

Orientation Services and Course Satisfaction among Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Trainees in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between orientation guidance services and course satisfaction among trainees in TVET institutions in Kakamega County, Kenya. Holland's theory of vocational choice guided the study. A concurrent Triangulation design was adopted. The study targeted 12807 trainees, four registrars, 4 Deputy Principals in charge of academics, and 4 Guidance and Counseling Coordinators from the TVET institutions in Kakamega County. The use of questionnaires and interview schedule collected data. The instruments were piloted among 38 trainees from Kisiwa TTI in neighboring Bungoma County of Kenya. The study established a significant positive correlation between orientation services ($r=.473$; $p=.000$) and course satisfaction among TVET trainees. Orientation services accounted for 22.1% of the variation in the level of course satisfaction. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the Administrators of TVET institutions ensure the implementation of TVET academic policy in the institutions to enhance the adequate provision of academic services.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Student course satisfaction is an essential indicator of the quality of learning experiences since delighted students are more likely to remain in and, ultimately, successfully graduate from college than unsatisfied students, who are likely to be less willing to attend classes regularly and are more likely to quit their studies [1]. Student satisfaction refers to student perceptions of learning experiences and the perceived value of a course [2], while course satisfaction is an overall measure of students' perceived benefit from a course. Every individual must, at one time or another, be confronted by the problem of occupational choice and many students encounter this problem when they are required to choose study programs leading to their future careers [3]. The provision of career guidance services helps inspire students toward success and enables them to make

informed decisions from the many choices open to them. Left unguided, students are likely to choose courses of study without directly relating them to their interests and abilities. Thus, career guidance services are invaluable in enabling students to select courses of their satisfaction that best fit their abilities, interest, and personality.

Career guidance services are explained in different ways by various researchers, but all serve one purpose. Lunenburg [4] identified any guidance program's four core areas: assessment, information, placement and follow-up, and counseling assistance services. While according to Balçı [5], career guidance services include guidance, advising, education, placement, coaching, and mentoring in the educational setting. On the other hand, Hossain and Faisal [6] listed the components of the guidance and counseling program as the orientation service, information service, counseling, career and placement service, referral service, remedial service, follow-up service, and evaluation service. According to Oberoi [7], the guidance and counseling services provided in learning institutions include orientation, placement, appraisal, and educational and information services. Despite the many guidance and counseling services listed by different researchers, the current study concentrated on orientation, appraisal, educational, and information services offered while students are still in the Institution. The level of career guidance development and implementation varies from country to country. In the United States, comprehensive school counseling program with a focus on academic development, personal-social development, and career development is used in many states [8]. A comprehensive school guidance program helps all students gain competencies in personal/social, educational, and career development at all educational levels, which underpin students' academic success. Although career guidance is often considered part of the school counselors' responsibilities [9], current state and national mandates focusing on academic achievement have drawn critical counseling resources away from career guidance, with high school counselors spending less time on career guidance than they preferred.

Similarly, in Germany, career guidance is provided by both schools and employment agencies, with the services being more intense to students in the lower track than in the middle track. There is also much regional variation in the type and quantity of school-based counseling [10]. Thus, the German career guidance system is traditionally based on a distinction between educational guidance in the educational sector and vocational guidance in the vocational training and employment sector. However, this differentiation is increasingly losing meaning in favor of integrative and lifelong guidance provision across all sectors. The critical goal of career guidance offered by employment agencies is to support the transition into an apprenticeship [10].

In China, Hong Kong, the Whole-School Approach (WSA) model of career counseling that involves all teachers in identifying students with problems and offering assistance was introduced as an educational policy in 1990 [11]. Career education has been an integral part of the schools' curriculum with rapid expansion and adaptation of career interventions and theories from Western nations. Career and Life Planning Grants (CLP) are provided to all public-sector schools and direct subsidy schools (DSS) with a senior secondary level meant to enhance the capacity of teaching staff to cater to students' career-

related developmental needs precisely. Currently, there is a paradigm shift in the roles of career guidance teachers, who are not only information disseminators but also counselors who guide students toward formulating and attaining their academic and vocational goals following their interests, abilities, and orientations [12].

