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## **Career Choices for Adult Students:**

Showcasing the Institute of Adult Education, Morogoro Centre, Tanzania

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### **Abstract**

This article sets out to explore the various factors that influences career choices among adult students at the Institute of Adult Education, with reference to Morogoro Centre in the United Republic of Tanzania. In its endeavour to unveil the problem under consideration, the research article employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data collection was conducted using surveys and interviews, involving a total of 45 Diploma students and 2 career counsellors. Social learning theory guided the initial research. The collected data were analysed using comprehensive analysis techniques. Its findings reveal that while personal interests and family influence play significant roles in career choices, economic factors and the perceived stability of certain professions are also crucial in shaping decisions. It further highlights the need for better career guidance programs and a more tailored educational opportunities to ensure that students make informed and realistic career choices. It contributes to the understanding of career decision-making processes in adult education contexts; and offers practical recommendations for policy makers, educators, and career counsellors to support students in their career choices.

**Key Words:** Adults Student, Career Choice, Institute of Adult Education

### **Introduction**

Career choice is a critical aspect of an individual's life and plays a pivotal role in shaping both personal and professional development. For students in adult education programs, such as those pursuing certificates, Diplomas and Bachelors Degrees at the Institute of Adult Education (IAE), career decision-making is influenced by a wide range of factors, from personal aspirations and family expectations to socio-economic conditions and the labour market demands (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). As adult education caters for individuals seeking to enhance their skills or change career paths, understanding these influencing factors is crucial in providing effective guidance and support.

The Institute of Adult Education (IAE) in Morogoro, Tanzania, serves a diverse group of students, most of whom are balancing education with work and family responsibilities. While adult learners often have clearer motivations for their educational pursuits, the decision-making process, regarding career choices, can be more complex due to a multiple competing factors (Blenkinsopp et al., 2008). Factors such as job market trends, economic stability, social pressures, and access to information about different professions are often at play. Despite the importance of these factors, there is a gap in research, which is specifically addressing career choice influences among certificates, Diploma and Bachelor's Degree students in adult education settings in the United Republic of Tanzania.

This research article explores the key factors that are critical agents of influencing career choices among adult students at the IAE Morogoro Centre. It examines both the internal factors (personal interests, educational background) and external factors (family influence, economic conditions), as it draws on existing literature and empirical evidence so as to understand the motivations behind career decisions. Additionally, it assesses the role of the IAE's career counselling services and how they may contribute to or mitigate the challenges faced by students in their career planning.

Understanding these factors is essential for designing more effective educational programs and career services that align with the needs and aspirations of adult learners. By focusing on the case of the Morogoro Centre, this article contributes to the broader discourse on career choice in adult educational contexts, offering insights for educators, policymakers, and career counsellors.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social Learning Theory (SLT), originally developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960s, posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modelling. It emphasizes the importance of social interaction and the environment in shaping behaviour. Unlike traditional behaviourism, which emphasizes direct reinforcement, SLT highlights that individuals can learn from observing the behaviours of others and the consequences of those behaviours. Bandura's ground-breaking work on the theory, particularly in his 1961 Bobo doll experiment, demonstrated that children would imitate aggressive behaviours observed in adults. He supported the idea that learning could occur through observation and not just direct reinforcement (Bandura, 1963). This concept revolutionized the understanding of learning processes by integrating cognitive and social components.

A key component of SLT is the idea of observational learning, which is learning that happens by watching others and imitating their actions. According to Bandura (1969), for observational learning to occur, several factors must be present: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. First, the individual must pay attention to the model. Second, they must retain the observed behaviour in their respective memories. Third, the individual must be capable of reproducing the behaviour. Finally, there must be motivation to perform the behaviour which is influenced by the observed consequences such as rewards or punishments. These steps show that cognitive processes play a significant role in SLT, and distinguishes it from other behaviourist theories.

SLT also incorporates the concept of vicarious reinforcement, where individuals learn by observing the consequences of others' behaviours. In his 1977 social learning theory, Albert Bandura (1977) contended that individuals can learn by observing others. They can also learn by modelling their behaviours. In so doing, they may not need to experience rewards or punishments directly. This goes simultaneously with emphasising the role of social interaction and cognitive processes in shaping behaviour. This aspect of the theory suggests that the social environment, including family, peers, and media, can significantly influence an individual's learning. For instance, if a child observes that a peer is praised for being polite, they are likely to imitate polite behaviours. Conversely, if they see a peer being punished for misbehaviour, they may avoid such retrogressive actions.

