constraints and shortage of time, only a few schools in the division were covered, and therefore findings of the study cannot be generalized to the entire country.

The study was also limited by the fact that some girls had chosen subjects for KCSE which were not in line with their career aspirations due to external factors, for example where the school does not offer subjects related to a given career.

### **1.9 Assumptions of the Study**

The study was based on the following assumptions: -

- 1) The students responded to the questionnaire frankly and give responses that reflect their actual career aspirations.
- 2) All secondary school students chose their careers by the end of Form Two.

## **1.10 Theoretical Framework**

The study was based on the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994). The SCCT proposes that career choice behaviour is shaped by outcome expectancies, career interests, and career self-efficacy, and that career self-efficacy plays a mediating role between one's background and interests and one's outcome expectancies. Moreover, career self-efficacy is influenced both by individual variants (that is, predispositions, gender, race/ethnicity, health status) and by contextual factors such as family background and learning experiences. The theory emphasizes the interactive influence of contextual factors and cognitive person variables on individual career development (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

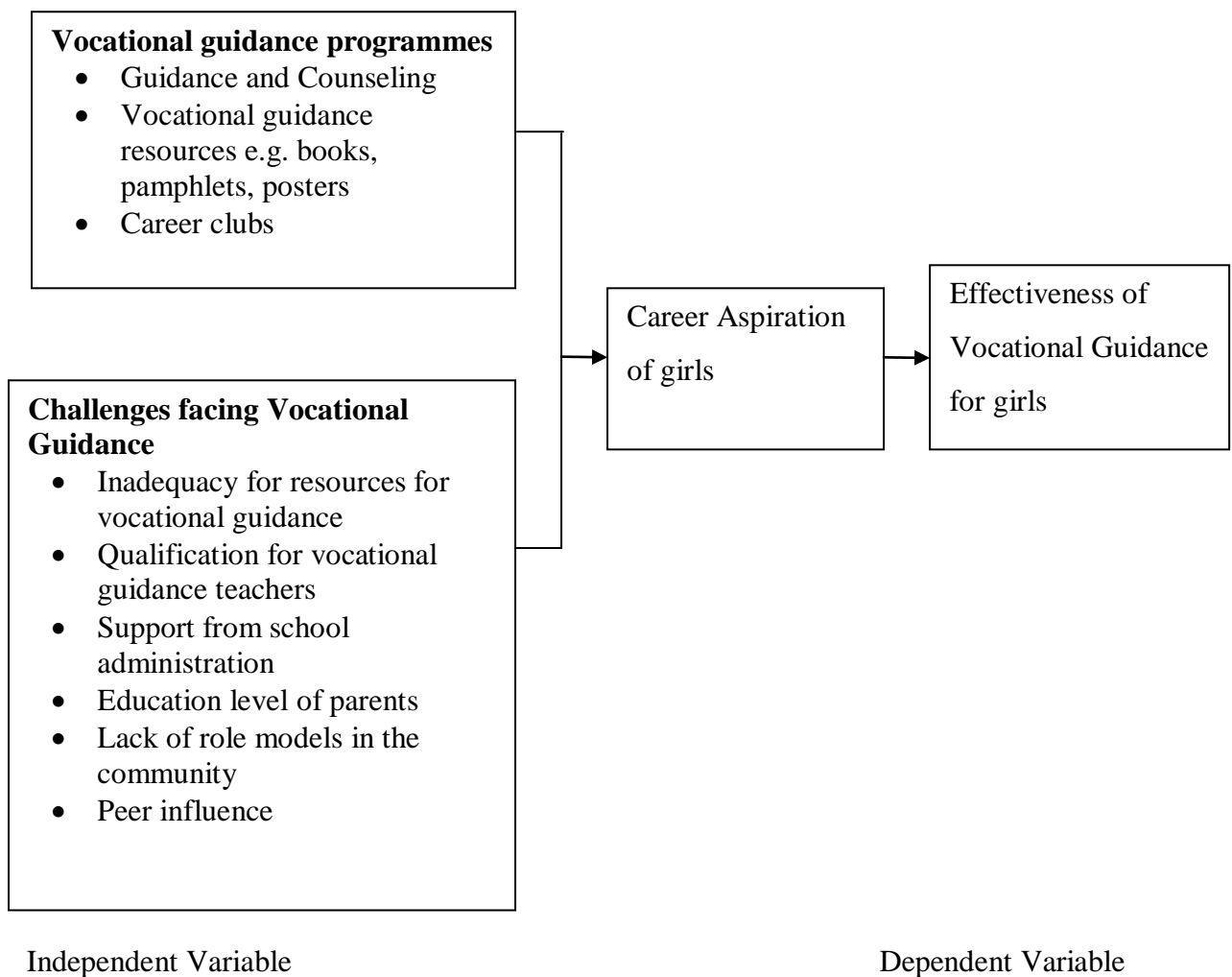
In this career development model, one's background (or contextual factors) and individual characteristics would influence one's learning experiences and, consequently, self-efficacy. Self-efficacy then would influence one's interests and outcome expectations, which eventually would influence one's career choice. Lent et al (1994) further asserted that objective and perceived aspects of the environment may have direct and moderating effects on career decision-making. Examples of objective environmental factors are the quality of educational experiences and the financial support available to individuals, whereas an example of perceived environmental factors is individuals' reaction to and interpretation of their surrounding environment (that is, whether they view their environment as a source of support or barriers).

The Social Cognitive Career Theory guided the researcher to find out the factors that affect career aspirations of girls in secondary schools. From the tenets of SCCT, the researcher expects that there are background factors and individual characteristics of girls that affect their career aspirations.

### 1.11 Conceptual Framework

The purpose of the study was to find out the factors affecting career aspirations of girls and emerging issues and challenges. Figure 1.1 presents the conceptual framework of the study.

**Figure 1.1 Conceptual Frameworks Showing the Effectiveness of Vocational Career Guidance for Girls in Secondary Schools**



Source: Researcher (2009)

The independent variables of the study included availability of vocational guidance teachers; qualifications of vocational guidance teachers; availability of resources for vocational guidance such as books, counseling office, and charts; and support of the school administration to vocational guidance teachers. These factors influence the career aspirations of girls, which is the dependent variable of the study. Career aspirations will be measured by the highest level of education aimed at and the career choice made by girls.

As shown in Figure 1.1, the study argued that career aspirations of girls can be influenced by a number of school-based factors and community-based factors. School-based factors include availability of vocational guidance programmes such as Guidance and Counseling, vocational guidance resources and career clubs. Qualification of career guidance teachers and the support offered by school administration can also influence career aspiration by influencing the career self-concept of the girls. Community-based factors that were expected to influence career aspirations of girls include the education level of parents and role models in the community. It was expected that girls whose parents have high levels of academic qualifications have higher aspirations than those whose parents have low levels of academic qualifications. It was also expected that girls who have role models with high level of academic qualifications would have higher career aspirations.

## 1.12 Operational Definition of Terms

**Career Aspiration:** Refers to the educational or job related ambition, goal, or target that one has set for him/herself in life.

**Career Decision-Making** is the process through which an individual selects a vocation to pursue in life.

**Career:** Refers an individual's course or progress through life (or a distinct portion of life). It usually is considered to pertain to remunerative work (and sometimes also formal education).

**Cluster:** A combination of four selected subjects required for one to pursue a given degree programme.

**Counseling** is the process by which one individual, the counsellor, assists another individual, the client, to face, understand, and accept information about himself and his interaction with others, so that he can make effective decisions about various life choices.

**Decision-Making** is an outcome of mental processes (cognitive process) leading to the selection of a course of action among several alternatives.

**Gender:** Refers to the social roles assigned to men and women. For example, who looks after the family in our cultures, who builds the house, who takes care of the family, and so on.

**Job opportunities:** refers to chances of getting jobs in the labour market after graduation.

**Vocational Guidance:** refers to the assistance offered to students by designated teachers or professionals in career choice and planning.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of literature related to the study on factors affecting career aspirations of girls in secondary schools. The chapter first presents literature on the benefits of female education, after which literature on factors affecting career aspirations of girls is given, focusing on economic factors, cultural factors, school and societal factors.

#### **2.2 Benefits of Female Education**

A wealth of research over the last few decades has established that the benefits of female education are substantial. Psacharopoulos (1985) reviewed research from 61 countries and concluded that the rate of return to the educational investment on women exceeds that of men, particularly in developing countries. According to the study, the average return for all levels of education combined was 15 percent for women as compared to 11 percent for men. Herz, Subbarao, Habbib and Raney (1991) also indicate that selection-corrected returns to schooling for women often exceed those for men, especially at secondary schools. In Thailand, for instance, the corrected return for secondary education is about 25% for women and 8% for men. In Peru, Herz et al (1991) indicate that the return to female education increase nationwide when corrected for the selection bias, and corrected returns are higher for women than men at both secondary and higher education. Herz et al (1991) further note that the social returns to female education are high and exceed the returns to male education: female education improves children's health, reduces the number of unwanted births and causes women to want smaller families. The potential for more

productive labour, better health and slower population growth all argue for more investment in female education.

Without education, it is difficult for women to exercise their other rights and meet their aspirations: adequate livelihoods, negotiating power in marriage, participation in political decision-making, and a fair chance in the modern economy for their children. According to the Population Council (2009), in addition to helping girls and women fulfil their aspirations as individuals, educating girls also has well documented benefits for the broader society. These include increased economic productivity, improvements in health, delayed age at marriage, lower fertility, increased political participation, and generally more effective investments in the next generation. While there are many other possible interventions to achieve these social goods, girls' education is the only one which impacts all of them simultaneously.

