



A Study of the Determinants of Vocational Choice among Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the determinants of vocational choice among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher developed two objectives of the study, two research questions and hypotheses. The researcher employed descriptive survey design for the research. The population of the study consists of all the teachers and students in SS I and SS II in sixty public secondary schools in Rivers State with a population size of 39,600 persons while the sample size is 600 persons using multistage sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest method which yields a coefficient of 0.80. The data collected were analyzed using mean score and null hypotheses were tested using z-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. The study reveals that parental educational background, parental financial status, parental occupation and students' subject selection in their senior secondary classes influence the vocational choice of secondary school students in Rivers State. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the society should not place preference to one course over another. This will make the students to choice their choice without been biased or intimidated of their chosen career choice.

Keywords: Determinants, Vocational, Choice, Guidance, Parental and Societal Factors

INTRODUCTION

The problem of choice is encountered by students all over the world; the choice of subjects in the junior secondary three and the senior secondary classes which lead to choice of career in the colleges and universities. Even at the university level, choice of courses is still a problem; various competing forces are brought into focus in this problem. They include age, sex, social class of parents, accident, occupational value pattern of parents, interest, self-concept, job availability etc. Most significant is the immediate environment of the students which houses among other things occupation of parents or profession and socio-economic status of parents. The complexity of this problem may be as a result of the pressure students get from their parents. Although, most parents mean well for their children, the rapid socio-economic changes in the country force the children to think and select certain types of occupations they think will be beneficial to them.

The career of a person plays an important role in his entire life. Denga (2015) stated that a person's social status, income, style of life, his choice of friends, his mental and physical health are influenced by the type of job he does. Career choice is a developmental process spanning almost throughout a person's life time. In view of the importance of career choice and its enduring effects on one's life, it is important therefore to note that, the role that parents' socio-economic status plays in their children's choice of career help in vocational education. Vocational education came into prominence as a programme of study in the United States of America. It arose out of the need for practical education in order to counter balance the emphasis being placed on liberal education by the American elites. According to Amaewhule (2000), the struggle to introduce it into educational curriculum then was identified. Prosser (2009) argued for social efficiency and the need for all students to be prepared for useful employment. Dewey (2010) saw vocational education as a means of liberating education. He revealed that vocational education programmes are offered at secondary and post-secondary levels of education (Amaewhule, 2000).

Vocational education can provide a more meaningful education which will enable our youths to be self-employed after a successful completion of their secondary school. Experts believe that vocational education is generally effective at the secondary school level which placed more emphasis on the vocational training of the students. It is very important that adequate guidance and counseling is done to enable students make the right decisions and to develop the right attitudes towards vocational education. According to Essien (2009), those youths who may not be able to proceed to universities can leave school with the requisite prevocational skills that will enable them function as useful citizens, independent workers and income earners. He further asserts that those who go further to universities are equally exposed to educational experiences which give advantage in securing employment in business, commerce and industry when they finish university education.

A student's choice of subjects should reflect his interest, ability and aptitude and take consideration of the possible career aspirations he may have. There are some subjects that are essential for some courses and careers. It is important to check out these subjects or entry requirements with a guidance counsellor. Lots of students have been found selecting subjects for senior school certificate examination not minding the aspect of their potentiality that affects them when choosing career in the university. Eremie (2014) argued that variables such as students' interest, ability, skills and personality should be considered when advising students into their course of study. In the light of the above, therefore, this study intends to investigate the determinants of vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

These days, people talk of how much skills one possesses but those without skills top the list of unemployment. Over the years, students have been battling with the conflicts in their choice of career. Making a correct or realistic career choice as well as planning for it is a difficult or delicate task. This perhaps is due partly to the inability of the students, the teachers and to some extent the surroundings which involve their socio-economic background and parental influence and occupation level. It is observed that most students are not showing any readiness for skill acquisition or vocational education. This is shown in their attitudes towards vocational education. Most of them view vocational programme as programmes for the never do well and can only go into it as a last resort. The quality of workforce has dropped as a result of lack of acquisition of necessary skills which vocational education can provide. There is high rate of juvenile delinquency due to the failure to provide the youth with vocational education.

The present works of the regular schools are largely regulated by administrators who do not know much about vocational education and as such have directed the propagation of false theories that have seriously impaired their social efficiency. For this reason, the introduction of vocational technical education into the school programme was consequently faced with the problem of whether it would accept philosophy of the general school or whether it would work out a philosophy radically different. Most administrators have failed to see vocational education as a peculiar education requiring proper knowledge and skills for effective performance of its learners. They fail to provide the facilities needed for teaching and learning vocational subjects and as such make them develop negative attitude towards the programme since the attitude of the learners influence their behavioural pattern and performance. However, students carelessness in selecting their subjects in secondary school which is part of the preparation for their future career and unnecessary parental involvements in their children's vocational choice have made the researcher to carry out this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the determinants of vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study are:

