



## **Career Aspiration of Students: The Influence of Peers, Teachers and Parents**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author MKO designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors AO and JA managed the analyses of the study. Author ETF managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Aim:** The study examined the influence of Peers, Teachers and Parents in the career aspiration of students in public Senior High Schools. Three research questions and three hypotheses framed the study.

**Study Design:** Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. One Hundred and Ninety Six (196) students, 30 teachers, and 50 parents were selected to respond to self designed questionnaires using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Results:** The findings indicated that: Teachers do not significantly influence the career aspirations of students, Parental influence is a major determinant in the career aspirations of students, Peers influence the career aspirations of male and female students differently, the influence of peers on career aspirations of students does not vary on the basis of age and programme of study.

**Conclusion:** Peers and parents determine to a large extent the decisions that students make concerning the careers they may want to pursue, as such, it is recommended that: School heads should collaborate with counselling unit in schools to organise career workshops for students to help minimise the influence of stakeholders on students' career aspirations.

*Keywords: Ghana; career aspiration; influence; peers; teachers; parents.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Zunker [1] career is the totality of work one experiences in a lifetime. It is a chosen pursuit, life work, success in one's profession (Oladele, [2]). Career has also been seen by Okobiah and Okorodudu [3] as a variety of work and non-work situations which usually span through the entire life of an individual. Thus, career is generally related to a pattern of decisions, transactions and adjustments which affects one's role of work, education, family, community development and leisure. The choice of career is a delicate issue that requires caution and serious considerations (Salami & Salami, [4]). This is because the kind of career that young people pursue can affect their lives in many ways. Career choice can influence how much education the individual will have and also determine the amount of money or income the individual will earn. Students have to make due career planning and also do exhaustive career research before making a career choice so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions in society (Wattles, [5]). This implies that information is highly important in career choice. According to Salami and Salami [4], students should be thinking about career choices in senior high school. It is therefore at this level that students develop aspirations for specific careers.

The young adolescent who enters school is encouraged to set high aspirations for him or herself and to work to achieve these aspirations. According to Dudovitz, Chung, Nelson, and Wong [6], career aspirations might provide quick insight into how adolescents perceive themselves and their futures. Career aspirations may therefore reflect an adolescent's emerging identity or values.

### 1.1 Peer Influence and Career Aspirations

According to Salvy, Haye, Bowker, and Hermans [7], peers are great sources of motivation for one another. Lifelong friendships are formed at school and peers have been known to stand up for one another sometimes even more than

siblings. They assist one another with school work and also become mentors to one another in their personal lives (Salvy et al., [7]). Very often, one finds that some students pursue some courses just because their friends are doing same. Such students sometimes find it difficult to perform well because they do not have an interest in the course. Adolescents choose friends who have characteristics or talents that they admire, which motivates them to achieve and act as their friends do. Friends encourage adolescents to study hard at school and can also help them think more creatively (Brown & Barbosa, [8]). This is true but it becomes a problem when the talent or interest of the student does not lie entirely in that of his friend.

Ogutu, Odera and Maragia [9] examined the influence of peers on students' career decision-making. They found that peer influence had a positive relationship with career decision making. Naz, Saeed, Khan, Khan, Sheikh and Khan [10] explored the nature, level and extent of peer and friends influence in career decision making process of an individual. The study found that although family primarily geared and transformed the behaviour of children in multiple ways, peer influence was an asset for developing career opportunities and decision making among youth.

In Uganda, Okiror and Otabong [11] found that peer interactions played important roles in career choice. In Kenya, Walaba and Kiboss [12] indicated that peer interactions influenced students in choosing careers. As the students interacted, they shared information about careers. In his study in China, Yi-Hui [13] revealed that students' interaction with peers of diversified interests, races and backgrounds have the potential to stimulate reflection, knowledge and beliefs which may lead to new ways of thinking about the world, other peers and eventually themselves. Kiuru [14] concluded that peer group members who are closely related are likely to end up in similar educational trajectories as they are likely to accept opinions from members who are similar to themselves. Kiuru indicated further that peer group members resembled each other, not only in their

educational expectations, but also their subsequent educational trajectories. In a Nigerian study by Bankole and Ogunsakin [15], peer relationships were revealed to be significant in helping students choose careers.