The provision of guidance and counseling in Kenya is equally inadequate. Formal guidance and counseling were introduced in the 1970s following the recommendations of the Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies. However, implementing guidance and counseling programs is faced with challenges, including a lack of standardized training curriculums, ethical standards, counseling models, and role ambiguity [13]. The practice does not exist in-depth, nor is it provided coherently and comprehensively, and fails to address career guidance, personal development, and educational mentoring holistically. The school counselor's role is unclear; most still have teaching responsibilities over and above counseling duties [14]. The absence of career information and counseling is evident in many schools. Therefore, it is expected that trainees enrolled in TVET institutions should study courses of interest and acquire the relevant skills to attain the country's development goals. However, changes in courses inside or beyond a program of study, dropouts, and delay in graduation are common in TVET institutions despite the existence of career guidance services in all TVET institutions, indicative of students' dissatisfaction with the courses of study. Against this background, the study sought to investigate the relationship between career guidance services and course satisfaction among trainees in TVET institutions in Kakamega County, Kenya.

Orientation services help trainees adjust better to the school environment and are key to students' success as it provides the student with information relevant to their stay in the Institution. The programs aim to introduce students to not only college life and the services available but also other students and make them feel like they are part of the college community, which in turn helps to create a comfortable place for learning [15]. The services are efforts to promote the successful transition to college for new students by providing the first opportunity for the students and the Institution to learn about each other, and to begin developing relationships that promote student development, success, and completion. Orientation services equip students with comprehensive information about curricula requirements, institutional policies, services, and resources [16]. Atkinson [17] reports that the identified goals of student orientation programs are to help first-year students succeed academically, to assist students in their overall personal adjustment to college by introducing them to campus life and the importance of active participation on campus, and to provide opportunities for faculty and staff to learn more about the joining first-year students.

2. METHOD

Research Design

The study adopted a concurrent triangulation design within the mixed methods approach. Mixed methods is a research approach in which researchers collect, analyze and integrate quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a sustained long-term

program of inquiry to address the research questions [18]. Quantitative research employs numbers and accuracy [19] and enables the researcher to establish how much of the attribute or characteristic is present [20]. This design was relevant to the current study since the data on the relationship between career guidance services and trainees' course satisfaction in TVET institutions was obtained through a questionnaire and interview.

Study participants

The study targeted a total of 12807 trainees from national TVET institutions; (8757 from Sigalagala National Polytechnic, 1489 from Shamberere Technical Training Institute, 1416 from Bushiangala Technical Training Institute, and 1146 from Butere Technical and Vocational College 4 Registrars, 4 Guidance and Counseling Coordinators, and 8 Deputy Principals from the TVET institutions. Subsequently, the sample consisted of 388 trainees, all 4 Registrars, the 4 Guidance and Counselling Coordinators, and the 4 Deputy Principals in charge of academics. The 4 Registrars, 4 Guidance and Counselling Coordinators, and 4 Deputy Principals in charge of academics were purposively sampled because they are in charge of trainees' registration, academic affairs, and their adjustment to the college environment, respectively, and thus possess required information on career guidance services as predictors of course satisfaction among trainees in TVET institutions.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire administered to 388 trainees was formulated according to the study objectives and contained structured and unstructured items meant to elicit responses from trainees. Structured questions were used to get information by providing a list of alternatives for respondents to select answers that best described their opinions. The Research Assistants administered the questionnaires to the 388 trainees in their institutions. The statements were rated on a five-point Likert scale where the participants indicated whether they Strongly Agree (SA) with the statement with a score of 5, Agree (A) with a score of 4, or Undecided (U) with a score of 3 or Disagree (D) with a score of 2 or Strongly Disagree (SD) with a score of 1. The present study employed a semi-structured interview schedule to conduct in-depth interviews on trainees' course satisfaction in TVET institutions. The strength of semi-structured interviews is that even though the questions are pre-planned before the interview, the interviewee can elaborate and explain issues through open-ended questions. The interview schedule examining research objectives on the relationship between career guidance services and course satisfaction among trainees was administered to 4 Guidance and counseling Coordinators, 4 Registrars, and 4 Deputy Principals in charge of academics from the sampled institutions.

To enhance the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out on 38 (10%) trainees from the Kisiwa Technical Training Institute in the neighboring Bungoma county with similar characteristics to pretest the interview schedule, and the instrument was administered to the Guidance and Counselling Coordinator in the same Institution. Ten percent of the sample (38) was appropriate for the pilot study because the number of cases in the pretest is between 1% and 10% depending on the sample size [21]. The internal validity of the constructs was tested by subjecting the survey data to suitability

tests using the Kaiser-Meyer-Okin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO Index) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

Procedure

The researcher obtained a research authorization permit from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) through the Board of Post-Graduate Studies of JOOUST. The researcher and two Research Assistants then visited the sampled institutions for an introductory meeting with the Guidance and Counseling Coordinators, Registrars, and Deputy Principals of sampled TVET institutions explaining the research purpose and requesting consent to participate in the study and establishing rapport with participants before the interview was essential to create a positive effect on the subsequent development of the interview [22]. At agreed dates, the Research Assistants took the data collection instruments to the respondents. The questionnaires to the sampled student respondents were administered by the Guidance and Counseling Coordinators and the Research Assistants and were filled out within one day. The Research Assistants conducted the interviews.

