

INFLUENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' CAREER CHOICES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of socio-economic variables which are family background, family income and peer group on career choice of secondary school students in Taraba State, Nigeria. This research work adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for this study was 2,247 students out of which a total of three hundred and twenty-seven (327) students from public secondary schools in Takum Education Zone, Taraba State were drawn through multistage sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Career Choice Questionnaire (CCQ). The items of CCQ were subjected to face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.71. Chi-square statistics was used to test the hypotheses formulated. Findings from the study show that there was significant influence of Family background, Family income, and Peer group on students' career choice. The study recommended that parents irrespective of their economic background and occupation should properly guide their children in the areas of career choice; Students should be educated and guided by school counselors and teachers on the potential influence of peer, helping them critically evaluate the advice they received from their friends, empower them to prioritize their own values and choice over peer conformity.

Keywords: Career Choice, Family background, Family income, Peer group,

Introduction

Career choice has a lasting impact on an individual. It predicts and influences an individual's prospective amount of income, kind of employment, and, as a result, leaves an influence on their personality, behavior, and attitude (Najar & Yousuf, 2019). As a result, a single bad decision can

alter an individual's destiny. This individual action has a bigger impact on a nation's economic development. Individuals who are misfits in the job are less productive and efficient, and hence are unable to fulfill their objectives. Furthermore, appropriate profession selection leads to success and satisfaction, and it is a necessary requirement for self-actualization. A significant turning point in teenagers' life is the profession decision they choose when in secondary school.

Every student has a difficult decision when choosing a career since they must examine a variety of criteria. Career is an essential component of human existence; it simply refers to a sort of job or style of life that an individual feels he or she is uniquely qualified for (Famolu, 2020). It is an employment to which a person devotes their entire life and has an innate affection and feeling for the task. A career is a job or occupation that one earns a livelihood from, particularly one for which he or she has received formal training in an institution or via apprenticeship. According to Rajitha (2016), career is the watershed of an individual, through which the rest of his or her life flows. So, if one has to be happy in life, he must be satisfied and be happy in his career. To achieve this, one must choose his career wisely.

One of the fundamental roles of career guidance in educational institutions is to help secondary school students and undergraduates to grow, develop and realize their full potentials. This is founded on the notion that every individual has unique abilities, skills, gifts, and other personal attributes that, if encouraged and developed, would serve as deciding factors in vocational choice. (Nwobi, et al., 2020). Furthermore, it was reported that some Nigerian students failed their examinations as a result of completely improper program choices in higher institutions (Bama & Borokonda, 2019; Ibrahim, 2023). This could be because a student's attitude is likely to be influenced by his or her enthusiasm for a certain field, which could negatively affect his or her performance. To help students in career decision-making, there are several aspects that play a major part in this lifelong process, including socioeconomic factors among others.

Some of the socio-economic factors that affect career choices include: Family background, Peer group influence, and Family income among others. The child's first environment is his/her home, which includes his family. Naturally, the youngster learns about careers through the jobs of his or her parents and other adults in the family. This starts to establish their interests in the job they will pick in the future. Most parents plan a vocation for their children and fight to make it a reality. A parent who does not live up to his own expectations would see this picture in his son. As a result, he insists that his son pursue a specific career path. Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) discovered that parents had the greatest influence on students when it came to career choice. Parental influence in a young person's life (academic or social) can have significant positive impact on the young person's career choice. Family influences practically every decision an individual makes in the early years of life, adolescence, and even adulthood, beginning with junior secondary school.

Moreso, career choice has compelled many young people to seek assistance from members of the age group in an attempt to resolve the seeming impasse. This refers to the influence a peer group exerts on an individual, encouraging their peers to alter his or her attitude, values, or behavior so that they conform to such a group (Oduh et al., 2020). Aside from parental influence, some children may desire to identify with their classmates. Hence, they choose subject combinations

which would lead to certain careers simply because a friend belongs to that particular group. Nwobi et al, (2020) research revealed that peer group is a reliable instructional technique that can enhance social learning and social skills of adolescents. In addition, peer pressure has a considerable impact on career choice. These adolescents discuss so many topics in their gatherings that may influence their career choice. They can influence each other in their discussion such as choice of subject combination. Some of these students may decide to choose a career as a challenge because a friend or a certain peer is on training or in the university pursuing such career.

Furthermore, the financial level of a secondary school student's family may influence the professional path chosen by the student at a given point in time. At some point, one inherits from his or her parents certain financial and other resources, which to some extent influence their career choices (Eremie & Okwulehie, 2018). Families with higher means may have more access to resources, including higher education. The financial position of the family impacts where one lives and which school he or she attends. Some students may have to budget for school based on their own income. Many students will require appropriate mentorship chances to succeed. Individuals living in poverty require specific training programs to overcome educational and social barriers and meet basic work demands. Economic considerations can heavily impact career choices. Financial stability can also provide a sense of security that encourages students to make choices regarding the timing and size of their families (Andeskebtso & Ugochukwu 2023). Family income and children's education remain important and reinforced over time, since income has a direct effect on educational results.

