



Parental Background and the Career Choice of Secondary School Students in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of parental background on choice of career among secondary school students in Ahoada East local government area of Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study used descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 1657 students comprising all the senior secondary school (SSS 3) male and female students in the 15 public secondary schools in Ahoada East. The sample size for this research was 831 senior secondary school (SSS3) male and female students selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a self - structured questionnaire titled: “Parental background and career choice questionnaire (PVCQ)”, consisting of 21 items. Validation of the instrument was done through face and content validity, by three experts. The reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. Mean was used to answer the research questions, while Z-test was used to analyse the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that parents’ attitude and level of formal education among others influence the career choices of their wards as perceived by students in the study area. Based on the result of the study, it was recommended that guidance and counselling services should be employed in secondary schools to counsel students on choosing career. It was further recommended that school should organise career talks with parents to sensitise them of various careers available for their wards.

Keywords: Parental, Background, Career, Choice, Secondary, school, students.

INTRODUCTION

Choosing a career is a lifelong process that demands accurate perceptions of ability, potential and achievement. Many career choices are made which requires much thought and reflection (Kelly, 2013). The issue of career choice by individuals entering into occupations has implications of national development. Occupation in the view of (Okorie & Ezeji, 2014), is a way of life. Character moulding, determines income, social status, style of life, choice of friends one makes, mental and the physical health of one, (Hummel & McDaniels, 2011), which goes to imply that the choice of occupation has a convincing link with one’s entire way of life.

According to Jungen (2008), there is this notion that the primary aim behind any pursuit of various occupations is the fundamental human need to make a living, and to have satisfaction of needs. While this have some elements of truth in it, the present society with its changes and sophisticated social and economic systems have taken the problem of occupational choice two steps further by making it complex and mysterious. There are many variables that stand to decide which/what occupation an individual chooses effectively (Aswani, 2012). Hence occupational choice made means foregoing

several alternatives. Some of these factors tend to have more and strong impact than others. Udoh and Sanni (2012) asserted that a general ranking of these factors in order of extent of influence escape from us because of individual differences in life. That which can significantly influence the occupational choice of an individual may have less or no significance in another. Be that as it may Toby (2000) opined that while it may be difficult to ascertain the reliability of these variables, it is not correct that there are cases in which some form of interaction among them that one modifies the other. Some of these variables are either biologically and psychologically based, while others are socio-economical rooted. Yet individuals still get in occupation by chance or accident (Wert, 2010).

Man's occupation determines the kind of person he becomes since, through his working hours, his cognitions about himself, his wants and goals and his interpersonal response traits are moulded (Larke, 2003). Since the mid-fifties, research has suggested that family interaction is linked to career choice and occupation behaviour (Onyejiaku, 2001). Career development is the balancing, recognizing and meeting of needs of individuals while at the same time responding to the outer forces and realities of life (Mugenda, Kimani, Maina & Wainaina, 2010). Environment tends to influence the career students choose in various ways. Someone in the student's life may make a significant impact or impression, leading to a definite career choice (Williams, 2016). Parents' educational background may influence student views on whether or not to continue their education in a particular career. Sometimes someone they saw on television or media presentations may influence the student's career choice, or parents may have demanded that they assume a family business. These various environmental factors impact on the student's choice of career (Wert, 2010). The family used to have an upper hand on the occupational decisions of its members. In the view of Osuala (2010) career guidance before now use to be the prerogative of the parents which is no longer as influential as it used to be. This is due to the change and dynamic social-economic situations in the nation, even if the family has not completely lost its influence on the vocational life of its children, because either directly or indirectly, their influence still exists.

The family decides not only the individuals' personality, even the vocational interests to a great extent because of its social group status (Hayes & Hopson, 2013). Children are brought up with respect to values of the family and as they grow, they learn, internalize and concretize such behaviour patterns which they are exposed for. The pattern of behaviour and training the children acquire from the family normally determines their job perception and eventually occupation decision (Osuala, 2010). Parents convey their influence to children through interactions such as conversations and through their reactions (both verbal and nonverbal). This then affects what children say and perceive about various careers. Often there is a contradiction between what parents say to children and what they ask of them, for instance, a parent may comment that it is acceptable to pursue a particular career in a non-profit agency, but then counter such statements with comments about low pay and long hours. These types of references imply that it is more important to earn a high salary than to pursue a satisfying career (Toby, 2000).