### **1.2 Influence of Teachers in Career Aspirations of Students**

Khan, Murtaza and Shafa [16] explored the role of teachers in career counselling in Senior High Schools in Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan. The key findings showed that teachers voluntarily act as informal counsellors guiding students in their choices of subjects and career paths. They added that students see their teachers as role models and attach high value to their advice and guidance related to career selection.

Shumba and Naong [17] sought to determine factors influencing career choice and aspirations among South African students. They found that the family; the ability of the student to identify his/her preferred career choice; and teachers were significant factors that influenced the career choice and aspirations of students. Njeri [18] investigated the factors that influence career choice among undergraduate students and found that teachers as role models had the greatest influence on career aspirations.

### **1.3 Influence of Parents in the Career Aspirations of Students**

Numerous studies (Knowles, [19]; Marjoribanks, [20]; Smith, [21]; Wilson & Wilson, [22]) have found that college students and young adults cite parents as an important influence on their choice of career. Werts [23] used 80,000 first year college students, compared their fathers' occupation with their sons career choices to find out whether there was a relationship between the sons choice and their fathers occupation. His findings suggested that certain groups of occupations (examples, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine) are inherited. Other studies have separately examined the influences of each parent on the career choices of their sons or daughters and have found that mothers tend to have more influence on the career decisions or aspirations of their children than father. For instance, Mickelson and Velasco [24] in their interviews conducted with 70 young adults found that mother were the most influential and that, daughters occupational aspirations were often similar to their mothers chosen professions.

Jungen [25] also noted in her research paper that choosing a career is often considered a major turning point in a young adult's life. This decision alone has the potential to open the door for success or close the door of opportunity. While often perceived to be an individual choice, the study suggested that a variety of influences such as family, school, community, social and economic factors are likely to manipulate one's ultimate career decision. Among these factors, students report that parents have the greatest influence on which career they choose.

A study by Kniveton, [26] showed that parents have a greater influence than even teachers on student's career choice (While direct parental career advice may be influential, parents may be unaware that they can also exert a strong career influence simply by serving as examples of good workers to their children. The study indicated that children as young as five years old begin to identify with the occupation of their mother or father as soon as they can pronounce their job title. Even though adolescents actively begin demonstrating their independence from their parents in their high school years, these young adults are still very much dependent on their parents for their career growth (Peterson, Stivers, & Peters as cited in Clutter, [27]). In fact, parents tend to create the strongest impression on their adolescent's vocational choice more than any other group including counsellors, teachers, friends, or even people working in the identified occupation of desire (Bardick, Berns, Magnusson, & Witko, [28]).

The study of Shumba and Naong [17] among South African students found that the family was a significant factor that influenced the career choice and aspirations of students. Similarly, Kazi and Akhlaq [29] examined the factors which influenced the choice of career among students in two public sector universities in Lahore city. Kazi and Akhlaq found that the influence of parents was the most significant factor in the career aspirations of students. In Hong Kong, Law and Yuen [30] revealed that students value the opinions of their parents. This implies that parents can foster interest in certain careers in their children from childhood. Bardick, Berns, Magnusson and Witko [28] revealed that Canadian adolescents tend to appreciate their parents' opinions more than any other source for answers to career related issues. Many parents are in the position to influence their children's career development because they have observed their children's development, know

their interests and strengths and have developed a trusting relationship with them. In Singapore, it was revealed that parental involvement had a significant influence on the selection of nursing careers (Ching & Keith, [31]).

#### 1.4 Statement of the Problem

In the Berekum Municipality, the only study in this area was done by Takyi [32]. He investigated the nurture experiences that influence Junior High School Students career aspirations in the Berekum Municipality. It is interesting to note that no study in this area has been conducted in the Senior High School level which apparently is the last level of pre tertiary education in Ghana after which students move to pursue their preferred careers. These students progress to either pursue a vocation or to the tertiary level and offer programmes that lead them to their future carriers. Takyi [32] reported that parental influence was high in the career choice of JHS students. It was therefore imperative to also examine the influences of stakeholders such as teachers, parents and peers on the career aspirations of Senior Secondary School students. On the basis of this, the study examined the influence of Peers, Teachers and Parents in the career aspiration of students in public Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Berekum Municipality.