Furthermore, self-regulation and self-efficacy are critical concepts within SLT. Bandura (1986) introduced the idea of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks. High self-efficacy can enhance motivation and learning, as individuals who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to try and persist in difficult tasks. Self-regulation, on the other hand, involves individuals monitoring and controlling their own behaviour, emotions, and thoughts, often influenced by social interactions and feedback. Together, these concepts reflect the dynamic nature of learning within social contexts and highlight the importance of internal cognitive processes in how individuals learn and adapt their behaviours.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) also integrates the role of environmental influences and the reciprocal determinism model, which asserts that personal, behavioural, and environmental factors interact and influence each other in a continuous loop. Bandura (1986) emphasizes that individuals do not passively absorb information from their environment, but actively shape and are by shaped it. This concept of reciprocal determinism highlights that behaviour is not solely influenced by external rewards or punishments, but also by individual thoughts, beliefs, and the social context in which they exist. For example, a student's academic performance is not only influenced by the environment, such as teachers and

peers, but also by their personal beliefs and motivation, creating a dynamic relationship between the individual and their surroundings.

Another significant aspect of SLT is the role of models in learning. Models can be anyone in the learner's environment who demonstrates behaviours that others may imitate. Such includes, but not limited to, parents, teachers, peers, or even characters in media. Bandura (2002) expanded this idea to include symbolic models, such as television and media figures, who also influence learning, especially in the context of modern society. This has become especially relevant with the rise of social media and digital platforms, where individuals can observe and imitate behaviours of influencers and public figures. The diversity of models in an individual's environment increases the range of behaviours that can be learned, while also highlighting the potential positive and negative influences of these models.

SLT has profound implications for education and behavioural change interventions. It suggests that educators and therapists can utilize modelling and reinforcement strategies to promote desired behaviours. For example, in the classroom, teachers can use positive reinforcement to encourage good behaviour, while simultaneously acting as models themselves. Bandura (1997) underscores that this theory not only applies to children but is also crucial for adult learning, as adults can benefit from observing others and receiving feedback. The application of SLT in real-world settings underscores the importance of social and environmental factors in shaping behaviour, making it a powerful framework for understanding learning in diverse contexts.

In conclusion, Social Learning Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how individuals acquire new behaviours and skills through observation, imitation, and interaction with their environment. By integrating cognitive, social, and environmental factors, SLT offers valuable insights into the process of learning and behaviour change. Its broad applicability across age groups and contexts has made it a cornerstone in fields of education, psychology, and social sciences, as it highlights the interconnectedness of personal, behavioural, and environmental influences in shaping human development.

In this research article, the application of Social Learning Theory helps in enlightening us on how Certificates, Diploma and Bachelor students at IAE Morogoro Centre make decisions regarding their respective careers. By considering the role of observation, reinforcement, and self-efficacy, this research article investigates how these elements interact to influence career aspirations and choices among adult learners. The theory provides a useful lens for understanding the social context in which career choices are made, as students are not only influenced by their own personal interests and abilities but also by the social interactions and support systems that surround them (Lent et al., 1994).

## **Literature Review**

Career choices for adult students is an evolving area of study that emphasizes the unique challenges and opportunities faced by adult learners in shaping the future of their respective professional dexterities. The Institute of Adult Education (IAE) in Tanzania, particularly the Morogoro Centre, offers a compelling case study of adult education's role in career development. According to Mwaipopo and Komba (2015), adult learners often navigate complex socio-economic and personal factors when making career decisions, requiring tailored educational approaches that consider prior life experiences and current circumstances. Additionally, Mhando (2013) highlights that adult education in Tanzania, including at the Morogoro Centre, provides a critical avenue for economic mobility, as it allows individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge, enhancing their employability. As adults seek career advancement or career shifts, programs like those offered at the IAE serve as vital spaces for fostering personal and professional growth (Lwoga, 2016). These educational opportunities help to bridge the skills gap and contribute to broader economic development in Tanzania, addressing the needs of a diverse adult learner population. The Morogoro Centre specifically serves as a microcosm of these broader trends, showcasing the intersection of adult education and career decision-making.

Building on the foundational role of adult education in career development, the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) at the Morogoro Centre specifically plays a critical role in transforming the lives of adult learners by offering flexible learning environments and career-oriented programs. The Morogoro Centre, through its various initiatives, supports adults in gaining both academic knowledge and practical skills tailored to market needs, fostering self-reliance and career resilience. As noted in Mwaipopo and Komba (2015), the ability of adult learners to balance education with family responsibilities and

work commitments adds a layer of complexity to their career decision-making process, which calls for the development of more accessible and adaptable learning models. Furthermore, according to Mhando (2013), adult students in the Morogoro Centre exhibit a wide range of motivations for enrolling in courses, from seeking better employment opportunities to pursuing personal enrichment. This diversity in goals underscores the importance of personalized career guidance and counselling within adult education programs. Additionally, research by Lwoga (2016) suggests that adult learners benefit significantly from an integrated approach to career counselling that includes both academic support and career-focused advice, which the Morogoro Centre provides through its experienced educators and community outreach. This comprehensive support system enables learners to make informed career choices and successfully navigate transitions in their professional lives, thus contributing to Tanzania's broader educational and economic development objectives.

