

VARIABLES INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AMONG PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract	<p><i>Choosing a career is an important step that influences the aspirations of undergraduate admission seekers. Students sometimes are unable to make a decision about the career they wish to pursue later in life. Stakeholders in the educational sectors have observed that most highschool leavers in Nigeria often make wrong decisions as regard to their career due to motivation, peer group and parental influence. Therefore, this paper examined variables influencing career choice among highschool students, Osun State.</i></p> <p><i>The study adopted descriptive survey research design while 10 public high schools in Irewole and Isokan Local Government, Osun State were selected using total enumeration method technique. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 20 students from each school sampled to have a total of 200 respondents. Questionnaire was the research instrument developed and used to collect data. This instrument was subjected to reliability through Cronbach's Alpha method and 0.79 of reliability coefficient was found. Simple percentages, frequency counts, regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used in analyzing the data collected.</i></p> <p><i>The study revealed that opportunity available to the students, motivation, peer group and parental influence relatively and jointly contributed to career choice among undergraduate admission seekers. The result equally indicated that career choice among highschool students, Osun State was found to be poor. Government should employed more teaching and teaching personnel to all public high schools in order to provide the necessary assistance and support for students from different parental background so as to enhance their career aspiration. Parents should not allow their educational background, income level and occupation influence become barriers for career choice of their children.</i></p>
Keywords	<i>Opportunity Available to the Student, Motivation, Peer Influence, Parental Influence and Career Choice</i>

INTRODUCTION

Career choice is about making a long life decision by senior high school students. Choosing a career is an important step that influences the aspirations of high school leavers. This career choice largely depends on the kind of profession that a prospective undergraduate student intends to pursue in life. As these high school students try to make career choices, they confront challenges of matching their career preferences with their abilities in academic achievement at the high school level. Atchoarena (2005) reported that regardless of great effort put forth by families, government agencies and non-governmental organizations, many students encounter difficulties in the transition from high school levels to the tertiary institution of learning. Career choice decision making is not an easy task, yet at one time or the other, undergraduate admission seekers are faced with the task of making choice in career, preparing for it, starting it and making progress in it. At this level of secondary education, students can make wrong decision if care is not taken. A wrong decision can mar one's happiness in life as this could result to career maladjustment. Inappropriate decision may spell doom not only for the individual but also the whole society (Salami and Salami, 2013).

It has been observed that many of high school students make wrong choice in which their academic achievement at high school level is below the expectation of admission requirement for a particular course of study in the university. When this occurs, they may not be able to cope when admitted into university and end up rusticated in the system. However, there are students

with outstanding performance while in high school but they could not receive career guidance that will influence their career positively. This type of students may excel but they may end up with other career in life after graduation. Salami (1999) found out that in Nigerian university, many undergraduate admission seekers go into unsuitable careers due to a number of factors among them being peer pressure and advice from friends. Consequently, many of them are unsuited for their careers as they usually find themselves in jobs where they could not satisfy their value needs later in future. When this occurs, they constitute nuisance to themselves and employers. They are often unable to contribute meaningfully to the community and ultimately become liability to the country as a whole.

Alphonse (2016) observed that student's future career is predetermined by the choice of subjects' combination offered at high school level and the level of performance in senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). This researcher added that many students end up in occupations that they had not aspired for. This seems to be common among high school leavers who are curiously want admission at all cost in any university of their choice. However, studies have shown that newly admitted students all over the world are usually faced with a dilemma in making a career choice decision in their lives due to their academic performance and who is to consult (Issa and Nwalo, 2008 and Njeri, 2013).

Oluwatimilehin and Okereke (2009) defined career as the totality of time and effort devoted to the pursuance of work in order to live a meaningful life. It includes all the periods of entrance into, the effort made to ensure progression including acquisition of further education, change of job and development all through a working life. Career is so important that it tends to define human personality and determine the quality of life that individuals live. Career aspiration is defined as the extent to which possible careers are researched and considered in the entire life of human being (Julius, Jacob, Daniel, Samson, Joseph, Betty and Hassan, 2016). At times, many of these senior high school students are fond of naming the seemingly common and popular careers such as medicine, engineering and law as their future ambitions. These professions have enjoyed great popularity as a result of the great potentials they had, transformation of individuals' lives, change their social status and economic fortunes within a relatively short period of time.