#### 1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Peers, Teachers and Parents in the career aspiration of students in public Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Berekum Municipality. Specifically the study identified:

1. The influence of peers on the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality.
2. The influence of teachers on the career aspiration of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality.
3. The influence of parents on the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality.
4. Whether peers influenced the career aspirations of male and female students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality.
5. Whether peers influence the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality on the basis of age.
6. Whether peers influence the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the

Berekum Municipality on the basis of programme offered.

#### 1.6 Research Questions

1. What influence do peers have on the career aspirations of students in public Senior High Schools in the Berekum municipality?
2. What influence do teachers have on the career aspirations of students in public Senior High Schools in the Berekum municipality?
3. What influence do parents have on the career aspirations of students in public Senior High Schools in the Berekum municipality?

#### 1.7 Hypotheses

1.  $H_0$ : There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of male and female students in Public Senior High Schools in the Berekum Municipality.
2.  $H_0$ : There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students in Public Senior High Schools on the basis of age in the Berekum Municipality.
3.  $H_0$ : There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students in Public Senior High Schools on the basis of programme offered in the Berekum Municipality.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study because it depicts the participants in an accurate way by describing the people who took part in the study and allows researchers to gather information, summarize and interpret data for purposes of clarification (Orodho, [33]). Descriptive survey design in the view of Neuman [34] is also helpful in indicating trends in attitudes, opinions and behaviours, and enabling generalisation of the findings of a study. Thus, in the context of this study, the descriptive survey design was helpful in knowing the thoughts and opinions of peers, teachers and parents on the influences in students' career aspirations.

### 2.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The accessible population comprised 401 form three students, 142 SHS teachers and 200

parents. Using Krejcie and Morgan's [35] table for determining sample size, a sample of 196 students were selected for the study. 30 teachers, representing 21.1% and 50 parents, representing 25.0% of parent's population were selected for the study. The use of these percentages was based on the view of Asamoah-Gyimah and Duodu [36] that for quantitative studies, a sample size of 10% to 30% of the population size is sufficient for generalisation purpose.

The students, parents and teachers were all sampled using the stratified sampling procedure. Ogah [37] noted that using stratified sampling ensures that important characteristics of the population are fairly represented in the sample. This approach was used to put the students, teachers and the parents into strata of school and gender (male and female). The use of these strata was to ensure a fair representation of the three public schools as well as both genders (males and females) in the study. The sample size of each stratum was gotten by calculating on the basis of the size of each stratum within the main population. Asamoah-Gyimah and Duodu [36] indicated that in stratified sampling, the proportion of each stratum sampled is identical to the proportion of the stratum in the population. After stratifying the sample, the simple random sampling was used to select the participants from each of the stratum for the study.

## 2.2 Data Collection Instruments

Three sets of self-designed close-ended type questionnaires were used for data collection. All three questionnaires were divided into sections A and B. Section A dealt with personal background information on respondents and B dealt with responses to the research questions. The issues were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1="Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree". In order to determine if the composite weight of any item on the five-point, Likert-type scale was high or low, a cut-off point was established as follows: Range between the highest and lowest possible scores. Thus,  $5-1=4$ . The midpoint of the range

was obtained as 4 divided by 2. Establishing the cut-off point therefore involved subtracting the midpoint of the range from the highest possible score. Thus,  $5-2=3$ . A cut-off point of 3 was set for the data. This implies that any mean value more than 3 was regarded as high and a mean value less than 3 was regarded as low. The instrument was piloted on a group of students ( $n=40$ ) at Dormaa Municipality who were not part of the study. The internal consistency measures were determined and Cronbach alpha co-efficient values realised were 0.77 for the students' questionnaire, 0.74 for the teachers' questionnaire and 0.79 for the parents' questionnaire. The instruments were deemed appropriate and were administered based on the reliability coefficients obtained.

## 2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Before administering the instruments, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to participants and they were assured that data collected would remain anonymous and that at anytime they could withdraw from the study. Thereafter, the questionnaires were personally distributed among the students, teachers in their respective schools and the parents were contacted to answer the questionnaires during the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings for the various schools. It took approximately 15 minutes to respond to the items on each of the questionnaires. 100% return rate was realised from all the administered questionnaires.