- (1) To find out how parental factors determines vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.
- (2) To examine how societal factors determines vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered to guide the study:

1. What are the parental factors that determine the vocational choice of secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. What are the societal factors that determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

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

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and students and how parental factors determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and students and how societal factors determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research survey design. This study was carried out in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State. As at the time of this study, Rivers State has 249 senior secondary schools with 19,647 teachers and 39,684 students (Source: Department of Planning, Research and Statistics, Rivers State Post-Primary School Board, 2019). This makes the study population to be 59,331 respondents. Multistage sampling was used in the selection of sample size. Stage 1 was the division of the state into three senatorial districts that make up Rivers State. Stage 2 was the division of each senatorial district into different Local Government Areas that form the senatorial district. At stage 3, simple random sampling technique was used to select four Local Government Areas from each senatorial district. Stage 4 was the use of simple random sampling technique to select 788 respondents comprising of 392 teachers and 396 students. Taro Yamen method of sample size determination was employed to arrived at the sample size. Taro Yamen formula is shown below:

$$S = \frac{N}{1 + N} (e)^2$$

The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled: Determinants of Vocational Choice Questionnaire (DVCQ). Its items were rated based on the 4-point Likert rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The reliability of the instrument was done using test-retest method. This was done by administering copies of the questionnaire to 13 teachers and 17 students in public senior secondary schools in the area which was not part of the sample. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to correlate the two sets of data and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained and was considered reliable. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The criterion decision rule is that any mean score that is 2.50 and above is accepted while the mean score that is less than 2.50 is rejected. The null hypotheses were tested using z-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Results of the study were presented below.

The following research questions were answered to guide the study:

Research Question 1: *What are the parental factors that determine the vocational choice of secondary school students in Rivers State?*

Table 1: Mean Responses on how Parental Factors Determine the Vocational Choice of Secondary School Students in Rivers State

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Teachers		Decision	Students		Decision
		(\bar{X})	SD		(\bar{X})	SD	
1.	Educational attainment of parents contributes to their children's choice of career.	2.96	0.84	Accepted	3.00	0.73	Accepted
2.	Parents with high academic status or qualification have great influence on their children's choice of career.	2.91	0.69	Accepted	3.38	0.80	Accepted
3.	An average man or parent can accept any course of study for this child provided the child gains admission.	2.98	0.73	Accepted	3.13	0.77	Accepted
4.	Educated parents insist on particular types of career for their children.	2.62	0.62	Accepted	2.97	0.64	Accepted
5.	Parents with high level of education allow their children to choose their own kind of career in the children's area of strength.	1.84	1.02	Rejected	1.92	0.94	Rejected
6.	Parents who have high financial status in the society do not allow their children to go into some careers like music and football.	2.72	0.65	Accepted	2.88	0.70	Accepted
7.	Parents with low income status in the society accept any course of study for their children provided they go to school.	2.69	0.88	Accepted	2.94	1.05	Accepted
8.	Parents with high economic or financial status disallow their children to choose course of study for themselves.	3.27	0.81	Accepted	3.10	1.11	Accepted
9.	Rich parents pay any amount to the school provided their children gain admission to the course of their choice.	2.82	0.70	Accepted	2.75	0.66	Accepted
10.	Parents with high financial status also encourage their children to attend vocational trainings to help them build up their career in their areas of strength.	1.73	1.03	Rejected	1.75	0.62	Rejected
11.	Lawyers in the society want at least one of their children to be a lawyer no matter the cost.	2.88	0.70	Accepted	2.71	0.87	Accepted

12	Medical doctors like their professions for possible inheritance.	2.81	0.68	Accepted	3.10	0.76	Accepted
13	Parental occupation has to a large extent influenced their children's career choice.	2.88	1.01	Accepted	2.76	0.66	Accepted
14	Most parents do not allow their children to choose vocational choice outside what they studied or their job.	1.67	0.67	Rejected	2.60	0.77	Rejected
15	Parents have no influence over their children's choice of career.	1.60	1.03	Rejected	2.03	0.63	Rejected
16	Students peer group can influence their interest in some subjects thereby making them to select subjects wrongly and this in turn affects their career choice.	2.92	1.21	Accepted	2.71	0.75	Accepted
17	Some parents force their children to choose science subjects when they do better in arts in the arts subjects.	3.29	0.81	Accepted	2.92	0.71	Accepted
18	Students' poor relationship with their teachers can affect their subject selection and their career choice later in life.	3.14	0.77	Accepted	2.61	0.62	Accepted
19	Lack of basic facilities and well equipped laboratories for practical can discourage some students from choosing science subjects; this affects their subject selection and their career in turn.	2.88	0.70	Accepted	2.79	0.63	Accepted
20	Lack of proper career guidance in Secondary school can affect students in their subject selection which can later influence their career choice.	3.04	0.58	Accepted	3.00	0.81	Accepted
Average Mean/SD		3.09	0.72	Accepted	2.83	0.69	Accepted

Source: *Researcher's Field Result, 2019*

Table 1 above reveals that the respondents (students and teachers) accepted the view that parental factors are determinants for vocational career choice of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. This was shown in their mean response with mean scores of 3.09 and 2.83 for teachers and students respectively which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 for acceptance or rejection.

