

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND PERSONALITY TRAITS AS CORRELATES OF PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON CAREER CHOICE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN LAGOS STATE

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ABSTRACT: Deciding on the most appropriate choice of career serves as one of the most important decisions students make in determining their future plans. While often perceived to be an individual choice, a variety of factors are likely to influence one's ultimate career decision. This study investigated gender differences and personality traits as correlates of parental influence on career choice among undergraduates. The study adopted a correlational survey design and randomly selected 281 (48.7%) male and 296 (51.3%) female participants from three universities in Lagos, Nigeria. Two standardized scales were utilized for data collection; a 44-item self-report Big Five Personality Inventory (Goldberg, 1992) with Cronbach coefficient of .76, and 14 14-item scale by Udoh (2012) which sought information on how parental influence on children's career choice. The results revealed that only agreeableness ($r=.285$; $p>.01$), conscientiousness ($r=.169$; $p<.01$) and openness to experience ($r=.278$; $p<.01$) had significant but weak positive relationship with parental influence on career choice. Also, the difference in means scores of female and male undergraduates was not statistically significant ($t= -1.15$; $df (575)$; $P>.05$). The research recommended a policy that will empower the counselling units to continue to educate students on the role of personality in the degree of parental influences on undergraduates' career choices. Also, this study emphasised the importance of assessing personality traits by counsellors before offering career guidance. In addition, freedom and proper guidance should be given to female undergraduates who intend to venture into areas or careers that are dominated by males.

Keywords: Parental Influence, Personality Trait, Career Choice, Gender

INTRODUCTION

Deciding on the most appropriate choice of career serves as one of the most important and stressful decisions students make, especially students who do not have proper guidance, in determining their future plans, since a career choice that is compatible with one's personality can be reinforced and rewarded by an academic environment (Kemboi et al., 2016). This is because success, commitment, and happiness depend on how well a person chooses his/her career. A career can be described as a personal path in the working life of an individual, in the choice of work or job, and in the position that an individual begins until the end of working life (Wong et al., 2019). In a broader and life-encompassing way, a career is the culmination of decisions that have an impact on social, educational, political, economic, and spiritual aspirations as well as life values and personality traits (Phifer, 2003).

In the society we live in, practically every individual must choose an occupation as it so important that it would affect other aspects of one's life. For instance, at the time of admission to colleges and universities, students, usually overwhelmed, ill-prepared, confused and with

little knowledge on what career path to take, are forced to make decision on career choice. While often perceived to be an individual choice, research suggests that a variety of influences such as family, school, community, availability of learning opportunities, and the need for self-fulfilment and social and economic factors are likely to manipulate one's ultimate career decision ((Ates, 2016), being a daunting task that anyone has to face when the time comes and it can make or a person's future, since there several choices of vocations or career to choose from, so choosing right is a task that must be learn (Egunjobi et al., 2013). The sad reality is that students as well as parents sometimes have limited occupational knowledge as well as there are narrow range of alternatives available to them (Muribwathoho, 2015). This predisposes students to make numerous changes when they are choosing their course of study before they eventually gain admission into the university (Kemboi, et al, 2016). Among these factors that influence career decision making, students report that parents and personality have the greatest influence on which career they choose (Wong et al., 2019; Alwis, 2018; Ates, 2016).

Few parents seem to recognize this impact and still believe that they have little to do with the career choices of their children, while studies have shown show that parents have a greater influence than teachers on career choice (Kumar, 2016) and can even influence what major their children choose to pursue in college and the highly educated parents do guide their children very early in life on choice of career, job-related information, and even made recommendation for them, which in turn influence their career choice(Natalie, 2016). Despite, parents arguing that they have less influence over their children's career decisions, research evidence from the perception of children identifies parents to be of the highest influence through their social support, networking and mobilization of resources for desire career for their children (Wong & Quek, 2015; Farooq, 2018). The looming threat observed in parental influence on career choice is that children may aspire to a career that follows their parents' norms, career path and values without developing their own sense of self.

