Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools: Current Perspectives

Volume 13, Issue 1, (2023) 21–35

www.gjgc.eu

Career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Eswatini

Alfred Fana Tsikati*, University of Eswatini, Department of Agricultural Education and Extension, Private Bag 4, Kwaluseni and M201, Eswatini, Swaziland,
Siboniso Mabuza, Khuphuka High School, Eswatini, Swaziland

Suggested Citation:
Tsikati, A. F. & Mabuza, S. (2023). Career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Eswatini. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools: Current Perspectives*, *13*(1), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.18844/gjgc.v13i1.8188

Receiv Received from December 28, 2022; revised from February 13, 2023; accepted from April 24, 2023.
Selection and peer review under responsibility of Assoc Prof. Dr. Nur Demirbas Celik, Alanya Alaadin Keykubat University, Turkey

Abstract

Understanding the career aspirations of students can inform policymakers and educators on how best they can be supported at society and school levels to facilitate the transition from school to further education and work. Existing literature is not comprehensive on the career aspirations of secondary school students in Eswatini, yet they are important. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Eswatini. The design of the study was a descriptive survey targeting Form-4 students, from eight schools in Eswatini. A total of 180 students were randomly sampled. A questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that most of the senior secondary students aspired to be medical doctors, pilots, and actors. Thus, being a medical doctor, pilot and actor were the most desired careers by senior secondary school students in Eswatini. The study recommended that career guidance and counselling officials should organise career expos so that students are exposed to a wide range of career choices.

Keywords: Career, career aspirations, career path, sources of aspiration;

*ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Alfred Fana Tsikati, Department of Agricultural Education and Extension, University of Eswatini, Private Bag 4, Kwaluseni and M201, Eswatini, Swaziland.
E-mail address: fanaalfred@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Understanding the career aspirations of students can inform policymakers and educators on how best they can be supported at society and school levels to facilitate the transition from school to further education and work (Kwok-Tung et al., 2019; Napolitano et al., 2020; Sellami et al., 2023). Career aspiration refers to the vocational possibilities or work preferences in a given ideal conditions (Metz et al., 2009). The concepts of aspirations are rooted in psychology and guided by the theory of achievement motivation. The achievement motivation theory postulates that people can learn to establish and acquire goals (McClelland et al., 1953; Murray, 1938). Teachers, peers, parents and other people who have a relationship with a person may affect that person's achievement motivation. Thus, education contributes to the process of aspiration formation (Bajema et al., 2002; Krannich et al., 2019; Zewude & Habtegiorgis, 2022).

According to Selcuk and Sirini (2004), future awareness plays an important role in the educational and occupational attainment of adolescents. Career awareness is important among students to realise the nation's dreams of improving the economy. Oluwatimilenin and JimohWale (2009) asserted that students need career education and counselling services that would expose them to modern career opportunities. This is imperative considering the reality of the high rate of unemployment among youth.

Lesedilesley (2004) found that students tend to aspire to a wide range of prestigious careers. However, African-Americans and Hispanic students were under-represented in prestigious professional occupations, such as executives, engineers and physicians, and over-represented in lower-paying jobs, such as social workers, housekeepers and janitors (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005). Marope (2010) found that few students aspired to science, mathematics and technology-based professions in Africa than in other developing regions. Marope (2010) revealed that only 9% of university graduates were engineers, while about 50% were trained in humanities and social sciences and 22% in education. Marope (2010) further revealed that more than 50% of the students studied engineering and science in China while only 2% of the students studied engineering in Eswatini.

The sources of career aspirations include intrinsic and extrinsic sources. Intrinsic sources include personal interests and professional development (Griffiths & Kaldi, 2007; Roche et al., 2021). Lesedilesley (2004) also found that students tend to be self-driven in their career aspirations. Kobia-Acquah et al. (2020) found that the career aspirations of students were influenced by career academic-related fields, interests, altruism and humanitarianism. Males were driven by finance-related, security and respect reasons, while females were motivated by significant others and the need for self-enhancement.