They indicate that in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, children whose mothers have received secondary schooling are twice as likely to be immunized against major disease as those whose mothers had not been to school. Bloom and Weston (2003) further indicate that educated mothers provide better nutrition to their children, and their knowledge of health risks protects their families against illness and promotes health-seeking behaviour more generally. As a consequence, child mortality rates are much higher in families where the mother lacks education than in families where both parents have attended school. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, children whose mothers have more than seven years of schooling have less than half the under-5 mortality rate of the children of uneducated mothers.

Investment in schooling for girls is particularly justified in that it brings so many benefits for the broader society. Most governments already have policies affirming

primary education, and some apparatus for delivering education exists in virtually all countries. Even in settings with low enrolment for both boys and girls, the argument for governments to focus resources on girls is compelling given the positive effect of girls' education on development. With relatively modest modifications in the content and quality of schooling, teachers and materials, a far higher percentage of girls could enroll in and complete primary school, or remain there long enough to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills (Population Council, 2009).

Educated mothers invest more in their children's schooling, thus improving both families' and societies' development prospects. They are also likely to have fewer children. For example, Bloom and Weston (2003) note that in Brazil, women with a secondary education have an average of 2.5 children, whereas illiterate women have an average of 6.5 children. Having fewer children allows families to invest more in the health and education of each child, thereby raising the productivity of future generations. These benefits of educating girls call for measures to improve their educational aspirations. The next section looks at the factors that affect girls' career aspirations.

### **2.3 Factors Affecting Girls' Career Aspirations**

Conditions that influence the improvement of girls' education have been discussed in a number of ways. With particular reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, Odaga and Heneveld (1995) discuss factors affecting female education under three categories: socio-economic and socio-cultural, factors related to the school environment, and political and institutional factors. Hyde (1989) summarizes conditions for improving women's education in Sub-Saharan Africa from four perspectives: family level, societal level, school level factors and factors influencing achievement. Njau and Wamahiu (1998) indicate that some of the critical factors in female dropout include

pregnancy, psychological cost of pregnancy, direct cost of schooling, societal perceptions, the labour market, opportunity costs, family poverty, irrelevant curriculum, insecurity, structural attributes and classroom culture. In the subsections below, the following factors that could affect girls' career aspirations are presented: socio-economic factors, cultural factors, school and societal factors.

### **2.3.1 Socio-economic Factors Affecting Girls' Career Aspirations**

According to Khallad (2000) socio-economic status of the family is among the factors that influence career aspirations. Mau and Bikos (2000) cited previous findings showing a positive association between a family's socio-economic status and aspirations. Youth from higher socio-economic statuses were more likely to be knowledgeable of and choose professional occupations (Sellers et al., 1999). In contrast, Brown and Barbosa (2001) found career aspirations of young females who came from low-income families were confined to experiences of their relatives and friends. Influential siblings are thought to play a key role in the career development of adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Ali, McWhirter, & Chronister, 2005).

Herr and Cramer (1996) indicated that socio-economic status affects information about work, work experience, and occupational stereotypes, which influences vocational interests. Studies show a positive association between high school students' aspirations and their family's socio-economic status, which is frequently related to parental education levels (Mau & Bikos, 2000; Signer & Saldana, 2001). Trusty (2002) indicated that a low socioeconomic status resulted in reduced and unrealized expectations. Additionally, socioeconomic status had a direct effect on unequal aspirations and expectations. Compared with middle and upper class

individuals, lower class individuals faced more obstacles that limited their career aspiration levels (Farmer, 1985). Regardless of socio-economic status, Stitt-Gohdes (1997) stressed that the career aspirations of all individuals are important in the career development process.

Girls dropping out of school have also been found to have links with socio-economic factors by several studies in Africa South of the Sahara. According to Odaga and Heneveld (1995) and Njau and Wamahiu (1998) the most important of these factors include direct and opportunity costs of schooling, limited employment opportunities, socio-economic status, parental/family investment behaviour, the economic value of girls, rural/ urban residence, and the level of parental education. Direct schooling costs have been found to be the major reason parents offer for not educating girls or for removing them from the school. Apart from tuition, such costs include fees for registration and admission, examinations, boarding, school building fund, parent and school association fees, book rental, the cost of uniforms, the provision of furniture, extra tutorials and transportation.

Graham-Browne (1991) and Nejema (1993) argue that poverty and the fiscal crises which force families to cover shortfalls have a devastating impact on households and the education system as far as girls' education is concerned. Kinyanjui (1993) links the severity of direct costs with the shift of educational costs to parents in the name of cost sharing. In Cameroon, Cammish and Brock (1994) found out that many secondary schools are private and charge fees. In general, several studies suggest that the direct costs or financial constraints hold back more girls than boys from schooling. The opportunity costs of girls' schooling are associated with resources/services lost due to sending the child to school. Child labour is indispensable to the survival of

many rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa: agricultural work, domestic work (cooking, collecting fuel, fetching water) as well as child care services are required from children, with girls demanded more than boys (Odaga and Heneveld, 1995). The prospects of low economic returns for girls reinforce dropout rates in Africa. Historically, formal education has been linked to employment, particularly in the civil service sector in this region. When families learn that women earn less than men or are excluded from the labour market due to economic policies, boys are sent to school and girls are kept at home. Sometimes legal or regulatory barriers to women's participation in the labour force or policies that restrict women's access to information and resources also help to perpetuate the tradition that girls stay home from school to do more domestic chores (Herz et al, 1991). Njau and Wamahiu (1998) note that the lack of economic alternatives in the labour market even when girls complete schooling, is not only a factor influencing female students to drop out, but also one of the reasons for pregnancy. Many girls, they say, perceive marriage as an escape from family poverty, and mistakenly believe that pregnancy will help them to "hook" husbands.

### **2.3.2 Cultural Factors Affecting Girls' Career Aspirations**

Cultural factors have an impact on career aspirations not only for girls but for boys alike. Socio-cultural beliefs, customs, practices, girls' expectations and other traditions play a significant role in decisions by parents to withdraw girls from school and girls' own career aspirations. According to Sen (1985), schooling does not necessarily offer the same direct economic pay-off for women as it does for men, partly because of cultural and family expectations that domestic and reproductive work will be undertaken by women. Cultural patterns that take girls out of the house

at marriage while tying sons to extended households may weaken parental investment in daughters.

Early marriages represent one cultural factor that hinders girls from advancing in education. Agyepong (2001) indicates that in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, some girls (some as young as ten years old) are betrothed in marriage and taken out of school to ensure their “protection” and to prepare them for the event. This practice is usually common in Muslim communities. Others leave their families to live with the family of the betrothed until they are of a marriageable age. There are only few instances when such girls get the opportunity to further their education. Stromquist (1989) cites a study from Kenya that found that girls were made to repeat grades in school so that they were educated enough to find a husband. In such instances, the education of girls is seen as worthy of consideration only up to a marriageable level. There have also been references to dropouts in Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon, Sierra-Leone and Ghana that indicate that female students withdrew from school when they discovered that education was conflicting with marriage (Agyepong, 2001).

Circumcision, or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), is another cultural factor that negatively impacts on girls’ career aspirations. Circumcised girls not only perceive themselves as adults, but also become negative influences on their uncircumcised peers. They may become rude to teachers. They often reject schools as institutions for “children”. Frequent absenteeism and reduced performance leads them to drop out from schools and eventually to marry (Gicharu, 1993). Together with the payment of bride price and early marriage, FGM functions to enhance the social status of teenagers and acts as a mechanism for curbing female sexuality and premarital pregnancy. Due to emphasis placed on female virginity before marriage, these

practices were perceived to increase economic returns to the family through bride wealth (Njau and Wamahiu, 1998).

Teenage pregnancies and the incidence of female dropout are closely related throughout Africa (Njau and Wamahiu, 1998). Usually unwanted, these pregnancies end the schooling of girls both through self-withdrawal and national pregnancy policies that ensures the expulsion of girls from the education system with little or no chance of re-entry. Njau and Wamahiu (1998) argue that it is the societal responses to pregnancy rather than pregnancy per se that push girls out of school and hamper their opportunities for educational and career development. They note that in most African countries, school policies and practices are based on the mistaken assumption that the problem of premarital pregnancy is caused by the pregnant schoolgirls themselves, and to a lesser extent, by their parents. The tendency has been to portray the pregnant girls as easily susceptible to becoming pregnant while still in school and eventually dropping out.

Odaga and Heneveld (1995) indicate that fear of pregnancy is another factor for parents to remove their children from schools. They refer to a study in Cameroon where Christian parents were found to marry off their daughters at puberty even if they have not finished primary school for fear of pregnancy. The health implications of teenage pregnancy are another reason for early dropouts. A study by Youri (1993) showed that secondary schoolgirls who had been pregnant were twice likely to report poor health than those with no pregnancy history.

### **2.3.3 School-Related Factors Affecting Girls' Career Aspirations**

There are a number of school factors that could affect career aspirations of girls. According to Karki (2004), failing grades or grade repetition are school factors associated with dropout in the literature on dropout in the United States. When students persistently fail examinations and are forced to repeat a grade, they may finally drop out of school. While the student often does contribute to the failure, school policies determine whether grade retention policies are used. A study carried out in the U.S. (NCES, 1988/89) found that almost one fifth of the school dropouts had been held back a grade, and almost half had failed a course.