Selecting a career that is a good fit for one's personality is considered a key determinant for future success in the workplace. So, one should be cautious while selecting a career (Alwis, 2018). Differences in career choices can be influenced by individuals' characteristics, patterns of behaviours, thoughts and feelings. Personality traits—relatively stable consistent, and enduring internal characteristic that is inferred from a pattern of behaviours, attitudes, feelings, and habits, reflect the basic dimensions on which people differ (Matthews, et al., 2003). Traits are important and interesting because they describe stable patterns of behaviour that persist for long periods of time (Caspi et al., 2005), while wrong decision in choosing a career has been identified as the key factor affecting today's graduate employment opportunities (Ng et al., 2016). Importantly, these stable patterns can have broad-ranging consequences for many areas of our life (Roberts et al., 2007). For instance, personality psychologists have found that traits like conscientiousness play an important role in colleague grades because highly conscientious individuals study hard, get their work done on time, and are less distracted by nonessential activities that take time away from school work. Personality traits are also useful ways to describe people, the types of job and activities a person will enjoy, and how good a worker will be on a job.

Much of the empirical research on career and personality has employed the Big Five model and the RIASEC model of personality. However, this study only includes the Big Five model which is deemed comprehensive enough to explain human difference and parental influence on career choices. The five-factor model has five broad factors. It represents personality at a

comprehensive level of abstraction. Consciousness (C), agreeableness(A), neuroticism (N), openness to experience (O), and extraversion (E) are the big five-factor; generally used acronyms for the big five-factor are “CANOE” or “OCEAN”.

Openness to Experience: Individuals with this trait are highly innovative, independent-minded, sensitive to internal beliefs, and creative. They are interested in recognizing unknown thoughts and deducing them to various points of view (Cattell and Mead, 2008).

Conscientiousness: Conscientiousness is an individual's ability to be organized, thoughtful, self-managed, and forward-thinking. They prefer to avoid risk (Burch and Neil, 2008). Conscientiousness relates to a person's ability to be disciplined, organized, and goal-oriented (Abdullah et al., 2013).

Extraversion: People with this trait are energetic, social, forceful, and emotionally upbeat. They are talkative, argue their points of view, interact with everyone openly, and seek excitement in all aspects of life (Burch and Neil, 2008).

Agreeableness: This type of person prefers social conformity and cooperation. They are kind, cooperative, and courteous. Agreeable desire societal peace and collaboration because they are born with the desire to help others, they assume that others are similarly honest and trustworthy (Olorunleke et al., 2020).

Neuroticism: The common characteristics of a neurotic personality are frustration, anxiety, loneliness, envy, worry, fearfulness, emotional instability, and jealousy. Frustration, anger, despair, tension, and self-blame are all symptoms of high neuroticism. They are commonly pessimistic and overreact to their failures and flaws. They are emotional and worried (Orthogonal, 2002).

The admission pool for enrolment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has expanded tremendously, with a sizeable number of males and females hugely represented. Men and women differ considerably in personality as well as their career choices, and many factors contribute to these differences. At the top of the pyramid is socialization, which refers to the lifelong social learning experiences that people have when interacting with others. This process of indoctrinating or teaching people to be proficient members of society begins very early in an individual's life. Parents, siblings, teachers, school counsellors, other adult role models, peers, and the media play a major role in the socialization experience and how individuals define themselves based on their gender. The immediate people in children's social environments reinforce—giving boys a pat when they handle pain, or getting girls gifts when they clean the kitchen—and send consistent messages as to what is expected of them according to their gender.