Data analysis

Quantitative data from the closed-ended items were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables, graphs, percentages, and bar graphs. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between variables at a significance level of 0.5. Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26 was used to analyze the data. Qualitative data collected from interviews with Registrars, Guidance and Counseling Coordinators, and Deputy Principals of TVET institutions in Kakamega County was analyzed using a thematic approach. Themes are recurrent patterns in data that represent a concept. Thematic analysis analyzes classifications, presents themes (patterns) that relate to the data in great detail, and deals with diverse subjects through interpretations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study investigated the relationship between orientation services and course satisfaction among TVET trainees. The inferential statistics analysis was used to establish whether orientation services influence course satisfaction among the TVET trainees. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine the degree of relationships between orientation services and course satisfaction among TVET trainees. The variables' scores were converted into ratio-scaled data by mean computing responses per respondent. The correlation analysis result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation Analysis of Orientation Services and Course Satisfaction

	Orientation Services	Course Satisfaction
Orientation Services	Pearson Correlation 1	.473**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	342

	Orientation Services	Course Satisfaction
Course Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation .473**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) .000	
	N 342	342

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of the correlation analysis presented in Table 1 indicate that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between orientation services and course satisfaction among TVET trainees ($n=342$; $r=.473$; $p=.000$). This implies that there is a direct relationship between orientation services and course satisfaction among TVET trainees, with higher levels of orientation services resulting into improved course satisfaction among TVET trainees. On the contrary, Kamenye, et al. [23] revealed that some schools do not have career guidance programs, and those that do start giving career advice to learners very late, and this was one of the reasons for the change of course of study.

Regression analysis was used to determine the degree of influence of orientation services on course satisfaction among TVET trainees. A coefficient of determination was computed to estimate the influence of orientation services on course satisfaction among TVET trainees. The results of the model summary of regression are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Model Summary of Orientation Services on Course Satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.473 ^a	.224	.221	.54764

a. Predictors: (Constant), Orientation Services

The model shows that orientation services accounted for 22.1%, as signified by the Adjusted R Square value of .221, of the variation in the level of course satisfaction among TVET trainees. This is a reasonably strong influence of a variable on the dependent variable. Table 2 shows the coefficient values of the regression model of the influence of orientation services on the level of course satisfaction among TVET trainees.

Table 3. Coefficients-Influence of Orientation Services on Course Satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	2.285	.189		12.081	.000	1.913	2.657
Orientation Services	.450	.046	.473	9.895	.000	.361	.540

a. Dependent Variable: Course Satisfaction

$$Y = \alpha + \beta x + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Course Satisfaction} = 2.285 + 0.450x + \text{error term.} \quad (2)$$

From the model, it is evident that the slope coefficient for orientation services was 0.450, implying that course satisfaction among the TVET trainees improves by 0.450 units for each unit improvement in orientation services. Similarly, an improvement in orientation services by one standard deviation results in an improvement in course satisfaction among the TVET trainees by .473 standard deviations. This finding agrees with Atkinson [17], which identified goals of student orientation programs to help first-year students succeed academically, to assist students in their overall personal adjustment to college by introducing them to campus life and the importance of active participation on campus, and to provide opportunities for faculty and staff to learn more about joining first-year students. Sandoval-Lucero et al. [16] also concluded that the new student orientation significantly increased the participants' knowledge, skill levels, and confidence perception. However, Palade and Constantin [24] reported contradictory findings that most students did not know about the existence of career counseling and orientation centers.

However, an Analysis of Variance was conducted to investigate whether the significance level between orientation services was a significant predictor of course satisfaction among TVET trainees, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. ANOVA- Influence of Orientation Services on Course Satisfaction

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.364	1	29.364	97.911	.000 ^b
	Residual	101.969	340	.300		
	Total	131.333	341			

a. Dependent Variable: Course Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Orientation Services

From the ANOVA output, there exists enough evidence to conclude that the slope of the population regression line is not zero, meaning orientation services is a significant predictor of Course Satisfaction, $F(1, 340) = 97.911$, $p = .000 < .05$; Adjusted $R^2 = .221$. Therefore, it was concluded that there is a statistically significant influence of Orientation Services on Course Satisfaction among the TVET trainees. This implies that TVET trainees with effective Orientation Services are likely to rate highly in Course Satisfaction compared to their counterparts who receive relatively low or poor orientation services.