Stakeholders in educational sector such as parents, teaching personnel, the society and the government have observed that most high school leavers in Nigeria often make poor career decisions due to available opportunity to the students, motivation, peer group and parental influence. These school leavers need proper career guidance in order to achieve their dream. A review of studies indicate that university choice factors include mass-media, parental preference, peer group influence, location, learning environment, political environment, concern for students, cost of education and facilities (Baharun, Awang and Padlee, 2011).

According to Borchert (2002), observed that several factors influenced career choices of public high school students and identifying these factors would give school administrators an idea as to where high school leavers place most of their trust in the career selection process. These factors include the students' immediate environment, opportunities available to the student and their personality. Similarly, Muraguri (2011) states that an individual's choice of career is likely to be influenced by several factors including personal and cultural values, family background, career expectations and career guidance. Some also make career decisions by taking the path of least resistance for example, following a career path advocated by their parents or following in the footsteps of an elder sibling (Carlos, 2009). According to Hewitt (2010), factors influencing career choice can either be intrinsic or extrinsic or both. However, motivation, parental influence, peer group influence and student opportunity are considered in this paper.

Motivation is very important when talking about career choice of senior high school students.

Children whose parents are educated stand a better chance for achieving their academic potential by way of motivation. The educated parents are able to provide educational needs for their children at every developmental stage in their life, hence equipping the children with necessary background experiences as might be required of them to meet challenging intellectual demands and pursuit. Motivation is sometimes used as pressures to induce senior high school students into predetermined career choice, regardless of the potentials, actual needs and ego of the child. The glamour associated with some careers often turn out to be an illusion. Empirical findings have confirmed to a greater extent, the impact of the motivation on choice of career among undergraduate admission seekers (Alika, 2010).

Parental influence is one of the factors that likely to influence career choice of senior high school students. Parental influence such as parental educational background, parental income and parental occupation influence are likely to determine the choice of discipline. Hewitt (2010) observes that students are influenced by careers of their parents. Parents' educational background may influence student views on whether or not to continue their education. Somerville (2013) identified that students from well- educated background are more likely to attend university than a student from a low educated background. This researcher added that many students from low educated background tend to enrol in 'caring professions' such as nurses or teachers with very few pursuing the fields of medicine, dentistry or the like. Alphonse (2016) stated that parents with a university qualification are able to pass its importance to their children and are more likely to offer their children an opportunity for a better education by enrolling them in good schools and in careers of their own choice.

Sear and Gordon (2002) were of the opinion that the level of parents' education has an effect in the secondary school leaver's career choice. The researchers believe that the level of education of one's parent will definitely determine the type of career choice he makes. If parents are not well educated, then this will eventually limit the career choice of their children. Muthukrishna and Sokoya (2008) found the mother as the most influential person to talk to their children as regard to their career choice. Similarly, Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006) reported that their parents had a significant influence on their career decisions but mothers were more influential. This implies that mothers seem to play a major role in career choice of their children.

Students from lower income families are not given adequate space to make independent decisions on their careers. Parental income also appears to influence senior high school students' career because large family tends to have less money to aid the older children in attending university, while younger children may receive more financial assistance since the financial strain is less once the older children leave home. The income level of public high school parents may determine what career a student chooses during a specific time in the student's life; choices that will determine a large part of that student's future. Some students will have to budget education according to their personal income (Salami and Salami, 2016). Female undergraduate admission seekers who come from higher income families could prefer more prestigious job, than girls from lower income families. Somerville (2013) confirmed that a group of mothers clearly articulated that finance was a major challenge in their daughters choosing a career requiring higher education. Furthermore, students from poor backgrounds may not have power to choose university of their choice so the dream of these set of students could not be actualized.

Parental occupational influence also determines the career choice of senior high school students. According to Williams (2016), a parent's occupation influences children's career choices both accidentally and inadvertently. By the time children move into adolescence stage, they begin seriously considering their futures, often looking to their father and mother either as role models or for career adviser. This scholar added further that if parents' jobs give them great satisfaction or provides a comfortable lifestyle; their children may want to do their parent

job. On the other hand, if parents complain about their jobs or struggle to support the family on the income they earn, they may not be able to do their parent job. Aswani (2012) who found out that parents' occupation and especially that of the mother had a significant positive influence on standard eight pupils' educational and occupational aspirations in Kenya. On the other hand, Mugenda, Kimani, Maina and Wainaina (2010) found out that boys were more likely to follow on the footsteps of their fathers and older brothers.

