

**DETERMINANTS OF CAREER CHOICES AMONG
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AWKA SOUTH
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE**

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Abstract

This study focused on factors influencing career choices among secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Five research questions were answered and a null hypothesis was tested. The population of the study consisted 1258 senior secondary school students in Awka-South Local Government Area. A sample size of 300 students was selected using Yaro Yamane's statistical formula. Structured questionnaire of 26 items were used as instrument for collection of data. It was validated by experts and Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded reliability coefficient of values of 0.86, 0.74, 0.83, 0.81, and 0.75, respectively. Mean with standard deviation was used to answer the research questions with decision based on upper and lower limits of the mean. The t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that parents, peer group, personal interest, gender and outcome expectations were the major factors that influence students' career choices. Based on the findings and conclusions, some recommendations were made.

Introduction

Career choice has become a complex science with the advent of information and communications technology, the emergence of postindustrial revolution and job competition. Recently, one has not only to make due career planning but also exhaustive career research before making a career choice so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions (Wattles, 2009). Making a good choice of career is a major concern of the students and parents since the aim of education is to help an individual to develop

occupational competencies that will enable him or her to make a good career choice. Most students appear not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate career choices.

According to Kerka (2005), career choice is influenced by multiple factors among which are personalities, interests, selfconcept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources, such as information and finance Parental influence has been implicated in the career choice of their

children (Okeke,1996) Okeke discovered that 60% of the children prefer taking after their parents' occupations. Secondary school students are often not aware of these influences and may accept their parents' choice as theirs. This situation owes its origin from early childhood when children grab their parent attitude towards different vocations.

A conflict, therefore, occurs when the child submits to his parents' choice while at the same time deeply resenting his submissions as he becomes aware of his loss of independence and finds his area of interest. Peer group is also another factor that influences students' choice of career. Hinchlife (2007) observed that friends influenced the choice career of adolescents. Durojaiye (2008) also found out that 77% of the pupils he studied affirmed that their classmates would be employed in choosing professional occupations just like them; while 24% said that their chosen jobs would be the same as their friends. Roe (2005) remarked that peer group provided the norms or standards of thought and behaviour to be pursued by its member and established the attitude, opinions and ideas which they were expected to adopt. It is this sense of identity and solidarity that can be manipulated in student in the school in influencing the student career choice.

Khan (2006) supported this view by stating that the impressive ideas of students from enlightened homes bring about some career influence such as their peers in choosing their own careers without considering their interest. Therefore he concludes that a student's choice of career is highly affected by the group to which the student belongs. Personal interest according to Jonel (2001) exercises a great influence on the career choice of students. Interest goes with likeness for the career. When a student develops interest in a particular career he or she tends to work towards it.

Reason why a person chooses a particular career is that the person has intrinsic interest in the field (Owie, 2003). Interest remains paramount if the individual is going to be effective, satisfied and excel in the career. Where interest is lacking no amount of motivation or gratification would significantly increase the person's effectiveness.

Gender appears to play a vital role in student's career choice. According to Jenkins (2004), gender role in determining student's career cannot be underplayed. Men and women are said to be naturally inclined towards certain different professions. Until recently, certain professions were exclusive for women such as nursing and teaching. These professions afford them enough time to look after their homes. Boys tend to choose careers that have to do with science courses like medicine, engineering, architecture and estate surveying while girls choose courses as education, linguistics and arts. Olayinka (2007) supported this view when he noted that boys were generally more inclined towards pure sciences than girls who were more inclined to arts. This has led to gender disparity in performances of these students as males perform better in sciences while females perform better in arts. Odion (2004) expressed that females are generally more emotional than males and so find it more difficult to solve complex calculations in mathematics and allied subjects. This is obvious in the great disparity in the number of males vis-à-vis females who choose science subjects in secondary schools.