Statement of the Problem

Choosing a career is a critical process that may have an impact on every aspect of one's life, including social, economic, and health aspects. However, a number of students appear to make decisions like this quite quickly, without considering capabilities, wellness, skills, and values for future life. Furthermore, making career decisions is not an easy matter for students, because in fact students encounter various career problems that can affect them in making career decisions.

More so, Secondary school students concern themselves with reading courses in the schools without the guidance of the school counsellor and without due regard to the marketability and employability of the graduates in the field, It makes suitable career decision a difficult challenge for secondary school students in Taraba state. many students in Taraba state encounter a lot of problems while making career choices arising from extraneous influences such as the family background and peer group, hence choosing subject combinations which would lead to certain careers simply because a friend belongs to that particular group rather than consulting the professionally trained school counsellors who will guide students on the right career choice. These are socioeconomic factors which appear to influence career choice that need to be addressed among students.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the influence of socio-economic variables on career choice of secondary school students in Taraba State. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- i. determine the influence of family background on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.
- ii. determine the influence of Family income on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.
- iii. determine the influence of Peer group on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO₁: Family background has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.

HO₂: Family income has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.

HO₃: Peer group has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.

Methodology

This research work adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for this study was 2,247 students out of which a total of three hundred and twenty-seven (327) students from public secondary schools in Takum Education Zone of Taraba State were drawn through multistage procedures. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Career Choice Questionnaire (CCQ) adapted from Anwar (2016) to provide answers to the research questions. CCQ is divided into two (2) sections, section A contains personal data of the respondent. Section B has 15 items grouped into 3 clusters. Clusters A, B and C covered the socio-economic factors (family background, peer influence and family income). The items of CCQ were subjected to face and content validity. The reliability of the instruments were established using Cronbach alpha. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.710. Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Hypotheses

HO₁: Family background has no significant influence on career choice of secondary school students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.

Table 1: Chi-square Analysis on the influence of family background on career choice of secondary school students

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1635.245 ^a	630	.000
Likelihood Ratio	935.887	630	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	105.644	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	327		

Sources: Field Report 2024

The table 1 above presents the chi-square analysis of the influence of family background on students' career choice. From the table it is observed that at 630 degree of freedom, 0.00 is significant at 0.05 probability level ($p < 0.05$) with X^2 value of 1635.245. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that Family background has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State is rejected. This means that there is statistical significant influence of Family background on secondary school students' career choice.

HO₂: Family income has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.

Table 2: Chi-square Analysis on the influence of family income on career choice of secondary school students

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1722.486 ^a	585	.000
Likelihood Ratio	884.803	585	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	168.044	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	327		

Sources: Field Report 2024

The table 2 above presents the chi-square analysis of the influence of family income on students' career choice. From the table it is observed that at 585 degree of freedom, 0.00 is significant at 0.05 probability level ($p < 0.05$) with X^2 value of 1722.486. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that Family income has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State is rejected. This means that there is statistical significant influence of Family income on secondary school students' career choice.

HO₃: Peer group has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State.

Table 3: chi-square Analysis on the influence of peer group on career choice of secondary school students

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1494.140 ^a	585	.000
Likelihood Ratio	876.205	585	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	125.047	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	327		

Sources: Field Report 2024

The table 3 above presents the chi-square analysis of the influence of peer group on students' career choice. From the table it is observed that at 585 degree of freedom, 0.00 is significant at 0.05 probability level ($p < 0.05$) with X^2 value of 1494.140. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that peer group has no significant influence on career choice of secondary students in Takum Education zone, Taraba State is rejected. This means that there is statistical significant influence of peer group on secondary school students' career choice.

Discussion of Findings

Chi-square was conducted to assess the influence of Family background, Family income, Peer Group Influence, Self-concept, Self-efficacy and Self-esteem on students career choice in Takum education zone Taraba State, Nigeria. The findings of this study revealed that there is significant influence of family background on students' career choice at 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$). The findings agrees with the studies of Famulo (2020), Oladokun (2022), Nwoka et al. (2022) and Chukwu et al. (2022) who all affirmed that there is a significant and positive influence of family background on students' career choice.

The findings of this study also indicated that there is a significant influence of Family income on secondary school students' career choice at 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.05$). The findings agrees with the studies of Jamim et al. (2022), Masereka et al. (2023); Kazi and Akhlaq (2017)

which revealed that there is a significant influence of Family income on secondary school students' career choice. However the findings contradicts the finding of Getnet et al. (2022) perceive socio economic factors as the major determinants negatively influenced career choice of students. The findings of this study furthermore revealed that there is significant influence of peer group on students' career choice. The findings agrees with the studies of Oladokun (2022); Aminu and Umar (2022). The findings of the study is also in line with the studies of Oduh et al. (2020); Ogutu (2017) who all revealed a significant influence of peer group on students' career choice.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine the influence of socio-economic and psychological variables which are Family background, Family income and Peer group on career choice of secondary school students in Taraba State, Nigeria. It is evident from the findings of this study to conclude that there is positive significant influence of Family background, Family income and Peer group influence, on secondary school students' career choice.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Parents irrespective of their economic background and occupation should properly guide their children in the areas of career choice
2. Students should be educated and guided by school counselors and teachers on the potential influence of peer, helping them critically evaluate the advice they received from their friends, empower them to prioritize their own values and choice over peer conformity.

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