The literature presents numerous extrinsic sources of career aspiration. Hadebe (2010) found that students were motivated by seeing successful professionals in the desired field. Teacher and school environment plays a vital role for students. When becoming adolescents, they want others, which means parents, teachers, and peers to be important role models in adolescents' career development as students see their parents as more important in their lives than when they were children (Metz et al., 2009). Similarly, Edwards and Quinter (2011) found that teachers and career counsellors were also a source of career aspiration for students. Teachers were found to be more influential compared to career counsellors. Furthermore, Gatua (2014) reported that guidance and counselling services have an impact on students' social and emotional adjustment. The students

perceived that the environment provided by their schools was supportive of their educational and occupational aspirations (Bajema et al., 2002; Macracken & Barcinas, 1991; Ruzsa et al., 2020). However, Spaull (2013) argued that poor quality schooling at the primary and secondary levels in South Africa severely limited the youth's capacity to exploit further training opportunities.

Edwards and Quinter (2011) pointed at family members as sources of career aspirations for students. Similarly, Macracken and Barcinas (1991) observed that the life and experiences of secondary school students have been determined in part by the families and the communities in which they live. Specifically, several studies point to parents as the common source of career advice (Lee, 1989; Yang, 1981). MacKracken et al. (1991) emphasised that parents were more likely to expect their children to advance their education beyond high school. Similarly, Yang (1981) reported that the decision of youth to enter college was strongly influenced by the expectations of their parents. Lee (1989) advised that parents, regardless of their racial background, need to be fully aware of their influence on the aspirations and expectations of their children. Lesedilesley (2004) found that students tend to be influenced by their mothers in their aspirations more than any member of the family.

Finally, Lesedilesley (2004) concluded that some aspirations of the students tend to be associated with some of their demographic characteristics. Spaull (2013) reported that students develop educational and occupational plans that build upon their background and experiences. Edwards and Quinter (2011) found that students' career choices are influenced by factors such as outcome expectancies, individual variants such as gender, personal interests, learning experiences, environmental factors and personal contacts. Kobia-Acquah et al. (2020) argued that gender differences were observed in some motives for choosing degree programs as career fields.

1.1. Theoretical framework

The study was framed by the achievement motivation theory. The theory was postulated by Murray (1938). The theory was then refined by McClelland et al. (1953). The theory postulates that an individual's motivation to achieve something in life or the dire need to achieve a specific goal is governed by various internal factors such as willingness, determination, punctuality and personal drive, along with numerous external factors, such as pressures, expectations, targets, etc., set by relevant organizations, members of the family or the society. The theory argues that a person's need to achieve something and the reason behind his/her overall motivation to achieve a certain goal comes from within and is strongly related to the individual's need for power and affiliation.

The achievement motivation theory is relevant in the study as the study seeks to establish the career aspirations of secondary school students in Eswatini. The theory points to the need to achieve something in life or the dire need to achieve a specific goal; which in this study links well with the career aspirations of the secondary school students in Eswatini. The theory also touches on internal and external motivation factors that influence the achievement of the goal which relates to the motivational sources for career aspiration by the students. The presentation of motivational sources for career aspirations by the students was presented as both intrinsic and extrinsic.

1.2. Purpose of study

In Eswatini, a study related to career was conducted by Marope (2010) entitled 'The education system of Swaziland: Training and skills development for shared growth and competencies'. This

study was conducted more than a decade ago, yet a lot has changed in the education system. The existing literature is not comprehensive and exhaustive on the career aspirations of secondary school students in Eswatini. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Eswatini.

The purpose of the study was to identify the career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Eswatini. The objectives of the study were to:

- describe respondents by demographic characteristics and background information;
- identify career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Eswatini;
- identify the sources of career aspirations for senior secondary school students in Eswatini; and
- examine if there is a significant difference between the career aspirations of rural and urban schools in Eswatini.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The design of the study was descriptive research. The target population of the study was eight schools from all the regions of the country: Hhohho, Lubombo, Manzini and Shiselweni. Two schools were randomly sampled in each region and among these sampled schools were four rural and four urban schools. In each school, 35 students were randomly sampled; thus, the sample size was 280 students for the study. The Form-4 classes were used because this is the stage where the students choose subjects that determine their desired career path.