Failing grades and poor performance are consistently associated with dropout; Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) estimated that among school factors, being held back is the single strongest predictor, accounting for approximately two thirds of the differences in mean school dropout rates for U.S. high school students. Research has also suggested that retention increases the odds of dropping out by 40% to 50%, and being held back a second time doubles the risk (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Thus, the policy of retaining students based on their test performances is thought to have produced lower achievement for these students, lower self-esteem, and higher dropout rates (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Class size and teacher quality can influence career aspirations through their effect on student achievement. Using data from more than 2.4 million students in the United States, Ferguson (1991) found significant relationships between teacher quality, class size, and student achievement. For grades 1 through 7, using student/teacher ratio as a measure of class size, Ferguson found that student achievement fell as the student/teacher ratio increased for every student above an 18 to 1 ratio. She found

even more profound impact when teacher quality (that is, teacher literacy skills and professional experience) were taken into account.

Heyneman and Loxley (1986) concluded that the quality of schools and teachers does affect student outcomes in developing countries. Fuller (1986) argued that, within industrialized countries, the effect of school quality is eclipsed by the child's family background but that, in developing countries, school quality can be a major determinant of educational achievement because the majority of families are below the poverty line and are mostly illiterate. Hence, their familial support for children's learning at home is minimal, which forces students to rely on school factors – classrooms, teachers, and textbooks - for learning achievements.

Some studies have found that poor school condition increases the probability of dropping out. Nielsen (1998), in Zambia, using school roofing as a predictor of school quality, found some impact of school quality on student attendance. That study found that poor school condition in some cases increases the probability of a student's dropping out and working by as much as 15%.

#### **2.3.4 Individual Factors**

There are a number of individual factors that could influence career aspirations, one of which is gender. Gender is often linked to certain stereotyped career roles (Crowley-Long, 2003; Lengermann & Wallace, 2005). Since the gender equity legislation and public awareness of the problem, much has been done to attempt to eradicate these inequalities (Crowley-Long, 2003). Another personal factor is ethnicity, whereby some research indicates that ethnicity is a major variable in the selection of a career and in the self-concept that produces success in school and in the work world (Roe, 2006). Ethnicity was linked with social position and class in the

past, but gradually over the years, with civil rights and support from affirmation action programs, changes may have been made (Norman, 1995).

A person's personality is another individual factor that can influence career aspirations. One of the primary approaches is Maslow's (1954) theory that human needs could be described as a hierarchy of low-order to high-order. According to Maslow, people must fulfill lower-order needs before they can strive to fulfill higher-order needs. Roe (2006) used Maslow's conceptualizations to suggest that vocational behavior is the individual's attempt to fulfill certain needs. That particular level of need, for which gratification is sought, in part determines the nature of the behaviors used. Roe (2006) emphasizes the importance of using the child-rearing practices to which the individual has been exposed, to help explain the individual's vocational behaviors. She describes three general types of practices as given below.

The first practice is emotional concentration on the child which might include overprotection and over-demand on the child. Children raised under these conditions tend to have their lower-order needs met such as safety, but not their higher-order needs such as belonging and self-esteem. Therefore, the prediction would be that they would seek this fulfillment through their occupation (Roe, 2006).

The second type of Roe's (2006) practices is avoidance of the child where neither the physiological nor emotional needs were fulfilled. Therefore, individuals seek 'things' and limit contact with other people in their occupation. The third practice is acceptance of the child in a democratic family unit where most needs are met. The prediction would be that the individual would seek fulfillment of the highest needs in an occupation (Roe, 2006).

## **2.4 Challenges Experienced in Career Guidance**

To improve career guidance for girls, policy makers must address challenges in compulsory schooling, in upper secondary schooling, in tertiary education, and for young people at risk (Sultana, 2004). There are challenges in meeting gaps in access, and in improving the nature, level and quality of services. In schools, the principal challenges are: to provide sufficient human and capital resources of the right type, both within the school and within its surrounding community; to ensure that these resources are dedicated to career guidance; and to make the best use of the resources that are available (Swanson & Parcover, 2008).

One of the major challenges associated with career counseling is encouraging participants to engage with it (Galassi, Crace, Martin, James & Wallace, 1992). For example in the UK 70% of people under 14 say they have had no careers advice while 45% of people over 14 have had no or very poor/limited advice (Jackson, 2003). Another issue is the spread of careers advice opportunities. For example, 40% of doctors in training found it difficult to get appropriate careers advice (Jackson, 2003). In a related issue some client groups tend to reject the interventions made by professional career counselors preferring to rely on the advice of peers or superiors within their own profession. Jackson et al. found that 44% of doctors in training felt that senior members of their own profession were best placed to give careers advice (Kim, Li & Lian, 2002). Furthermore it is recognised that the giving of career advice is something that is widely spread through a range of formal and informal roles. In addition to career counselors it is also common for teachers, managers, trainers and HR specialists to give formal support in career choices. Similarly it is also common for people to seek informal support from friends and family around their career choices and to bypass career professionals altogether. Today increasingly people rely

on career web portals to seek advice on resume writing and handling interviews; as also to research on various professions and companies. It has even become possible to take vocational assessments online (Sultana, 2004).

## **2.5 Summary**

The literature reviewed above has shown that there are many benefits of educating girls. The Kenya Government has promoted this by introducing Free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Secondary Education (FSE) programmes in 2003 and 2007 respectively. However, even with these programmes, there is need to address the factors that could affect girls' career aspirations. This is because, as the literature reveals, girls have been reported to have lower career aspirations than boys. Emerging from the literature review also is that the factors affecting career aspirations of girls can be classified into socio-economic, cultural and school based factors. It is however not clear which of the factors account for the highest effects on career aspirations of secondary school girls in Kenya. The reviewed studies have focussed on educational access and retention of girls. The current study, therefore, intended to determine the factors that affect career aspirations of secondary school girls in Thika West District. This is important given the fact that no study known to the researcher has been done in Thika West District.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology to be used in the study. The chapter highlights the following; research design, study locale, target population, study sample, sampling procedures, research instruments, validity and reliability, data collection and data analysis.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study used the descriptive survey design to investigate factors that affect career aspirations of secondary school students. The descriptive survey design was suited to the study because the researcher collected data on the situation as it exists on the ground without manipulating variables. Descriptive survey designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information. The researcher summarizes, presents and interprets information for the purpose of clarification (Borg and Gall, 1989). Descriptive survey research was intended to produce statistical information about aspect of education that interest policy makers and educators.

#### **3.3 Study Locale**

The study was carried out in Thika West District one of districts that make up Central Province. Singleton (1993) noted that the ideal setting for any study should be easily accessible to the researcher and should be that which permits instant rapport with the informants. Thika West District was chosen because it was easily accessible to the researcher. No research has been carried out on career aspirations of girls in Thika West District. Another reason for choice of Thika west district was that the girls in the

district have a problem in choosing careers, and do not seek guidance from dean of studies as evidenced by Kibui (2005).

### **3.4 Target Population**

The target population is defined as the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects the researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research (Borg and Gall, 1989).

#### **3.4.1 Schools' Target Population**

The target population for this study comprised of 11 schools in Thika West District. One is a national girl's school, one is a provincial girl's school, one is a district girl's school, five are district mixed girls schools, two are private girls and one is a private mixed gender school. The respondents were students (girls), school principals, career masters and teacher counsellors.

#### **3.4.2 Subject Target Population**

The study comprised of 2,254 girls, 11 principals, 11 career teachers and 11 teacher-counsellors.

### **3.5 Sampling Design**

Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Any statements made about the sample should also be true of the population (Orodho, 2002).

#### **3.5.1 Sample Size (Schools)**

The study sample was selected from all the 11 girls and mixed-gender secondary schools in Thika West District. From the eleven schools, eight secondary were selected to participate in the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select

participating schools; each strata representing girls' only and mixed gender schools from the national, provincial, district and private schools categories.

### 3.5.2 Sample Size (Subjects)

Simple random sampling was used to select 255 girls from girls' only schools and 85 girls from mixed gender schools giving a sample of 340 girls. This was done by picking every fifth girl from the class register until a sample of 340 girls was obtained. This sample represented 12.7% of all the 2254 girls in the target population. This is in line with Gay's (1992) recommendation that a minimum sample of 10% of the target population is adequate for educational research. Table 3.1 presents the sampling matrix.

**Table 3.1: Sampling Matrix**

Type of school	No. of schools	No. girls	Sample size	
			schools	Girls
National girls	1	560	1	40
Provincial girls	1	563	1	40
District girls	1	360	1	40
District mixed	5	605	3	120
Private mixed	1	100	1	40
Private girls	2	336	1	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2,524</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>320</b>

The study sample also comprised of 8 Principals, 8 Teacher-counsellors and 8 Career-teachers selected from the sample schools.

### **3.5.3 Sampling Procedure**

Purposive sampling was used to select schools from the National, Provincial, District Girls, Private girls and Private Mixed categories. This is because there is only one of each of these categories. Simple random sampling was used to select three schools out of the five district mixed schools.

From each of the eight secondary schools, stratified random sampling was used to select 40 girls, 10 each from Forms one to four. All the principals, teacher-Counsellors and career masters of the eight sample schools were included in the sample. As such, the study sample comprised of 320 secondary school girls, 8 principals, 8 teacher-counsellors and 8 career masters from 8 secondary schools in Thika West District

## **3.6 Research Instruments**

The study employed three research instruments, which included a questionnaire for students, an interview schedule for principals, and an interview schedule for career masters and teacher-counsellors. Details about each instrument are provided below.

### **3.6.1 Career Aspirations Questionnaire for Girls**

Career Aspirations Questionnaire for girls was used to collect information from girls on their career aspirations and factors influencing their aspirations. The questionnaire had items covering background information of the girls, their career aspirations, school-based factors influencing their aspirations, home based factors and personal factors affecting their career aspirations. Best & Khan (1992) noted that questionnaires enable the person administering them to explain the purpose of the study and the meaning of items that may not be clear. Questionnaires have been used successfully in the past on related studies by Kibui (2005) and Kibera (1993).