Eckerman and Didow (1988) observed that cooperative interactions between peers begin in toddler hood and that the most frequent were acts that imitated the actions of the peer models, which continues all through childhood and adolescence. Wentzel (1991) observed that associating with friends that serve as academic and social resources could have a direct and positive influence on achievement outcomes at school. According to Wentzel (1991), peers may have a less influential role than parents in influencing adolescents' career choice. The young adolescent who enters school is encouraged to set high aspirations for him or herself and to work to achieve these aspirations.

Peer influence is an important aspect in determining career aspiration of secondary school students. A group of student can learn from discussions with their peer and can possibly influence their career. Studies suggested that the quality of peers could affect a wide range of student learning outcomes (Korir and Kipkemboi, 2014). It has been established in the literature that most secondary school students who have positive peer relationship make a right decision regarding their career choice while students who have negative relationship with their contemporary tend to make a wrong career choice (Udo and Sanni, 2012).

Opportunity available to the student is the fourth factor as mentioned in this study that is likely to encourage undergraduate admission seekers to make a career choice. If admission seekers know that they are going to be employed in Oil Company or banking sector, they are likely to study petrol chemical engineering or banking and finance. Maxwell and Chiamaka (2018) observed that opportunity available to student will determine the career choices that the student of secondary schools makes. In fact, opportunity may influence how students have perceived their future in terms of the reasonable probability of a future in particular career fields. One needs to ask how opportunities available to the secondary school leavers have affected their career choice. Opportunities available for students can also be linked to quality of education a student has at the secondary school level. This is because opportunities are limited without the quality and proper education. Hooley (2012) stated that the quality of education one receives at secondary school level will determine their career choice. This implies that students who are privileged to have access to the best quality of education tend to make right career choice while those who do not have access to quality education are most likely going to make wrong career choices.

Studies have also investigated factors that influence career choice by high school students. Mudhovozi and Chireshe (2012) investigated factors that influence career choice by high school students and found that the participants who attended rural-situated public schools made delayed career decisions. The researcher also found that participants were mainly influenced by parents, teachers and friends to choose psychology as a career. It is on this background that the study investigated variables influencing career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Observations have shown that many undergraduate admission seekers in their final years choose subjects leading to careers for which they do not qualify for in term of capability and ability while others choose those that are not even relevant to their career. This situation has led to a lot of arguments amongst educational administrators, planners and managers among

others as to what actually causes of these problems in making appropriate decision on career. This may be attributed to poor motivation and career guidance both in the school and at home. Also, the peer group that students associate with cannot be discarded as an influencing factor because mostly what their friends want to become can prompt them to choose career. It is important to note that home of children cannot be excluded from the factors that affect career choice.

The reality of the contemporary time shows that not all undergraduate admission seekers can end up becoming medical doctors, lawyers and engineers no matter how great they fantasize, but there are equally high profile and lucrative professions which offer great hopes of fulfilling careers to the young ones. However, the extent to which senior high school students are aware of these careers may determine their ability to explore such opportunities. Despite the challenges associated with career choice among undergraduate admission seekers in public high schools, few studies have been done to investigate these factors. Hence this study investigated variables influencing career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the contributions of motivation, parental influence, peer group influence and opportunity available to the student to career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the relative and joint contribution of motivation, parental influence, peer group influence and opportunity available to the student to career choice and the extent to which public high schools make career choice in Osun State, Nigeria

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated and tested for the study:

- Ho₁:** There is no relative contribution of motivation, parental influence, peer group influence and opportunity available to the student to career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria
- Ho₂:** There are no jointly contributions of motivation, parental influence, peer group influence and opportunity available to the student to career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationally, scholars have examined determinants of undergraduate admission seekers' career choice in various fields of specialization. To mention but a few, there is study on the views of students on teaching career (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000). This study found that the main reasons for student to choosing teaching career fall into three main areas, namely extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors and altruistic factors. Extrinsic reasons cover aspect of jobs which are not inherent in work itself such as long holidays, level of pay and status. Intrinsic motives may be understood as entering the career for job-related factors like the nature of the job, for instance, the activity of teaching children, chance for life-long learning and many opportunities that associated with the job. The third category is altruistic factors. These often go beyond tangible benefits that the career has to offer. Individuals who are motivated by altruistic reasons see teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job. They have a desire and passion to teach, a great love for children and desire to help society improve and make a difference to the lives of their students (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000).

