



# **Managing Career Choice Among Junior Secondary School Students In Port Harcourt Metropolis Of Rivers State, Nigeria**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive research design was adopted. The population of the study was 38 principals and 2,575 teachers; totaling 2,613 respondents in 38 public junior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 38 principals and 262 teachers totaling 300 respondents. A self-designed questionnaire titled: “Managing Career Choice among Junior Secondary School Students Questionnaire” (MCCJSSSQ)” was used to collect data from respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts while the test-retest was used to achieve a reliability index of 0.70. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses. Findings among others showed that organizing career day and career orientation increase student’s exposure to career options, and enlighten students on career interests which are effective strategies for managing career choice. Some recommendations made among others were that school administrators should ensure that programmes such as career day and career orientation are held annually in schools; Class streaming which categorize students based on their abilities and interest should be maintained in schools as strategies for managing students career choices effectively for prospective careers that can satisfy their personal aspirations in life.

**Keywords:** career management, career awareness, career exploration

## **INTRODUCTION**

Junior secondary education is the formal training given to children between the ages of twelve to eighteen. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013, p 24) in her National Policy on Education defined junior secondary education “as the education which a child receives immediately after primary education.” It also stated that the objectives of junior secondary education shall be: providing the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurial and educational advancement; develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and the performance of their civic responsibilities; inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking, and who appreciate the dignity of labour; and inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, ethnic and socio-economic background. This level of education is the foundation for inculcating social values, norms, ideas and personal habits which prepares a child for adolescence.

Junior secondary education level, is a critical period to make decisions that will place an individual in the right institution to assist him/her develop skills and abilities for a prospective career. Chamberlain (2017) stated that, at this level of education the individual child has knowledge of what career is all about and should be properly nurtured and guided with requisite skills and knowledge. Basically, this level of education is the period for building the foundation for the right career path in a child’s life. Comparably students from high socio-economic backgrounds are most often conversant with career

choices as their parents bought similitude toy tools and equipment of medical doctors or engineers for them between the ages of 3 and 5 years. This paints a strong mental picture in the mind's eye of such privileged students who at the secondary school would either want to be medical doctors or engineers. Others develop flare for their parents vocations and so may wish to become lecturers, lawyers, pharmacists, accountants etcetera. Unfortunately their friends and class mates from low socio-economic backgrounds in their naivete often join them to echo career paths without some form of orientation. Such unguided steps had ruined the future of so many students. The onus therefore lie on school administrators as part of student personnel management and accounting to hold annual career and orientation days whereby students would be well informed about career choice.

The choice of career remains an important aspect in a student's life; the reason for which proper management of career choice among students at junior secondary school is crucial in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Career refers to the job or occupation an individual does day to day for a long time. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) defined career as the series of jobs that an individual has in particular or specific area, usually involving various responsibilities. Similarly Dawn (2013), defined career as an individual's vocation or trade or how he/she makes a living. The choice of career is a delicate issue that requires caution and serious consideration. Career choice refers to the process of choosing a career path or occupation by an individual. According to Powers (2013) career choice is determining a field of learning that requires certain knowledge and skills, acquired through a specific educational program which results in a certificate or degree attesting to one's accomplishment. Similarly, Rajabi, Papzan and Zahed (2012) posited that career choice involves the acquirement of abilities and skills for a career and determination of career interest and goals. Career choice simply refers to the decision one makes on what to do in order to make a living. Proper choice of career leads to success, happiness and indeed is a prerequisite for self-actualization and otherwise can lead to devastation on one's wellbeing (Ogueze, 2006). This calls for prudence on the part of school administrators in the management of career choice among students.

Career management at junior secondary level of education is a process of preparing students for a career path. This process is very essential and enables individuals especially students to prepare for the world of work by arming them with adaptable skills and knowledge necessary for them to earn a living. Most students who never had the opportunity of career orientation in their secondary schools studied courses based on the number of credit pass they had in the West African Secondary School Examination or the National Examination Council Examination. This scenario has led to nonchalant attitude of job holders at work after graduation. Based on the forgoing the study investigated managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria.