### **3.6.2 Career Aspirations Interview Schedule for Principals**

The career aspirations interview schedule for principals was used to conduct face-to-face interviews with principals on the factors affecting career aspirations of girls in their schools. The interview schedule comprised of items related to school factors, home based factors and personal factors affecting career aspirations of girls. The interview schedule also had items to determine the role that the principals play in promoting career aspirations of girls. Interview schedules are considered important when the sample respondents are few because interviewing allows the researcher to probe the respondent further, thereby obtaining more in-depth information about a phenomenon than would be possible using questionnaires (Best & Khan, 1992)

### **3.6.3 Career Aspirations Interview Schedule for Career Masters and Teacher-Counsellors**

The career aspirations interview schedule for career masters and teacher-counsellors was used to conduct face-to-face interviews with career masters and teacher-counsellors on the factors affecting career aspirations of girls in their schools. This interview schedule guided interviews on school factors, home based factors and personal factors affecting career aspirations of girls. The interview schedule also had items to determine the role that the career masters and teacher-counsellors play in promoting career aspirations of girls.

## **3.7 Instrument Reliability**

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trial. It is necessary that the research instruments are piloted as a way of finalizing them (Wiersma, 1985). This is vital as it enables the reliability of the instruments to be determined.

Reliability is synonymous with repeatability or stability. A measurement that yields consistent results over time is said to be reliable (Wiersma, 1985). When a measurement is prone to random error, it lacks reliability. The study used the split-half method of reliability testing. The research instruments were piloted in order to assess their reliability. Three secondary schools within Thika West District were selected for piloting the instruments. Split-Half technique of reliability testing was employed, whereby the pilot questionnaires were divided into two equivalent halves and then a correlation coefficient for the two halves computed using the formula below.

$$(i) \quad r = 1 - \frac{6\sum (D)^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Where:

r = Correlation coefficient

N = Sample,

$\sum$  = Summation of scores,

D = Deviation

$$(ii) \quad SH = \frac{2r}{1 + r} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{(Where Items are doubled)} \\ \text{(Spearman Brown Prophecy)} \end{array}$$

A reliability coefficient of 0.7 or above was accepted as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999).

### **3.8 Instrument Validity**

Validity is defined as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). In other words, validity is the

degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represents the phenomena under study. Validity according to Borg and Gall (1989) is the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure.

According to Borg and Gall (1989), validity of an instrument is improved through expert judgment. As such, the researcher sought the assistance of research experts, experienced graduates, lecturers and experienced supervisors in order to help improve validity of the instrument.

### **3.9 Piloting**

Prior to visiting the schools for data collection, the researcher pre-tested the questionnaires using three schools from Thika West District, but which were not included in the sampled schools. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the validity and reliability of the instrument, help identify any items in the questionnaire that were ambiguous or unclear to the respondents and change them effectively, and enable the researcher to be familiar with administration of the instrument.

### **3.10 Data Collection Procedure**

After clearance from the supervisors, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies, Kenyatta University. After this, a research permit was obtained from the Ministry of Education, (MoE). Thereafter, the office of the District Education Officer (DEO) for Thika West District was contacted before the start of the study. The researcher then visited the sample school and introduced herself and the research to the principal/deputy principal. Appointments were booked on the appropriate date to conduct data collection. On the appointed date, the schools were visited and the questionnaire administered to the respondents. The researcher personally administered

the questionnaires to participants of the study. The respondents were assured that strict confidentiality will be maintained in dealing with the responses. The researcher was available throughout to offer assistance to the respondents and make any necessary clarifications. The researcher booked appointments with the principals, teacher-counsellors and career masters on an appropriate time when face-to-face interviews will be conducted. The data collection process took a period of two weeks.

### **3.11 Data Analysis Plan**

This research yielded data that requires both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis entails analyzing numbers about a situation by choosing specific aspects of that situation. Qualitative analysis entails analyzing information in words or pictures by collecting data, recording peoples' experiences not selecting any pre-chosen aspect. The qualitative data obtained in this study was analyzed by organizing it into similar themes and tallying the number of similar responses.

Descriptive statistics including percentages and frequency counts were used to analyze the quantitative data obtained. Bell (1993) maintains that when making the results known to a variety of readers, simple descriptive statistics such as percentages have a considerable advantage over more complex statistics. Borg and Gall (1989) also hold that the most widely used and understood standard proportion is the percentage. Quantitative data analysis required use of a computer programme, whereby the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. As Martin and Acuna (2002) observe, SPSS is able to handle large amount of data, and given its wide spectrum of statistical procedures purposefully designed for social sciences, it is quite efficient. The analysis results were presented in summary form using tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents data analysis and discussion of the study findings. The purpose of the study was to find out the factors affecting career aspirations of girls and emerging issues and challenges in Thika West District. The findings of the research are presented based on the five research questions:

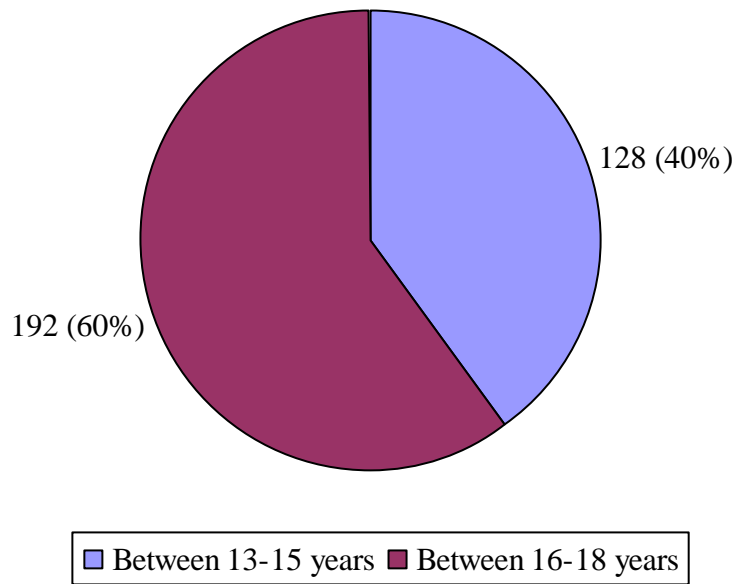
1. Which are the vocational guidance programmes available in schools for assisting girls in career choice?
2. What are the career aspirations of secondary school girls in Thika West District?
3. What is the influence of vocational guidance on career aspirations of girls?
4. Which other challenges influence career aspirations of secondary school girls?
5. In which ways can career aspirations of girls in secondary schools be enhanced in order to increase the number of girls pursuing higher education?

The background data of the respondents is given first, followed by the analysis and discussion of each of the five research questions.

#### **4.2 Background Data of The Respondents**

The study targeted 2,254 girls, 11 principals, 11 career teachers and 11 teacher-counsellors. However, the study participants comprised 8 Principals, 8 Teacher-counsellors/Career-teachers as well as 320 students from 8 schools in Thika West District, giving a 100% return rate of questionnaires. All the students who took part in the study were girls from national, provincial and district boarding girls' schools in Thika West District. The students who participated in the study were chosen equally

from forms 1-4, meaning that 80 students were picked from each form, 10 from each school which participated in the study. Figure 4.1 shows the students' ages in years.



**Figure 4.1: Age in years**

Figure 4.1 shows that 192 (60%) of the students were aged 16-18 while 128 (40%) of them were aged 13-15 years. This is consistent with the age of students in secondary school according to the Ministry of Education requirements.

### **4.3 Vocational Guidance Programmes Available in Secondary Schools for Assisting Girls in Career Choice**

The first research question sought to find out the vocational guidance programmes available in schools for assisting girls in career choice. To establish this, the respondents were given a series of questions whose responses are discussed as follows.

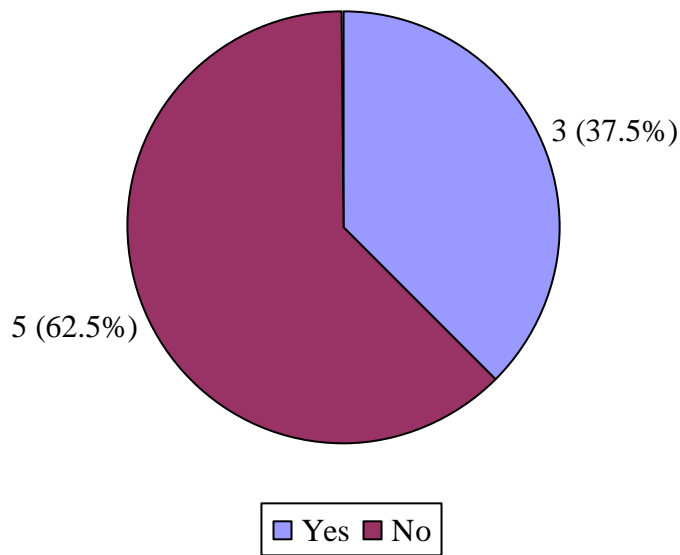
The students were given a list of vocational guidance programmes and they were required to tick against the choices that were available in their schools. Their responses are shown in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Vocational guidance programmes**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Guidance and counseling	310	96.9
Inviting guests to speak on careers	300	93.7
Career guidance materials eg. Books, magazines, fliers etc	218	68.1
Careers day	176	55.0
Career club	150	46.9

Table 4.1 shows that the most common vocational guidance programmes offered in the schools as reported by over 90% of the students were guidance and counseling as well as inviting guests to speak on careers.. The least offered programme as reported by 46.9% of the students was careers club.

