



## **Parental Preference Towards Choice Of Tertiary Education Of Their Children In Okrika Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria**

<sup>1</sup>Maxwell D. EREMIE, Ed.D & <sup>2</sup>KENNEDY Margaret G, M.Ed

**Department of Educational Foundations,  
Faculty Of Science And Technical Education  
Rivers State University Of Science And Technology  
Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.**

**Emails: <sup>1</sup>[maxwell.eremie@edu.ng](mailto:maxwell.eremie@edu.ng)(+2348034827746)**

**<sup>2</sup>[counsellourmeg@yahoo.com](mailto:counsellourmeg@yahoo.com) (08138885391 OR 08055346153)**

### **ABSTRACT**

The study examined parental preference towards choice of tertiary education of their children in Okrika Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. The Survey method was used. The population for the study consist of parents of some secondary schools in the state, resulting to 2,000 parental strength. A total of 200 male and female were drawn through purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for the study is tagged Tertiary Institution, Preference Scale for Parents (TPSP). Cronbach alpha yielded a Reliability Coefficient of 0.68. The Z test statistics was used to test the three null hypotheses at 0.05 confidence level.

The findings revealed that the three null hypotheses were accepted .Ho<sub>1</sub>: Educational background does not significantly influence their preference of choice of tertiary education. Ho<sub>2</sub>: Sex difference of parents does not significantly influence their preference of choice of tertiary education of their children. Ho<sub>3</sub>: Marital status does not significantly influence parents preference for choice of tertiary education of their children. Based on the findings four recommendations were made:

**Keywords:** Parental, Preference, Choice, Tertiary, Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

What children will be when they grow up has often been a matter of intense interest to parents Ipaye (1986). Munn (1998) in Awujo and Kennedy (2014) is of the view that parental involvement in their children's education and choice of career has gained momentum recently and has been a concern of education policy makers. She stressed the fact that the educational system is an area where the relationship between the consumer (parents) and the producer (school) tilts the balance of power between the two towards the former.

Children in the Western World can take independent decision on what they want but in our society parents dictate the tune of choice in most cases. Most parents believe that a university degree is a golden key to greater opportunities in life. Anagbogu and Uba (2012) opined that the choice of a thing is a powerful motivator than what is suggested by another person, be it parents, guardian or school counselor. Most parents do not respect this fact and will want to push their children to the area of their choice. In this modern age it is the wish of most parents for their children to pass through tertiary education. Most parents are themselves illiterates but are enthusiastic of getting their children to achieve for what they lamentably missed. At this point let us understand the meaning of tertiary education to make a better progress and conclusion.

Tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses, (FRN, 2004). The goal of tertiary education as stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) is as follows:

- (a) Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- (b) Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- (c) Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- (d) Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- (e) Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- (f) Forge and cement national unity and;
- (g) Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary education sets out to achieve these lofty goals, but most parents are only interested in the university option without given a second thought to other tertiary education routes which can as well achieve the same goal with university education. The mad rush for university education by parents, have made most students to look down on other tertiary institution and other tertiary institutions are considered as a last resort by most students. This may be due to the differential treatment given to university graduates and graduates of other higher institutions.

There is irrefutable evidence that parents are the strongest influence on their children's choice of school at all levels (Oladele, 1992 as cited in Awujo & Kennedy 2014). Most parents prefer their children taking the university route into a career than the polytechnic, monotechnic, colleges of education and other specialized institutions route. A vast majority of students in Rivers State, Nigeria experience pressure from their parents to go to university. While the value of a university education is well known, the value of other educational pathways is not known.