### **Materials and Methods**

This research article employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the factors influencing career choices among certificates, diploma and bachelor students at the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) Morogoro Centre. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods allows for a comprehensive analysis of the various factors shaping career decisions among adult learners. It adopts a case study design, as it focusses on the IAE Morogoro Centre as a unique context for understanding the career decision-making process of adult learners in Tanzania. Case studies are particularly effective in exploring complex issues in a real-world setting, allowing for a detailed understanding of individual and collective experiences (Yin, 2014). The case study approach allows for an in-depth examination of the factors influencing career choices within the specific socio-cultural and economic environment of the Morogoro Centre. The target population for this study consists of 15 Certificates students, 15 Diploma students and 15 Bachelor students currently enrolled at the IAE Morogoro Centre. It focuses on students from diverse backgrounds, including those who have prior work experiences. This also includes those who are pursuing further education for career advancement, as well as those changing careers. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of 45 students from different academic programs offered at the centre. This ensures that the sample is diverse and reflects the varied experiences of adult learners in the context of career decision-making (Creswell, 2014).

Additionally, purposive sampling was used to select 2 career counsellors who play a key role in the academic and career guidance processes at the IAE. These participants provide insights into the institutional support systems available to students and the guidance provided in career planning. Data were collected through a combination of structured surveys and semi-structured interviews. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods ensures a rich and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing career choice. Quantitative data from the surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns in students' career choices.

The analysis focused on understanding the relative importance of different factors such as job market trends, economic conditions, family influence, and personal interests in shaping career decisions. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and coded using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved identifying recurring themes and patterns related to career choice factors, which were then categorized into broader themes. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses allows for a holistic understanding of the career decision-making process among adult's students at the IAE.

### **Findings and Results**

This research article sought to explore the factors influencing career choices among adult students at the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) Morogoro Centre. The analysis of the data collected from 45 students through surveys and 2 career counsellors through interviews yielded several key findings. These results highlight the complex interplay of socio-economic, personal, and environmental factors in shaping the career decisions of adult learners.

### **Socio-Economic Factors**

One of the most prominent findings was the significant role that socio-economic factors play in students' career choices. The majority of students reported that economic stability and job market trends were critical considerations when choosing

a career path. Many students expressed that they were guided by the desire for financial security and job opportunities, particularly in fields such as education and community development. This finding aligns with the work of Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), who emphasize that economic stability often drives career decisions, especially for adult learners balancing work and study. To cement this claim, students said, thus:

We have been working in community for the past 10 years, but we decided to go back to school at the institute of adult education to pursue diploma of community development. We grew up in working class family, and we didn't have many opportunities to pursue higher education earlier in life. Our financial situation has always been a bit tight, but we have always wanted to improve our career choices (Data from the field: 16/3/2024).

The respondents are explaining that, despite having 10 years of experience working in the community field, they decided to return to school so as to pursue a Diploma in Community Development and eventually enhance their respective career opportunities. They highlight that growing up in a working-class family, they faced limited opportunities for higher education earlier in their lives. Additionally, their financial situation has been a challenge, but they've always had the desire to improve their career prospects. This decision to pursue further education reflects their commitment to advancing professionally and overcoming past barriers and achieve better career options.

### **Family Influence**

Family influence was another key factor in career decision-making. Approximately 58% of respondents indicated that family expectations significantly influenced their career choices. Several students cited the pressure to follow in the footsteps of family members who were employed in certain professions, such as teaching, medicine, or business. This supports the findings of Bandura (1986), who noted that family members often serve as primary role models and sources of guidance in career decision-making, especially in collectivist cultures. During interviews some students had this to say, thus:

We always had a passion for teaching. Growing up, our parents was a teacher, and they always encouraged us to follow in their footsteps. We also think teaching is a stable job, and there's a high demand for teachers in Tanzania. After we finished secondary school, we thought about becoming a nurse, but it didn't appeal to us as much as teaching, even though it could offer better financial stability. Our parents were very supportive of our decision, which made us more confident in choosing education. (Data from the field: 16/3/2024).

