

Influence of Parental Occupation on Career Development of Youths with Intellectual Disabilities in Selected Skills Training Institutions in Zambia

Mathatha Viola^{1*}, Ndhlovu Daniel²

Zambia

***Corresponding Author:** Mathatha Viola, Zambia

Abstract: This paper discusses the influence of parental occupation on career development of youths with Intellectual disabilities (IDs) in selected skills training institutions in Zambia. The phenomenological study was carried out in Kabwe, Chisamba and Ndola districts of Central and Copper belt Provinces respectively. Purposive sampling was to select a sample of 60 respondents: parents of youths with IDs (30), youths with IDs (15) and lecturers of youths with IDs (15). Semi-structured interviews, observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to collect data. Data analysis was done thematically. The study revealed that parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs through role modeling and interactions. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the government, through the Ministry of Higher Education should provide training to parents of youths with IDs as a way of helping them gain awareness of their role in career development of their children.

Keywords: Career Development, Intellectual Disability, Parent, Occupation

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time of active vocational development and making career choices. As children attain adolescence, they begin to think of their futures. The environment in which these adolescents are brought up influence their development. Particularly, individual homes are basically the places from where lives of adolescents are moulded and shaped into adults leading to career choices. Choosing a career is often considered as a turning point in an individual's life. This decision alone has the potential of opening or closing doors for success. Although career choices are made by individuals, research suggests that they are certainly influenced by many factors among them parental occupation (William, 2016; Munyingi, 2012; Kisulu, Kimani & Kombo 2012; Whiston & Keller, 2004). What remains puzzling is how parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs, the gap this study sought to fill.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

While studies have shown that parental occupation influences career development of adolescents (William, 2016; Munyingi, 2012; Whiston & Keller, 2004), actualization of this for parents of youths with IDs is still unknown. A study focusing on this area would lessen the already existing high unemployment rates among youths with intellectual disabilities.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose was to establish how parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs in selected skills training institutions in Zambia.

1.3. Research Objective

- To determine how parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs.

1.4. Research Question

- How does parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs?

1.5. Theoretical Framework

The Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1999) guided the study. The theory believes that development is best understood by examining ones' context. It states that career development

depends on the heterogeneity of individuals and is influenced by the context in which they live. The theory believes that a person's ability to reach their potential is dependent on the presence of real life opportunities in the environment (Roundy, 2015). It argues that individuals better adjust and are more satisfied in environments that match their attitudes, values, goals and experiences, that is, they are more satisfied when there is a fit between themselves and their environment (Schutheiss, Kress, Manzi & Glasscock, 2001). Being congruent with one's parents on career matters reflects a fit which is likely to foster career development (Duffy & Dik, 2009). Incongruity or lack of fit on the other hand is a potential external barrier to career development (Schutheiss, et al., 2001). The theory states that parents influence development of their children through their interactions, relationships and expectations (Duffy & Dik, 2009). The theory helped understand how parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs.

1.6. Significance of the Study

Findings may contribute to the knowledge gap of the significant influence of parental occupation on career development of youths with IDs. They may also reveal to policy makers and implementers on how they might help parents of youths with IDs understand the effects of their occupations on their children's career development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Saleem, Hanan, Saleem, Rao and Shad (2015) conducted an online descriptive survey in Pakistan on 444 Lahore University students. The study sought to the effects of parents' profession, mass media and personal choice on career selection. The study found that parents' professions or occupations played important roles in career development and the selection of careers for their children. Therefore, the study validates that parent's profession have strong and direct influence on their children. The study however differs with the current study on methodology. A phenomenological study as opposed to an online descriptive study is used. This study's focus is on parents of youths with IDs as opposed to students in general.

Mwaa (2016) conducted a survey on factors influencing career choices among high school students in Nairobi County, Kenya. From the population of 27, 614 form four students, the study purposively sampled 400 students. Simple random sampling was used to sample 10 schools. Findings indicate that parental occupation is one of the factors that influence career choices of students. The study recommended that parents and career guidance counselors should take into cognizance the influence of parental factors as they guide the students make sound career choices based on their education achievement and level of education.

Bhattacharya (2013) designed an investigation to study the impact of parental influence on career choice of students. He used a group of sample of 180 students (90 boys and 90 girls). A General Information Schedule, Parental Influence Questionnaire and Social Influence Questionnaire were administered to the subjects accompanied by giving proper instruction. The findings revealed that maximum parental influence was upon the girls who are under high income group. This study was a comparative study of youths without disabilities. The current study however, focuses on how parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs. In addition, it is not a comparative study and it makes use of qualitative methods in data collection.

