

Gender Differences in Decision-Making Skills among Teacher Trainees: A Comparative Study of Public Diploma teacher Training Colleges in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties.

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ABSTRACT: Young people make lifestyle and career decisions that impact their destinies and the future of society. They thus need to be furnished with skills to guide them as they make critical choices in life. This study aimed at evaluating if there are any gender differences in decision-making skills among teacher trainees in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties. The Target population for the study consisted of 6659 trainees from three public diploma teacher training colleges in the two Counties. A sample of 362 respondents from the three colleges was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Descriptive research design was applied in this study. Social cognitive theory developed by Bandura guided the study. Data were collected using a standard psychometric scale developed by Dindigal, Vijayalaxmi and Aminabhavi (2007) Psychosocial Competence Scale questionnaire administered to the sampled teacher trainees and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of a computer programme SPSS version 20.0. Analyzed data revealed that the males had a higher mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) of decision-making skills than the females ($\bar{x} = 3.50$). However, there was no statistically significant difference in decision making skills between male and female respondents. The findings also indicated that peer influence was a major factor when making decisions for most of the trainees. Further the fact that students were prepared to take risks and accept their consequences points to a disconnect between knowledge and the practical application. These study findings are important because they would inform policy makers, curriculum developers and teachers on the gender differences in decision making. The researcher recommends that tertiary institutions need to train and equip peer counsellors with the relevant skills to influence the rest of the trainees positively.

Key Words: - Gender, Decision-making, Teacher trainees, Peer Counselling.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In a fast-changing world, the adolescents and young adults need to be furnished with skills to guide them as they make lifestyle and career decisions that impact their destinies. Kiuna (2022) asserts that young adults are going through different challenges that include contradicting messages from the media, peer pressure and unstable family background. Salintri (2005) notes that as learners enter the tertiary institutions of learning, they encounter issues that adversely influence their transition from high school to institutions of higher learning. These include; different teaching styles, the new-found independence, and peer pressure among others. If these issues are left unchecked, these students risk disrupting their studies, early pregnancies among females and involving themselves in drug and substance abuse. They thus need to be equipped with decision making skills to navigate through this stage of development. Youth who make wrong decisions and engage in risky behavior can affect themselves and society negatively in future. Thus, the ability to evaluate the decisions that they make will not only assist them in resisting peer pressure to engage in risky conduct, but also nurtures social skills and social awareness. It will also encourage them to think about the implications and consequences, determine on appropriate goals, and appreciate their own and others' feelings (Elias and Tobias 1990). Richard (2004) recommends that one should reflectively question common beliefs and, carefully distinguishing those that are reasonable and logical from those which however appealing they may be to someone, lack adequate evidence or rational foundation to warrant belief.

While Orasanu, et al (1993) define decision making as a sequence of cognitive operations which encompass the elements from the surroundings in a specific place and time, Maria, et al (2007) noted that the process is among the most complicated components of human thinking, that involves various factors and courses of action with diverse outcomes. Likewise, Elder & Paul (2010), contend that decision making ought to be considered as a combination of complementary skills like capacity for producing options, ability for calculating personal risks, skills for evaluating evidence, assessing consequences of action and non-action and also collecting information. Learners who made snap decisions without carefully considering their implications were more likely to be involved in hazardous behaviors than those youth who prudently thought about options and evaluated probable consequences Jacobs (1993). Clearly, the young adults need to be well grounded in this process if they are to negotiate their way through this developmental stage successfully. Thus the necessity of establishing whether there are any gender differences in the acquisition of decision making skills among teacher trainees.

Recently developed research has been analyzing the differences in the way males and females make decisions, whether those decisions are large or small. This study hoped to further look into whether male and female teacher trainees differed in their decision-making process. Seock & Bailey (2008) sought to establish the differences between male and female students while shopping on-line. The researchers found a significant difference in their shopping adaptation. It was established that women visited more websites and investigated all options more thoroughly than men did while shopping online. They also took advantage of sales and discounts offered. On the other hand, males showed more efficiency in the way they conducted their shopping. They were faster and more focused rather than 'fussing over the smaller details that drew in the females'. Understanding the differences in the way males and females process information is crucial as families and organizations could take advantage of the complementary roles of men and women in every-day life. Wing et al., (2010) recognized how gender differences could be advantageous in the work place. Their findings from an Editorial Board revealed that women took longer in deciding whether to pass or reject a manuscript. This implies that women consider different points of view and are not in a hurry to make a decision unlike men. This information may be useful in work places in that men and women could complement each other rather than competing on who wins when major decisions are being made. This is because women will evaluate the out-come from different points of view while men will ensure decisions are not delayed unnecessarily.