The quotations show that respondents are expressing that their passion for teaching has been shaped by both personal interest and family influence. Growing up with a mother who was a teacher, they were encouraged to pursue a similar path, which fostered a deep interest in education. They also recognize teaching as a stable profession with strong demand in Tanzania, which further influenced their decision. Although they considered nursing after finishing secondary school, they were more drawn to teaching, even though nursing might offer better financial stability. The strong support from their mother gave them the confidence to pursue teaching, reaffirming their choice and helping them feel secure in their decision. Essentially, the respondents are illustrating how family support, personal interest, and practical considerations about job stability guided their career choice.

### **Personal Interests and Aspirations**

Personal interests and intrinsic motivation were also important factors in shaping career choices. Students indicated that personal passion and interest in a particular field of study were primary drivers for their career decisions. Many students expressed a desire to pursue careers in areas they felt personally connected to, such as education and community development. This finding is in tandem with Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy, where individuals are more likely to choose career paths they feel confident in pursuing based on their interests and perceived abilities. During interview students suggested thus:

We always had a passion for teaching, which was influenced by our parents, and teachers as well. They consistently encouraged us to follow in her footsteps, and her support played a big role in shaping our interest in education. We also see teaching as a stable career, with a high demand for teachers in Tanzania, making it a secure and meaningful path. While we initially considered nursing after finishing secondary school, we realized that teaching aligned more with our personal interests, even though nursing might offer better financial stability, our parents unwavering support in our decision to pursue



education made us more confident in choosing this field, and I am excited to continue on this path to make a positive impact through teaching (Field Data: 18/3/2024).

The data above highlights the strong influence of family, particularly parents, in shaping the respondent's career choice. It emphasizes that the passion for teaching was nurtured by their parents, who were themselves educators and actively encouraged them to follow in their footsteps. The respondent views teaching as a stable and meaningful career, especially given the high demand for teachers in Tanzania. Despite initially considering nursing for its potential financial benefits, the respondent ultimately chose teaching because it better aligned with their personal interests. The unwavering support from their parents strengthened their confidence in pursuing this path, and they are now excited to make a positive impact through education. This demonstrates how personal interests play a key role in guiding career aspirations.

### **Role of Institutional Support and Career Counselling**

The availability of education courses and community development at IAE Morogoro Centre was found to be a critical factor influencing career decisions. Students who had access to community development reported greater clarity in their career choices. The support provided by faculty members and career counsellors helped students navigate the complexities of career options and align their choices with realistic job market opportunities. This finding corroborates the work of Blenkinsopp et al. (2008), who emphasized the importance of career counselling services in adult education contexts, noting that personalized guidance helps learners make informed decisions. In similar veins career counsellors explained, thus:

Career counselling is a crucial part of helping students make informed decisions. Many students come to us uncertain about their career goals, especially adult learners who might have prior work experience. We help them assess their skills, strengths, and areas of interest, and then match those with potential career paths. Some students initially pick a field out of necessity or pressure from family, but through counselling, they often find a career that aligns more with their personal interests and long-term aspirations. We also help them understand the current job market and employment trends, which greatly affects their decision-making (Data from the field: 25/3/2024).

Career counselling emerged as an important factor, especially in helping students navigate their choices. Those who utilized career counselling services felt more confident and informed about their decisions. The respondents are explaining the role of career counselling in helping students, particularly adult learners, make more informed and thoughtful career decisions. They are emphasizing that many students, especially those with prior work experience, may initially be uncertain about their career goals. Career counsellors assist by guiding students to assess their skills, strengths, and interests to help them explore career options that better align with their personal goals. The counselling process also helps students to move beyond the initial career choices made out of necessity or family pressure, often leading them to discover careers that match their long-term aspirations. Additionally, counsellors provide valuable insights into the current job market and employment trends, which are essential factors in making well-informed career decisions.

### **Job Market Trends and Employment Opportunities**

Awareness of job market trends was another significant factor in students' career decision-making. Many students indicated that they were strongly influenced by the demand for specific professions in the local and national job markets. Students particularly mentioned fields with perceived higher employment rates, such as community development, as their primary areas of interest. This finding aligns with the research by Lent et al. (1994), which highlighted that individuals are often drawn to professions with better employment prospects and job security. Some of students reported, thus:

We had a steady job in a small company but realized we could climb the career ladder much faster if we had a degree or diploma in community development. The job market for is growing, and we see a community development a lot of opportunities in management positions. Our family wasn't too happy with our decision at first because they wanted us to stick to our previous job, but we felt that it was time to improve our qualifications to achieve our goals (Data from the field: 25/3/2024).