The career masters/teacher counselors were asked whether their schools had career clubs, to which they replied as shown in figure 4.2.

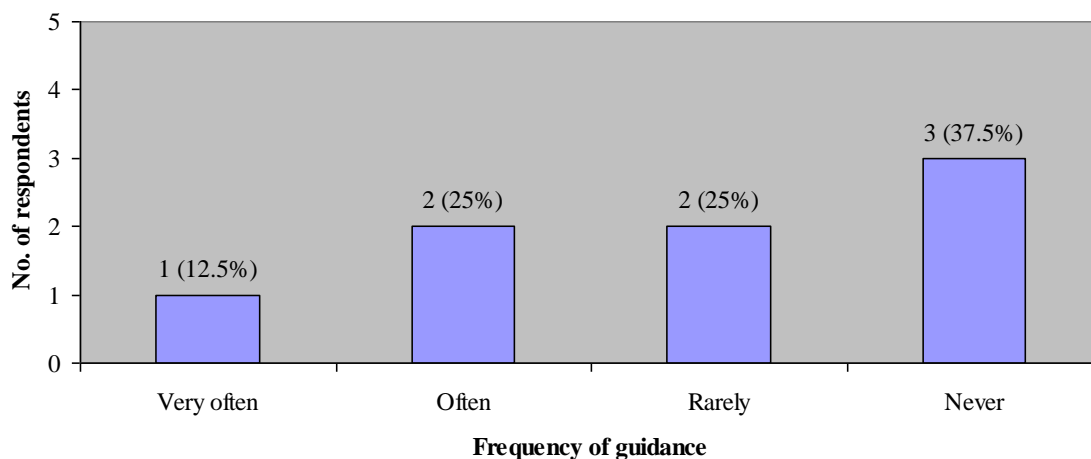


**Figure 4.2: Availability of career clubs**

Figure 4.2 shows that 5 (62.5%) of the career teachers reported that their schools did not have career clubs while 3 (37.5%) of them indicated that their schools had career clubs.

Further the career teachers were asked whether they invited career speakers to their schools to guide girls in their careers. To this question, 6 (75%) of the career teachers indicated that they invited career speakers while 2 (25%) indicated that they did not.

The career teachers were also asked the frequency with which students were given career guidance. They responded as shown in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.3: Frequency of guidance**

Figure 4.3 shows that 37.5% of the career teachers indicated that their schools never offered career guidance, 25% indicated that their schools rarely offered guidance, another 25% indicated that their schools often offered guidance on careers to students while 12.5% said they very often offered career guidance to students.

#### **4.4 Career Aspirations of Secondary School Girls in Thika West District**

The second research question sought to find out the career aspirations of secondary school girls in Thika West District. In order to establish this, the respondents were given a series of questions whose answers gave the career aspirations of girls in secondary schools in Thika West District. The responses to the questions are presented as follows.

The students were asked what they would like to do after completing their form four level of education. They responded as shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Things to do after completion of form four**

	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Pursue further education (go to college or university)	312	97.5
Find any kind of employment immediately	8	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.2 shows that the majority (97.5%) of the students indicated that they would pursue further education after completing form four while only 2.5% of them indicated that they would find some kind of employment immediately. This is an indication that the students did not want to stop learning after completing form four.

Career aspirations of girls are affected by vocational guidance given in schools. Efficient educational and vocational guidance services are more and more necessary to guide young students and professionals to the choice of suitable learning paths. In the contemporary society, many young people have to face the problem of the career choice: this can often lead to wrong decisions, with negative consequences for the single individual as well as for society, either from an economic and a social point of view. The career choice of an individual is obviously related to the development of professional skills belonging to a specific didactic area and for this reason students must select at first a learning subject (Ricci and Boccardi, 2010).

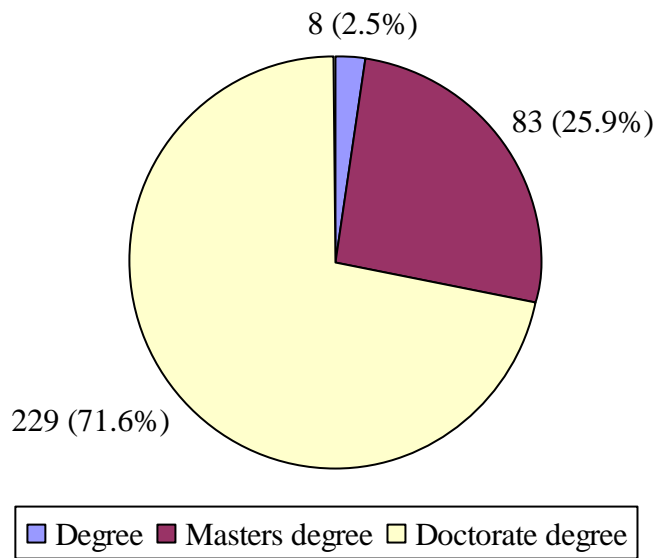
The students were further asked what their parents would want them to do after completing their form four. Their responses are as shown in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Preferences of parents on what students should do after completing form four**

	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Join the family business	8	2.5
Go to university	288	90.0
Go to college for further training	24	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.3 shows that majority (90%) of the students reported that their parents wanted them to go to university after completing form four. On the other hand, 7.5% indicated that their parents wanted them to go to college for further training while only 2.5% indicated that their parents wanted them to join the family business after finishing form four. This is an implication that parents were keen on their children's education and wanted them to pursue higher education.

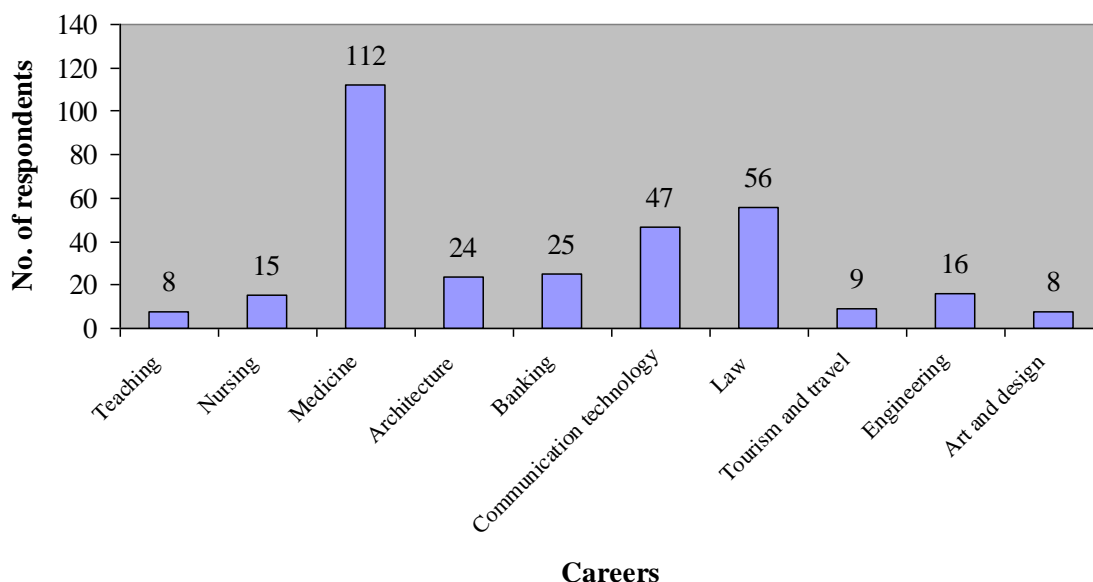
The students were asked the highest level of education they would like to attain if admitted to university. They responded as shown in Figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: Highest aspired level of education at university**

Figure 4.4 shows that the majority of the students (229%) indicated that they would like to pursue education to doctoral level, 25.9% indicated they would like to reach masters degree level while 2.5% reported they would like to reach degree level.

The students were further asked what their parents would like them to do most after their KCSE. The students were asked the field of study they would want to pursue. Their responses are shown in Figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5: Field of study**

Figure 4.5 shows that 112 (35%) of the students indicated that they would like to pursue medicine, followed by 56 of them, who indicated they would like to pursue law. On the other hand, the careers that students would least like to pursue were teaching and art and design. Further, 250 (78.1%) of the students indicated that they would like to be employed in a formal setting while 70 (21.9%) indicated that they would like to be self employed.

The career masters/teacher counselors were asked their opinion concerning career aspirations of students in their schools. Their responses are shown in table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Career aspirations**

	frequency	%
Medicine	6	75.0
Teaching	2	25.0
Law	5	62.5
Business studies	7	87.5
Information technology	4	50.0
Media industry	3	37.5

Table 4.4 shows that most 7 (87.5%) of the career masters reported that students would like to pursue business studies after high school while 6 (75%) of them indicated that student would like to pursue medicine. On the other hand, only 2 (25%) of them reported that students would like to pursue teaching as a career. These findings are in agreement with students' opinions in Figure 4.5, in which very few students indicated that they would like to pursue teaching. The teachers also reported that almost all the students would like formal employment apart from very few of them who would like to be self employed. The teachers and students' perceptions about career aspirations agree, since the teachers also reported that students would be more likely to pursue medicine than teaching. This is an indication that students have a negative perception on the teaching profession.