2.2. Data collection instrument

A close-ended questionnaire was developed from the literature and used in data collection. The self-administered questionnaire had three sections, namely, career aspirations, sources of the career aspirations, and demographic characteristics and background information. The questionnaire used a nominal rating scale to measure the career aspirations and sources of career aspirations for both rural and urban senior secondary school students in Eswatini. The 5-point nominal rating scale for the career aspirations had the following ranges: 1 = not desired, 2 = slightly desired, 3 = moderately desired, 4 = desire and 5 = highly desired. again, the five-point nominal rating scale for the sources of career aspirations had the following ranges: 1 = never supported, 2 = slightly supported, 3 = moderately supported, 4 = supported and 5 = highly supported. In the demographic characteristics and background information section, respondents were requested either to circle a number or fill in blank spaces. The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the Department of Agricultural Education and Extension at the University of Eswatini, a professional in the Career and Guidance Department in the Ministry of Education and Training and the Head of the Career and Guidance Department at Lobamba National High School.

A pilot study was conducted using 30 senior secondary school students from St Christopher High School and Mvimbeko High School. These students did not participate in the actual study. They were used to establish inter-item reliability using Cronbach's alpha and the reliability coefficient was $r = 0.76$.

2.3. Ethical consideration

The researcher collected data from February to March 2018. The researchers personally delivered the questionnaires to the students in the schools. Letters seeking permission to conduct the study were written to the school principals and the respondents, and permission was granted. Parents were asked to fill the accent forms for respondents who were under age and those who were above 18 years filled out the consent form. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the questionnaire was formulated such that the respondents' names were concealed. Also, the data were accessible only to the researchers.

2.4. Data analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 were used for analyzing the data.

3. Results

Table 1 depicts that most of the respondents were female students (*n* = 145, 51.9%). A majority of the students were in the age bracket of 15–17 years (*n* = 161, 55.5%). The respondents were dominated by students from the semi-urban area (*n* = 130, 46. 4%) and most of the respondents were from the Manzini region (*n* = 86, 30.8%). A majority of the parents of the respondents possessed a school leaving certificate (O'level): father (*n* = 73, 26.1%) and mother (*n* = 93, 33.2%).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics and Background Information

	f	%
Sex		
Male	135	48.2
Female	145	51.9
Age		
15–17 years	161	55.5
18–21 years	90	32
21–25 years.	23	8.2
Above 25 years	6	4.3
Home location		
Rural	75	26.8
Semi-urban	130	46.4
Urban	75	26.75
Region		
Hhohho	54	19.3
Manzini	86	30.8
Lubombo	73	26.05
Shiselweni	67	23.95
Father qualification		
O'level	73	26.1
Certificate	51	18.2
Diploma	39	13.95
Bachelor's degree	39	13.95

Master's degree	25	8.95
Doctorate	15	5.35
Never school	38	13.55
Mother qualification		
O'level	93	33.2
Certificate	47	16.8
Diploma	52	18.6
Bachelor's degree	25	8.9
Master's degree	15	5.25
Doctorate	14	5
Never school	34	12.15

3.1. Career aspirations of senior secondary school students in terms of academic fields

Table 2 reveals that the senior secondary school students moderately aspired for all the career fields (*M* = 2.90, SD = 1.42), except security (*M* = 2.45, SD = 1.36). The prominent academic career fields were medical and health (*M* = 3.38, SD = 1.37), computer specialist (*M* = 3.34, SD = 1.45), engineering careers (*M* = 3.24, SD = 1.43), pilot and aviation (*M* = 3.15, SD = 1.47) and scientists careers (*M* = 3.12, SD = 1.37). Among the least-rated career academic fields was an agriculture-related career (*M* = 2.50, SD = 1.32). The findings are consistent with those by Lesedilesley (2004). Lesedilesley (2004) reported that students tend to aspire to a wide range of prestigious careers. However, Found and Byars-Winston (2005) found that African-Americans and Hispanic students were under-represented in prestigious professional occupations, such as executives, engineers and physicians, and over-represented in lower paying jobs, such as social workers, housekeepers and janitors (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005). Marope (2010) found that few students aspired to science, mathematics and technology-based professions in Africa than in other developing regions.