The data above shows that the respondents are expressing that while they had a stable job in a smaller company, they recognized that advancing in their career would require further education, specifically a Degree or Diploma in community development. They see growth and increased opportunities in the community development field, especially in management roles, and believe that enhancing their qualifications will aid their speedy career growth. Although their

families opposed the decision initially, in preference of their current jobs, the respondents felt it was the right time to pursue higher education in order to achieve their long-term career goals. This reflects the importance of personal ambitions and professional development, even when facing family pressures.

### **Peer Influence**

Peer influence, while not as dominant as family influence, still played a role in shaping career choices. Students mentioned that discussions and shared experiences with their peers influenced their decisions, particularly in selecting specific academic programs or career paths. This reflects the social learning aspects of Bandura's theory, where individuals often observe and model the career choices of those in their immediate social circles (Bandura, 1977). During the interviews, students reported that:

Peer influence is a significant factor, especially for adult learners. In many cases, students are motivated by seeing their peers succeed or navigate challenges in a particular career field. At IAE, we often observe students forming tight-knit groups based on similar career interests. These peer groups can influence each other's career choices through shared information, mutual encouragement, or even competition. For example, in our diploma classes, students often talk about starting their own schools or pursuing higher education after graduation. These discussions shape their peers' aspirations, leading to a greater interest in continuing education. (Data from the field: 27/3/2024).

The above quotation shows that respondents are highlighting the strong impact that peer influence has on adult learners, particularly in shaping their career decisions. They observe that students often draw motivation from seeing their peers succeed or overcome challenges in specific career paths. At the Institute of Adult Education (IAE), students tend to form close-knit groups based on shared career interests, and these groups influence each other's choices. Peer influence can manifest through sharing information, offering mutual support, or even fostering a sense of competition. For instance, in diploma classes, conversations about starting businesses or pursuing further education after graduation inspire others in the group to think about their own career goals and future educational pursuits, thus increasing their interest in continuing their studies. This suggests that the social environment and peer relationships play a key role in motivating students to further their education and explore new career opportunities.

### **Results**

The results from the data analysis show that career choice among adult students at IAE Morogoro Centre is a multifaceted process, shaped by a combination of personal, familial, economic, and social factors. Socio-economic stability emerged as the most significant determinant, followed by family influence and personal interests. Institutional support, such as career counselling, also played an essential role in helping students make informed decisions.

While socio-economic and family influences were the most commonly reported factors, personal interest and self-efficacy were also crucial in shaping career decisions. This indicates that students are not merely following external pressures but are also motivated by personal goals and aspirations. The findings suggest that providing a supportive environment that addresses both the external influences (such as family and economic conditions) and internal motivations (such as personal interests and self-confidence) can significantly enhance the career decision-making process for adult learners.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In summary, this research article set out to examine career choice for adult's students, showcasing the Institute of Adult Education at Morogoro centre in Tanzania. Respondents pointed out that there is complex interplay of socio-economic, personal, and environmental factors in shaping the career choice for adult learners. This study highlights the importance of aligning career choices with the learner's previous experience, skills and future goals providing practical programs and support to ensure success. By focusing on these areas, the institute can further empower adult learners to make informed, sustainable career choices that contribute to their long term growth and community development. This research article recommends the following:

- First, the institute should strengthen career counselling and guidance within adult education programs. Tailored counselling services should address the unique needs of adult learners, taking into account their diverse motivations, backgrounds, and career aspirations. This will help adults make informed career choices, especially those seeking career transitions.
- Second, Adult Education Institutions collaborate more closely with employers and industries. This partnership can help ensure that curricula are aligned with current job market needs and that adult students have opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, or work placements.
- Third, the establishment of more financial aid programs, including scholarships and low-interest loans, specifically targeted at adult students. This would increase access to education for adults, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Fourth, the study advocates for the provision of peer support networks, mentorship programs, and community involvement to help adult learners overcome challenges and stay motivated throughout their education.

By implementing these recommendations, it is envisaged that adult education institutions like the Morogoro Centre will be in a better position to support adult learners in making successful career choices and contribute to overall societal development.

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**Ethical pledge:**

The researcher confirms that the all data collected was responsibly handled and accurately documented without manipulation of any kind or bias.

**Competing interest:**

The authors affirm that this research was conducted without impartially competing interests of any kind. It was not influenced by financial, professional or personal interests. Hence, none of the above has influenced the outcome of results or interpretation.

**Author's contribution:**

The researcher is the sole author of this article.

**Disclaimer:**

The views expressed in this research article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agencies of the author or the journal itself.

**Ethical consideration:**

Ethical guidelines relating to respect, honesty, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were perceptively observed.