Outcome expectation is also another factor that can influence student's choice of careers. By outcome expectation it meant benefits that one expected to come with a chosen career. These outcome expectations include:

- (a) Availability of advancement;
- (b) Availability of jobs;

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| © | Employment security; | 2. | To establish if peers influence students' career choices in secondary schools in Awka metropolis South LGA. |
| (d) | Career flexibility; | | |
| (e) | Prestige associated with the profession; | 3. | To determine if interest plays a role in students' career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA. |
| (f) | Ability to choose career specialization; | 4. | To find out the role of gender in students' choice of careers in secondary schools in Awka South LGA. |
| (g) | Self employment opportunity; and | 5. | To determine if outcome expectations influence students' career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA. |
| (h) | Opportunity to apply skills and knowledge acquired. | | |

Knochung and Migunde Quinter (2011) identified six factors they used for the study that the outcome expectation factors were the most influential factor in student career choice.

Often, students do not find it easy to choose career in secondary schools. This is as a result of several intervening factors in the process. Firstly, parental intervention in the decision making process make students to choose a career which their parents want and for which they have no mental ability or aptitude to cope with. Secondly, peer group member may make the students to develop dislike for a career which they have aptitude and mental ability to master. Limited job prospects and opportunities for certain vocations in the future make students unwilling to choose courses which provide educational career for such vocations even when they have aptitude for them. Also, the absence of guidance and counselling staff in many secondary schools also serve as a deterrent to students in making appropriate career choice. The need arose to identify these factors and establish how they influence students' career choices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that influence student's choice of career in secondary schools. Thus the specific objectives of the study were:

1. To find out if parents influence students' choice of careers in secondary schools in Awka South LGA.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used for the study:

1. What extent do parents influence students' choices of careers in secondary schools in secondary schools in Awka South LGA?
2. What role does peer group play in determining students' career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA?
3. What extent does interest of the students affect their career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA?
4. What role does gender play in students career choices in secondary school in secondary schools in Awka South LGA?
5. What extent do outcome expectations influence students' career choice in secondary schools in Awka South LGA?

Hypothesis

- H₀: There is no significant differences between male and female students in the factors that influence their career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA.

Methods

The design was a descriptive survey type that elicited information from the respondents on factors influencing career choices among secondary school students in Awka South LGA.

The population of the study was 1258 Senior Secondary School students of five secondary schools from Awka-South L.G.A.

- St. John of God Secondary School, Awka 300
- Igwebuikwe Grammar Schooo, Awka 280
- Girls' Secondary School Awka 220
- Capital City Secondary School Awka 230
- Kenneth Dike Memorial Secondary School Awka 228

Total 1258

The sample size was selected using Yaro Yamane's Statistical formula to arrive at the sample of 300 Senior Secondary School Students.

Structured question was used to collect the necessary data for the study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one consisted a personal data, while the section two consisted of items derived from the content of the research questions. A four-point response scale of Strongly agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly disagreed (SD) and Very great extent (VGE), Great extent (GE), Low extent (LE), and Very low extent (VLE) was used for the data collection. The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements contained in the instrument. In order to establish the content validity of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were given to teachers in the school management broad in Awka Local Government Area.

Their contribution informed re-writing items in the instruments to suit what it is intended. Twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to students in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State to establish the reliability of the instrument. The reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha and the data yielded reliability coefficient of values vis-à-vis the various response sections of the instrument, thus: 0.86, 0.74, 0.83, 0.81 and 0.75, respectively. Nominal values were assigned to the scaling item as follows:

Strongly agreed/Very great extent	-	4 points
Agreed/ Great extent	-	3 points
Disagreed/ Low extent-		2 points
Strongly disagreed/ Very low extent	-	1 point

The mean with standard deviation was used to answer the research questions with decision based on upper and lower limits of the mean, thus:

Strongly agreed/Very great extent	- 3.50-4.00
Agreed/Great extent	- 2.50-3.49
Disagreed/Low extent	- 1.50-2.49
Strongly disagreed/Very low extent	- 1.00-1.49

The t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected if the t-calculated value was greater than the critical value, or not rejected if the calculated t-value was less than the critical (table) t-value.