However, the aftermath of parental influence on career choice can have several implications for the society and ultimately to the nation. As earlier stated, career provides a person with identity and status, boosts a person's self-esteem, creates a sense of belonging and makes it easier to form relationships with other members of the society. It is for this reason that this study sought to examine gender differences and personality traits as correlates of parental influence on career choice among undergraduates in among university students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kemboi et al. (2016), investigated the relationship between personality types and career choices of undergraduate students of Moi University. A survey research design was used and 399 participants was selected for the research. The research used John Holland's Personality Theory of Career Choice as a foundation (Holland, 1997). The research paper utilized Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS) questionnaires to sort out students' personality types, and Holland's Occupational Finder checklist to categorize degree programs into career options based on Holland's Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC) mode. According to the results, there was statistically significant relationship between personality types and employment choice, and majority of students (73.3 percent) were content with their field of study.

Onoyase and Onoyase (2009) investigated the relationship between personality types and career choice of secondary school students in federal government colleges in Nigeria. The researchers used a sample of 616 senior secondary two students who responded to two instruments on personality and career choice. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between Artistic (coefficient value = 0.61; critical r value = 0.29), Social (coefficient value = 0.65; critical r value = 0.20), Enterprising (coefficient value = 0.04; critical r value = 0.22) and Investigative (coefficient value = 0.05; critical r value = 0.22) personality type on one hand and career choice on the other. However, no significant relationships were found between Realistic (coefficient value = 0.15, critical r value = 0.30) and Conventional (coefficient value = 0.57, critical r value = 0.29) personality types and career choice. Similarly, in Nigeria, Fred (2012) conducted a study on the relationship between personality characteristics and vocational choice using Holland's theory. The findings of the study showed that 70% of the population had personality type that was congruent with their career choice.

Studies have found a link between gender stereotypes and work opportunities concerning career choices and expectations (Madikizela & Haupt, 2010; Atalay & Doan, 2020). Events and experiences that occur during childhood could influence an individual later in life (Watson et al., 2011). Madikizela and Haupt (2010) confirmed that young people begin to make career decisions by the age of 16 and that gender-based career stereotyping hinders the ability for young girls to make career choices or take contrary career decisions in opposition to the will of their parents. English and Hay (2015) revealed that, although many parents were reluctant to encourage their daughters to take up a profession in construction, they showed no hesitance in allowing their sons to enter the construction industry.

Hypotheses

- There will be significant relationships between personality factors and parental influence on career choice among undergraduate students in Lagos State University.
- Female undergraduates' career choices will be more influenced by parents than male undergraduates.

METHODS

Design

Correlational research design was used in this study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. In this regard, numerical information was collected and analysed systematically in order to give a detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation. This design was used to determine the relationship between variables rather than to draw conclusions about cause and effect.

Location, Population and Sample

In this study, the target population was tertiary institutions in Lagos state, Nigeria. For the purpose of the study, the accessible population was restricted to all full-time final year undergraduate students in these Universities excluding diploma or sandwich students. The rationale for selecting full-time students in 4th year is due to the easy accessibility, and they are in a better position to provide responses to aid the study, as these participants were, most likely, ready for the job market. The study was conducted across three (3) tertiary institutions in Lagos state; Lagos State University main campus, Ojo, University of Lagos, Akoka, Caleb University, Ikorodu. The data gathered from the population can be generalized to cover the rest of the category that share similar characteristics with the target population. The estimated population was about 9300 final year students using the report of past students graduated. The universities were randomly selected while the participants were selected using quota sampling in order to ensure that the sample represents certain characteristics of the population.

Table 1: Estimated Population of the Universities

Name of University	Estimated Pop.	Sample selected
Lagos state University main campus, Ojo	4000	232
University of Lagos, Akoka	4700	257
Caleb University, Ikorodu	600	88
Total Sample Size	9300	577

Research Instruments

The researcher made use of existing scales developed into questionnaires for data collection.

Section A: Consists of information on respondents' socio-demographic data.