Table 2

Career Aspirations of Senior Secondary School Students in Terms of Academic Fields

Career aspirations	*M*	SD
Medical and health	3.38	1.37
Computer specialist	3.34	1.45
Engineering careers	3.24	1.43
Pilot and aviation	3.15	1.47
Scientists' careers	3.12	1.37
Law careers	3.07	1.53
Entertainment careers	3.03	1.43
Education careers	2.87	1.41
News and media	2.66	1.39
Wildlife careers	2.62	1.41
Artistic careers	2.62	1.34
Sports careers	2.61	1.57
Agricultural careers	2.50	1.32
Security careers	2.45	1.36
Overall	2.90	1.42

3.2. Specific career aspirations of senior secondary school students

Table 3 reveals that most of the senior secondary school students aspired to be medical doctors (*M* = 4.04, SD = 1.32), pilots (*M* = 3.56, SD = 1.54) and actors (*M* = 3.57, SD = 1.57). The following were the prominent careers that the senior secondary school students moderately aspired for: mathematician (*M* = 3.48, SD = 1.53), environmental scientist (*M* = 3.47, SD = 1.22), computer information (*M* = 3.43, SD = 1.43), chemical engineer (*M* = 3.43, SD = 1.44), judge (*M* = 3.42, SD = 1.47), web developer (*M* = 3.42, SD = 1.51), nurse (*M* = 3.39, SD = 1.41), computer software developer (*M* = 3.38, SD = 1.41), mechanical engineer (*M* = 3.36, SD = 1.45), musician (*M* = 3.34, SD = 1.56), director/producer (*M* = 3.34, SD = 1.32), pharmacist (*M* = 3.33, SD = 1.36), climate scientist (*M* = 3.32, SD = 1.31), therapist (*M* = 3.29, SD = 1.31), psychologist (*M* = 3.29, SD = 1.38), physicist (*M* = 3.28, SD = 1.35), Lawyer (*M* = 3.28, SD = 1.55), electrical engineer (*M* = 3.28, SD = 1.42), civil engineer (*M* = 3.25, SD = 1.43), management (*M* = 3.25, SD = 1.32), computer artist (*M* = 3.24, SD = 1.33), dentist (*M* = 3.23, SD = 1.45), journalist (*M* = 3.19, SD = 1.47), career advisor (*M* = 3.18, SD = 1.43), chemist (*M* = 3.17, SD = 1.44), animal scientist (*M* = 3.15, SD = 1.49), computer hardware (*M* = 3.13, SD = 1.47), physician (*M* = 3.13, SD = 1.35), food scientist (*M* = 3.11, SD = 1.49), designer (*M* = 3.10, SD = 1.61), wildlife biologist (*M* = 3.06, SD = 1.47), flight attendants (*M* = 3.04, SD = 1.37) and teacher (*M* = 3.02, SD = 1.38). The students did not have many career aspirations for the following: horticulturist (*M* = 2.24, SD = 1.32), agronomist (*M* = 2.13, SD = 1.28), drawing artist (*M* = 2.36, SD = 1.49), painting artist (*M* = 2.33, SD = 1.39), drafter (*M* = 2.07, SD = 1.13), sculpturing artist (*M* = 2.00, SD = 1.13), park ranger (*M* = 1.87, SD = 1.25), botanist (*M* = 2.42, SD = 1.28), announcer (*M* = 2.46, SD = 1.37), caterer (*M* = 2.47, SD = 1.31), athlete (*M* = 2.37, SD = 1.54), soldier (*M* = 2.43, SD = 1.45), fire-fighter (*M* = 2.04, SD = 1.22) and secretary/receptionist (*M* = 2.21, SD = 1.03).

Table 3

Specific Career Aspirations of Senior Secondary School Students

Agricultural careers	*M*	SD
Animal scientist	3.15	1.49
Food scientist	3.11	1.49
Agricultural education	2.60	1.32
Agricultural extension	2.46	1.38
Economist	2.55	1.50
Horticulturist	2.24	1.32
Agronomist	2.13	1.28
Artistic careers		
Computer artist	3.24	1.33
Designer	3.10	1.61
Photographer	2.57	1.37
Drawing artist	2.36	1.49
Painting artist	2.33	1.39
Drafter	2.07	1.13
Sculpturing artist	2.00	1.13
Architect	1.95	1.23
Educational careers		
Career advisor	3.18	1.43
Teacher	3.02	1.38
Child care	2.66	1.49