Aloka J.O, et al, (2013) investigated gender, age and teaching experiences differences in decision making behaviour of members of disciplinary panels of selected Kenya secondary schools. Mixed method design was adopted for the study and collected both qualitative and quantitative data. A sample of 78 participants (33 females and 45 males) from ten secondary schools' disciplinary panels was used. The results indicated that, the pre disciplinary hearing response scores of male members were relatively higher than those of their female counterparts. It was also observed from the scores from the Modified Choice Dilemma Questionnaire (MCDQ) that male participants made risky pre-disciplinary hearing decisions as compared to the females, who made cautious pre-disciplinary hearing decisions. The results also revealed that male members were more rigid and made less shifts from pre to post disciplinary hearing meeting decisions than their female counterparts. This is an indication that the female members made greater shift from their original pre-disciplinary hearing decisions as compared to their male correspondents.

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to test whether the differences in the pre and post disciplinary hearing decisions were statistically significant between the female and male respondents. The ANOVA results indicated probability level to be $P = 0.000$ which is less than five percent (0.05 or $P < 0.05$). This indicated that the differences in the types of pre to post disciplinary hearing decisions between the male and female members were statistically significant. The difference in the way men and women make decisions could have far reaching consequences. The results of a disciplinary committee could make or break the life of a student. If it is too rigid, the panelists may deny the student a chance to reform. Looking at the implication of the decision from different viewpoints may just give the student a lifeline. Teacher trainees will find themselves in situations where major decisions that affect the life of students will have to be made. This study implies that involving both parties before making decisions on cases that have far reaching implications on students' welfare is necessary. The student may just get a more balanced verdict.

Asiyanbola (2005) asserts that men are different from women in decision- making behavior since they are socialized differently. Indigenous communities have stereotype norms that they transmit in the form of traditions, values, and behavioral expectations. Ndirangu (2013) observes that "socializing agents have imposed gender specific attitudes to men and women, boys and girls, of expected behaviour". This resonates with a study sanctioned by the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP, 2013), that twice as many women than men sought counselling since in the traditional society, the two genders are socialized differently. The concept of expressing one's feelings and analyzing psychological and emotional difficulties has, for long, been matched with a 'female trait' rather than 'male trait'. It can thus be perceived that being male or female may influence one's judgment. This study thus sought to establish the differences in the way men and women make decisions in the public diploma TTCs in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties. This is in

order to inform the different stake holders so as to cater for gender differences in the curriculum and in the teaching methodologies.

Sanz, et al(2007) carried out a study on “*Factors that affect decision making: gender and age differences*”.The results indicated that significant age and sex disparities exist in the decision-making processes of the participants of the study. This means that depending on their ages, the male and female respondents do not perform the same way as they make decisions. This is because the individual decision maker is influenced by the importance they attach to the task and the environmental factors that regulate the resolution process. Thus, doubts, uncertainty, and the dynamism that are involved in the decision are more important to the women. They also place more value on money and time and are more apprehensive about the consequences of their decision whether affecting them or other people. Women are more conscious of the restraints put on them by close persons and settings, and that their emotions are more paramount to them when making decisions. On the other hand, men allocate more importance to the way they analyze the information needed to make the decision. They also attach importance to the purposes of the decision and definition of the targets. According to the researchers, it is therefore evident that men and women are motivated by different aspects when making decisions. This researcher sought to establish if there are gender differences between the teacher trainees in decision making.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS.

This study was carried out on teacher trainees from three public diploma teacher training colleges in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties from March 2021 to July 2021. A total of 362 trainees (both male and female) were involved in the study.

