



Influence of Middle Age on Mid-Career Change in Rivers State: Implication for Counselling

Agi, W. Comfort¹ & Fiddo A. Mercy²

**Department of Educational Foundations
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.**

¹Email: comfortagi@gmail.com ; Phone: 08030958193

²Email: mercy@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of middle age on mid career change. The researcher developed two (2) objectives of the study, research questions and hypotheses to guide the study. The design fat the study was ex-post-facto research design. A sample of 286 respondents (ages 35-45, 45-55 and 55-60) was randomly selected from Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State. A self-made questionnaire was used to elicit response from participants. Two research questions as well as two were guide the study. Data was analyzed with mean, standard deviation and independent t-test statistics. The findings of the study revealed that, age does not significantly influence mid-career change. The results also showed that male and female do not significantly differ in career change need during middle age.

Keywords: Middle age, Middle-career, Reasons, Career, Change, Counselling, Midlife, Adulthood.

INTRODUCTION

Often individuals in their middle age are pressured by time and the realization that a significant portion of their lives is behind, hence they engage in midlife review. Consequently, considering a career change, middle age is mostly regarded as a period between the ages from 3 5-60 (middle adulthood) and include at least one crisis period, as a very volatile period in individual's lives (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1999). Levinson et al (1999) further explained that the middle age period evokes tumultuous struggles within the self and the external world, every aspect of the individuals live comes into question, as such he is forced to make choices.

Stewart & Vandewater (1999) maintained that career change is one of the choices that an individual may experience at middle age. In buttressing this view, Crandell (2010) explained that the middle age is characterized by earnest effort by workers to achieve their highest ranks, their fattest salaries and their most prestigious achievement. Therefore, workers in their middle age often make serious financial sacrifices in a bid to reach the peak in their career, This may lead to a feeling of worthlessness and dissatisfaction in their previous chosen career, and awaking in them the need to explore other possibilities of pursuing a new career, Career goals at this point in time may range from incremental changes, such as pursuing advancement or promotion within the same occupation, or major changes such as going back to graduate school or becoming an entrepreneur (Lee & Mitchell, 2001).

Mid-career is conceptualized as the middle of an individual's work life (Kanfer & Ankerman, 2004). It is distinguished from other career stages by the presence of mastery, being established in the role, and feeling engaged in one's career with few thoughts of disengagement or retirement (Waif, 2001). A career change is seen as the period during which an individual is either changing roles or changing orientation to a role (Ibarra, 2003). The age at which mid-career change occurs may dependent on the career pattern. Mid-career change is delineated by the midpoint of when an individual begins and ends a career experience. Although the age when mid-career starts may shift dependent on the start and end of the career, it will frequently occur during midlife or middle age (Swann, Rentfrow and Guinn, 2003).

Mid-career change is a viable option if a person is dissatisfied with his current job. At middle age, people tend to reflect on the gap between the reality of their lives and the dreams they once held. This however seems to be the Last chance to make it right. The needs of social status and meeting the expectations of significant others at this point may become less important. Arthur & Kram (2000) observed that at middle age individuals have concerns with personal advancement such that the greatest individual mid-career need is advancement and recognition.

There are various reasons why people change jobs. Herr & Cramer (1979) enlisted the following as reasons why people change jobs:

- Initial career not the person's own choice
- Career inappropriate from onset
- Original aspiration not met by career
- Purpose of first career accomplished.
- Change of career required by changing goals
- Satisfaction sought for higher level needs.
- Disproportion between prescribed and discretionary duties
- Works becomes too physically challenging
- Inadequate outlet for creativity

In expanding on the reasons why people change jobs, Brown & Brooks (1987) maintained that other reasons such as mental health problems, dissatisfaction not necessarily from personality change, and other emotional stressors could cause people to change their jobs either temporarily or permanently.

Statement of the Problem

Individuals in their mid-career try to establish effective upward and downward influence and try to fulfil their career aspirations around organisational goals. In the process of reexamination of their role if they find that they have failed in the above objectives, chances are more that these individuals end up with mid-career crisis which has far reaching implications on their social, emotional and financial life. Specifically, some persons may develop psychological symptoms of varying severity, ranging from mild frustration, anxiety, and irritability to emotional exhaustion as well as psychosomatic and depressive symptoms. The situation is such that the individuals lack certainty and clear direction for the future work role. To this end, this study intends to investigate the influence of middle age on mid-career change.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of middle age on mid-career change. Specifically, the study will achieve the following objectives:

1. Examine the influence age on mid-career change.
2. Determine the difference of male and female career change need during middle age

Research Questions

1. To what extent does age influence mid-career change.
2. To what extent does male and female career change need differ during middle age.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of age on mid-career change.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female career change need during middle age.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The present study adopted ex-post-facto research design. The sample for this study was 286 respondents (ages 35-45, 45-55 and 55-60) who were randomly selected from Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. A self-made questionnaire was used to elicit response from participants. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method of internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.67 was obtained.

Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation independent t-test statistics. The results of the research questions and their corresponding null hypotheses are presented together in the same table.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *To what extent does age influence mid-career change?*

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of age on mid-career change.

Table 1a: Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation of age on mid-career change

Age	N	X	Sd
35-45	75	37.07	1.455
45-55	86	37.05	1.463
55-60	125	36.74	1.426

Table 1a revealed that age 35 to 45 had mean and standard deviation scores of 37.07 and 1.455, age 45 to 55 had mean and standard deviation scores of 37.05 and 1.463, and age 55 to 60 had mean and standard deviation scores of 36.74 and 1.426 respectively. The data analyzed showed that age 35 to 45 have a mean value of 37.07 slightly greater than those between age 45 to 55 with mean value of 37.05 and finally those between age 55 to 60 with mean value of 36.74 have the least influence on mid-career change. This therefore implies that age 35 to 45 influence mid-career change more followed by age 45 to 55 and finally age 55 to 60.

Table 1b: One Way Analysis of Variance of Age on Mid-career Change

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.217	2	3.609	1.729	.179
Within Groups	590.769	283	2.088		
Total	597.986	285			

Table 1b shows that sum of squares for between groups is 7.217 with a mean square of 3.609. The sum of squares for within groups is 590.769 with a mean square value of 2.088. With degrees of freedom of 2 and 283, the critical probability value of .179 is greater than the criterion probability value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, age does not significantly influence mid-career change.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does male and female career change need differ during middle age?*

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female career change need during middle age.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics on the difference of male and female career change need during middle age

Category	N	X	Sd	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
Male	190	36.85	1.463	284	1.13	1.96	Hypothesis not statistically significant
Female	96	37.05	1.417				

Table 2 shows that male had mean and standard deviation scores of 36.85 and 1.463 while the female had mean and standard deviation scores of 37.05 and 1.417 respectively. This shows that females have slightly high mean value above their male counterparts and have the need for career change during middle age the more. With a degree of freedom of 284, the calculated t-test value of 1.13 is less than the critical t-test value of 1.96. By implication, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, male and female do not significantly differ in career change need during middle age.

Implications for Counselling

- Career counselling is extremely important for all and sundry, but especially for people at middle age. Counsellors should endeavour to treat each adult career problem on its own merit. They should be objective in assisting individuals experiencing mid-life crisis in as much as it has to do with career choice and career change.

- Counsellors should endeavour to help clients resolve and adjust to whatever career option available to them. They should help clients choose a career that are in line with their capabilities, needs and aspirations.
- Counsellors should be involved in job recruitment processes to determine whether applicants fit job task or descriptions.
- Counsellors in human resource development should ensure that job placements are in accordance workers' abilities, area of specialization and interest.

Mid-career has been identified as the middle phase of an individual's work life, with its own set of task, social and emotional needs. At middle age, most people tend to reflect on the gap between the reality of their lives and the dreams they once held. Hence, mid-career change is a viable option if a person is dissatisfied with his current job. This study has clearly shown that age does not significantly influence mid-career change. It has also shown that male and female do not significantly differ in career change need during middle age.

REFERENCES

- Arthur, M.B. & Kram, K.E. (2000). Reciprocity at work: The separate, yet inseparable possibilities for individual and organizational development. In MB. Arthur, D.T., Hall & B.S. Lawrence (Eds.), *Handbook of Career Theory*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Brown, P. & Brooks, J. (2007). *Introduction to educational technology*. New Delli: Stearling Publishers Private Limited.
- Cramer, J. (2009). Superintendent conceptions of international integration. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 36(4), 319-343.
- Crandell, S.A. (2010). *Secondary and middle school teaching method (7th ed)*. Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Guinn, O.A. (2003). *Understanding by design*. Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Herr, E.L. & Cramer, S.H. (1978). *Career guidance through life span*. Boston Little, Brown and Company.
- Ibarra, H. (2003). *Working identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Kanfer, R. & Ackerman, P.L. (2004). Aging, adult development, and work motivation. *Academy of Management Review*, 11, 375-392.
- Lee, T. W. & Mitchell, T. R. (2001). An alternative approach: The unfolding model of voluntary employee turnover. *Academy of Management Review*, 19, 51.
- Levinson, D.J., Darrow, C.N., Klein, E.B., Levinson, M.H. & McKee, B. (1999). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Schultz, R.D. & Shultz, E.S. (2001). *Theories of personality*. USA: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning.
- Stewart, A.J. & Vandewater, B. (1999). If I had it to over again: Midlife review, midcourse corrections, and women's well-being in midlife. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 2 70-283.
- Swann Jr., W.B., Rentfrow, P.J. & Guinn, J.S. (2003). Self-verification: The search for coherence. In M R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Warr, P. (2001). Age and work behaviour: Physical attributes, cognitive abilities, knowledge, personality traits, and motives. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 16, 1-36