## 3. FINDINGS

### 3.1 Research Question 1

It is shown in Table 1 that the statement 'what I hope to be in future is influenced by my friends' recorded the highest mean of 4.11 and a standard deviation of 1.26. Also, it is shown that the statement 'My friends influenced me in choosing my course in SHS' recorded a mean of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 1.38. In

**Table 1. Influence of peers on career aspirations of students**

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
My friends are great source of motivation for me	2.44	1.31
My friends influenced me in choosing my course in SHS	3.91	1.38
The friends I admire most motivate me to be who I am	2.95	1.53
The way I learn is as a result of how my friends learn	3.39	1.31
What I hope to be in future is influenced by my friends	4.11	1.26
Average of Means & Standard Deviations	3.36	1.36

Source: Field Survey (2019)

addition, it is seen that the statement 'The way I learn is as a result of how my friends learn' recorded a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 1.31. The results in Table 4 imply that most of the respondents agreed that what they want to be in future is influenced by their friends, their choices of courses are influenced by their friends and the ways they learn are also influenced by their friends. The average of the means was computed by adding all the means and dividing by the number of items. The average of means was 3.36. This was higher than the 3.0 cut-off set for the study. This implies that overall the respondents agreed to most of the statements showing that peers had a great influence on the career aspirations of students.

### 3.2 Research Question 2

Table 2 shows the influence of teachers on the career aspirations of students. It is shown that all the mean scores are below the cut-off score of 3.0. Therefore, it can be inferred that all the statements recorded lower mean scores. This implies that most of the teachers did not agree with the statements and as such the teachers did not view themselves as having a significant influence on the career aspirations of their students. However, out of all the statements in the table, it can be seen that teachers giving special attention to students who struggled with

career choice issues recorded a mean of 2.57 and a standard deviation of 1.17. This mean was slightly closer to the cut-off score of 3.0 and thus implies that some of the teachers gave special attention to students with career choice struggles. Overall, the mean of means (2.28) indicated that the influence teachers had on the career aspirations of students was low.

### 3.3 Research Question 3

Table 3 shows the influence of parents on the career aspirations of students. The table shows that two statements recorded mean scores above 3.0 implying that the parents agreed mostly to these statements. The parents were of the view that their children will not attempt decisions without their approval (M=3.32, SD=1.43). This implies that parents were forcing their children to make decisions that they approved of. The parents also indicated that they know their children will do best in their (parents) own career areas (M=3.26, SD=1.36). These two statements show that parents had influence on the career aspirations of their children. The statement 'I have no interest in the career my child chooses' recorded a mean of 2.24 lower than the cut-off score of 3.0 which implies that the most of the respondents were not in agreement with the statement. By implication, the parents were interested in the careers of their

**Table 2. Influence of teachers on career aspirations of students**

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
As teacher,		
I suggest future careers for my students	2.47	1.01
I am interested in what careers my students choose	2.03	1.25
I interact with my students to know their preferred career choice needs	2.13	1.22
I give relevant education and occupational information to my students	2.20	1.24
I give special attention to students who struggle with career choice issues	2.57	1.17
Average of Means & Standard Deviations	2.28	1.18

Source: Field Survey (2019)

**Table 3. Influence of parents on the career aspirations of their wards**

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
As a parent, when it comes to career choice:		
I suggest the best future career of my child or children	2.88	1.32
I try to make my child/children pursue my own career area	3.26	1.36
I do not force my wishes above the career interest of my child/children	1.80	0.90
My child will never make any decision without my approval	3.32	1.43
I am aware that I have great influence on my child's career aspirations	2.08	1.12
I have no interest in the career my child chooses	2.24	1.56
Fathers greatly influence the career aspirations of their sons	2.52	1.42
Mothers greatly influence the career aspirations of their daughters	2.44	1.39
Average of Means & Standard Deviations	2.57	1.31

Source: Field Survey (2019)

children. Again, the statement ‘I know my child’s career interest is more important than my wishes’ recorded a mean of 1.80 and a standard deviation of 0.90. This means most of the parents disagreed to the statement. It can be inferred from the results in table 3 that the parents had interest in the careers of their children and that their children did not take career decisions without the approval of the parents.