2.0 Research Design:

The study employed a descriptive research design to examine decision making skills among teacher trainees from public diploma teacher training colleges in Nairobi and Nyeri counties in Kenya. According to Kothari (2004), descriptive studies are intended to collect data pertaining to the prevailing status of a phenomenon and draw deductions from the data collected without manipulating the research variables. Additionally, descriptive studies permit exploration of relationships between variables and make it possible for extensive collection of data over a wide area within a short period of time using the cross-sectional design (Kothari, 2004). Descriptive design was thus found to be most appropriate for the study in view of the variables of the study that did not require manipulation.

2.1 Population and Sample:

The Target population for the study consisted of 6659 trainees from three public diploma teacher training colleges in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties namely; KAGZ, KTTY and KISX. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling technique were used to select the respondents from the target population. Stratified sampling technique is where the entire target population is divided into different subgroups or strata. This ensured that the heterogeneity characteristics of the population was captured. In this study the population was first stratified according to the three colleges. This enabled the researcher to compare their levels of decision-making skills. They were also stratified according to gender. This was done to ensure equal representation according to the population. The sample size drawn from each stratum was determined using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sampling tables. According to this table, a population of 6659 teacher trainees is adequately represented by a sample of 362 respondents. Since this sample was to be proportionately distributed in the 3 teacher training colleges according to the representation of each gender, the number of teacher trainees to be drawn from each of the colleges was computed. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of the respondents by gender.

Table no 1: Sample Size of Teacher Trainees by Gender.

Name of College	Males	Females	Total
KAGZ	36	18	54
KTTY	121	68	189
KISX	46	73	119
Total	203	159	362

2.2 Procedure and methodology:

After written informed consent was obtained, data were collected using the Dindigal & Aminabhavi (2007) Psychosocial Competence Scale which was adopted and modified by the researcher. The tool consisted of a likert scale with 5 items that gathered data relating to the respondents’ decision-making skills. The scores obtained were used to compute a mean score which was used to rate the learners’ level of decision-making skills on a scale of 1 to 5. Respondents who scored below 3.0 were said to have a low level of the decision-making

skills, 3.0–3.9 moderate level and scores of 4.0 and above were considered to demonstrate a high level of the life skill.

2.3 Statistical analysis

Data was analyzed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The researcher then computed an independent sample t-test to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean levels of decision-making skills between males and females. The results were displayed using tables and charts.

III. RESULTS

The researcher sought to find out if there is a difference in the mean levels of decision-making skills between male and female teacher trainees in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties. The respondents were provided with 5 items in a likert scale to indicate their opinion. The scale ranged from 1-5, with 5 denoting strongly agree (SA), 4- agree (A), 3-not sure (NS), 2-disagree (D) and 1-strongly disagree (SD). The midpoint of the scale was a score of 3. The analysis of the items was collapsed into Agree, Disagree and Not sure. Therefore, any score below 3 denoted that respondent disagreed with the statement while scores above 3 signified that respondent agreed with the statement. The scores obtained were used to compute a mean score (\bar{x}) of decision-making skills of the respondents on a scale of 1 to 5. The findings are displayed in Table 2.

Table no2: Levels of Decision Making among Male and Female Teacher Trainees in the Diploma TTCs in Nyeri (rural) and Nairobi (urban) Counties.

Statement	Gender	SD	D	NS	A	SA	n	\bar{x}	S
After making a decision, I often doubt its effectiveness.	Male	19	51	30	72	31	203	3.22	1.24
	Female	24	55	13	45	22	159	2.91	1.34
I often do things/make decisions like others have done because it has worked for them.	Male	30	51	32	72	18	203	2.99	1.25
	Female	32	46	17	42	22	159	2.85	1.38
I am prepared to take risky decisions and accept their outcomes.	Male	10	21	36	94	42	203	3.67	1.07
	Female	12	14	30	67	36	159	3.64	1.15
Decisions need to be changed as and when required.	Male	10	17	14	93	69	203	3.96	1.09
	Female	7	9	4	74	65	159	4.14	1.02
I consider all aspects before making decisions	Male	2	10	64	80	47	203	3.79	.89
	Female	3	2	39	70	45	159	3.96	.87
Mean score (males) \bar{x}=3.53, Mean score (females) \bar{x}=3.50									