Furthermore, Onyejiaku (2001), Wert (2010) and Denga (2012) postulated various positive relationship between children's early rearing experiences and their occupational choice, since children spend most of their years at home and they naturally regard this as their reference group with parent as important figures. In this regard, Carter (2009) classified parental work attitudes into four namely; Silent attitude, resentful attitude, participating attitude and candid attitude. Carter further explained silent attitude as where parents rather discuss their own work and less of other peoples' work. There is no vocational plan for children hence leaving their children's occupational aspirations to chance. The resentful attitude is expressed by parents who only make incidental remarks about work. They leave their children's occupational choice to fate and schooling and never attempt to consciously discuss vocation with their children. The participating attitude is exhibited by parents who are interested on their jobs and discuss them freely with their children thus exposing their children to these occupations. Lastly, the candid attitude is children centred, which describes parents that openly and courteously discuss all aspects of work, the advantages and the disadvantages thereof, with their children (Carter, 2009).

In analyses of the various attitudes exhibited by parents regarding occupational issues with their families, it is glaring that children from these levels of home will have differences in attitudes regarding work. Invariably children from the participating and candid attitude parental environment could be vocationally mature much earlier than children from the other two categories.

Parental occupation and education also impact strongly on the occupational choice of School children. It is believed that children brought up in a family with a peculiar occupation are likely to be influenced by such occupation. In some cases families are known for certain occupation over a long generation. Children whose parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties are medically oriented will obviously have different vocational interest from children that are raised in a family known for trading teaching over the years (Trice & Knapp, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Career choice seems to be seen as a big problem for students in our contemporary society. Hence it is not uncommon for students to get into occupations that are not always suitable to their abilities. Osuala (2010) stated that parental background on the other hand tends to be the single most influential factor in students career choice. More often than not, parents due to personal interest pressure their children into taking up family occupations and other careers even when they do not possess requisite abilities (Larke, 2003). What they usually obtain in the end is job dissatisfaction, underperformance if not complete malfunction, frustration and inefficiency and all of these translate in the long run into national economic crisis. Therefore, this study is an attempt to investigate the influence of parental background on the career choice of secondary school students in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of parental background on the career choice of secondary school students in Ahoada East Local Government Area. In specific terms, the study intended to ascertain:

1. The influence of parental attitude towards occupations on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area
2. The influence of parents' level of education on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area.
3. The influence of parents' occupation on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The study sought to provide answer to the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of parental attitude towards occupations on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area?
2. What is the influence of parents' level of education on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area?
3. What is the influence of parents' occupation on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance to guide the study;

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students regarding the influence of parental attitude towards occupations on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students regarding the influence of parents' level of education on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students regarding the influence of parents' occupation on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive survey design and was carried out in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population of the study consisted of 1,657 (873 male and 784 female) senior secondary three (SS3) students of public secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State. The sample for the study was 831(460 male and 371 female) SS3 students selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique.

The instrument used for the study was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Parental Background and Career Choice Questionnaire (PBCQ)". The PBCQ was patterned to illicit information from the

respondents in four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) with 4 point; Agree (A) with 3 point; Disagree (D) with 2 point and Strongly Disagree (SD) with 1 point.

The instrument was faced and content validated by three experts; one in measurement and evaluation and two in guidance and counselling from Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The instrument was distributed to 20 students outside the sample twice within two weeks interval and the results were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.75. A total of 831 copies of the instrument were administered to the 831 respondents. All the copies administered were completely filled and returned and used for analysis.

The research questions were answered using mean. Using a criterion (cut-off mean) of 2.50 any item with a mean response of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed while an- item with a mean response less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. Standard deviation values close or wide apart were used to determine homogeneity in the perceptions of the respondents. Also, if the calculated value of t (tcal) is less than the critical value of t (tcrit), the null hypothesis was accepted otherwise, rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What is the influence of parental attitude towards occupations on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area?*