Section B: This section asks questions about one's personality using the 44-item Big Five Personality Inventory adapted from Goldberg (1992). This multidimensional scale measures 5 dimensions of personality traits namely; Extraversion, Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. The scale has a 5-point Likert response format ranging from Disagree strongly, disagree a little, neither agree nor disagree, agree a little, agree strongly. The author reported a coefficient of .75 reliability for the scale.

Section C: This section consists of 14 items developed by Udoh (2012) which sought information on how parental variables influence the career choice of the students. The scale adopted 4-point Likert rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree,

Disagree. The 14 items on the instrument yielded a test re-test reliability coefficient of 0.85 for parents' attitude, 0.55 for parental level of formal education, and 0.87 for parents' occupation—an indication of internal validity.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher contacted the research participants in their various institutions and faculties to establish rapport with them and also seek their consent before administering the questionnaire. Participants were adequately briefed, assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and informed that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any point if any form of discomfort is experienced. The questionnaires were administered with the assistance of 4 trained undergraduate research assistants who had undergone a day training on the nuances of the study. The administration of the questionnaire was done during school hours and it took the researcher approximately three (3) weeks and four (4) days to administer the questionnaire. The researcher administered 700 questionnaires but only 633 were returned representing 90.4%. Out of the 633 questionnaires retrieved, only 577 were correctly completed and this represented 82.24 of the total questionnaires administered.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed utilizing SPSS Version 25.0 (IBM Corp). Descriptive statistics such as the mean (standard deviation) and frequency (percentages) depicted the socio-demographic variables and scores on the study measures. Hypothesis 1 was tested using Pearson's correlational matrix, and Hypothesis 2 was tested using an independent t-test. Hypothesis one was non-directional and correlation was set at p-values less 0.05 level and .01 (2-tailed) while hypothesis one was directional (1-tailed), and the level of statistical significance was set at a p-value less than 0.05.

RESULTS

Participants Demographic Information

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

<i>Variable</i>		Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Sex</i>	Male	281	48.7
	Female	296	51.3
<i>Religion</i>	Christians	365	63.3
	Muslim	186	32.2
	Traditional	17	2.9
	Others	9	1.6
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	548	95.0
	Married	29	5.0
<i>Admission</i>	Students who applied to a course but was given another course	450	78.0
	Students who got the same course applied to.	127	22.0
<i>University</i>	Lagos State University, Ojo	232	40.2
	University of Lagos, Akoka	257	44.5
	Caleb University, Ikorodu	88	15.3

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between personality traits and parental influence on career choice among undergraduate students in Lagos State University. This hypothesis was tested using the Pearson's correlation matrix and the result is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Summary table of correlation matrix showing relationship between personality factors and career choice among undergraduate students.

Variables	Mean	S. D	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Career Choice	35.89	7.39		.051	.285**	.169**	-.059	.278**
2. Extraversion	23.74	3.77			.044	.215**	.127**	.297**
3. Agreeableness	30.66	5.56				.347**	-.154**	.557**
4. Conscientiousness	28.77	5.02					-.102**	.388**
5. Neuroticism	23.69	4.35						.113**
6. Openness	30.08	6.43						-

** Correlations is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlations is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results from the table revealed that not all personality traits related with parental influence of career. Findings from the results suggests that agreeableness ($r=.285$; $p>.01$), conscientiousness ($r=.169$; $p<.01$) and openness to experience ($r=.278$; $p<.01$) had significant weak positive relationship with parental influence on career choice. However, the correlation matrix reveals no statistical relationship existed between extraversion and career choice ($r=.051$; $p>.05$) and neuroticism and career choice ($r=-.059$; $p>.05$). The hypothesis is thereby partially confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: Female undergraduates career choice will be more influenced by parents than male undergraduates

Table 3: Summary table of independent t-test showing difference in parental influence on career choice between male and female undergraduate students.