Munyingi (2012) conducted a study using cross sectional research design on the factors that influence career choices among young females in tertiary institutions in Kenya. The study revealed that occupational status of parents had a significant impact on the career aspirations and career choices of female youths. This study however was conducted on female youths without IDs. Concern is whether such a study would yield similar results if conducted on parents of youths with IDs in Zambia using a phenomenological design.

Kisulu et al., (2012) investigated the factors that influence academic aspirations among girls in secondary schools in Nairobi region, Kenya. Results indicated that the family members affect the parents and older siblings affect the occupation and career choices of students with 42,5% of the respondents stating that they preferred same occupations as their parents. This study does not indicate how the family influences career development of girls. The current study therefore seeks to establish how parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs.

Similarly, Mathatha (2013) conducted a descriptive case study on individuals with visual impairments in two schools that educate learners with visual impairments in Zambia. The study aimed at establishing how learners with visual impairments develop their careers. Findings showed that parental occupation influenced career development of learners with visual impairments. The 2013 study is similar to the current one in that both are on individuals with disabilities but only differ on the type of disabilities. The 2013 study however, was done on learners with visual impairments in schools and not parents of youths with IDs in skills training institutions.

Whiston and Keller's (2004) survey in Latin America on the influence of the family found that parental education influenced what the child learnt about work and work experiences. In addition to this, parental occupation reflected parental attitudes about school and work, which in turn had a long-term impact on their young adolescents' career choices, decisions and plans. The study however, was conducted in Latin America and used a survey method as opposed to a phenomenological approach in this study. The researcher wonders how parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs in the Zambian context.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study used the phenomenological study design (Astalin, 2013) to examine lived experiences through the description provided by the people involved or involved in the issue that is being researched (Creswell, 2014). The design was selected because it is best used in examining lived experiences, is normally used where there is little knowledge on a phenomenon (Donalek, 2004) and the study relied more on qualitative methods.

3.2. Research Sites

The study was conducted at Chipembi Farm College, Chisambain Central Province, Kabwe School for Continuing Education, Kabwe in Central Province and the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, Ndola on the Copperbelt Province where youths with IDs from across the country are offered skills training.

3.3. Target Population, Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The population consisted of all youths with IDs at the named sites, their lecturers and their parents. The sample comprised sixty (60) purposively selected respondents; thirty (30) parents of with IDs, fifteen (15) youths with IDs and fifteen (15) lecturers of youths with IDs.

3.4. Research Instruments, Data Collection Procedures and Data Analysis

The study used semi-structured interviews, observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to collect lived experiences from respondents. These were deemed appropriate because interpretivist researchers favour to interact and dialogue with the studied participants (Wahyumi, 2012). Semi-structured interviews were administered to all respondents. FGDs were conducted to youths only. Observation was employed to assess the self-esteem of youths with IDs. Triangulation was done through documentary study. Data was analyzed thematically.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Consistent with Reinsk (2011), ethical considerations such as seeking permission from the university ethical committee and site authorities, respondent issues of confidentiality and other basic research conventions were taken into account. For youths with IDs, consent was sought from site authorities.

3.6. Validity

In order to ensure validity of the contents, the report was peer reviewed.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. How Parental Occupation Influences Career Development of Youths with Ids

4.1.1. Through Role Modeling

The findings indicate that parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs through role modeling.

All children always admire what their parents do or the jobs of their parents.... (L11, Male, Masters)

This is broadly in line with Cass (2013) and Liu, MacMahon, & Watson, (2015) who found that role models were individuals whose behaviour styles and attributes were emulated by others. In this case, youths with IDs admired their parents who were their role models in home environments. Consistently, Ceka and Murati (2016) points out that parents are the first role models for their children and have a strong influence on career development. By admiring these role models in the environment, youths with IDs' desire to work later in life grew. As observed by Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014), parents as daily models provide cultural standards, attitudes and help children develop self- confidence and social skills. It can be deduced that youths with IDs acquired different attitudes, skills and confidence from their parents which enhanced their desire to pursue certain careers. Consistent with previous research by Mathatha (2013), the presence of teachers in families was a significant factor influencing learners with visual impairments to choose teaching career. Therefore, in this study, parents of youths with IDs were role models for their children and they shaped their children's behaviours and attitudes of careers on a daily basis in the environment. Therefore, parents of youths with IDs need to be made aware that they can influence their children's career development simply by serving as examples of workers.