Table 1: Mean Response on Parental Attitude and Career Choice of Students

S/N	Items	Male (N=460)			Female (N=371)		
		M ₁	SD ₁	RMK	M ₂	SD ₂	RMK
1	My parents' interest motivated me in my choice of career	2.91	1.13	A	2.99	1.01	A
2	My parents' willingness for me to choose my choice of career created more interest in me for the course.	2.97	1.08	A	2.80	1.08	A
3	My parents' dislike for my choice of career discouraged me from going for the course.	2.79	1.05	A	2.60	1.12	A
4	My parents' comments about my choice of career motivated me to go for the course.	2.60	0.98	A	2.59	1.12	A
5	My parents' comments about my choice of career discouraged me from going for the course.	3.05	1.05	A	2.52	1.16	A
6	My parents' advice regarding career choice helped me to make the decision of choice of career.	3.25	1.01	A	2.90	1.06	A
7	I chose my career because my parents mandated me to do it.	2.63	1.11	A	2.64	1.15	A
8	My parents spelt out specific courses I should choose.	2.61	1.12	A	3.01	1.15	A
	Grand mean	2.85	1.07		2.76	1.11	

Field data (A=Agree)

The analysis in Table 1 shows that the mean values of all the respondents were above the 2.50 cut off mean value. This implies that both the male and female students agree that parental attitude influence their choice of career in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area. Further-more, Table 1 revealed that the male students had a standard deviation ranging from 0.98 to 1.13 while the female students had a standard deviation of ranging from 1.01 to 1.15, signifying that the opinions of both categories of respondents were homogeneous.

Research Question 2: *What is the influence of parents' level of education on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area?*

Table 2: Mean Response on Parents' Level of Education and Career Choice of Students

S/N	Items	Male (N=460)			Female (N=371)		
		M ₁	SD ₁		M ₁	SD ₁	
9	My parents' education aided me in making my career decision.	2.79	1.09	A	2.87	1.10	A
10	My parents' education provided me the educational resources needed to make right decision in my career choice.	2.63	1.09	A	2.90	1.08	A
11	My parents' education provided me the exposure needed to make in my career choice.	2.92	1.10	A	2.92	1.05	A
12	My parents chose my career for me based on their education.	2.34	1.21	D	2.06	1.14	D
13	I chose same course as my parent(s) because I aspire to be like my parents.	2.05	0.94	D	2.27	1.19	D
14	My parents' level of education has nothing to do with my choice of career.	2.41	1.18	D	2.37	1.09	D
Grand mean		2.52	1.10		2.57	1.11	

Field data (A=Agree; D=Disagree)

Table 2 shows that both male and female students agree with items 9, 10 and 11 as aspects of parent's level of education that influence their choice of career but disagrees with items 12, 13 and 14 regarding parent's level of education that influence their choice of career. The standard deviation values ranging from 0.94 to 1.18 for male respondents and 1.08 to 1.19 show homogeneity in the opinion of the respondents

Research Question 3: *What is the influence of parents' occupation on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area?*

Table 3: Mean Response on Parents' Occupation and Career Choice of Students

S/N	Items	Male (N=460)			Female (N=371)		
		M ₁	SD ₁		M ₁	SD ₁	
15	I chose my course because it is same course one of my parents read in school.	2.42	1.12	D	2.26	1.05	D
16	I like my father's career and I also chose to read it in school	2.26	0.99	D	2.29	1.03	D
17	I like my mother's career and I also chose to read it in school	2.24	0.99	D	2.33	1.01	D
18	I chose my career in line with my family business	2.21	1.09	D	2.36	0.99	D
19	I am not influenced by my father's or mother's occupation	2.06	1.06	D	2.40	0.97	D
20	My father's occupation is not giving him enough money, so I will not like to follow such occupation	2.23	1.03	D	2.43	0.95	D
21	I choose to follow my family occupation to maintain its continuity.	2.41	1.02	D	2.47	0.92	D
Grand mean		2.26	1.04	D	2.36	0.99	D

Field data (D=Disagree)

Table 3 shows that with mean values of all the items less than 2.50 cut off mean values, both male and female students disagreed that parental occupation influence their choice of career. Also, the standard deviation values ranging from 0.99 to 1.12 for male students and 0.92 to 1.05 for female students show homogeneity in the opinions of the respondents

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students regarding the influence of parental attitude towards occupations on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Table 4: Z-Test for Influence of Parental Attitude on Students' Career Choice.

Group	N	\bar{X}_1	SD	Df	α	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	307	2.85	1.07	871	0.05	1.17	1.960	Accepted
Female	566	2.76	1.11					

The result in Table 4 shows that the calculated value of z is 1.17 and the critical value of z is 1.96. Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the hypothesis is accepted. This implies that male students did not differ from their female counterparts in their opinion regarding the influence of parental attitude towards occupations on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students regarding the influence of parents' level of education on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Table 5: Z-Test for Influence of Parent's Level of Education on Students' Career Choice.