Research Question 2: *What are the societal factors that determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State?*

Table 2: Mean Responses on how Societal Factors Determine the Vocational Choice of Secondary School Students in Rivers State

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Teachers		Decision	Students		Decision
		(\bar{X})	SD		(\bar{X})	SD	
21.	Positive peer encouragement	2.84	0.68	Accepted	3.01	1.04	Accepted
22.	Quality parental encouragement	2.34	0.91	Accepted	3.44	0.65	Accepted
23.	Quick and regular job placement.	3.05	0.72	Accepted	2.41	0.87	Rejected
24.	Societal status of the career	2.72	1.02	Accepted	2.48	0.80	Rejected
25.	High level of esteem the society attach to a profession.	3.41	1.11	Accepted	3.76	0.61	Accepted
26.	Low societal estimation of vocational career	2.14	0.80	Rejected	2.38	0.73	Rejected
27.	Societal prestige in administrative positions.	3.64	1.05	Accepted	3.04	0.83	Accepted
28.	Effective recognition of the course in the society	3.84	0.77	Accepted	2.60	1.11	Accepted
29.	I chose a course with professional title.	3.55	0.60	Accepted	3.77	1.03	Accepted
30.	Comments by individual influence my career choice	2.40	0.64	Rejected	3.61	0.57	Accepted
31.	I choose my course because I will be influential in the society	3.06	1.01	Accepted	3.54	0.66	Accepted
32.	The belief of people around me influences my choice.	3.11	0.81	Accepted	2.36	0.85	Rejected
Average Mean/SD		3.01	0.84	Accepted	3.03	0.81	Accepted

Source: *Researcher's Field Result, 2019*

Table 2 above reveals that the respondents (students and teachers) accepted the view that societal factors are determinants for vocational career choice of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. This was shown in their mean response with mean scores of 3.01 and 3.03 for teachers and students respectively which is greater than the cut-off point of 2.50 for acceptance or rejection.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and students and how parental factors determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 3: z-Test Analysis on How Parental Factors Determine Vocational Choice

S/N	X	SD	N	Df	α	zcal	zcrit	Remark
Teachers	3.09	0.72	392	786	0.05	1.16	1.96	Accepted
Students	2.83	0.69	396					

Source: *Researcher's Field Result; 2019* Accept Ho if $z_{cal} \leq z_{crit}$, Otherwise Reject Ho.

Since the calculated value of z ($z_{cal} = 1.16$) is less than the critical value of z ($z_{crit} = 1.960$) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and students and how parental factors determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and students and how societal factors determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 4: z-Test Analysis on How Societal Factors Determine Vocational Choice

S/N	X	SD	N	Df	α	zcal	zcrit	Remark
Teachers	3.01	0.84	392	786	0.05	-0.34	1.96	Accepted
Students	3.03	0.81	396					

Source: *Researcher's Field Result; 2019* Accept Ho if $z_{cal} \leq z_{crit}$, Otherwise Reject Ho.

Since the calculated value of z ($z_{cal} = -0.34$) is less than the critical value of z ($z_{crit} = 1.960$) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of teachers and students and how societal factors determine vocational choice among secondary school students in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result from Table 1 revealed that parental factors influence vocational choice of students in senior secondary schools. The study reveals that parental factors such as educational attainment of parents contributes to their children's choice of career, parents with low income status, and parents' profession among others influence the vocational choice of secondary school students in Rivers State. This finding is in line with the view of Osuala (2012) as observed that there is a significant relationship between parents' educational background or status and vocational choice of their children especially in senior secondary schools.

Result from Table 2 revealed that societal factors influence vocational choice of students in senior secondary schools. The study reveals that societal factors such as quick and regular job placement and societal prestige contributes to their children's choice of career among secondary school students in Rivers State. This finding is in line with the view of Udegbo (2007) who found that societal factors such as recognition of a particular course like medicine and law influences students' vocational choice in senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following deductions were made that parental factors were found to influence vocational choice of students in secondary schools in Rivers State. The study further found that other factors that influence vocational choice of senior secondary school students include societal factors such as prestige by the society among others influences students' choice in their vocational choice in secondary schools in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has decided to put forward the following recommendations:

1. Parents, irrespective of their educational background, financial/economic status and occupation should avoid unnecessary interference with their children's subject selection and career choice. This will make their children to make choice that they can pursue confidently.
2. The society should not place preference to one course over another. This will make the students to choose their choice without been biased or intimidated of their chosen career choice.

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