### **Conceptualization of Career Management**

Career management is concerned with the provision of activities and programmes which are intended to guide students in developing their career interest among varied career paths for satisfactory work life and future earnings. According to Ezeani (2013), career management involves all activities and efforts initiated and made by agencies in hosting career-oriented activities and experiences from the nursery through adulthood. It was further stated that it provides an avenue for bridging the gap between an individual and his choice of career in life. It emphasizes on the question: what does one want to become in life? Amaewhule cited in Chamberlin (2017) maintained that career management has the following roles: development of attitudes in alignment with personal interest; psychological; social and economic significance of work; decision making skills relevant for career choice direction; qualities necessary for making career choices of career goals in alignment with development of self in relation to the sequence of career option; abilities to understand oneself; establishing career goals in alignment with individuals' needs or desires; and understanding of all work types. Career management connotes the process of planning, implementing and monitoring career activities provided by institutions in order to assist students develop interest in future gains in technical knowledge, skills and abilities for the world of work. According to Amaewhule (2014), career management is a part of educational preparations which emphasizes that students should be equipped with two-dimensional approaches; preparation to seek career in the world of work, including all it takes to succeed in a given position and preparation for self-employment. Career management involves activities such as career awareness, career explorations, career preparations, career

orientation and career counselling that will make students fit in properly into the world of work today (Ezeani, 2013). Hence career management plays an indispensable role in managing career choice of students in public junior secondary schools.

### **Career Awareness**

According to Ezeani (2013), career awareness provides students with the opportunity to learn about the world of work and acquaint them with various career opportunities. Through career awareness students will be able to differentiate between occupations and the requirements for a wide variety of occupations. Hirsh (2006) noted that, career awareness helps students understand how to identify and access work roles which suits them well and opportunities for improving their skills and developing their potentials. Career awareness involves a well-planned career development programme which entails talent hunt, career workshops, career newsletter and career counseling (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). It infers that through talent hunt, career workshops, newsletters, and counseling students could be well exposed to career choice in junior secondary schools. A paper presented by California State Department of Education (2012), defined career awareness as a developmental process in which students learn about the wide range of career options available to them. In career awareness process, students acquire knowledge about the world of work, characteristics of job, structure of a job and job requirements. They also develop competencies which assist them in uniting these job characteristics, structures and requirements with their own abilities in making a naturalistic career choice.

### **Career Exploration**

Career exploration affords students the opportunity to exhibit their skills in various career opportunities (Ezeani, 2013). Students obtain on-site observation, instruction and hands-on experience on variety of occupations through career exploration (California State Department of Education, 2012). Mathis and Jackson (2011) buttressed that career exploration focuses on key activities which enable proper management of career choice among students, thus; self-assessment (what interest the students and what they do well on), feedback on their performance (where they fit in) and career goals (equipping themselves with required training and experience to match their set goals). This process enables students have a clear understanding of what people do in a particular occupation. School administrators explore students' career choices by making available programmes that allow students the opportunity of exhibiting their skills, passion and dedication in various career opportunities, thus; providing career clubs in schools, career workshops, career test and fieldtrips (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). Career exploration helps students discover and understand various career options when making their career plans.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Junior secondary education is given to students in preparation for adolescence. At this level of education students make decisions that will place them in the right career path so as to develop their skills and abilities. One of the objectives of junior secondary education is providing the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurial and educational advancement. Hence, they need appropriate direction to the right career path at the formative years of their adolescence. Edwards and Quinter (2013) observed that a wrong career choice can lead to the problem or difficulty of matching choice of career with abilities and school performance.

However it has been observed that there is no proper career awareness and career exploration at the public junior secondary schools. Students are confused in their choice of career and most of them tend to ask questions; where can someone who studied marketing work? While some choose a career they only know the name but don't have a better understanding of what such career entails. Most students who never had the opportunity of career awareness and career exploration during their secondary schools are likely to be in professions that were not of their choice or so be in one because of the number of credits they were able to obtain either in the West African Secondary School Examination or the National Examination Council. Based on the aforementioned, the researchers decided to proffer solution in managing career choice among junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. Specifically the study sought to:

1. identify career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.
2. determine the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.
3. investigate the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?
2. What are the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?
3. What are the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance in the study:

- HO<sub>1</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State
- HO<sub>2</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.
- HO<sub>3</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design used for this study was the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 38 principals and 2575 teachers; totaling 2613 respondents in 38 public junior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt City Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 38 principals and 262 teachers totaling 300 respondents. A self-developed questionnaire titled: "Managing Career Choice among Junior Secondary School Students Questionnaire (MCCJSSSQ)" was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument had two (2) sections, sections A and B. Section A dealt with demographic information while Section B had 15 items. The response scale was structured on 4-point modified Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Test-retest was used to determine and obtain a reliability index of 0.70. Mean statistics was used to answer the research questions. The criterion mean was 2.50. Questionnaire items with ratings below 2.50 denotes 'Disagree' while 2.50 and above signifies 'Agree'. The hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Any response therefore, with a calculated z-value above the z-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$  was rejected and below  $\pm 1.96$  was accepted.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** *What are the career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?*

**Table 1: Mean responses of principals and teachers on career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State**

S/N	ITEMS	Principals N= 38		Teachers N=262		Average mean	Decision
		X <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>		
1.	Career Awareness	2.68	0.52	3.02	0.68	2.85	A
2.	Career Exploration	3.11	0.70	2.50	0.51	2.81	A
3.	Career Placement	3.31	0.78	2.78	0.59	3.05	SA
4.	Career Preparation	3.24	0.73	3.16	0.62	3.20	SA
5.	Career Counselling	2.98	0.69	3.01	0.70	3.00	SA
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.06</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>2.98</b>	

Field survey, 2020

Table 1 above for research question 1 revealed that respondents agreed to questionnaire items (1-5) on career management strategies with grand mean of 3.06 and 2.89 for principals and teachers respectively. This signifies that all the items are career management strategies needed in managing career choice among junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?*

**Table 2: Mean responses of principals and teachers on career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among junior public secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.**

S/N	Items	Principals N= 38		Teachers N=262		Average Mean	RMK
		X <sub>1</sub>	Std <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	Std <sub>2</sub>		
6	Career day should be organized to enable students become aware of different career options	3.25	0.72	2.95	0.58	3.10	SA
7	Class streaming will enable create awareness to students about careers	3.00	0.60	3.09	0.53	3.01	SA
8	Career orientation should be done to increase students' exposure to career options available in the world of work	2.77	0.50	3.04	0.62	2.91	A
9	Talk shows about career should be organized in the school to enlighten students about different professions	3.19	0.69	3.30	0.76	3.21	SA
10	Talent hunt should be organized in schools to acquaint students with various career opportunities	2.69	0.52	3.11	0.65	2.90	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.98</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>3.03</b>	

Field survey, 2020

Table 2 above for research question 2 showed that respondents strongly agreed to questionnaire items (6-10) with grand mean of 2.98 and 3.10 for principals and teachers. This infers that all the items on career awareness strategies are effective in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

**Research Question 3:** *What are the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State?*

**Table 3: Mean responses of principals and teachers on career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.**

S/N	Items	Principals N= 38		Teachers N=262		Average Mean	RMK
		X <sub>1</sub>	Std <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	Std <sub>2</sub>		
11	Field trips should be undertaken in different fields of profession to enable students understand what the profession entails	3.31	0.78	2.90	0.72	3.11	SA
12	Students should be encouraged to assess themselves in order to know their career interest	3.08	0.61	2.65	0.51	2.87	SA
13	Conducting career test determine students' knowledge about career choice	3.13	0.77	3.09	0.73	3.11	SA
14	Career workshops should be accessed in schools to equip students with required training and experience to match their set goals	2.73	0.63	2.96	0.69	2.85	A
15	Subject teachers should be assigned responsibilities as career counsellors to students to ascertain their areas of strengths	3.20	0.79	3.05	0.76	3.13	SA
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.09</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>3.01</b>	

**Field survey, 2020**

Table 3 above for research question 3 showed that respondents strongly agreed that questionnaire items (11-15) were needed career exploration strategies with grand mean of 3.09 and 2.93 for principals and teachers. This infers that all the items on career exploration strategies would be effective in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

**Hypotheses**

HO<sub>1</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

**Table 4: z-test analysis of difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State**

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-cri.	Decision
Principals	38	3.06	0.68	298	0.05	1.45	$\pm 1.96$	Not Significant Accept
Teachers	262	2.89	0.62					