In fact, Jungen(2008) notes that children as early as 5 years begin to identify with the occupation of their parents as soon as they pronounce their job title. This means career development is influenced by witnessing gender typed roles that convey messages about their roles in the society. It can be deduced that by the time youths with IDs reach adolescence, they begin to seriously consider their future often looking to their parents as either role models. Although adolescents begin to demonstrate independence from their parents in their high school years, those with IDs are still dependant on their parents for their career growth (Nord, 2012). Parents of youths with IDs' approach to this can either inspire them to explore potential occupations or to stick to a path their parents approve of. This then calls for the need to sensitize parents of youths with IDs on the need of valuing their presence in the environment and the guidance they give to their children if these children are to develop careers development and benefit from the employment options available. Consistent with the ecological theory used in this study, the environment in which an individual grows influences his or her development (Duffy & Dik, 2009).

It should be noted that parental occupations influence values and goals that parents have for their children and this influences their (parents') behavior (Eccles, 2009). If parents' jobs gives them great satisfaction or provide a comfortable lifestyle and if children see the perks early, they may favour these careers over others. In contrast, if parents complain about their jobs or struggle to support their families on the income their jobs provide, children are more likely to seek more fulfilling jobs. This scenario possibly explains why some youths with IDs wanted to pursue their parents' careers while others did not want to. Their parents could have showed that they got great satisfaction from their jobs. It also indicates that some parents of youths with IDs could have been struggling resulting in their children not admiring their jobs. The finding indicates the need for parents of youths with IDs to exhibit the right career packed behavior for their children to model. Such an exhibition would make youths with IDs benefit from career options available and have better livelihood as adults.

Research has shown that parents have unique influence on their children's acquisition of new skills through their continual and powerful presence in the lives of their children (Ingresol & Gergan, 2007). Similarly, youths with IDs whose parents were available obviously acquired new skills as they prepared for futures. These youths looked up to their parents as their role models because these parents were presumably helpful in teaching them new tasks, skills and norms. As a result, youths with IDs in this study learnt about the world of work from adult within the environment. On the contrary, those whose parents were too busy to be available lost out on the benefit of this resource.

According to Cass (2013), career development develops through observation and admiring. In this study, observation and admiring of parental role models within the environment led to youths with IDs developing their various careers. This finding runs counter to that of Gibson (2004) and Mathatha (2013) who found that individuals who had admired a successful role model in a specific career reported to have a preference for pursuing the same career. In these environments, parents of youths with IDs served as a source of inspiration for their children. Through this inspiration, youths with IDs

developed the desire take up certain careers and some believed they would also be successful in careers similar to their parents. This belief explains why some youths with IDs looked enthusiastic in their pursuits of careers that were similar to those of their parents. Consistent with the ecological theory, congruence is a facilitator of career development (Duffy & Dik, 2009).

It was clear from the findings that parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs through role modelling. For example, although pursuing General Agriculture, a male youth with IDs whose father is a Police Officer indicated that he had wanted to be a Police Officer.

Nenze kufuna kunkhala kapokola... (I wanted to be a Police Officer...) (Y3, Male, 21, General Agriculture).

This finding clearly shows that parents are the individuals admired and emulated by children (Liu et al., 2015; Mathatha, 2013; Cass, 2013). The finding also indicates that some parents of youths with IDs obviously behaved in a way that inspired their children to pursue certain careers. Additionally, it is possible to deduce that such youths with IDs did not only admire their parents' occupation but they also desired to imitate parents' noble behaviour and their role as community contributors. This means youths with IDs who admired their parents' occupations and pursued careers similar to their parents were also possibly eager to make notable contributions to the community.

A further analysis of this findings shows that the two male youths with IDs admired their fathers' occupations.

I am doing General Agriculture,.... My father works with the Ministry of Agriculture... (Y11, Male, 21, General Agriculture)

In this case it is clear that a father's occupation is highly correlated with his son's career choice (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). This then shows that there is a close link between gender and its influences on careers. This finding resonates well with prior research by Mathatha (2013) which showed that individuals sought role models who were similar to them in an identifiable way such as physically, gender or race. It can also be concluded that parents of youths with IDs in these studies exhibited behaviours that communicated good attributes about their jobs which their children then internalized. It is possible to believe that such parents great satisfaction from their jobs or provided a comfortable lifestyle which made children to see the perks early thereby favouring these careers over others (Eccles, 2009).

It was interesting to note that regardless of their intellectual functioning, youths with IDs admired careers pursued by individuals without disabilities.