Upon being asked how the school assists girls in career selection, the principals answered as shown in table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Schools' ways of helping in students' career choice**

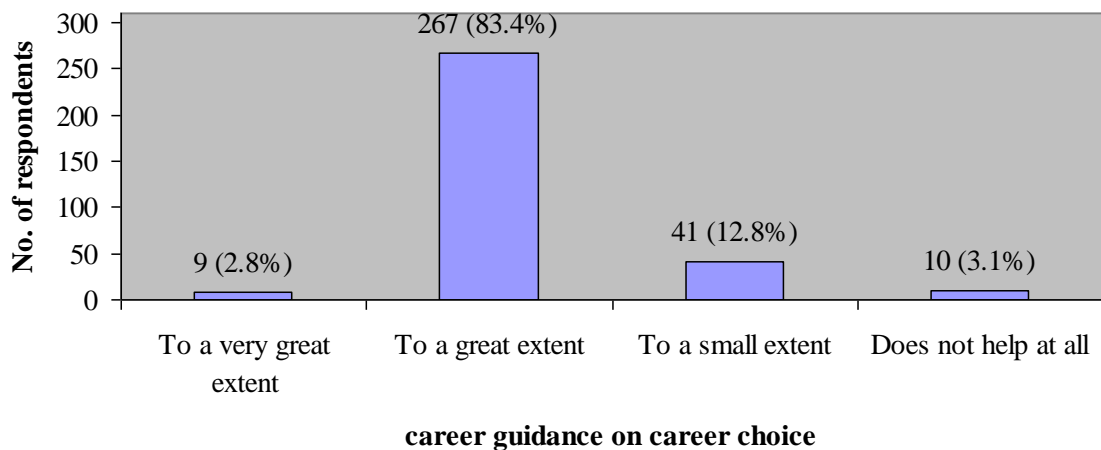
	frequency	%
Inviting motivational speakers	7	87.5
Having talent days	2	25.0
Inviting people from different job groups to speak to students	4	50.0
Having career days	3	37.5
Having career teachers	5	62.5

Table 4.5 shows that majority 87.5% of the principals indicated that to support their girls in career selection, they invited motivational speakers to speak to the girls in their schools. Another 62.5% of them also indicated that they had career teachers to guide students on career choice. Very few of the principals indicated that they had talent days to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses.

#### 4.5 Influence of Vocational Guidance on Career Aspirations of Girls

The third research question sought to find out the influence of vocational guidance on career aspirations of girls. To establish this, the respondents were asked some questions whose responses are discussed below.

The students were asked the extent to which vocational guidance helped them in choosing their careers. Their responses are shown in Figure 4.6.



**Figure 4.6: Extent of career guidance helping career choice**

Figure 4.6 shows that 83.4% of the students indicated that career guidance helped them to make career choices to a great extent while 12.8% reported it helped them to a small extent. The rest of the students responded as shown in the figure.

The career teachers were also asked whether vocational guidance helped students in choosing careers. All of them indicated that it did. Further, the teachers reported that career guidance helped in career choice in that: it made students more informed about careers, helped students stay focused on their career paths, directed students to know which subjects to focus on in order to realize their career aspirations and also helped students to know the careers that they could choose from, and not concentrate on the common careers only.

Upon being asked the influence of vocational guidance on career aspirations of girls, all the principals responded that vocational guidance had a positive influence on career aspirations of girls, and that all girls should be given the help they needed in realizing their dreams.

#### **4.6 Challenges Influencing Career Aspirations of Secondary School Girls**

The fourth research objective sought to find out the challenges influencing career aspirations of girls. The respondents were asked some questions whose responses would establish these challenges as discussed below. The challenges were classified into socio-economic challenges, cultural factors, school-related factors and individual factors.

According to the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), one's background (or contextual factors) and individual characteristics influence one's learning experiences and, consequently, self-efficacy. Self-efficacy then influences one's interests and outcome expectations, which eventually influence one's career aspirations. Factors such as parental level education, home environment factors, girls' motivation to learn, discipline and academic performance could have an impact on their career aspirations.

The students were required to rate socio-economic factors influencing career aspirations on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very much to not at all. Their responses are shown in table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Socio-economic factors influencing career aspirations**

Statements	VM		M		AL		NAT	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Level of education attained by parents/guardians	32	10.0	39	12.2	91	28.4	158	49.4
Occupation of your parents/guardians	49	15.3	39	12.2	82	25.6	150	46.9
Age of your parents/guardians	25	7.8	15	4.7	49	15.3	231	72.2
Ability of your parents/guardians to pay your college fees	202	63.1	41	12.8	65	20.3	12	3.8
Location of your home (rural/urban)	48	15.0	8	2.5	87	27.2	177	55.3

**Key: VM** (Very Much), **M** (Much), **AL** (A Little), **NAT** (Not At All)

Table 4.6 shows that 49.4% of the students indicated that the level of education attained by parents/guardians did not influence girls' career aspirations. It was indicated by 72.2% of the students that the age of their guardians/parents did not influence their career aspirations, same as 55.3% of the students who indicated that the location of their homes did not influence their career aspirations. On the other hand, 63.1% of the students indicated that the ability of their parents to pay college fees influenced their career aspirations. This is an implication that socio-economic factors did not have much influence on girls' career aspirations; except parents' economic status which was reported to have a major influence.

The career masters/teacher counselors as well as the principals were asked to give the socio-economic factors influencing students' career aspirations. Their responses they gave include: parents' ambitions and expectations influence from key individuals, economic status of parents, social class of parents, peer influence and social contacts.

According to Khallad (2000) socio-economic status of the family is among the factors that influence career aspirations. Mau and Bikos (2000) cited previous findings showing a positive association between a family's socio-economic status and aspirations. Youth from higher socio-economic statuses were more likely to be knowledgeable of and choose professional occupations (Sellers et al., 1999). In contrast, Brown and Barbosa (2001) found career aspirations of young females who came from low-income families were confined to experiences of their relatives and friends. Influential siblings are thought to play a key role in the career development of adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Ali, McWhirter, & Chronister, 2005).

The students were given a table containing cultural factors influencing career aspirations of secondary school girls. They were required to rate the factors on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very much to not at all. Their responses are shown in Table 4.7

**Table 4.7: Cultural factors influencing career aspirations of girls**

Statements	VM		M		AL		NAT	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Cultural practices (eg. FGM)	72	22.5	16	5.0	40	12.5	192	60.0
Early marriages	104	32.5	16	5.0	24	7.5	176	55.0
Pre-marital/teenage pregnancies	104	32.5	32	10.0	25	7.5	159	49.7
Expectations of society for girls to be housewives	97	30.3	16	5.0	72	22.5	135	42.2
Child labour	95	29.7	25	7.8	32	10.0	168	52.5
Lack of role models	80	25.0	42	13.1	71	22.2	127	39.7

**Key:** VM (Very Much), M (Much), AL (A Little), NAT (Not At All)

Table 4.7 shows that the cultural factors influencing career aspiration of girls very much were early marriages (32.5%), pre-marital/teenage pregnancies (32.5%) and expectations for girls to be housewives (30.3%). On the other hand the factors that were reported not to influence girls' career aspirations were: cultural practices e.g FGM (60.0%) and child labour (52.5%). This is an implication that to some extent, cultural factors influenced girls' career aspirations.

The career masters and school principals were also asked to state cultural factors influencing girls' career aspirations. Their responses were: society's preference for the boy child over the girl child, reinforcing negative stereotypes about girls' abilities, forced marriages, level of prestige attached to a job and perceptions of barriers, since girls are more wary of rejection than boys so they would be least likely to pursue a career if they perceived obstacles

The students were required to rate school-related factors influencing career aspirations on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very much to not at all. Their responses are shown in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8: School-related factors influencing career aspirations of girls**

Statements	VM		M		AL		NAT	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Career guidance availability	164	51.3	31	9.7	32	10.0	93	29.1
Subjects offered in school	146	45.6	57	17.8	48	15.0	69	21.6
Performance of students in science subjects	145	45.3	48	15.0	112	35.0	15	4.7
Motivation by teachers/parents/guardians	179	55.9	64	20.0	24	7.5	53	16.6
Availability of resources eg labs	106	33.1	80	25.0	49	15.3	85	26.6
Being forced by teachers to do certain subjects	104	32.5	24	7.5	41	12.8	151	47.2

**Key: VM** (Very Much), **M** (Much), **AL** (A Little), **NAT** (Not At All)

Table 4.8 shows that slightly more than 50% of the students indicated that the individual factors that influenced their career aspirations very much were interest in education (65.9%), discipline (60.6%) and academic performance (55.6%). On the other hand, 30% of the students indicated that academic performance had a little influence on career aspirations while 64.7% indicated that lack of sanitary towels had no influence on their career aspirations. This is an implication that individual factors influenced girls' career aspirations.

The school principals and career masters were asked to state the school-related factors influencing girls' career aspirations. Their responses are shown in table 4.9

**Table 4.9 School-related factors influencing girls' career aspirations**

Statement	Principals		Career teachers	
	f	%	f	%
Early school experiences like bullying may make girls withdrawn and lack high ambitions.	4	50.0	5	62.5
Students' level of education influences career aspirations since those students who pursue education to high levels tend to have higher career aspirations compared to those who attain low levels of education	7	87.5	6	75.0
Having very large classes reduces the teacher-student connection needed for students to perform well in class, which eventually determines their career aspirations	4	50.0	5	62.5
Students who perform well in class tend to have higher career aspirations than those who perform poorly, so class performance influences career aspirations	6	75.0	7	87.5
Class repetition affects career aspirations since students who keep repeating classes lose their morale with education and end up performing poorly in their studies. Some even end up dropping out of school.	5	62.5	6	75.0

As shown in table 4.9, more than 70% of the principals agreed with the statements that students' level of education influences career aspirations of girls and that students who perform well in class tend to have higher career aspirations than those who perform poorly. On the other hand, more than 70% of the career teachers agreed with the statements that students' level of education influences career aspiration of girls, students who perform well in class tend to have higher career aspirations than those who perform poorly and that class repetition affects career aspirations since students who keep on repeating classes lose their morale with education.