Saiti and Mitrosili (2005) assert that there is a lack of understanding and appreciation that, other than university, alternatives may lead to equally lucrative jobs and rewarding careers. Depending on the interest of the student concern, a university education may be viable for some, yet may not be for others. Given the fact that less than one third of all jobs in the Nigerian labour market actually require a university degree, there is an apparent disconnection between reality and pursuit. Every parent wants his/her child(ren) to be enrolled into a university. This overwhelming interest for university education by parents have not helped matters much. It is a known fact that most students cut off marks at jamb does not meet the university demand but may match the demands of polytechnics, monotechnics or other institutions; parents will rather encourage their child(ren) to re-write jamb instead of taking to alternative routes. This is not surprising as studies and observations have proved that parents are the most influential in guiding the choice of higher education for their children. For instance, a very close friend of one of the researchers told the researcher, that her son's cut off point was below the required admission cut off point just by 2 marks. She was advised to try out polytechnic since the student want to study engineering and not medicine. What the parent said was shocking, "God forbid my son will attend the university", after all he is only 16 years. Another parents did the same thing when she was advised in the same manner "what will my son go and do in the polytechnic" she retorted. Parents need to realize that polytechnics, monotechnics and other schools offer challenging programs that can potentially lead to very lucrative careers. Oladele (1992 as cited by Awujo & Kennedy 2014) is of the opinion that "However good the school careers programmes may be it cannot succeed without taking sufficient account of the importance of consulting with parents at all stages of education". He went further to state that "we must educate parents by inculcating in their minds the right attitude towards the problem of choice of school in other that they may support and encourage the development of the right attitude in the minds of their children. McDowell and Hostetler (1996) asserts that

"Parental pressure plays a significant part in some kids selection of a college. The young man or woman may be persuaded to attend Mum or dad's alma marter. He or she may be pressured to attend a school primarily because it is close to home or less expensive than others. The

young person may be pushed to attend a denomination college or a well regarded Christian college, some parents even select the school for the child(ren).

David Elkind in Mcdowell and Hostetler (1996) addressed parents of college bound youth in these words, Try to stay on the sideline while your child makes his/her choices. You can and should provide guidance, but it is important to resist the urge to dictate which schools are acceptable. You may have to swallow hard and accept some of your child(ren)'s seemingly irrational reason for liking or disliking a school... Bear in mind that your child may be in a better position than you to know what he/she want to study and where he/she will feel most comfortable.

In other to prevent mistakes in choosing a higher school, parents of young people preparing for higher education need guidance. They have to be well informed that non-university career options have changed dramatically with technological advancement over recent years (Hari, 2005). The writer went further to say that:

The occupational opportunities are more challenging, complex and rewarding than they have been in the past. As the demands of the market place continue to evolve, so will educational requirements. Employers are continually seeking different skills and attributes in new hires in order to maintain their competitive edge in the world of business.

The way and manner in which parents perceive other tertiary education routes to career success have become worrisome as a lot of young school leavers keep writing jamb repeatedly waiting for university education endlessly. It is believed that this research will provide parents with vital information that will change their perception and gear their interest towards the usefulness of other tertiary education part ways other than university education, and they will in-turn re-educate and re-orientate their children along same line. It is against this background that this study was conceived.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Studies on parental perception on several variables such as choice of career, choice of life partner for children, drug use etc, have been intensively studied. It appears little or nothing has been done on parental perception towards choice of tertiary education. This was one reason why the researchers conducted this study. Indeed this would go a long way to re-orientate, re-educated and re-direct parents overwhelming preference for university education.

Hence, Kemjika (2008) asserts that parents can only successfully play their advisory role on career decision making of their children who will always turn to them for advice when they are well informed. It is on this basis this study was conceived.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of this study is to investigate parental preference towards choice of tertiary education of their children. Specifically this study intends to:

- Determine whether parental preference affects choice of tertiary education of their child(ren) with regard to educational background.
- Determine whether sex of parents affect choice of tertiary education of their children.
- Determine whether marital status of parents affect their attitude towards choice of tertiary education.

#### **Research Question**

The following research questions were framed to guide the study:

- What is the preference of parents towards choice of tertiary education of their children with regard to educational background?
- To what extent does sex affect the preference of parents towards choice of tertiary education of their children?
- What is the preference of parents towards choice of tertiary education of their children with regard to marital status?

#### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- H<sub>01</sub>:** Educational background does not significantly influence parents preference for choice of tertiary education.
- H<sub>02</sub>:** Sex difference of parents does not significantly influence their preference of choice of tertiary education of their children.
- H<sub>03</sub>:** Marital status does not significantly influence parents preference for choice of tertiary education of their children.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive survey design was used in this study. The population for the study consist of parents of some selected secondary schools in the state resulting to 2,000 parental strength. A total of 200 men and women were drawn from these schools through a purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for the study is tagged tertiary institution, Preference scale for parents. (TIPSP). The questionnaire was constructed through intensive search of relevant literature. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections. Section A consist of personal data of the respondents which includes sex, marital status, and educational background while section B consists of 10 items on parents preference for choice of tertiary education of their child(ren).