To determine whether there is a significant influence of orientation services on course satisfaction among TVET trainees, the following null hypothesis was formulated;

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of orientation services on course satisfaction among TVET trainees

The investigated null hypothesis is $H_0: \beta_1 = 0$, and the corresponding alternative hypothesis is $H_1: \beta_1 \neq 0$. Suppose the null hypothesis is true from $E(Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X$. In that case, the population means of Y is β_1 for every X value, which indicates that X (Orientation services) does not influence Y (Course satisfaction), and the alternative is that Orientation services are associated with course satisfaction among TVET trainees. The results of the regression ANOVA reveal that the calculated F statistics were statistically significant [$F(1,340) = 97.911, p = .000 < .05$]. Hence, sufficient evidence exists to reject the null hypothesis ($\beta_1 = 0$). Subsequently, the alternative hypothesis ($\beta_1 \neq 0$) was supported, and it was concluded that Orientation services, as an aspect of career guidance services, have a statistically significant influence on course satisfaction among TVET trainees. This finding agrees with Amoah et al. [25], which concluded that the school counselor plays a critical role in providing appropriate career education and guidance to students and thus influences students' career choices. On the contrary, Bidalakshmi [26] reported that unless students are assisted through career guidance to overcome the challenges they encounter and be well-adjusted, they may not make informed decisions about the course of study and thus fail to achieve satisfaction.

Qualitative data was also obtained from respondents, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. One of the themes reported was the general orientation of new students.

Theme 1: *General orientation of new students*

All the study participants reported the general orientation service for new college students. Most respondents reported that this was necessary for new students to adjust effectively to the new environments within the college. Some respondents reported that:

“We have orientation for new students at the Institute. Initially, it was for all trainees in the Institute, but due to the increase in the number of trainees being admitted to various courses, it was felt that it would not be easy to control the large number. Thus, it was zeroed to new students only. Moreover, it was felt that the function deprived continuing trainees of the learning hours. They were done at least once per term for the new trainees-1st years only. I think even the old trainees need it too because some may have come/reported late in their first year and did not attend it. They ask questions about their courses” (Guidance and Counselling Coordinator 1)

“There is general orientation- meant to assist new trainees to know about choices of programs, the culture of an institution and acquaint themselves with the classroom environment. Done by the office of the Dean of Students who organizes the whole Institution. Whole college, different speakers from different departments in the college though rarely attended by old students apart from Student leaders who have to attend compulsorily” (Deputy Principal 2)

“General orientation of new students is held for new students as there is a steady rise in the number of trainees and so it is not very easy to control the numbers if all students were to attend. Two weeks after opening, they were

done at least once per term for the new trainees I think even the old trainees need it too because some may have come/reported late in their first year and did not attend it. They ask questions about their courses. In short, there are lapses in the courses or information previously given when they were away” (Registrar 3)

From the interview excerpts, the general orientation enhanced course satisfaction among trainees, and various departments at various institutions established this. This finding agrees with Tschopp et al. [27] study that career orientation, the way a person considers their career, is an essential driving force behind career intentions and, consequently, career choice and path. This finding is contrary to that of Tahir et al. [28], who revealed that graduates of the TVET sector in Pakistan are not properly counseled in their institutions, and the majority of them are employed without the assistance of their institutions. The graduates lack career-related information resulting in a lack of future direction and a significant decrease in performance. Qualitative data was also obtained from respondents, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. One of the themes reported was examinations orientations services.

Theme 2: Examination orientations

The findings also indicated that there were orientation services on internal and external examinations for the students. This was to inform the students of the expectations regarding the schedules of examinations, enrollment fees, and duration of exams. This orientation helped the students become conversant with what is expected regarding the examinations. Some respondents reported that:

“We have an internal briefing of students/candidates before KNEC exams – requirements for exams, penalties if KNEC regulations are breached, conduct of exams when it starts and ends. Briefing of KNEC candidates by supervisors and invigilators on the conduct of exams and expectations” (Guidance and Counselling Coordinator 2)

“KNEC Examination briefings are done slightly before the exams begin, e.g., a week before exams in May, July, September, and December of every year. There are no exams in Term 1. These dates have since changed because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and there are exams in Term 1 (January-February 2021). The briefing was thus done in January” (Registrar 4)

“Career services –ask/invite external speakers apart from the orientation time, to enlighten trainees on topics such as youth employability skills, additional skills required by employers such as research, communication, digital/computer skills, etc.; in the current situation; and may more” (Guidance and Counselling Coordinator 4)

From the interview results, it can be concluded that examinations orientations services enhanced course satisfaction among the institutions' trainees, which was helpful

for them. On the contrary, Kamenye, et al. [23] revealed that some schools do not have career guidance programs, and those that do start giving career advice to learners very late, and this was one of the reasons for the change of course of study. Qualitative data was also obtained from respondents, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. One of the themes reported was orientation for new staff.

