

**INFLUENCE OF SELECTED PARENTAL AND STUDENTS' FACTORS ON
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' CAREER ASPIRATIONS IN
NYAHURURU MUNICIPALITY, KENYA.**

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ABSTRACT

Career choice is a very important decision in life. Secondary school students are prepared through career guidance to make career choices that are best suited to them. However this is not always the case and many high school graduates have continued to choose careers which they are not happy with. To help them make better career choices, it is important that career guidance teachers understand the influence of parental and students' personal factors on secondary school student's career aspirations. The purpose of this study was to determine whether parents' occupation, level of formal education and students characteristics, specifically gender and academic performance have any influence on students career aspirations in Nyahururu Municipality, Laikipia County, Kenya. The study utilized *ex-post facto* research design. A stratified sample of 327 Form III and IV students from eleven (four public and seven private) secondary schools were purposively selected for the study from a target population of 1565 students. A structured questionnaire was administered to the respondents who had been selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques from a target population of 1565 students. Using statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme version 20.0, data were analyzed through frequency counts and percentages with respect to nominal scale data. Hypotheses were tested by use of ANOVA and t-test statistics at .05 alpha level. Parents level of formal education ($p < .05$), student's gender ($p < .05$) and students' academic performance had statistically significant influence on students' career aspirations. However, this was not the case with regard to parents' occupation. The study offers useful insights to secondary schools on how to strengthen career guidance and counseling departments so as to be more effective in aligning students to the right career paths. In particular, there is need to strengthen parent-school meetings so as to sensitize parents on matters pertaining to career guidance for their children.