I wanted to do secretarial but I found the course full.... I will change next term.... (Y8, Female, 23, Food production)

This finding clearly indicates that role modelling is a strong way through which individuals develop careers (Gibson, 2004; Mathatha, 2013; Olasabiken & Olusakin, 2014; Liu, et al., 2015; Ceka & Murati, 2016)). The finding concurs with that of Chandramuki, Venkata, & Mysore (2012) which revealed that despite their challenges, individuals with IDs still have some strengths which can be made use of. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's theory used in this study also states that as children admire working adults in their immediate environment, their vocational concepts develop (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Consistently, Krishman (2010) posits that the family environment in which children grow, is a predictor of their future outcomes. By nature, youths with IDs have little exposure to the kinds of jobs that are available (Nord, 2012) as such, they rely on their immediate environment. As such, it would be advisable to help parents of youths with IDs become aware of what their children can do regardless of the intellectual disability. This also calls for the need to sensitize parents of youths with IDs to exhibit desirable attitudes and behaviours for their children to emulate.

It is important to note that role models' effectiveness also depends on the amount of time they spend with their children in the environment. This entails that the more parents of youths with IDs spent time with their children, the more the youths were availed to role models to admire and the better the process of career development. In addition, what the parents of youths with IDs did and how they acted had a much more influence on the youths with IDs than what they said. As the saying goes; *Actions speak louder than words*. This scenario indicates the need to sensitize parents of youths with

IDs to mind the behaviours they exhibit to their children and also to value the time they spend with their children.

An analysis of the finding revealed that not all pairs of parents of youths with IDs were in the same type of occupation meaning, role modeling and information parents conveyed varied. This variation suggests that the model that exhibited desirable behaviour was emulated by the youths with IDs over the other. Earlier research by Eccles (2009) found that the types of jobs parents have influence their values and goals in turn influencing their behaviours and what children emulate. This finding is supported by William (2016) who noted that if parents complain of their jobs or struggle to support families on income their jobs provide, children are more likely to seek more fulfilling jobs. The variation also means that the information parents had varied. This scenario obviously affected career development process of the youths with IDs in this study positively or negatively. Youths with IDs had a variety of information to choose from. It also means that youths with IDs had a tough time on making a choice from the two opposing sides. Consistent with the ecological theory used in this study, incongruity or poor fit between an individual and the environment inhibits career development (Roundy, 2009). Congruence on the other hand fosters career development.

The bio-data indicated that some parents of youths with IDs were in business. It would be assumed that such parents were role models to their children to influence their career development into business careers. Surprisingly though, no youth with IDs mentioned that his or her parents talked to him or her about their businesses. More shocking was the fact that, no youth with IDs indicated that they admired business. Worse still, no youth said they had any interest in doing business. Yet, CSO (2012) reports that most youths with IDs were found in family businesses. The possible explanation for this finding could be four fold. Firstly, it could mean that parents of youths with IDs were not admirable and they probably did not talk about their business careers to their children even though they could have said they did during the interviews. Similar findings were reported by Taylor, Harris and Taylor (2004) who found that it may have been disheartening for parents to be seen as being irresponsible. One might also be forced to think that such parents might have under rated the abilities of their children to do business. Yet, Asbury (2010) argues that despite their challenges, youths with IDs can and do go on to succeed in education and employment. Another thought would be that such parents were not happy with their businesses and therefore needed not to talk good about their occupations.

5. THROUGH INTERACTIONS

The study revealed that parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs through interactions.

I work, so I talk to him about the need for him to work later and earn a living like I do... (P8, Female, Formal employment)

This finding mirrors that of Whiston and Keller (2004) who found that as parents communicated and socialized with their children, working roles were embedded in their children. The embedment of the working roles gave rise to career development in youths with IDs.

Research has shown that children always adopt and internalize parental values and behaviour which shape their own beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour that then ultimately impact on post school outcomes (Ceka & Murati, 2016). The attitudes and behaviours of parents while working or discussing their occupations with their children is what the children respond to and learn. Career development may be influenced by witnessing gender typed interactions that convey messages about their roles in the society. In addition, it means that how parents present information to their children matters more than what they present (Liu et al., 2015). It should be noted that such interactions are normally done both formally and informally.

On the other hand, some studies have shown that parents whose work is characterized with good conditions are more satisfied with their job experiences, report less distress and have positive parent-child relationships (Ingresol & Gergan, 2007). These relationships obviously promoted career interactions between parents of youths with IDs and their children thereby fostering career development of youths with IDs. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory used in this study also believes that children develop their careers through interactions with role models within the

microsystem (home environment) (Roundy, 2015). While parents may not consider this to be influential, interactions can profoundly limit or expand their children's future careers.