Librarian	2.59	1.35
Wildlife		
Wildlife biologist	3.06	1.47
Wildlife officer	2.92	1.52
Park ranger	1.87	1.25
Scientist		
Mathematician	3.48	1.53
Environmental scientist	3.47	1.22
Climate scientist	3.32	1.31
Physicist	3.28	1.35
Chemist	3.17	1.44
Zoologist	2.72	1.47
Botanist	2.42	1.28
News and media		
Journalist	3.19	1.47
Reporter	2.82	1.34
Announcer	2.46	1.37
Entertainment		
Actor	3.57	1.57
Musician	3.34	1.56
Director/producer	3.34	1.32
Management	3.25	1.32
Dancers	2.69	1.56
Interior decorator	2.57	1.33
Caterer	2.47	1.31
Sports career		
Coach	2.86	1.59
Athlete	2.37	1.54
Law career		
Judge	3.42	1.47
Lawyer	3.28	1.55
Attorney	2.51	1.27
Pilot and aviation		
Pilot	3.56	1.54
Flight attendants	3.04	1.37
Air traffic controller	2.87	1.51
Engineering career		
Chemical engineer	3.43	1.44
Civil engineer	3.25	1.43
Electrical engineer	3.28	1.42
Mechanical engineer	3.36	1.45
Industrial engineer	2.88	1.40
Computer specialist career		
Computer information	3.43	1.43
Computer software developer	3.38	1.41
Web developer	3.42	1.51
Computer hardware	3.13	1.47
Medical and health career		

Doctor	4.04	1.32
Nurse	3.39	1.41
Pharmacist	3.33	1.36
Therapist	3.29	1.31
Psychologist	3.29	1.38
Dentist	3.23	1.45
Physician	3.13	1.35
Security career		
Police	2.89	1.40
Soldier	2.43	1.45
Fire-fighter	2.04	1.22
Other careers		
Social worker	2.51	1.37
Secretary/receptionist	2.21	1.03
Carpenter	2.00	1.26

3.3. Sources of the career aspirations of students

Table 4 depicts that the sources of career aspirations for the senior secondary students were predominantly intrinsic (*M* = 3.96, SD = 1.14) than extrinsic (*M* = 3.56, SD = 1.33). The senior secondary school students were highly influenced by the desire to achieve (*M* = 4.55, SD = 0.80). The student's career aspirations were intrinsically coming from self-respect (*M* = 4.40, SD = 0.95), exposure through learning (*M* = 4.35, SD = 0.85), love and belonging (*M* = 4.05, SD = 1.25), income (*M* = 3.90, SD = 1.25), self-exploration (*M* = 3.90, SD = 1.20), safety and security (*M* = 3.65, SD = 1.30) and power (*M* = 3.60, SD = 1.30). Extrinsically, the career aspirations of the senior secondary school students were coming from mother (*M* = 4.35, SD = 1.20), school (*M* = 3.95, SD = 1.15), role models (*M* = 3.95, SD = 1.20), pastors (*M* = 3.60, SD = 1.45), siblings (*M* = 3.60, SD = 1.20), church members (*M* = 3.60, SD = 1.35), teachers (*M* = 3.60, SD = 1.40) and experiences (*M* = 3.50, SD = 1.30).

Table 4

Sources of the Career Aspirations of Students

Intrinsic sources	*M*	SD
Desire to archive	4.55	0.8
Self-respect	4.40	0.95
Exposure through learning	4.35	0.85
Love and belonging	4.05	1.25
Income	3.90	1.25
Self-exploration	3.90	1.20
Safety and security	3.65	1.30
Power	3.60	1.30
Physical survival	3.25	1.35
Average	3.96	1.14
Extrinsic sources		
Mother	4.35	1.20
School	3.95	1.15
Role models	3.95	1.20
Pastors	3.60	1.45
Siblings	3.60	1.20

Church members	3.60	1.35
Teachers	3.60	1.40
Experiences	3.50	1.30
Father	3.45	1.55
Career guidance	3.40	1.25
Friends and peers	3.35	1.40
Media	3.30	1.40
Societal values	3.20	1.30
Lecturers	3.05	1.45
Average	3.56	1.33

3.4. Difference between the career aspirations from rural and urban schools in Eswatini

An Independent *t*-test was used to identify differences between the career aspirations of students from rural and urban schools in Eswatini. Table 5 reveals that there was a significant difference between the career aspirations of students from rural and urban schools in Eswatini (t = −4.631, p = 0.01). Students from rural schools had better career aspirations than those from urban areas.