**Field survey, 2020**

Table 4 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean opinions of principals and teachers on career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The z-test calculated stood at 1.45 while the z-critical value was  $\pm 1.96$ , using 298 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the z-calculated was less than the z-critical, the null hypothesis was accepted. This infers that, there is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

HO<sub>2</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State

**Table 5: z-test analysis of difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State**

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-cri.	Decision
Principals	38	2.98	0.61	298	0.05	1.09	$\pm 1.96$	Not Significant Accept
Teachers	262	3.10	0.63					

**Field survey, 2020**

Table 5 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean opinions of principals and teachers on the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The z-test calculated stood at 1.09 while the z-critical value was  $\pm 1.96$ , using 298 degrees of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the z-calculated was less than the z-critical, the null hypothesis was accepted. This infers that, there is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

HO<sub>3</sub> There is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

**Table 6: z-test analysis of difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State**

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-cri.	Decision
Principals	38	3.09	0.72	298	0.05	0.92	<u>±1.96</u>	Not Significant Accept
Teachers	262	2.98	0.68					

**Field survey, 2020**

Table 6 shows a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between the mean opinions of principals and teachers on the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The z-test calculated stood at 0.92 while the z-critical value was ±1.96, using 298 degrees of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the z-calculated is less than the z-critical, the null hypothesis was accepted. This infers that, there is no significant difference between the mean opinion scores of principals and teachers on the career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Findings on research question 1 showed that respondents strongly agreed that career management strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State were: career awareness, career exploration, career placement, career preparation and career counselling with a grand mean 2.98. This is in agreement with Ezeani (2013) who asserted that career management involves activities such as career awareness, career explorations, career preparations, career orientation and career counselling that will make students fit in properly into the world of work today. The findings of this study also corroborated with Amaewhule (2014), who buttressed that career management is a part of educational preparations which emphasizes that students should be equipped with two-dimensional approaches; preparation to seek career in the world of work, including all it takes to succeed in a given position and preparation for self-employment.

Findings on research question 2 revealed that organizing career day to enable students become aware of different career options, carrying out class streaming, organizing career orientation to increase students exposure to career options, talk shows and talent hunt were career awareness strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State with a grand mean 3.03. This is in consonance with Gyansah and Guantai (2018) who stated that career awareness involves a well-planned career development programme which entails talent hunt, career workshops, career newsletter and career counseling. In corroboration, California State Department of Education (2012) was of the view that, career awareness is a developmental process in which students learn about the wide range of career options available to them. In career awareness process, students acquire knowledge about the world of work, characteristics of job, structure of a job and job requirements.

Findings on research question 3 affirmed that undertaking of fieldtrips in different fields of profession, encouraging students on self-assessment to know their career interests, conducting career test to determine students’ knowledge about career, accessing career workshops to equip students with required training and experience and assigning subject teachers as career counsellors to ascertain students strengths are career exploration strategies needed in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State with grand mean of 3.01. This findings corroborates with Mathis and Jackson (2011) who asserted that career exploration focuses on key activities which enable proper management of career choice among students, such as self-assessment (what interest the students and what they do well on), feedback on their performance (where they fit in) and career goals (equipping themselves with required training and experience to

match their set goals). Also in agreement, California State Department of Education (2012) noted that students obtain on-site observation, instruction and hands-on experience on variety of occupations through career exploration.

## CONCLUSION

Making the right career choice at the junior secondary education depends largely on proper management of career choice. This management is essential in the lives of student because it will curtail their nonchalant attitude towards job offers after graduation. It was therefore concluded that career awareness, career exploration, career placement, career preparation and career counselling are career management strategies which will be effective in managing career choice among public junior secondary school students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In consideration of the findings of the study; the following recommendations made were:

1. School administrators should develop and implement career programmes such as career days and career orientation that will enable students develop their abilities and career paths in order to satisfy their personal aspirations in life.
2. The school authority should regularly keep students aware about wide range of career opportunities, characteristics of job and job requirements available to them to enable them in making naturalistic career choice.
3. Principals and teachers should duel on career exploration activities in order to afford students the opportunity of exhibiting their skills, passion and dedication in various career opportunities and also acquire a lot of experience on a variety of occupations.
4. Principals and teachers should always counsel students on their strengths so as to guide them to develop their career interest for future aspirations.

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