	Sex	N	Mean	Std D.	df	t-value	Sig
Parental influence on Career Choice	Male	281	35.54	8.02			
	Female	296	36.24	6.72	575	-1.15	>.05

The means scores on the table in respect of the parental influence on career choice revealed that female undergraduates ($M= 36.24$) scored higher than male undergraduates ($M= 35.54$) with a mean difference of (1.34). However, the independent sample t-value indicates that the difference in means scores of both female and male undergraduates was not statistically significant ($t= -1.15$; $df (575)$; $P>.05$). Therefore, the stated hypothesis is thereby rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated gender differences and personality traits as correlates of parental influence on career choice of university students. The study was prompted by the fact that some final year, who are expected to be in the labour market in a couple of years, are not aware of the role their parents has played on their career choices. Also, there was the need to establish the gender differences between male and female undergraduates score on the degree of their parental influence of career choice.

The correlation matrix results, which was partially confirmed, established that there is statistically significant relationship between three personality traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience) and parental influence on students' career choices. The results confirm the finding from Miller's (2000) that parental attitudes and behaviours are positively associated with students' vocational development. Although this research doesn't factor in the role of personality, it serves as the foundation to indicate that parental influences are positively correlated with career choice. Furthermore, the result of the study also confirms the findings of Hossein and Taher (2012) that openness to experience significantly influences career choice.

The finding by Fred (2012) conducted on the relationship between personality characteristics and vocational choice using Holland's theory revealed that 70% of the population had personality type that was congruent with their career choice. This result also corroborates the study by Chinyere (2017) who found out that there is no statistically positive relationship between career choice and neuroticism. This can be because high scorers on are pessimistic and they maybe likely to be influenced by parents on their choice of career as they would literally see no good in whatever options presented.

The result of the second hypothesis reveals no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of males and females in respect to parental influence on their career. Although, female undergraduates scored higher in respect of parental influence on career choice compared to male undergraduates. This result is in congruence with Madikizela and Haupt (2010) who confirmed that young people begin to make career decisions by the age of 16 and that gender-based career stereotyping hinders the ability for young girls to make career choices or take contrary career decisions in opposition to the will of their parents. The results also corroborate the findings of English and Hay (2015) which revealed that, although many parents were reluctant to encourage their daughters to take up a profession in construction, they showed no hesitation in allowing their sons to enter the construction industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study have implication for career guidance and counselling among both male and female students, as this would help the school counsellors to recognize the role in which personality plays in the degree of parental influences on undergraduates' career choices. Also, this study emphasises the importance of assessing personality by counsellors and career coach before offering careering guidance. This should be a requirement in order to help students pick the right career choice that will be in tandem with their aspirations and desire. The stakeholders which include, parents, career coaches, counsellors and educators should be reminded that personality type as well as gender can determine the degree to which undergraduates career choice are influenced by parents. The ripple effect is that children may

aspire to a career that follows their parents' norms, career path and values without developing their own sense of self.

In addition, freedom and proper guidance should be given to female undergraduates who intend to venture in areas or careers that are dominated by males. Restrictions by parental influences, such as behaviours and attitude towards career choices, can lead to several mental issues. Also, parents should endeavour to ensure that undergraduates career choice also strongly aligns with their personality. Consequently, this would enhance their choice of appropriate careers which will inure to the benefits of themselves and the society at large. Based on the above, it is recommended that seminars also be organized by counsellors to encourage both male and female students to venture into careers of their choice.

Limitations

Due to the characteristics of the university students in Lagos, Nigeria, the demographics of this research limits the external generalizability of the findings. Also, participants were not randomly selected and, therefore, not representative of the final year students in Lagos state, Nigeria. Therefore, future studies should be carried out using a larger sample size and randomly selected participants. Additionally, it was only assumed that personality traits of individuals and gender differences play a significant role, there was not much emphasis placed on other external factors such as socioeconomic status, peer influences, achievement motivation, etc. which are also factors that can be correlated parental influence on career choice of university students. It is necessary for future studies to account for these factors.

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