Theme 3: Orientation for New Staff

The findings also indicated that there were orientation services for new college staff. This was to make them aware of the programs within the departments and the expectations of their duties as they began. This orientation was seen to help assist staff in adjusting quickly to the new demands of the environment. Some respondents reported that:

“The Institute also holds orientation for incoming support and teaching staff employees. There is a desire to take care of old students, but the problem that crops up is that most students stay outside the compound, so on such occasions, they choose to stay away from the college. This also affects the attendance of the new students. The orientation is meant to help them familiarize themselves with the college layout, the offices and to get to know where to get what service” (Guidance and Counselling Coordinator, 2)

“Career guidance office and trainers inform students on employment opportunities briefly. The external speakers handling topics of interest are non-traditional. For example, when you get male students shying away from a specific course like Food and Beverage, the office gets a speaker who has excelled in the area, like a chef in a five-star hotel, to give a talk. This motivates the students. The orientation helps the students to remove misconceptions. It also helps the trainers to encourage the students and stir students’ interest and boost the morale of the students to pursue the courses they are undertaking” (Deputy Principal, 1)

From the interview results, it is through an orientation that the incoming students get to know information about the college. Information is provided on courses offered. Each head of a department is given a chance to say something about their department and qualifications. This finding agrees with Oigo and Kaluyu [29], which revealed that the readiness to make career choices among university students had minimal influence from the career guidance services offered at the Institution. This finding is contrary to that of Kamenye, et al. [23], who revealed that some schools do not have career guidance programs and those that do start giving career advice to learners very late, which was one of the reasons for the change of course of study. Qualitative data was also obtained from respondents, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. One of the themes reported was departmental orientation services.

Theme 4: Departmental orientation services

The study findings reported that there was departmental orientation for new students who joined the institutions. This was meant to help students know the courses they are

meant to study and their available options. Some respondents reported the following regarding departmental orientation services:

“We have departmental orientation for our students with members of that department, chaired by the HOD. At G & C, vocational counseling guides new trainees on how to choose their courses appropriately. They are given two weeks to think through the courses they would wish to take and are encouraged to take those that they have a high aptitude for; those they desire to do; have a potential for” (Guidance and Counselling Coordinator, 2)

“Yes, the orientation services enhance course satisfaction as the trainees know whether they made the right choices concerning the course they are taking. The students are given a chance to switch course if they feel their expectations are not met, and this has to be done in consultation with the guardians” (Registrar, 1)

“It is through the orientation that one can ascertain those who have chosen to do a course and those who were told to do a course. The students are engaged through a questionnaire and get feedback which helps in decision-making. Career guidance office and trainers inform students on employment opportunities briefly” (Guidance and Counselling Coordinator, 3)

From the interview results, it can be concluded that departmental orientation services were evident in most colleges and effectively enhanced course satisfaction among the trainees. Similarly, Kanga et al. [30] revealed that guidance and counseling effectively enhance student adjustment to the school environment in public secondary schools. This finding is contrary to that of Kamenye, et al. [23], which revealed that some schools do not have career guidance programs, and those that do start giving career advice to learners very late, which was one of the reasons for the change of course of study. This finding agrees with Oigo and Kaluyu [29], who revealed that the readiness to make career choices among university students had minimal influence from the career guidance services offered at the Institution.

4. CONCLUSION

The study sought to investigate the relationship between orientation services and course satisfaction among TVET trainees in Kenya. Course satisfaction is essential in a student's life as it leads to motivation and good performance critical for the country's development. Trainees who study courses to their satisfaction in terms of skills, interests, and particular aptitudes are an asset to the country's development goals. Orientation services had a positive and significant relationship with trainees' course satisfaction. While orientation services are predictors of students' course satisfaction, the forms of orientation offered in TVET institutions are limited to the general orientation of new students, departmental orientation services, examination orientations, and orientation for new staff. Other orientation services like library orientation and information technology are not provided. From this finding, it can be concluded that there is a need to include other

aspects of orientation, such as library orientation and information technology, in orientation services offered to trainees in TVET institutions.

Further, since TVET programs are flexible concerning entry and exit points, the orientation services should not be limited to only the first years. All trainees should benefit from the services regardless of their year of study. It is recommended that TVET institutions implement inclusive informational services comprising a library and information technology that benefit all trainees regardless of the year of study to enhance their course satisfaction. This will ensure that the orientation services are comprehensive enough to assist students in selecting courses that provide satisfaction.

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