Julius, Jacob, Daniel, Samson, Joseph, Betty and Hassan, (2016) studied factors that influence career choices among students in public universities in Kenya using descriptive survey research design. Students who are second, third and fourth year at the University of Eldoret were

targeted for the study. A convenience sampling technique was used to select a sample of 210. The data collection instrument used was a self-administered questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results indicated that multiple factors influence career choices of undergraduate students. Salami (1999) found that many youths made wrong career choices due to ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers, or as a result of prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counseling.

Alphonse (2016) employed research survey design to investigate the extent by which parental factors influence career choice among form four students in Nairobi County. The study population comprised 27,614 form four students who had enrolled for the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) examinations for the year 2016. Frequencies, percentages and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were used to answer research questions raised for the study. Results showed that parental factors influence the career choice of students in Nairobi County. These factors included parental highest education level, parents' occupation, parental values and expectations, and parent-child relationships. Therefore, socio-economic status of the family was found not to influence the career choice of the students.

Amani (2013) examined social influence and occupational knowledge as predictors of career choice intentions among undergraduate students in Tanzania using cross-sectional survey design. A convenient sampling technique was used to sample 100 first and finalist undergraduate students in this study. The structured questionnaire was used to assess the level of occupational knowledge, social influence, and career choice intentions. The study found that undergraduate students' intentions to join their careers were highly determined by their level of occupational knowledge and social influence from significant individuals such as parents, friends, and lecturers. It was further revealed that there was low but positive correlation between occupational knowledge and career choice intentions. The study equally found that majority of students intend to join their careers upon their graduation.

Brownson (2014) investigated the parents' influence on the career choice of their children in some selected schools in Ondo West Local Government Area (OWLGA) of Ondo State. The population comprised all the Senior High School II students in Ondo West Local Government Area. Sample used comprised 256 S.S. II students randomly drawn from the population. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean and t-test. The findings revealed, among others, that the influence of parents on their children's career choice was minimal, parents did not aid their children to study another course from that which they had chosen, and parents only advised their children on subjects to offer.

Salami and Salami (2013) conducted study on the factors determining the choice of career. Simple sampling technique was used to select 100 students from five high schools in Ogun State. A questionnaire designed on the basis of Likert-type scale on the factors determining the choice of career based on environment, influence and opportunity of the students was administered. Data were analyzed using percentage, mean, standard deviation and independent T-test. Significant difference was found on the environmental factor, personality and opportunity of the students.

Loren and Naltan (2014) worked on determinant factors contributing to student choice in selecting a University. The study adopted survey research design using a self-developed questionnaire to collect data. A sample of 261 respondents from central Thailand participated in the study. All respondents sampled were students of senior high school and students who had just enrolled for the first time at the University of their Choice. Support systems, safe and

friendly environment, learning environment and job prospects, sporting facilities and student life and activities were found to be significantly influenced decision-making on which institution of higher learning to attend.

Alika (2010) adopted survey method to investigate parental and peer group influence as correlate of career choice in humanities among highschool students. The population of the study comprised students in senior high school two (SS2). A random sample of hundred high school two (SS 2) students was selected in Oredo and Egor local government areas of Edo State. Occupational Clusters Preference Scale (OCPS), Peer Pressure Assessment Scale (PPAS) and the Parental Influence Assessment Inventory (PIA) were instruments used and developed to collect data from respondents. Pearson Product moment Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis were employed in carrying out the study. Result showed that there was no significant relationship between parental and peer group influence on career choice in humanities among high school students.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It is a descriptive survey research design because it is a form of planned collection of data from a large population for the purpose of analysing the relationships among the variables. Population of the study comprised 500 high school students in 20 public schools. Ten (10) public high schools in Irewole and Isokan Local Government, Osun State were selected using total enumeration method technique. This technique was chosen because these schools are not many in both the local governments selected for the study. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select twenty (20) students from each school sampled to have a total of two hundred (200) respondents. Questionnaire was the research instrument developed and used to collect data. This instrument was subjected to reliability through Cronbach’s Alpha method and 0.79 of reliability coefficient was found. Descriptive statistics of simple percentages and frequency counts was used in answering research question raised while inferential statistics of regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used in testing all hypotheses formulated.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: There is no relative contribution of motivation, parental influence, peer group influence and opportunity available to the student to career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria.