Results

Table 1

Mean responses of secondary school students on whether parents influence their career choices

S/N	Item	very great extent	Great extent	Low extent	Very low extent	X	SD	Decision
1	Parents support any course their children want to study	213	75	09	03	3.66	0.38	VGE
2	Parents progress in an occupation encourage students to the choice of their own occupation	222	72	06	00	3.72	0.24	VGE
3	Parents who are professional encourage their children to choose similar profession	204	66	24	06	3.56	0.53	VGE
4	Parents allow students to choose a career because they parents like the career	205	65	24	06	3.57	0.54	VGE
	Grand Mean					3.63	0.42	

Table 1 shows the listed responses on whether parents' influence students' career choices. The mean scores range from 3.72 to 3.56. Item 2 obtains the highest mean score, followed by item 1 with mean score of 3.66. Item 4 has a mean score of 3.57, while item 3 has 3.56 mean score. This is indicative of the fact that parents influence students' career choices in secondary schools. A grand

mean of 3.63 is also recorded for the four items indicating that all the respondents generally agree to the fact that parents influence their children's career choices in secondary schools.

Table 2
Mean responses of secondary school students on peer group influence in determining the student career choices

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
5	Peers have strong influence on students choice of career	216	75	06	03	3.70	0.33	SA
6	Most peer groups discourage heir friends on the right course of choice	213	81	06	00	3.71	0.28	SA
7	Peers groups are good consellers to their friends in selecting their career choices	165	90	30	15	3.35	0.73	A
8	Peers from educated homes influence members choice of education career	180	84	33	03	3.45	0.52	A
	Grand Mean					3.56	0.47	

As can be seen from table 2, all the listed items on peer group influence were accepted. The mean scores range from 3.71 to 3.35. Item 6 received the highest mean score, followed by item 5 with a mean score of 3.70. Item 8 and 7 had the mean scores of 3.45 and 3.35 respectively. This is an indication that all the respondents agreed with the items relating to peer group influence in

determining students career choices. A grand mean of 3.56 was obtained indicating also the all respondents agreed that peer group actually influence students career choices.

Table 3

Mean responses of students on interest affects their choices of career in secondary schools in Awka South LGA

S/N	Item	Very great extent	Great extent	Low extent	Very low extent	X	SD	Decision
9	Personal interest of students influence the student career choices	184	80	33	0.3	3.45	0.52	GE
10	Parents' interest in a career influences their children's career choice.	180	105	15	0.0	3.55	0.34	VGE
11	Peer group interest	180	105	15	0.0	3.55	0.34	VGE
12	Interest of friends	165	90	30	15	3.35	0.38	GE
13	Interest of siblings in the family	180	105	15	0.0	3.55	0.34	VGE
	Grand Mean					3.53	0.43	

Table 3 shows that respondents were in agreement with all the items that interest is a factor in student career choices. A grand mean of 3.53 also indicated that personal interest in actually one of the factors influencing students' career choices.

Table 4

Responses of Respondents on the role gender plays in influencing students' career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
14	Gender strongly influences career choices of students in secondary schools.	220	77	03	0	3.72	0.24	SA
15	Boys prefer science related careers to art related careers	184	90	23	03	3.45	0.52	A
16	Girls prefer Art related careers	180	110	10	0	3.55	0.34	SA
17	Many boys prefer technology based course	184	90	23	03	3.45	0.52	A
18	Many girls prefer health sciences based course	180	110	10	0	3.55	0.34	SA
	Grand Mean					3.54	0.37	

Table 4 indicates that all the respondents agreed to the fact that gender influences career choices among secondary school students. This agreement also could be confirmed by the grand mean which is 3.54.