### 3.4 Hypothesis One

From Table 4, it is seen clearly that the significant value of .228 is greater than .05 the significant level. This implies that equal variances can be assumed. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met.

The results of the independent samples t-test are presented in Table 5.

It is shown in Table 5 that there is a significant difference in the influence of peers on career aspirations of male and female students ( $t(194) = -2.879, p < .05$ ). The mean of the females was higher (17.95) than that of males (16.04). This implies that female students perceived peers as having an influence on their career aspirations than male students. Based on the results in Table 5, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a significant difference between male and female

students in terms of the influence of peers on their career aspirations.

### 3.5 Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two had three independent groups (12-16 years, 17-19 years and 20 years and above) and one dependent variable (influence of peers), One-Way ANOVA was used in testing the hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that there is no significant difference in the influence of peer pressure on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age [ $F(195) = .521, p > .05$ ]. The probability value (p-value) of .595 is greater than .05 significant level and as such the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results imply that there was no difference in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age. In simple terms, it can be inferred that age was not a factor in how peers influenced the career aspirations of students.

### 3.6 Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three had six independent groups (Science, General Arts, Home Economics, Business, Agriculture Science, and Visual Arts) and one dependent variable (influence of peers); One-Way ANOVA was used in testing the hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 4. Levene’s test for equality of variances**

	F	Sig
Equal variances assumed	1.464	.228
Equal variances not assumed		

Source: Field Survey (2019); \* Significant,  $p < .05$

**Table 5. Gender difference in influence of peers on career aspirations**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	118	16.04	4.86	194	-2.879*	.004
Female	78	17.95	3.99			

Source: Field Survey, (2019); \* Significant,  $p < .05$

**Table 6. Differences in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.379	2	11.190	.521	.595
Within Groups	4142.861	193	21.466		
Total	4165.240	195			

Source: Field Survey (2019); \* Significant,  $p < .05$

**Table 7. Differences in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme offered**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	181.306	5	45.326	2.173	.074
Within Groups	3983.934	190	20.858		
Total	4165.240	195			

Source: Field Survey (2019); \* Significant,  $p < .05$

Table 7 shows that there is no significant difference in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme offered [ $F(195) = 2.173, p > .05$ ]. Since significant value of .074 is greater than .05 the null hypothesis is not rejected. The results imply that there was no difference in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme offered.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study showed that what they want to be in future is influenced by their friends, their choices of courses are influenced by their friends and that the manner in which they learn is as a result of how their friends learned. The mean of means implied that overall the respondents agreed to most of the statements showing that peers had a great influence on the career aspirations of students. For most senior high school students, the desire for peer approval and liking makes them want to be involved in whatever their peers were involved in. This desire can expand even to career aspirations. Therefore, the finding of the study that peers had a great influence on career aspirations of students is understandable. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Ogotu, Odera and Maragia [9] who revealed that peers influenced career decision making among secondary school students in Busia County in Kenya. Ogotu et al. pointed out that, students valued the opinions of their peers and as such took career decision that reflected the views of their peers. In a similar vein, Naz et al. [10] revealed that even though families had an influence on career choices, the influence of peers cannot be discounted. They argued that most students value what their peers say in terms of what is the desirable career. As a result, the career aspirations of students can be greatly impacted by the influence of peers.

The influence of peers on career aspirations of students occurs through peer interactions. This has been confirmed in various studies in Uganda and Kenya (Okiror & Otabong, [14]; Walaba &

Kiboss, [12]). In his study in China, Yi-Hui [13] revealed that students' interactions with peers of diversified interests, races and backgrounds have the potential to stimulate reflection, knowledge and beliefs which may lead to new ways of thinking about the world, other peers and eventually themselves. This ultimately influences the career aspirations of students.

Kiuru [14] conducted a study in Finland and concluded that peer group members who were closely related ended up in similar educational trajectories as they accepted opinions from members who were similar to themselves. Kiuru indicated further that peer group members resembled each other, not only in their educational expectations, but also their subsequent educational trajectories. In a Nigerian study by Bankole and Ogunsakin [15], peer relationships were revealed to be significant in helping students choose careers. The findings from these studies have confirmed that peer influence is a major factor in the career aspirations of students.