Table I: **Relative Contribution of (Motivation, Parental Influence, Peer Group Influence and Opportunity available to the Student) to Career Choice**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	10.852	1.911		5.679	.000
Opportunity available to the student	3.000	.392	.056	.768	.001
Motivation	.310	.242	.086	2.967	.003
Peer Group Influence	2.425	.016	.121	1.546	.011
Parental Influence	-3.410	.008	.035	.412	.008

Table 1 shows the relative contribution of the independent variables (opportunity available to the student, motivation, peer group and parental influence) to the dependent variable (career choice). opportunity available to the student was statistically significant at ($\beta = 0.056$; $t=0.768$; $P < 0.05$). Motivation was significantly contributed at ($\beta = 0.086$; $t=2.967$; $P < 0.05$). Peer group influence was statistically significant at ($\beta = 0.121$; $t=1.546$; $P < 0.05$) while parental influence was equally contributed to career choice ($\beta = 0.035$; $t .412$; $P < 0.05$). However, peer group influence was potential and had highest contribution to career choice among public high

schools. Based on the result, the stated hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is relative contribution of (opportunity available to the student, motivation, peer group and parental influence) to career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria. The findings is in line with the result of Alphonse(2016) employed research survey design to investigate the extent by which parental factors influence career choice among form four students in Nairobi County. Results showed that parental factors (parental highest education level, parents' occupation, parental values and expectations, and parent-child relationships) influence the career choice of students in Nairobi County.

However, this result is contrary to the finding of Brownson (2014) who investigated the parents' influence on the career choice of their children in some selected schools in Ondo West Local Government Area (OWLGA) of Ondo State. The study found that the influence of parents on their children's career choice was minimal, parents did not aid their children to study another course from that which they had chosen, and parents only advised their children on subjects to offer.

Hypothesis 2: There are no jointly contributions of career guidance, motivation, peer group and parental influence to career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria

Table 2: Joint Contribution of (Career Guidance, Motivation, Peer Group and Parental Influence) to Career Choice

R	R Square			Adjusted R Square	Std.	Error of the estimate
.416	.383			.140		
ANOVA						
Mode;	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	257.798	4	28.644	4.215	.003	Sig.
Residual	1229.357	196	6.470			
Total	1487.155	200				

Table 2 shows joint contribution of the independent variables (career guidance, motivation, peer group and parental influence) to the prediction of the dependent variable (career choice). This shows that independent variables (career guidance, motivation, peer group and parental influence) accounted for 38.3% of the total variation in the dependent variable (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.140$, $F_{(4, 196)} = 4.215$, $p < 0.05$). This joint contribution is shown to be significant. The hypothesis is also rejected. This indicates that there is jointly contribution of (career guidance, motivation, peer group and parental influence) to career choice among public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria. This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance. The findings of this study is consistent with the findings of Julius, Jacob, Daniel, Samson, Joseph, Betty and Hassan, (2016) who studied factors that influence career choices among students in public universities in Kenya using descriptive survey research design and found that multiple factors influence career choices of undergraduate students. The finding of this paper also corroborated with the result of Loren and Naltan (2014) who carried out study on factors contributing to student choice in selecting a university using survey research design. The study found that support systems, safe and friendly environment, learning environment and job prospects, sporting facilities and student life and activities were significantly influenced decision-making on which institution of higher learning to attend.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions. The study has established that career choice among undergraduate admission seekers in public high schools can be attributed to a number of factors among the prominent factors are career guidance, motivation, peer group influence and parental influence. The study equally established that peer group influence was potential and had highest contribution to career choice among

public high schools in Osun State, Nigeria. The study also demonstrates that there is joint and relative contribution of career guidance, motivation, peer group influence and parental influence to career choice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

Government should employed more teaching personnel to all public high schools in order to provide the necessary assistance and support for students from different parental background so as to enhance their career choice. Parents should not allow their educational background, income level and occupation influence become barriers for career choice of their children. Bursary and scholarship should be given to outstanding admission seekers to Public Nigerian Universities for encouraging their career choice.

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