

ATTITUDE, SELF-CONCEPT AND CAREER CHOICE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN TARABA STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated attitude, self-concept and career choice among secondary school students in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State, Nigeria. Two research purposes and two hypotheses guided the study. The study work adopted a correlational research design. The population for this study was 9,807 public secondary school students out of which 384 students were sample through mutlti-stage sampling procedure. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaires titled “Students’ Attitudes, Self-Concept and Career Choice Questionnaire” (SASCQ). The instrument (SASCQ) was subjected to face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha which yielded 0.71 reliability index. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed there is a significant positive relationship between students’ attitudes and career choice ($r = 0.347, p < 0.000$). There is also a significant positive relationship between self-concept and career choice ($r = 0.343, p < 0.000$). It was concluded that both students’ attitudes and self-concept have a significant positive correlation with career choices among secondary school students in the Jalingo education zone of Taraba State, Nigeria. It was recommended that Schools should implement comprehensive career guidance and counseling programs to help students develop a clear understanding of their interests, abilities, and career goals.

Keywords: Attitude, Self-concept, Career choice, Students

Introduction

Education is regarded as the key to national development, and it is intended to serve the expressed goals and aspirations of the country as enshrined in the national policy on education (FRN, 2018). One of the levels of education in Nigeria that has received much attention is secondary school education. Secondary education serves as a linkage between primary education and tertiary education. Learning instructions presented to students at secondary schools is geared towards preparing the learner towards useful living within the society and advance learning in the tertiary

level through possessing the right attitude and self- concept, which is likely to influence their career choice.

Attitude includes ways of feeling, thinking and behaving and maintaining an expression of one's identity within the environment. Attitude can be said to be the emotional and mental entities that propel an individual to take any action towards an object or subject (Nja et al, 2022). Attitude determines what each individual will see, hear, think, and do. It is also the way someone behaves and the position in which they hold their bodies. According to Kamara and Dadhabai (2022) attitude can be formed as a result of an opinion or by following the footsteps of others such as parents, teachers, peers, and friends which could be either be negative or positive. Students' attitude in schools is conceptualized as consisting of the students' self-reported interest in and affect towards education. Anjorin-Ojewole, (2023) asserted that positive learning attitude can foster curiosity, motivation, persistence, and self-regulation, while a negative learning attitude can lead to boredom, frustration, avoidance, and helplessness. More so, students with a positive attitude toward school have been noted to demonstrate beliefs that academic performance and learning is relevant to their lives and or to their success as adult (Getrude et al., 2021). The attitude of students in secondary schools is an important factor that influences their career choices, future success and can alter every aspect of a students' life, including their self-concept. Self-concept has to do with individuals' mental images of themselves; it literally refers to the picture or image a person has of himself. Self-concept can be seen as self-perception which involves a combination of what one would like to achieve, making the competence a component of one's self-esteem. Self-concept is simply an individual's awareness of their self, which refers to the extent to which self-knowledge is clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporarily stable (Okoh, 2016). Self-concept refers to the personal beliefs someone develops about their academic abilities or skills. Self-concept can be high or low which can have positive or negative impact on individuals. Student with low self-concept sees themselves as having low ability, poor ability, not competent, relying on the rating of people, failure, lack basic school needs, rejection and guilt, while high self-concept can positively affect academic performance (Shehu, 2020). The perception of their self, plays a vital role in their career choices as well as their success.

Career choices could be defined as a sequence of positions, jobs or occupation, which a person engages in during his working life. Career choices preparation focuses specifically on issues related to the world of work. Career choice plays an important role in his entire life in which one earns his living especially one for which he has a period of training in an institution or through apprenticeship. Career choice is one of many important choices students will make in determining future plans; this decision will impact them throughout their lives. The essence of who the student is will revolve around what the student wants to do with their life-long work (Egbo, 2017). The choice determines satisfaction one expects to get from work and the opportunities one has for promotion and advancement.