In terms of the influences that teachers have on the career aspirations of students, the study found that most of the teachers did not agree with the statements and as such the teachers did not view themselves as significant influencing the career aspirations of their students. However, the teachers indicated that they gave special attention to students who struggled with career choice issues. This implies that even though generally the teachers did not see themselves as playing significant roles in the career aspirations of students, some of the teachers gave special attention to students with career choice struggles. In Ghanaian schools, the duties of teachers have mostly been restricted to cognition, thus, they focus only on impacting knowledge based on the curriculum. In this sense, most teachers may not see helping students in their career decisions as part of their responsibilities. This could probably explain why the teachers did not view themselves as influencing the career aspirations of students. However, when students are facing issues in



deciding about their careers, teachers are more likely to provide assistance to such students. The minimal role that teachers play in career decisions of students is probably the reason why schools in Ghana are required to have guidance coordinators who will be in charge of students' career choice issues. The guidance coordinators or school counsellors can help guide students in their career aspirations and their career decisions.

The findings were in line with the findings of Pummel, Harwood and Lavallee [38], which identified some different groups who can influence career choice decisions of students. They indicated that career choice decisions are mostly influenced by parents, peers, friends, relatives, role models, and career counsellors. They argued that in schools where career counsellors are operational, teachers do not play significant roles regarding students' career aspirations. The findings however contradict the study of Khan, Murtaza and Shafa [16] who explored the influence of teachers in career counselling in secondary schools in Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan. Khan et al. found that teachers have vital roles to guide students and their careers. They indicated further that teachers voluntarily acted as informal counsellors guiding students in their choices of subjects and career paths. The contradiction could be explained to be due to the fact that the teachers in the study of Khan et al. played the roles of guidance coordinators while the teachers in the current study were just limited to classroom teaching. Again, the contradiction could be due to the teachers in the study not very equipped in terms of skills to use to help students in their career aspirations.

Teachers who serve as guidance coordinators or counsellors in their schools influence students' career choices significantly. For instance, Mghweno, Mghweno and Baguma [39] established that Tanzanian school career guidance teachers played a key role in preparing students to successfully proceed to the next level, whether for further education or a job. Teachers who serve as career guidance coordinators therefore offer career guidance to students as part of their daily work (Ferreira, Santos, Fonseca, & Haase, [40]). The implication of the results is that teachers who were not guidance coordinators did not influence students much on their career choices compared to teachers who serve as guidance coordinators in schools.

The study also revealed that parents had interest in the careers of their children and that their children do not take career decisions without their approval. In most societies, parents are influential in the lives of their children. They determine the schools they should attend and also the subjects their children should study. Most children in Ghana seek the approval of their parents in every decision they take. It is unsurprising therefore, that the study found that, students seek for the approval of their parents regarding their career choices. Again, parents are interested in the career choices of their children because in Ghana, parents see the careers of their children as the crowning of their caretaking efforts. They therefore expect their children to be in lucrative careers even if the children are not interested in such careers. Parental influence is thus a major determinant of the career aspirations of students.

The findings are in line with the findings of Shumba and Naong [17] who investigated the factors influencing career choice and aspirations among South African students. They found that the family was a significant factor that influenced the career choice and aspirations of students. Similarly, Kazi and Akhlaq [29] examined the factors which affect the choice of career among students in two public sector universities in Lahore city. Kazi and Akhlaq found that the influence of parents was the most significant factor in the career aspirations of students. It has also been confirmed that students report that parents have the greatest influence on which career they choose (Kniveton, [26]). Parents therefore have a greater influence than even teachers on student's career choice.

In Hong Kong, Law and Yuen [30] revealed that students value the opinions of their parents. This implies that parents can foster interest in certain careers in their children from childhood. A similar report was made in Canada by Bardick, Berns, Magnusson and Witko [28] that Canadian adolescents tend to appreciate their parents' opinions more than any other source for answers to career related issues. Many parents are in the position to influence their children's career development because they have observed their children's development, know their interests and strengths and have developed a trusting relationship with them. In Singapore, it was revealed that parental involvement had a significant influence on the selection of nursing careers (Ching & Keith, [31]).