Table 5
Mean responses of students on how outcome expectation influence students' choices of careers in Awka South LGA

S/N	Item	very great extent	Great extent	Low extent	Very low extent	X	SD	Decision
19	Availability of jobs;	183	108	09	0	3.58	0.30	VGE
20	Availability of advancement	165	90	30	15	3.35	0.73	GE
21	Employment security	175	198	17	0	3.52	0.37	VGE
22	Career adaptability	200	70	24	06	3.56	0.53	VGE
23	Career flexibility	218	70	09	03	3.66	0.38	VGE
24	Prestige associated with the profession	184	80	33	03	3.45	0.52	GE
25	Self employment opportunity	220	74	03	03	3.72	0.24	VGE
26	Opportunity to apply skills and knowledge	180	84	36	00	3.45	0.52	GE
	Grand Mean					3.54	0.44	

Table 5 shows a mean ratings of 3.58, 3.35, 3.52, 3.56, 3.66, 3.45, 3.72 and 3.45 which shows that all respondents agreed that outcome expectations influence students career choices in secondary school. The table also shows a grand mean 3.54 which is also an indication that all the respondents generally agreed to the fact that out come expectation influence

students career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA.

Table 6
t-test comparison of differences between male and female students in the factors that influence their career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA.

Factor	Sex	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-table	Decision
(a) Parents	Male	115	3.36	0.73	298	0.94	1.96	NS
	female	185	3.28	0.71				
(b) Peer group	Male	115	3.33	0.79	298	0.21	1.96	NS
	female	185	3.31	0.81				
(c) Interest	Male	115	3.36	0.73	298	0.11	1.96	NS
	female	185	3.35	0.77				
(d) Gender	Male	115	3.31	0.78	298	-0.33	1.96	NS
	female	185	3.34	0.73				
(e) Outcome expectation	Male	115	3.32	0.81	298	0.31	1.96	NS
	female	185	3.29	0.79				
Key NS = Not significant								

The result on table 6 shows the mean, standard deviation and the t-calculated values of the responses of the respondents on factors influencing students career choices. The result indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of the male and female students on all the factors. The result showed that the t-calculated values obtained are not greater than the t-table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 298 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected because there is a significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students in the factors that influence their career choices.

Discussion of findings

The findings from research question one showed that parents directly or indirectly influence their children's choice of careers. This agreed with Quesi (2004) who posited that parents exerted a major influence on the careers students choose in secondary schools. The findings showed that the students more or less drift to choose career because they were influenced by their parents. It is not some students' willingness to choose particular careers, but their parents desire to see their children becoming a professional in a particular career.

Peer pressure was also seen as a factor that influence career choice. This could be as a result of overworked teachers who did not have time to advise students and parents spending less time with their children. This left the students in the hands of their fellow peers who offer the necessary guidance.

Regarding the influence of personal interest on career choices it could be seen from research question three that interest played a vital role in determining students' career choices.

These findings were not strange considering the fact that students' interests were often shaped by their environment, the people they interact with and more so their life experiences as they grow.

Furthermore the result from research question four showed that gender was another factor that influenced students' career choices in secondary schools in Awka South LGA. From research question five which with out come expectation as a factor influenced students' career choices it could be seen that outcome expectation played a very vital role in influencing students career choices. These results were similar to those of Konchung and Migunde (2011) found out that outcome expectations influence individual students' career choices. These similarities confirmed that when students make career choices their decisions are much influenced by what a particular career is likely to give in return.

The t-test analysis indicated that all the factors listed were accepted by the respondents as factors influencing students' choices of career. The null hypothesis was not rejected for the factors that influenced their career choices. This showed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the factors influencing their career choices.

Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussion on this study, it was concluded that parents, peers, interest and outcome expectation are major factors influencing students' career choices in secondary school in Awka-South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

However, the outcome expectations seem to be most influential among the factors. Guidance counsellors therefore should be aware of these factors as they provide vocational counseling to secondary school students.

Recommendations

The following were recommended

- (1) The school authority should ensure that career, counseling is taken seriously in the various secondary schools.
- (2) Parents, teachers, friends, mentors and all capable members of the society should help in career counselling of students in the secondary school.
- (3) Guidance counsellors in secondary schools should harness the factors highlighted in this study for counselling students.

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