The results indicated that the overall mean levels of decision-making skills for both males and females were moderate and about the same (males \bar{x} =3.53 and females \bar{x} =3.50). However, some of the responses to the items in the questionnaire made by both gender stand out. 103 (64.78%) of the female and 136 (67%) of the male respondents admitted they are prepared to take risky decisions and accept their outcomes. 139 (87.42%) of the females and 162 (79.8%) of the males were confident that they could change decisions as and when required. Unfortunately, some of the risky decisions they could make have far reaching consequences whose effects could affect their destinies. 103 (64.78%) of the males and 67 (42.14%) of the females admitted they often doubt the effectiveness of their decisions. 90 (44.33%) of the males and 64 (40.25%) of the females revealed they make decisions like others because it has worked for them. This indicates that peer influence is a major factor as far as teacher trainees are concerned. However on the positive side, 127 (62.56%) of the males and 109 (68.55%) of the females indicated they consider all aspects before making a decision.

Results of Tests of the Research Hypothesis: The researcher then computed an independent sample t-test to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean levels of decision-making skills between males (\bar{x} =3.53) and females (\bar{x} =3.50). The results are displayed in Table 3.

Table no3: Comparison of Mean Levels of Decision-Making Skills between male and female Teacher Trainees
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Decision Making	Equal variances assumed	.532	.466	.509	360	.611	.02701	.05304	-.07729	.13131
	Equal variances not assumed			.513	347.400	.608	.02701	.05268	-.07660	.13062

The findings presented on (Table 7) indicated that the level of significance ($p=.611$) is more than the alpha value ($\alpha=.05$). There is therefore no statistically significant difference in the levels of decision-making between the male and female teacher trainees. The researcher thus concluded that the levels of decision-making between the males ($\bar{x}=3.53$) and females ($\bar{x}=3.50$) was largely the same.

IV. DISCUSSION

Results of this study revealed that males scored slightly higher ($\bar{x}=3.53$) than females ($\bar{x}=3.50$) in decision making. There was however no statistically significant difference in the levels of decision making between them. This is similar to Githui's (2017) findings that boys performed better in decision making than girls in both urban (Boys $\bar{x}=3.27$, Girls $\bar{x}=3.18$) and rural (Boys $\bar{x}=3.21$, Girls $\bar{x}=2.95$) settings. The differences in the mean scores could be as a result of the age difference between secondary school students and the teacher trainees, which may influence their responses to the questionnaires.

Orasanu & Connolly (1993) confirm the results of this study by establishing that decision making included sex-related influences and environmental aspects which vary from time to time and place to place. Stone and Neale (1984) also confirmed that there existed significant disparities in the mean scores of girls and boys in decision making skills. They submitted that boys tended to be more problem-focused and were more inclined to use straight forward approaches to figure out the obstacles they encountered from time to time (Stone & Neale, 1984). This was due to the assumption that males and females are socialized into unsimilar gender roles. The society underscores that boys are expected to be more assertive and independent in decision making. Girls on the other hand were expected to be flexible and submissive (Gilligan, 1982). Consequently, gender differences as well as the cosmopolitan environment of Nairobi County compared with the rural environment of Nyeri County could be among the variables that contributed to differences in the observed decision-making skills by the teacher trainees.

According to Brown et al., (1990); Rose & Rudolph (2006), girls create close and intimate networks with one or two female friends — a relationship based on intermutual support, self-exposure, empathy and cooperation. Thus, they find it easy to share with their close friends their emotions, thoughts and confusions they encounter on any decision they intend to make. Boys on the other hand are more drawn to building 'superficial connections', but are still influenced by their friends' inclinations and social pressure. This makes it arduous for them to make independent choices. The implication is that girls and boys appreciate the involvement of their friends in their decisions. However, the process of this influence differs between the two genders. This information may be relevant to the curriculum developers as they review the content of teacher trainees' life skills education. It could also be cascaded to lower levels so that teacher counsellors could appreciate the gender differences in decision making.