The effect size was calculated using Cohen's (1988) formula to determine the practical difference (magnitude) between the students from rural and urban places.

The formula for calculating effect size is as follows:
$d = Mean_1 – Mean_2 / SD_{pooled}$
where:
d = effect size;
$Mean_1$ = mean of students from rural areas;
$Mean_2$ = mean of students from urban areas;
$SD1^2$ = standard deviation for a mean of students from rural areas;
$SD2^2$ = SD for a mean of students from urban areas;
$SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{[(SD1^2 + SD2^2)/2]}$ = square root of the standard deviations divided by two;
$SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{0.43^2 + 0.53^2)/2]} = 0.34$; and
$d = [3.04 - 2.77]/0.34 = 0.79$.

The higher the effect size, the greater the practical value on the magnitude between the female and male students on factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling at the University of Eswatini. According to Cohen (1988), a large effect size has a value of d = 0.80 and above; a medium effect size (d) is between 0.50 and 0.79; while a small effect size has a d value of 0.49 and below. The findings of the study revealed a small effect size (d = 0.79). This implies that the difference between students from rural and urban schools on their career aspirations was medium.

Table 5
Differences Between the Student's Career Aspirations From Rural and Urban Schools

Location	*N*	*M*	SD	*t*-value	*p*	*d*
Rural	140	3.04	0.43	−4.631	0.011	0.79
Urban	140	2.77	0.53			

4. Discussion

The findings of the study confirm the existing literature as it depicts that students tend to be self-driven in their choice of career aspirations (Lesedilesley, 2004). Kobia-Acquah et al. (2020) found that the career aspirations of students were influenced by academic-related career fields, interests, altruism and humanitarianism. The findings of the study also support the achievement motivation theory which states that there are intrinsic sources of career aspiration.

The findings of the study are harmonious with the existing literature. Lesedilesley (2004) found that students tend to aspire to a wide range of prestigious careers. However, Found and Byars-Winston (2005) found that African-Americans and Hispanic students were under-represented in prestigious professional occupations such as executives, engineers and physicians and over-represented in lower-paying jobs such as social workers, housekeepers and janitors (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005). Marope (2010) found that few students aspired to science, mathematics and technology-based professions in Africa than in other developing regions. The achievement motivation theory was confirmed as the senior secondary school students had career aspirations that were postulated by the theory.

The students were extrinsically inspired by the mother, school, role models, pastors, siblings, church members, teachers and experiences. The sources of career aspirations include intrinsic and extrinsic sources. These sources of career aspiration include professionals in the related field (Hadebe, 2010); teachers and school environment (Bajema et al., 2002; Macracken & Barcinas, 1991; Metz, et al., 2009); career counsellors (Edwards & Quinter, 2011; Gatua, 2014); family members (Edwards & Quinter, 2011; Macracken and Barcinas, 1991); parent (Lee, 1989; Yang, 1981) and demographic characteristics and background experiences (Lesedilesley, 2004; Spaull, 2013). Lesedilesley (2004) found that students tend to be influenced by their mothers in several of their aspirations more than any member of the family. The findings of the study also support the achievement motivation theory which states that there are extrinsic sources of career aspiration.