Statement of the Problem

The challenges of career choices have made many students spend more than the duration of a course being admitted or even dropping out of school. This could be as a result of a poor career decision made by the students. Career choices is a challenge for secondary students in Jalingo Education zone, lagging behind in their identity development because their self-concept is not elaborated and they have diffused negative attitude, personal values and professional goals. This challenge is stressed in educational systems where secondary students have to choose professions early. This is because making a wrong career decision can ruin one's happiness in life as this could result to vocational maladjustment. Inappropriate career-decision made by students in Jalingo Education zone, may cause disaster not only for them as individuals, but also the entire society. Since the attitude and self-concept of a student affects his/her emotions, vision, and ambition according to Eremie and Ikpah (2017). The problem of this study is that, could students' attitude and self-concept affect their career choices? Thus, the researcher finds it pertinent to study attitude, self-concept and career choice among secondary school students in Jalingo education zone.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate attitude, self-concept and career choice among secondary school students. Specifically, the study examined:

1. the relationship between students' attitude and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone.
2. the relationship between self-concept and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone.

Statement of the Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are postulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO_1 ; There is no significant relationship between students' attitude and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone.

HO_2 ; There is no significant relationship between self-concept and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study was correlation research design. The population of the study comprised of 9,807 public secondary school students in Jalingo Education Zone. The sample size for the study was 384 secondary school students drawn using Taro Yamane's simplified formula. The instrument used for data collection, was Students' Attitudes, Self-Concept and Career Choice Questionnaire (SASCQ). SASCQ was divided into two (2) sections (A, and B). Section A deals with the respondents' personal information while Section B deals with the research variables which consisted of 50 items. SASCQ is measured on a four-point rating scale to elicit students' responses. The instrument was validated for face and content validity by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Taraba State University, Jalingo. Pilot testing of the instrument was conducted in a school outside the study area. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.718 using Chronbach alpha. The research questions were answered, using descriptive statistic of mean and standard deviations. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

HO_1 ; There is no significant relationship between students' attitude and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation analysis on relationship between students' attitude and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone

Variables		Students' Attitudes (SA)	Career choices (CC)
Students' attitudes (SA)	Pearson Correlation	1	.347**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	384
Career choices (CC)	Pearson Correlation	.347**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	384	384

Source: Field (2025)

Table 3 reveals the Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between students' attitude (SA) and career choice (CC) among secondary school students in the Jalingo Education Zone. The results indicate a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.347$, $p < 0.000$), suggesting a moderate relationship between the two variables. This finding rejects the null hypothesis, indicating that students' attitudes toward academic activities significantly influence their career choices.

Hypothesis two

H_{O2} ; There is no significant relationship between self-concept and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone.

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis on relationship between self-concept and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone

Variables	Self-concept (SC)	Career choices (CC)
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Self-concept (SC)	Pearson Correlation	1	.343**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	384
Career choices (CC)	Pearson Correlation	.343**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	304	304

Source: Field (2025)

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between self-concept (SSC) and career choice (CC) among secondary school students in the Jalingo Education Zone. The analysis reveals a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.343$, $p < 0.000$), indicating a moderate relationship between self-concept and career choice. This result rejects the null hypothesis, demonstrating that students' self-concept significantly influences their career choices.

Discussion of Findings

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), and independent sample t-test were conducted to investigate the influence of attitude and self-concept on career choice among secondary school students in Jalingo education zone. The findings of this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between attitudes toward academic activities and career choice among secondary school students in the Jalingo Education Zone, with a positive correlation. This findings agrees with the findings of Shehu (2020); Oyewo and Akanbi (2021), Osi (2018); Afful (2019) who all affirmed that attitude is significant in relationship to career choice. Aslo, the revelead a positive correlation as also revealed by Getrude, Henry and Jack (2021) study. The findings of this study also revealed a significant relationship between self-concept and career choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education zone. The findings agree with the findings of Ogutu (2017); Ubani (2018); Afful (2019); Wiguno et al. (2020); Bi et al. (2023) who all affirmed that self-concept influenced career choice among secondary school students and that self-concept significantly correlated with career choice of secondary school students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that both students' attitudes and self-concept have a significant positive correlation with career choices. This suggests that students who have a positive attitude toward learning and a well-developed self-concept are more likely to make informed and suitable career decisions.

Recommendations

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

1. Schools should implement comprehensive career guidance and counseling programs to help students develop a clear understanding of their interests, abilities, and career goals. These programs should focus on improving students' self-concept and attitudes toward academic activities to enable them to make informed career choices.
2. Teachers and school administrators should adopt teaching methods that engage students and enhance their interest in academic activities. Encouraging a positive learning environment can improve students' attitudes toward their studies, thereby influencing their career decisions positively.
3. Schools administrators should introduce workshops, mentorship programs, and self-assessment activities to help students build a strong self-concept. These initiatives should help students recognize their strengths, values, and career aspirations, thereby improving their decision-making processes.

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