The students were required to rate the individual factors influencing career aspirations on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very much to not at all. Their responses are shown in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10: Individual factors influencing career aspirations of girls**

Statements	VM		M		AL		NAT	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Interest in education	211	65.9	24	7.5	16	5.0	69	21.6
Peer pressure	113	35.3	40	12.5	96	30.0	71	22.2
Discipline	194	60.6	49	15.3	31	9.7	46	14.4
Academic performance	178	55.6	72	22.5	47	14.7	23	7.2
Interpersonal relations eg boy/girlfriends	81	25.3	48	15.0	70	21.9	121	37.8
Lack of sanitary towels	57	17.8	17	5.3	39	12.2	207	64.7
Lack of basic necessities eg books	113	35.3	39	12.2	56	17.5	112	35.0

**Key: VM** (Very Much), **M** (Much), **AL** (A Little), **NAT** (Not At All)

Table 4.10 shows that 65.9% of the students indicated that interest in education, 60.6% of the students indicated discipline while 55.6% of them indicated academic performance influence girls' career aspirations. Another 30% of the students indicated that peer pressure influenced girls' career aspirations to some extent while 64.7% of them indicated that lack of sanitary towels did not influence girls' career aspirations. This is an implication that individual factors influence girls' career aspirations.

The career masters and school principals were asked to give their opinion regarding individual factors that influenced girls' career aspirations. Their responses are shown in table 4.11

**Table 4.11: Individual factors that influenced girls' career aspirations**

Individual Factors	Principals		Career teachers	
	frequency	%	frequency	%
Personal aptitude	5	62.5	6	75.0
Career interests	4	50.0	5	62.5
Career self efficacy	7	87.5	6	75.0
Level of confidence	7	87.5	7	87.5
Personal interests	6	87.5	8	87.5
Learning experience	4	50.0	4	50.0
Students' spiritual commitment	3	37.5	2	25.0
Student's ambition	6	75.0	7	87.5
Indulgence in negative leisure activities	4	50.0	6	75.0

More than 70% of the principals reported individual factors that influenced girls career aspirations as: career self-efficacy (87.5%), level of confidence (87.5%), personal interests (87.5%), and students' ambition (75.0%). On the other hand, more than 70% of the career teachers indicated personal aptitude (75.0%), career efficacy (75.0%), level of confidence (87.5%), personal interests (87.5%), student's ambition (87.5%) and indulgence in negative leisure activities (75.0%) as the individual factors that influenced girls career aspirations.

#### **4.7 Ways of enhancing Career Aspirations of Girls to Increase the Number of Girls Pursuing Higher Education**

The fifth research question sought to find out the ways in which career aspirations of girls in secondary schools can be enhanced in order to increase the number of girls pursuing higher education. To establish this, the respondents were given a series of questions whose answers are discussed below.

The school principals were asked to give some challenges students faced that hindered their participation in education. Their responses are shown in Table 4.12.

**Table 4.12: Challenges faced by girls in pursuing education**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Poverty	7	87.5
Lack of learning material	5	62.5
Lack of support form parents and the community	6	75.0
Lack of personal necessities	5	62.5
Forced marriages	3	37.5
Teenage pregnancies	4	50.0

Table 4.12 shows that over 60% of the principals indicated that the biggest challenges faced by girls in pursuing education were: poverty, lack of learning materials, lack of support form parents and the community and also lack of personal necessities. This shows that girls do not have a smooth time when it comes to pursuing education, which may adversely affect their future.

The career masters were asked the problems they experienced as career teachers. Their responses are shown in Table 4.13.

**Table 4.13: Problems experienced by career masters**

<b>Problems</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Lack of cooperation from school administration	5	62.5
Lack of office space for counseling students	7	87.5
Lack of privacy	8	100.0
Students fear to ask for guidance in careers	2	25.0
Preset minds in wrong careers	4	50.0
Lack of support form parents	6	75.0

Table 4.13 shows that all the career masters indicated that lack of privacy was the biggest problem they faced. Over 60% of the career masters indicated that lack of cooperation from the school administration, lack of office space for counseling students and lack of support from parents were other challenges they faced.

The students were asked to suggest ways in which the government, the society, the school administration and parents/guardians could advance career aspirations of girls.

Their responses are shown in Table 4.14.

**Table 4.14: Ways of furthering career aspirations of girls**

<b>Government</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Hold campaigns on the importance of educating the girl child	214	66.9
Give bursaries and scholarships to poor girls	310	96.9
Providing enough learning resources to schools	257	80.3
Enforce laws to arrest cultural practices eg. circumcision/early marriages and give girls a chance	298	93.1
Put emphasis on the rights of women and gender equality	291	90.9
<b>Society</b>		
Change their attitudes towards the girl child	163	50.9
Be good role models for the girls	296	92.5
Hold seminars to educate community on importance of girl child education	121	37.8
Encouraging girls to attend school	258	80.6
Empowering the social environment in girls' schools to make them friendlier	243	75.9
<b>School Administration</b>		
Providing necessary materials for learning, as well as a clean environment for learning	284	88.8
Inviting motivational speakers to speak to girls on careers	309	75.9
Having career days and clubs	290	90.6
Having guidance and counseling teachers and programmes	287	89.9
Teaching girls their worth and contribution to society	300	93.8
<b>Parents</b>		
Build girls' self esteem	305	95.3
Be good role models to the girls	294	91.9
Guide girls towards realizing their goals	279	87.2
Pay school fees on time	302	94.4
Provide all the help needed for girls to pursue their studies	275	85.9

Table 4.14 shows that the best ways of furthering girls' career aspirations as reported by over 90% of the students were: give bursaries and scholarships to poor girls,

enforce laws to arrest cultural practices eg. circumcision/ early marriages and give girls a chance, put emphasis on the rights of women and gender equality, be good role models for the girls, Having career days and clubs, teaching girls their worth and contribution to society, build girls' self esteem, be good role models to the girls as well as pay school fees on time.

The career masters and school principals were also asked to suggest ways in which girls' career aspirations could be advanced. Their responses are shown below:

Sourcing assistance for poor girls who cannot afford school fees, educating parents on the importance of encouraging girls to further education, counseling girls to value education and work harder, organizing trips outside school for exposure, discouraging gender bias of children among parents, ensuring role models' participation in schools, adequate staffing and resources for girls' schools, advise girls on the benefits of education and also eradicate illiteracy through adult education.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1: Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations arrived at. It also gives suggestions for further studies.

#### **5.2: Summary**

The purpose of this study was to find out the factors affecting career aspirations of girls and emerging issues and challenges in Thika West District. The study targeted 2,254 girls, 11 principals, 11 career teachers and 11 teacher-counsellors. However, the study participants comprised 8 Principals, 8 Teacher-counsellors/Career-teachers as well as 320 students from 8 schools in Thika West District. The data was therefore analyzed based on this number. Given below is a summary of the main study findings based on the research objectives.

##### **5.2.1 Vocational Guidance Programmes Available in Secondary Schools for assisting Girls in Career Choice**

The study established that over 90% of the students indicated that their schools had guidance and counseling programmes and that they also invited guests to speak on careers. Majority (85.9%) of the students reported that they had guidance and counseling teachers in their schools. The least offered programme as reported by 46.9% of the students was careers club. Five (62.5%) of the career teachers reported that their schools did not have career clubs while 3 (37.5%) of them indicated that their schools had career clubs.

### **5.2.2 Career Aspirations of Secondary School Girls in Thika West District**

Majority of the students (97.5%) indicated that they would pursue further education after completing form four, which is an indication that the girls would like to further their studies completing form four. In addition, teachers reported that almost all the students would like formal employment. Majority (87.5%) of the principals indicated that to support their girls in career selection, they invited motivational speakers to speak to the girls in their schools. Another 62.5% of them indicated that they had career teachers to guide students on career choice.

The findings of the study revealed that almost all 96.9% of the students indicated that their schools had vocational guidance. Another (83.4%) indicated that career guidance helped them to make career choices to a great extent. The career teachers were asked whether. All the teachers indicated that vocational guidance helped students in choosing careers.

### **5.2.3 Issues and challenges faced by vocational guidance career teachers in assisting girls in career choice.**

On the challenges that influence career aspirations, 49.4% of the students indicated that the level of education attained by parents/guardians did not influence girls' career aspirations. A significant portion of the students (72.2%) indicated that the age of their guardians/parents did not influence their career aspirations, same as 55.3% of the students who indicated that the location of their homes did not influence their career aspirations. On the other hand, 63.1% of the students indicated that the ability of their parents to pay college fees influenced their career aspirations. This is an implication that cultural factors had a little influence on girls' career aspirations.

The career masters/teacher counselors as well as the principals reported the socio-economic factors influencing students' career aspirations as: parents' ambitions and expectations influence from key individuals, economic status of parents, social class of parents, peer influence, social contacts. Over 50% of the students indicated that cultural practices eg FGM, early marriages and child labor did not influence their career aspirations. This is an implication that to some extent, cultural factors had influence on girls' career aspirations. The career masters and school principals also reported the cultural factors influencing girls' career aspirations were: society's preference for the boy child over the girl child, reinforcing negative stereotypes about girls' abilities, perceptions of barriers, since girls are more wary of rejection than boys so they would be least likely to pursue a career if they perceived obstacles, forced marriages and level of prestige attached to a job. This is an implication that individual factors influence girls' career aspirations. The career masters and school principals gave their opinion regarding individual factors that influenced girls' career aspirations as: personal aptitude, career interests, career self efficacy, level of confidence, personal interests, learning experience, students' spiritual commitment, lack of ambition and indulgence in negative leisure activities.