The validity of the instrument was determined by giving it to test experts in measurement and evaluation, education, guidance and counseling experts in the 3 universities in Rivers State. 35 items were initially constructed for validation, after thorough scrutiny by these experts the items were reduced to 10 highly relevant items with regard to the variables used to state the research questions and hypotheses.

Test-retest method was used to pilot test the instrument on 20 parents in Port Harcourt Local Government Area different from the actual population of the study. Cronbach alpha was used to obtain the correlation co-efficient for reliability and it yielded a co-efficient of 0.68 which was adjudged to be good for the study.

The instrument was administered to the respondents through the face to face method with the help of 4 research assistants and this exercise lasted for one day in each school during the end of session Parents Teachers Association meeting (PTA). Out of 200 questionnaires given out only 192 were retrieved, some were retrieved on the same day, others on later days through their wards/children. Each of the research assistance covered one school each the researchers covered 2 schools each. 8 of the instruments suffered death. Only the 192 retrieved were used for the study.

The research questions were answered through the use of descriptive statistic mean scores while the null hypotheses were tested using inferential statistic z-test statistics at 0.05 probability level. Mean rating above 2.5 was regarded as a negative preference while 2.4 and below was rated positive preference.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** *What is the preference of parents towards choice of tertiary education of their children with regard to educational background?*

Data answering this research question is found on table 1

**Table 1: Mean scores of parental preference of choice of tertiary Education of their children with regard to educational background.**

Variable		SA	A	D	SD	Total No	Total Score	$\bar{X}$	Preference
Educational Background	Graduates	44	38	18	4	104	330	3.2	Poor
	Non-graduates	48	26	11	3	88	395	3.4	Poor

Analysis of educational background from the results obtained on Table 1 shows that both graduates and non-graduates have an overwhelming preference for university education. This is depicted in the mean scores obtained which are above 2.5 set as the norm. on this basis the answer to research question 1 is parental preference towards choice of tertiary education of their children is poor this is due to the

overwhelming preference shown to university education at the neglect of other tertiary education shown from the mean scores obtained above the set norm.

**Research Question 2 and 3:** *To what extent do sex and marital status of parents influence their preference for choice of Tertiary Education of their children?*

**Table 2:** Mean scores of parents towards preference for choice of tertiary education with regard to sex and marital status.

Variable		SA	A	D	SD	Total No	Total Score	$\bar{X}$	Preference
Sex	Male	68	30	12	4	114	390	3.4	Poor
	Female	40	25	10	3	78	258	3.3	Poor
Marital Status	Married	101	22	4	7	134	485	3.6	Poor
	Unmarried	29	24	2	3	58	195	3.4	Poor

The overall analyses of sex and marital status on table 2 indicates that both males and females, married and single parents have an overwhelming preference for university education at the neglect of other tertiary educations. All the mean scores are above 2.5 (the norm) and so the answer to research questions 2 & 3 is that male and female, married and single parents have a great preference for university education to a large extent. Their thought patterns are along the same continuum. This preference style is regarded as poor.

**Hypothesis 1:** Educational Background does not significantly influence parents preference for choice of tertiary education of their children.

**Table 3:** z-test value of parental preference with regard to educational background

RESPONDENTS	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Se	Df	P	z-crit	z-cal	Decision
Literates	104	3.2	6.6						Accept
Non-literates	88	3.4	5.4	0.88	190	0.05	1.960	0.23	Ho

*Result not significant*

Table 3 indicates that the calculated z-test value of 2.3 is lower than the critical value of z at 1.960 with a degree of freedom of 190 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. This means (literates and non literates) educational background of parents does not significantly influence their preference of choice of tertiary education of their children. On this basis the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** Sex difference of parents does not significantly influence their choice of tertiary education of their children.