The study implies that the difference between students from rural and urban schools on their career aspirations was medium. The findings are inconsistent with those from McCracken and Barcinas (1991) who found that the career aspirations of students from rural and urban schools were not significant at Ohio state in America. MacBrayn (1987) found that rural students registered academic aptitude scores similar to those of urban students.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the study was that the senior secondary school students were aspiring for the following career fields: medical and health, computer specialist, engineering careers, pilot and aviation, and scientists career. They do not aspire to the career field in security. The students' aspiration for the agriculture career field is wanting. The career most aspired for by the senior students in Eswatini is to be a medical doctor, pilot and actor. The senior secondary school students also aspired for the following careers in the following order: mathematician, environmental scientist, computer information officer, chemical engineer, judge, web developer, nurse, computer software developer, mechanical engineer, musician, director/producer, pharmacist, climate scientist, therapist, psychologist, physicist, lawyer, electrical engineer, civil engineer, management, computer

artist, dentist, journalist, career advisor, chemist, animal scientist, computer hardware, physician, food scientist, designer, wildlife biologist, flight attendants and teacher. Furthermore, it was concluded that the senior secondary school students were not interested in the following careers: horticulturist, agronomist, drawing artist, painting artist, drafter, sculpturing artist, park ranger, botanist, announcer, caterer, athlete, soldier, fire-fighter and secretary/receptionist. Furthermore, the career aspirations of the senior secondary school students from rural schools were better than those from urban schools.

Another conclusion drawn was that the senior secondary school students were intrinsically inspired in choosing a career. The most inspiring intrinsic source of a career aspiration was the desire to achieve. The students were also intrinsically inspired by self-respect, exposure through learning, love and belonging, income, self-exploration, safety and security, and power. The researcher also concluded that the career aspirations of the senior secondary school students were extrinsically inspired by the mother, school, role models, pastors, siblings, church members, teachers and experiences.

The findings and conclusions of the study imply that the Ministries of Education and schools around the world should craft the curriculum in a way that supports the career aspirations of the students. Medical schools are absent or few in many developing countries, yet students are interested in medical careers such as being a medical doctor; thus, developing countries like Eswatini should have such institutions. Engineering training opportunities should be increased, coupled with opportunities for computer-related training. Students' desires should be given priority when assisting them with their careers. Schools should organise periodic career education and strengthen their counselling services so that students can be exposed to the various emerging and highly promising careers in the modern world.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, it was recommended that the Career Guidance and Counselling Department provided in the schools must be strengthened as it is vital to the student's career aspirations. The students should get enough information or orientation on the careers they can pursue upon school leaving. Schools should consider organising career expos where representatives from different occupational fields can present to the students. The career selection software should be availed to the students so that they can have the career self-check. The students should always be supported in the career in which they have an interest.

Programs should be established to capacitate the different individuals directly or indirectly influential on the career aspirations of students such as parents, siblings, peers, pastors and significant others. Efforts should be made in exposing and encouraging students to consider career fields such as security and agriculture. The same is true for specific careers such as horticulturist, agronomist, drawing artist, painting artist, drafter, sculpturing artist, park ranger, botanist, announcer, caterer, athlete, soldier, fire-fighter and secretary/receptionist.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to appreciate the Form-5 students in Eswatini for participating in this study. Special thanks are directed to Mr. E. M. Manana, a former lecturer at Ngwane College for his tireless effort in proofreading and editing this journal article.

References

Bajema, D. H., Miller, W. W., & Williams, D. L. (2002). Aspirations of rural youth. *Journal of Agricultural Education, 43*(3), 61–71. https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/219/

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. Erlbaum.

Edwards, K., & Quinter, K. E. (2011). Factors influencing students career choice among secondary school students in Kisimu Municipality Kenya. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Education Research and Policy Studies, 2*(2), 81–87. https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/EJC135714

Fouad, N. A., & Byars-Winston, A. M. (2005). Cultural context of career choice: Meta-analysis of race/ethnicity differences. *The Career Development Quarterly, 53*(3), 223–233. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2005.tb00992.x

Gatua, D. M. (2014, November). Impact of guidance and counselling services on students social and emotional adjustment in public urban and rural secondary schools in Nakuru and Uasin Gishu Conties, Kenya. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR), 3*(11), 48–60. http://www.ijsr.net

Griffiths, M. L., & Kaldi, C. (2007). The role of work and cultural values in the occupational choice, satisfaction, and success: A theoretical statement. *Journal of Counselling and Development, 80*, 48–56.

Hadebe, A. (2010). *Factors affecting students' selection of a programme of study at UNISWA: A case study of the Faculty of Agriculture 2009/2010* [Unpublished bachelor's thesis]. University of Swaziland.