The study found out that over 60% of the principals indicated that the biggest challenges faced by girls in pursuing education were: poverty, lack of learning materials, lack of support from parents and the community and also lack of personal necessities. This shows that girls do not have a smooth time when it comes to pursuing education, which may adversely affect their future. All the career masters indicated that lack of privacy was the biggest problem they faced. Over 60% of the career masters indicated that lack of cooperation from the school administration, lack

of office space for counseling students and lack of support from parents were other challenges they faced.

### **5.3: Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study as summarized above, it can be concluded that most schools had vocational guidance programmes to guide students in the choice of careers, stay more focused on their career paths and also keep them informed of the careers available. The study revealed that the students aspired to go to university after completing form four. The study further revealed that the parents were involved in their children's welfare in school and wanted them to further their studies. They therefore supported them by providing all the learning materials and equipment they needed. It emerged from the study that socio-economic factors and cultural practices to some extent influence girls' career aspirations. However, the study found out that school-related factors positively influenced girls' career aspirations. It was also established that individual factors like self efficacy had an influence on girls' career aspirations.

### **5.4: Recommendations**

1. There is need for awareness campaigns targeting the community, parents, local leaders, administrators, teachers and students on the importance of education and the benefits of education especially of the girl child. This should be done through public barazas, seminars, school parents' days and other community functions.
2. There is need to enforce laws that prohibit female genital mutilation, early bookings which leads to early marriages. Heavy penalties for teachers who sexually harass their female students as well as rapists. Parents should be sensitized on the dangers of these practices, on their daughters as this is the only

way to stop the vice. In addition, school administrators should also organize trips outside the school for exposure. This will change the attitude of the girls gradually.

3. The school administration should also accept girls who have been sexually abused and even become pregnant. Through this they will be telling their parents that pregnancy is not the end of education. By accepting the girls back to school will not only encourage the parents but give another chance to the girl child who would otherwise be lost.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

This study was limited to factors affecting career aspirations of girls and emerging issues and challenges in Thika West District.

1. It would be worthwhile to undertake a similar research in boys' schools and co-educational schools in order to compare the findings and give a comprehensive report of the problem in Thika district.
2. A similar study could also be carried in primary schools with standard eight pupils.
3. A study could be conducted on the effect of parental influence on students' career choices.

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## **APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

**Elizabeth Mung'ara**

**P.O. Box 511-01000**

**Thika.**

Dear Respondent,

**RE: QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am a post graduate student in the school of education at Kenyatta University. I am required to undertake a research study whose title is **'Factors affecting career aspirations of girls; emerging issues and challenges in Thika West district'**.

This letter is aimed at requesting you to truthfully fill the attached questionnaire. I would also like to assure you that any information given will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used for academic purpose only. Your assistance and corporation is highly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely

Elizabeth Mung'ara

## **APPENDIX II: CAREER ASPIRATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

This questionnaire is intended to gather information on your aspirations in school and the factors that influence them. The answers you give will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please do not write your name or that of your school anywhere on the questionnaire.

### **Background Information**

1. Your gender?
  - a) Male
  - b) Female
2. Your age?
  - (a)  Below 12 yrs
  - (b)  Between 13-15 yrs
  - (c)  Between 16-18 yrs
  - (d)  Over 18 yrs
3. School type
  - a)  Mixed (Day/Boarding) School
  - b)  Boys (Day/Boarding) School
  - c)  Girls (Day/Boarding) School
4. School category
  - a)  National school
  - b)  Provincial school
  - c)  District school
5. Are you a boarder or day scholar?
  - (a)  Boarder
  - (b)  Day scholar
6. Class
  - (a)  Form 1
  - (b)  Form 2
  - (c)  Form 3
  - (d)  Form 4

### **Vocational guidance programmes**

1. Tick against the choice that is available in your school.
  - a.  Guidance and counseling
  - b.  Guidance and counseling teacher
  - c.  Vocational counseling teacher
  - d.  Careers day
  - e.  Career club
  - f.  Inviting guests to speak on careers
  - g.  Career guidance materials e.g. Books, magazines, fliers, pamphlets etc.

Others (specify).....

### **Career aspirations**

1. Students attend school for different reasons. Please tick (✓) in the right box what you would do after completing form four level of education.

- (e)  Get married immediately
- (f)  Stay at home and let life take its course
- (g)  Pursue further education (go to college or university)
- (h)  Find any kind of employment immediately

Others (Specify) .....

2. If you aspire to further your education, what field of study do you wish to pursue?

- (i)  Teaching
- (j)  Nursing
- (k)  Medicine
- (l)  Architecture
- (m)  Banking
- (n)  Secretarial
- (o)  Communication Technology e.g. Computer Science, IT etc

Others (specify).....

3. Briefly explain why you are interested in the field of study you have chosen above.

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4. What is the highest level of education you would like to attain?

- (p) [ ] Form IV
- (q) [ ] Post-secondary Diploma
- (r) [ ] Degree
- (s) [ ] Masters Degree
- (t) [ ] Doctorate Degree

5. What are the main reasons for the level of education you desire most?

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6. What would your parents want you to do most after your KCSE?

- (u) [ ] Get married immediately
- (v) [ ] Go into employment
- (w)[ ] Join the family business
- (x) [ ] Help with work at home
- (y) [ ] Go to university
- (z) [ ] Go to college for further training

7. What level of education do your parents aspire for you to get?

- (aa) [ ] Form IV
- (bb) [ ] Post-secondary Diploma
- (cc) [ ] University Degree
- (dd) [ ] Masters Degree
- (ee) [ ] Doctorate Degree

8. If you want to get employed after finishing form four, what kind of job would you want to do?

- (ff) [ ] Formal (Specify) .....
- (gg) [ ] Informal (Specify) .....

9. Briefly give reasons for your choice above

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**Influence of vocational guidance on career aspirations**

1. Do you have vocational guidance in your school?
  - a.  Yes
  - b.  No
  
2. To what extent does vocational guidance help you in choosing your career?
  - a.  To a very great extent
  - b.  To a great extent
  - c.  To a small extent
  - d.  Does not help at all

**Challenges of career aspirations**

**Socio-economic factors**

1. In the table below, indicate the extent to which each of the factors presented affects your career aspirations. (Tick where appropriate)

<b>VM</b> (Very Much), <b>M</b> (Much), <b>AL</b> (A Little), <b>NAT</b> (Not At All)	<b>VM</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>AL</b>	<b>NAT</b>
Level of education attained by parents/guardians				
Occupation of your parents/guardians				
Age of your parents/guardians				
Ability of your parents/guardians to pay your college fees				
Location of your home (rural/urban)				

2. Indicate any other socio-economic factors that could influence girls' career aspirations

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**Cultural factors**

1. In the table below, indicate the extent to which each of the factors presented affects your career aspirations. (Tick where appropriate)

**VM** (Very Much), **M** (Much), **AL** (A Little), **NAT** (Not At All)

	<b>VM</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>AL</b>	<b>NAT</b>
Cultural practices (e.g. FGM)				
Early marriages				
Pre-marital/teenage pregnancies				
Expectations of society for girls to be housewives				
Child labour				
Lack of role models				

2. Indicate any other cultural factors that could influence girls' career aspirations

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**School-related factors**

1. In the table below, indicate the extent to which each of the factors presented affects your career aspirations. (Tick where appropriate)

**VM** (Very Much), **M** (Much), **AL** (A Little), **NAT** (Not At All)

	<b>VM</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>AL</b>	<b>NAT</b>
Career guidance availability				
Subjects offered in school				
Performance of students in science subjects				
Motivation by teachers/parents/guardians				
Availability of resources e.g. labs				
Being forced by teachers to do certain subjects				

2. Indicate any other cultural factors that could influence girls' career aspirations

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### **Individual factors**

1. In the table below, indicate the extent to which each of the factors presented affects your career aspirations. (Tick where appropriate)

**VM** (Very Much), **M** (Much), **AL** (A Little), **NAT** (Not At All)

	<b>VM</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>AL</b>	<b>NAT</b>
Interest in education				
Peer pressure				
Discipline				
Academic performance				
Interpersonal relations e.g. boy/girlfriends				
Lack of sanitary towels				
Lack of basic necessities e.g. books				

2. Indicate any other individual factors that could influence girls' career aspirations

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**Ways of enhancing career aspirations**

1. Suggest ways through which the following can advance career aspirations of girls

a) Government

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b) Society

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c) School administration

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d) Parents/guardians

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## **APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CAREER**

### **MASTERS/TEACHER COUNSELOR**

1. Does your school provide guidance and Counseling services to the students on career choice?
  - (a) Probe for existence of career clubs
  - (b) Probe for invitation of career speakers
  - (c) Probe for mode and frequency of guidance
2. What generally would you say are the career aspirations of your form four students?
  - (a) Probe for family life aspirations
  - (b) Probe for pursuit of a career
  - (c) Probe for employment ambitions (formal and informal)
  - (d) Probe for other aspirations
3. In your opinion, does vocational guidance help girls in choosing their careers? In what way does it help them?
4. What according to you are the factors that affect career aspirations of girls in your school?
  - (a) Probe for student related factors – socioeconomic background
  - (b) Probe for community related factors – cultural factors
  - (c) Probe for school related factors
  - (d) Probe for individual factors
5. What problems (if any) do you experience as a career teacher?
6. How can girls' career aspirations be enhanced?



**APPENDIX V: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION LETTER**