The influence of parents on career choice can be positive or negative. This is because when students are forced into careers that they are not interested in, they are likely not to enjoy their careers in the future. However, when students are encouraged by their parents into careers that they are interested in then they are more likely to enjoy their careers in the future. This view has been confirmed by Clutter [27] who revealed that it is possible for parents to influence their children's career choices negatively. At the end, all the studies along with the current study have shown that parental influence is a significant factor in the career aspirations and choices of students. This happens regardless of the society or community as has been shown in the different studies from different places.

The study revealed that there was a significant difference in the influence of peers on career aspirations of male and female students. Specifically, female students perceived peers as having an influence on their career aspirations more than male students. The implication of the results is that female students were influenced more by peers compared to male students.

This finding is in line with several previous studies. For instance, Stuart [41] found that peers' attitudes toward gender may increase or decrease a person's confidence in pursuing a career. He stated that adolescent girls are easily influenced by their peers because they rely on their friends to provide validation of the choices that they make including career decisions. The implication of the finding of Stuart is that there is difference between males and females in terms of how peers influence their career aspirations and decisions. In a similar vein, the findings of the current study support the findings of Garrahy [42] that the social situations that students find themselves in reinforce gender-appropriate occupations of students. Thus, school activities, social environment and peer influence on career decisions vary in terms of the gender of students (Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, [43]). In his study, Spade [44] found that gender difference in students' experiences in terms of how peers influence their careers existed throughout school. In her study in Nigeria, Denga [45] found that sex-role stereotypes existed among boys and girls in schools as they aspire to traditional occupations. This implies that the beliefs of significant others influence children's self-perceptions of ability and consequently career choice.

All these studies have confirmed that peers influence career aspirations and decisions of students differently in terms of gender. The study revealed that there was no significant difference in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age. The results can be inferred that age was not a factor in how peers influenced the career aspirations of students. Thus, age does not matter whether peers will influence the career aspirations of students. The findings confirm the findings of Lopez and Ann-Yi [46] who revealed that age does not play a role in how career aspirations of students are influenced. Similarly, Schmidt, Miles and Welsh [47] found that there was no difference in how career choices of students were influenced by peers on the basis of age. Thus, by implication, the career choices of students of different ages cannot be influenced by their peers. It was revealed that no statistically significant difference existed in the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme offered. The results imply that peers did not influence the career aspirations of students on the kind of programme that they offer in school. This confirms the finding of Yamin-Ali [48] who explored subject selection of secondary school students in Trinidad and found that the influence of peers on the career aspirations of students did not differ based on the subjects of study. This means that the career choices of students offering different programmes were not influenced by their peers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were made:

1. Peers determine to a large extent the decisions that students make concerning the careers they may want to pursue. Students value the views and opinions of their friends and as such develop interest in specific careers because of the views of their friends. In connection to the larger conversation on peers, it can be inferred that the influences of peers on students extend beyond academic work and behaviour and encompasses career decisions.
2. Teachers in Senior High Schools do not play major roles in influencing the career aspirations of students. They may however offer intermittent assistance to students with career decision confusions. This situation may not be helpful in schools

where there are no career guidance coordinators.

3. Parental influence is a major determinant in the career aspirations of students. It is because of this that students valued the approval of their parents in their career choices.
4. Peers influence the career aspirations of male and female students differently with female students being more influenced than male students. Thus, it can be inferred that the career aspirations of students can be influenced by peers mostly for female students. In the context of the larger conversation on peers, female students have been identified to be more susceptible. Therefore, this conclusion ties in with several previous empirical studies.
5. The influence of peers on career aspirations of students does not vary on the basis of age.
6. The influence of peers on career aspirations of students on the basis of programme offered did not vary.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. School heads should collaborate with counselling unit in schools to organise career workshops for students about how to deal with the negative influence of peers on their career aspirations. This is important because peers were found to be a major factor influencing the career aspirations of students. Thus, empowering students to be able to take their own career decisions and not following their peers out of naivety.
2. School counsellors together with teachers should show interest in the career aspirations of students. They ought to continually assist students who may have career decision issues.
3. School counsellors should interact with parents so as to avoid forcing careers on their children but encourage their children to pursue careers that align with their wards interests. This can help students to be more productive in their academic work hence their total development.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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