An analysis of the finding revealed that not all pairs of parents of youths with IDs were in the same occupation meaning that the information they relayed varied. This variation suggests that the parents that constantly interacted convincingly were emulated by the youths with IDs. Earlier research by Eccles (2009) found that the types of jobs parents have influence their values and goals in turn influencing their behaviours. This affected career development process of the youths with IDs differently. This finding is supported by William (2016) who noted that if parents complain of their jobs or struggle to support families on income their jobs provide, children are more likely to seek more fulfilling jobs. This scenario obviously affected career development process of the youths with IDs in this study.

The bio-data indicated that some parents of youths with IDs were in business.

I am in business ... (P2, Female, Tertiary, Non-formal employment).

It would be assumed that such parents talked to their children on business careers. Surprisingly though, no youth with IDs mentioned that his or her parents talked to him or her about their business. More shocking was the fact that, no youth with IDs indicated that they were encouraged to do business. Worse still, no youth said they had interest in business. Yet, CSO (2012) reports that most youths with IDs were found in family businesses. Possibly, parents of youths with IDs did not talk about their business careers to their children even though they could have said they did during the interviews. As reported by Taylor et al., (2004), it may have been disheartening for parents to be seen as being irresponsible. Alternatively, such parents of youths with IDs might have under rated their children's abilities to do business. Yet, Asbury (2010) argues that despite their challenges, youths with IDs can and do go on to succeed in education and employment. It is also possible that parents of youths with IDs may not have had any expectations on their children based on the significantly impaired intellectual functioning. Likewise, Chandramuki et al., (2012) argues that when there is disability in spite of above-average intelligence, the disappointed parents develop negative attitudes towards their children which yield low expectations resulting in low interactions and low support. The low interactions negatively affect career development of youths with IDs. There is no doubt that most parents of youths with IDs in this study had negative attitudes towards youths with IDs. This calls for the need to foster attitude change among parents of youths with IDs towards disability.

It sad to note that in this study, some youths with IDs lived in fear in the environment which should have provided stimulating role models. Some youths confessed that their parents, who were the readily available role models, were fond of beating or shouting at them. For example, one youth complained;

I like talking to daddy because mummy likes shouting and beating any how... (Y10, 22, Female, Food production)

It is obvious that youths with IDs with such parents had problems on who to admire as the role models available were fearful. The possible explanation to the fearful environment could be the presence of the disability which in turn strained parent-child relationships. Based on the ecological theory, this entails a poor fit or incongruence between the youths with IDs and their environments (Roundy, 2015). This in turn negatively affected their career development.

Although parents of youths with IDs are supposed to be available and spending time with their children as role models, it was rather strange to note that some of them said that they were too busy.

I am a very busy person... (P17, Male, Tertiary, Formal employment).

Since these parents were busy, it means that they were rarely at home. As such they made the home environment poor for career development of their children. Consistent with Bendtro (2010), work condition produce different out comes for parents. This means that for parents of youths with IDs who were too busy, the transmission of vocational knowledge to their children was negatively affected thereby inhibiting career development. In addition, such parents did not avail themselves for youths with IDs to emulate. As noted by Mwaa (2016), parents who look for opportunities to make themselves available to their children foster career development of their children. As such parents of

youths with IDs need to be helped to understand the importance of availing themselves to their children to enhance career development. In addition, parents need to be helped to understand the importance of being emotionally and socially available to their children for career development.

6. CONCLUSION

The study established that parental occupation influences career development of youths with IDs through role modeling and through interactions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

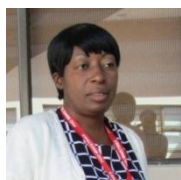
Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Ministry of Higher Education should provide training to parents of youths with IDs as a way of helping them gain awareness of their role in career development of their children. This would help youths develop careers and benefit from the career options available. It would also reduce on the unemployment rates among youths with IDs.

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AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY



Viola Mathatha, has 25 years of teaching experience. She taught at a secondary school for 20 years before moving to Kwame Nkrumah University where she worked for 4 years. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Special Education with the University of Zambia. vmathatha@gmail.com



Dr. Daniel Ndhlovu, holds a PhD (Special Education), has 34 years teaching experience and is formerly Assistant Dean, Post Graduate, School of Education, University of Zambia. He is currently Director, Institute of Distance Education, University of Zambia and lecturer in the School of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, Sociology and Special Education.

Ndhlovu2010@gmail.com

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