Results of the current study also indicated that peer influence is a major determinant in the way the teacher trainees make decisions. 40.25% of the females and 44.3% of the males admitted that they "make decisions like others have done since it has worked for them". This could imply their friends. The implication is that most of these students are not able to make independent decisions and that a large number of the trainees do not put into consideration the steps that lead to effective decision-making. One of the major steps should be to recognize the possible consequences of every option and selecting the one that is most favorable to the individual. It also implies that the trainees ignore the fact that the effects of some of those decisions are irreversible. It is evident that their main point of reference and affirmation are their peers. Therefore, the influence peers counsellors could have among the trainees cannot be underestimated and the GC departments may need to take the peer factor seriously in their programmes. Equipping them with skills on how to make positive influence on their colleagues may go a long way in helping their friends make the right choices. Probably the students' preference for peer acceptance was because at their age, they want to 'belong to

the group and not look different'. However, this contradicts Kamina's (2018) findings who observed that (75%) of the university students perceived peer counselling negatively. In addition, her study also revealed that 85% of the students never utilized Peer Counselling Services at any time while only 15% utilized Peer Counselling Services at different levels. The findings also revealed that more females (69%) than males (31%) had positive perception of the services. Since the students from both studies were of the same age group, probably the level of sensitization on the effectiveness of peer counselling may have contributed to the difference in perception.

The results also showed that 136 (67%) of males and 103 (64.78%) of females admitted that they were prepared to take risky decisions and accept their consequences. This trend raises concern as some of the outcomes may result in irreparable damage. These sentiments have been raised by the National Aids Strategic Plan (2009-2010) which noted that university and college female students were at high risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) due to unsafe sex owing to several factors including experimentation with drugs and in general the perception that they are not likely to be infected following engagement in unsafe sex. Gichuru (2019), observed that despite the high level of sex knowledge, the respondents still had a high probability of having unprotected sex ($\bar{x}=3.78$) and unplanned pregnancies ($\bar{x}=3.72$). The researcher concluded that having sexual and reproductive health knowledge alone has very little influence on changing sexual behaviour. There seems to be a gap between knowledge and application of the same. UNICEF (2002) reiterates that teaching approaches in life skills education should fundamentally be participatory in nature. However Githui (2018) found that the implementation of life skills education in Nairobi and Nyeri combined was 1.42 which indicates that it was low on a scale of 0 to 5. Probably further research on the teaching of life skills and availability of teaching learning materials may bridge this gap between knowledge and its application.

However, Sanz de Acedo Lizárraga, et al (2007) found that the differences between men and women in decision making depends on the context. The researchers sampled 589 Spaniards of both sexes (n=294 men and n=295 women) from three developmental stages: 207 youths who were first-year university students from different faculties, 205 adults from different professions and 177 retired men and women who were also professionals. Student's *t* test for independent samples revealed statistically significant differences between men and women in sex variable. The women allocated more importance than did the men to uncertainty [$t(587)=4.65, p<.001$], time/money constraints [$t(587)=5.07, p<.001$], the consequences of the decision [$t(587)=5.89, p<.001$], the task factor [$t(587)=6.35, p<.001$], emotions [$t(587)=3.68, p<.001$], and social pressure [$t(587)=5.39, p<.001$]. Conversely, men scored higher than women in information and goals [$t(587)=-6.42, p<.001$], motivation [$t(587)=-4.37, p<.001$], and work pressure [$t(587)=-7.52, p<.001$]. No differences were found in cognition, self-regulation, and the environmental factor. The researchers observed that there were significant sex and age differences in decision making. This implies that being man or woman will determine what you consider to be significant. The researcher had participants from different professions and age groups. The current researcher dealt with respondents from the same profession and with no major age differences, hence the differences in the results. This creates room for more research on gender differences in decision making.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to assess gender differences in decision making skills among diploma teacher trainees in Nyeri and Nairobi counties. The results indicated that the males scored higher ($\bar{x}=3.53$) than their female counterparts ($\bar{x}=3.50$). Though these are moderate scores, both males and females admitted that they could still make risky decisions and accept their outcomes, thus implying that there could be a gap between acquiring knowledge and applying it in real life situations. The findings of this study may be useful to the policy makers and curriculum developers to examine not only the content but also its application on a day-to-day basis. This could particularly be considered as the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) is rolled out for the teacher trainees. Peer influence was also found to be a major determinant in decision making among the trainees. The implication is that tertiary institutions need to strengthen, equip and prioritize training of the peer counsellors in order to make it more effective.

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