Kobia-Acquah, E., Owusu, E., Akuffo, K. O., Koomson, N. Y., & Pascal, T. M. (2020). Career aspirations and factors influencing career choices of optometry students in Ghana. *PLoS One, 15*(5). https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0233862

Krannich, M., Goetz, T., Lipnevich, A. A., Bieg, M., Roos, A. L., Becker, E. S., & Morger, V. (2019). Being over-or under challenged in class: Effects on students' career aspirations via academic self-concept and boredom. *Learning and Individual Differences, 69*, 206–218. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S104160801830164X

Kwok-Tung, T., Chi-Kin, J. L., King-Fai, S. H., Wai-Sun, D. C., & Nim-Chi, K. C. (2019). Academic and career aspiration and destinations: A Hong Kong perspective on adolescent transition. *Hindawi Education Research International*. https://www.hindawi.com/journals/edri/2019/3421953/abs/

Lee, C. (1989). An investigation of the psychosocial variables in the occupational aspirations and adolescents: Implications for vocational education. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 17*(3), 28–34. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ298896

Lesedilesley, M. (2004). *The aspirations of high school completers in Southern region, Botswana* [Unpublished thesis]. Research Project Report University of Swaziland.

MacBrayne, P. S. (1987). Education and occupational aspiration of rural youth: A review literature. *Research in Rural Education, 4*(3), 135–139.

Macracken, J., & Barcinas, J. D. T. (1991). Differences between rural and urban schools, students characteristics and students' aspirations in Ohio. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 7*, 29–40. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=7effcb6131bf2e52cf9738b0f2ab960782f5236e

Marope, M. (2010). The education system of Swaziland: Training and skills development for shared growth and competences. In T. W. Bank (Ed.), African Human Development Series. www.worldbank.org/newelibrary

McClelland, D. C., Atkinson, J. W., Clark, R. A., & Lowell, E. L. (1953). *The achievement motive.* Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Metz, A. J., Fouad, N., & Ihle-Helledy, K. (2009). Career aspirations and expectations of college students demographic and labor market comparisons. *Journal of Career Assessment, 17*(2), 155–171. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1069072708328862

Murray, H. A. (1938). *Explorations in personality*. Oxford University Press.

Napolitano, C. M., Hoff, K. A., Ming, C. W. J., Tu, N., & Rounds, J. (2020). Great expectations: Adolescents' intentional self-regulation predicts career aspiration and expectation consistency. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 120*, 103423. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001879120300488

Oluwatimilenin, J. B., & JimohWale, O. J. (2009, January). Career aspirations: An investigation of senior secondary school students awareness of contemporary high-profile careers. *European Scientific Journal, 8*(1), 47–70. https://tinyurl.com/59ap9p7r

Roche, R., Manzi, J., & Kruithoff, B. C. (2021). The benefits of being a "Buddy": Exploring the medical student experience as mentor to minority high-school students. *Health Equity, 5*(1), 1–7. https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/heq.2020.0060

Ruzsa, G., Szeverenyi, C., & Varga, K. (2020). Person-and job-specific factors of intuitive decision-making in clinical practice: Results of a sample survey among Hungarian physicians and nurses. *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, 8*(1), 152–184. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21642850.2020.1741372

Selcuk, R., & Sirini, M. A. (2004, May-June). Future aspirations of urban youth adolescents: A person-in-context model. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 17*(3), 437–459. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0951839042000204607

Sellami, A., Santhosh, M., Bhadra, J., & Ahmad, Z. (2023). High school students' STEM interests and career aspirations in Qatar: An exploratory study. *Heliyon, 9*(3). https://www.cell.com/heliyon/pdf/S2405-8440(23)01105-2.pdf

Spaull, N. (2013, October). South Africa's education crisis: The quality of education in South Africa; 1994-2011. *Center for Development, 7*, 38–70. https://section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Spaull-2013-CDE-report-South-Africas-Education-Crisis.pdf

Yang, S. (1981). Differential socialization in the classroom: Implications for equal opportunities. In G. Spindler (Ed.), *Doing the ethnography of schooling* (Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 268–309). CBS College Publishing.

Zewude, B., & Habtegiorgis, T. (2022). Higher education and career aspirations among secondary school students in Southern Ethiopia. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 27*(1), 235–248. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02673843.2022.2076604