Group	N	\bar{X}_1	SD	Df	α	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	307	2.52	1.10	871	0.05	-0.64	1.960	Accepted
Female	566	2.57	1.11					

As shown in Table 5, calculated value of z is 0.64 and the critical value of z is 1.96. Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the hypothesis is accepted. This implies that male students did not differ from their female counterparts in their opinion regarding the influence of parent's level of education on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students regarding the influence of parents' occupation on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Table 6: Z-Test for Influence of Parents' Occupation on Students' Career Choice.

Group	N	\bar{X}_1	SD	Df	α	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	307	2.26	1.04	871	0.05	-1.38	1.960	Accepted
Female	566	2.36	0.99					

As shown in Table 6, the calculated value of z is 1.38 and is less than the critical value of z which is 1.96; hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that male students did not differ from their female counterparts in the opinion regarding the influence of parental occupation on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

DISCUSSION

The findings with respect to research question one showed that the students agree that their parents' interest in their choice of career motivated them to choose it; parents' willingness for them to choose their choice of career created more interest in them for the course; parents' dislike for their choice of career discouraged them from going for the course. This result corroborates that of Udoh and Sanni (2012) who found that parents' attitudes towards occupations, parents' level of formal education, and parents' occupation exert influence on the career choice of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The outcome of the analysis of the first hypothesis

further revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean response of male and female students regarding the influence of parental attitude towards occupations on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

The second research question two sought to ascertain students' perception on the influence of parent's level of formal education on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area. From the result, both male and female students agree that their parents' education aided them to assist me in making my career decision; their parents' education aided them to provide for them the educational resources needed to make right decision in my career choice; parents' education aided them provided them the exposure needed to make right decision in my career choice. They however disagreed that parents chose their career choice for them based on their education; they chose same course as their parent(s) because they aspire to be like their parents and that parents' level of education has nothing to do with their choice of course. This result is in agreement with that of Pfungst (2015) who conducted a study to investigate the relationship between parental socio economic status and girls' career aspirations in North Brisbane State High School and a South Coast State High School in Australia. Pfungst found that students whose fathers had reached the highest level of education to year 10 or 12, were more likely to aspire to attend university than to directly enter the work force either part or fulltime. Furthermore, the findings of this study is consistent with the finding of Mbagwu and Ajaegbu (2016) who conducted a study to ascertain the influence of parents' educational background on career choice of teenagers among senior secondary school students in Owerri, Imo state. Mbagwu and Ajaegbu found that teenagers whose parents were from high educational background were more consistent and did not have much difficulty in making career choice when compared with those whose parents had low educational background. The analysis of the second hypothesis indicated that male students did not differ from their female counterparts in their opinion regarding the influence of parent's level of education on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Research question three sought to ascertain students' perception on the influence of parental occupation on the career choice of male and female students in Ahoada East Local Government Area. From the result, both male and female students disagree that they chose their course because it is same course one of their parents read in school and s/he was doing very well; they like their father's career and also chose to read it in school; they like their mothers' career and also chose to read it in school; they chose their career in line with their family business; they were not influenced by their father's or mother's occupation; their fathers' occupation is not giving him enough money. This finding is in line with that obtained by Alphonse (2016) who conducted a study to investigate the extent to which parental factors influence career choice among form four students in Nairobi County. Alphonse found that parents' occupations, parents' socio-economic status, parents' values and expectations, influenced the career choice of students in the study area. Furthermore, the analysis of the third hypothesis revealed that male students did not differ from their female counterparts in the opinion regarding the influence of parental occupation on their career choice in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was therefore concluded that the career choice made by students in secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers state are influenced by their parents' attitude. Their choice of career is also influenced by their parents' level of education and occupation. There is need therefore to mount sensitisation programmes for both parents and students of secondary schools in the study area regarding choosing career. Such programme could reduce the level of negative influence parents could exert on the career choice of their wards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings from this study:

- (1) The services of guidance counsellors should be employed in secondary schools to counsel students on choosing career. This will sensitise them of the various careers and the prospects of such career.
- (2) School should organise career talks with parents to sensitise them of various careers available for their wards. This will go a long way to help especially uneducated parents on the career part ways their wards can choose.

- (3) Parents should be involved in the academic activities of their wards. This way they may know the areas of strength and weakness on their wards so they can administer appropriate advice as regard their career choice.

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