**Table 4:** Z-test value of parental preference with regard to sex

RESPONDENTS	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Se	Df	P	z-crit	z-cal	Decision
Male	114	3.4	6.5						Accept Ho
Female	78	3.3	4.9	0.88	190	0.05	1.960	0.23	

*Result not significant*

Again Table 4 shows that the calculated z-test value of 0.12 is lower than the critical value of z at 1.960 with a degree of freedom of 190 at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. On this basis the null hypothesis is retained and the alternate rejected which means sex difference of parents does not significantly influence their choice of tertiary education of their children.

**Hypothesis 3:** Marital status does not significantly influence parents preference for choice of tertiary education of their children.

**Table 4:** z-test value of parental preference with regard to marital status

RESPONDENTS	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Se	Df	P	z-crit	z-cal	Decision
Single	134	3.6	8.6						Accept Ho
Married	58	3.4	4.3	0.48	190	0.05	1.960	0.42	

*Result not significant*

Table 5 shows that the calculated z-test value is 0.42 while the critical z-test value is 1.960 with a degree of freedom of 190 at 0.05 Alpha level of significance, on this ground the null hypothesis of no significant difference is retained and the alternate hypothesis rejected, which means marital status does not significantly influence parents preference for choice of tertiary education of their children.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding from the study shows that parents have an overwhelming preference for university education at the neglect of other tertiary education without blinking based on educational background. This finding is in consonance with the assertions of Ipaye (1986) who said that what children will be when they grow up has often been a matter of intense interest to parents, who are enthusiastic of getting their children to make for what they lamentably missed. It's not surprising as most of the parents who did not pass through university education want their children to have a feel of it as revealed by the mean scores obtained.

Again the study revealed that sex of parents have no significant effect on the choice of tertiary education for their children. This can be attested to from the various tables presented in this study.

Table 4 revealed that parental attitude toward choice of tertiary education tilted towards one side as both male and female thought along the same line, this revelation is in agreement with the assertions of Mcdowel & Hosteler (1996) that parental pressures plays a significant part in the life of some kids selection of a college as they dictate the kind of school the kids will go to, both daddy and mummy are guilty of this charge. No wonder David Elkind in Mcdowell and Hostetler (1996) addressed parents of college bound youths by saying "try to stay on the sideline while your children make the choices" etc.

Finally, the study also revealed that marital status of parents does not affect the choice of tertiary education for their children. Whether married or single parents have the tendency to influence the choice of school for their children. This is in line with the caution given by Hari (2005) in these words, in other to prevent mistake in choosing a higher school parents of young people preparing for higher education need guidance, they have to be well informed that non-university career options have changed dramatically with technological advancement over recent years. All these are not surprising as parents have the strongest influence on their children's choice of school at all levels.

The implication of these findings to counseling is that, parents need to be guided properly on issues concerning choices they should be counseled on the right attitude to adopt in line with the interest of their children and what will benefit the children on the long run.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings of this research, the following recommendations are therefore made:

1. Parents of tertiary institutions bound youths should be counseled on the dangers of making choices for their children and the usefulness of other tertiary education
2. Parents of students at all levels of education should be counseled and orientated on the usefulness of the different levels of education the children will progress into
3. Counsellors should be employed at all stages of our educational system backed with appropriate laws to strengthen it, in order to educate and orientate parents and students on a continuous basis to achieve better positive attitude to issues of choice.

4. Differential treatment given to graduates of university, polytechnics, monototechnics etc should be bridged. The researchers are of the opinion that this is the cause of the overwhelming interest of university education over the others shown by parents.

## CONCLUSIONS

The negative preference of parents towards other tertiary institutions and the overwhelming positive preference towards university education is not a good signal for our nation's educational system. This is because the nation's education planners and policy makers planned the tertiary education in such a way that it will contribute meaningfully to the development of our society. Going by this fact, there should be a mechanism set up by government to re-orientate, re-educate and re-emphasize the importance of tertiary education at all levels and deemphasizing the superiority of one over the other. Graduates of all tertiary education should be given equal treatment, differential treatments should be avoided. And parents should be educated on the diverse and lucrative opportunities that lie in all the tertiary education.

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