

FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN COVENANT UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

A. Okojide, A. Adekeye, E. Bakare

Covenant University (NIGERIA)

Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the factors influencing the choice of career of undergraduates in Covenant University. The study was conducted using descriptive survey research design. A sample of 400 first to third year students was randomly selected from the four colleges of the University. The data for this study was collected using questionnaire titled Career Choice Questionnaire (CCQ) which explored the psycho-social factors that influenced students' career choices. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Result shows that parents greatly influence their children's choices of career and that students' academic attainments/performances at secondary school level influenced their choices of career. The secondary school environment was another factor that influences students' choices of career. Other factors are personal interest and advancement of science and technology. However, gender was found not to have a significant influence on the students' career choices. The study concludes that students' choice of career is influenced by parents/guardians, their school environment, academic performance among others. Based on the findings, it was recommended that parents/guardians should be properly oriented on the extent they should be involved in the career choices and decision of their wards. In addition, secondary school teachers, principals, school counsellors and other stakeholders in the educational system should provide students with appropriate experiences that expand their exploration processes and a wide range of career information on all the available careers to enable them explore, and make informed career choices.

Keywords: Career, Career Choices, Undergraduates, Psycho-social, University.

1 INTRODUCTION

It has been established that the career choice of an individual is very important. It affects every aspect of life including the social, economic, mental and physical lives. Choosing a career has become so difficult in this particular time of advancement in information technology and post-industrial revolution (Kochung & Migunde, 2011). Today, anyone who wishes to make a good career choice and be able to adjust to the ever-changing social economic situation and technological advancement is bound to carry out proper career research and planning (Wallace, 2009). Every individual in this world desires to be stable, happy and recognized, for these reasons, one must choose a career which will meet these needs; career that may last a lifetime. Career should be chosen according to one's interests and demand of time (Mirza, Zahra & Ahmed, 2014). A stage comes in a student's life when decision about future career has to be taken. This important decision gives the foundation for course of study in the institution of higher learning and influences life. Gesinde (1997) as cited by Durosaro & Nuhu (2012) noted that in our present society, education is the best ground to prepare the younger generation. However, in Nigeria, due to cultural influences, parents have great influence on their children and this often manifest in career choice.

Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Postorelli (2001) stated that those going through the process of career choice are influenced by different factors which include the way they perceive things happening in their environment, abilities, interest, the people they associate with and educational achievements. Hewitt (2010) was of the view that things that motivate people in choosing certain occupations are either within them or in their environment. He further explained that most youths choose some occupations to please their parents or guardians. According to McQuaid and Bond (2003), students' ethnic background, years of study, degree of academic performance, subject combinations, activities and differences in job features have influenced students believe of being suitable for a given career. In addition, Kerka (2000) noted that career choice is influenced by student's characteristics, belief about self, culture, information technology, mentors, income of parents and social network. Shahzad, Zahra and Ahmed (2014) believed that career choices made by students are determined by their precedents, personality, opportunities, socio-economic background and environment where they live.

Career deals with all activities and actions that relate to one's vocation, assigned task, and job type or specification that has to do with a person's work-life. Career can also be seen as what a person is prepared, educated and trained to do over a period of time. Career choice refers to the profession and job which an individual has decided to go into which will lead to economic/social independence, productive and fulfilled life. Making a career choice is one's ability to identify and select a type of occupation or vocation that will enable him/her achieve a life goal. It also involves an individual utilizing information and knowledge about self, world of work and opportunities in his or her environment to make career decisions. Salami & Salami (2013) opined that secondary school students are always concerned about their future as regards to job availability and occupation mobility. They further explained that how the young people of today meet the problem of tomorrow will depend upon the amount of success they make in planning for the tomorrow. Durosaro & Nuhu (2012) noted that most undergraduates have problems in the course of their studies because they were not properly guided in the choice of subject combinations while in senior secondary school. Students who are not well guided may find themselves in courses for which they have no aptitude and may equally end up in jobs that do not fit their personality type.

Choice of career among undergraduates in this ever-evolving economic and technological advancing society has been a major issue that needs to be carefully addressed. A good number of undergraduates are studying certain courses not because they were chosen willingly or carefully guided but due to certain influences beyond their control, Consequently, they end up doing a job totally different from what they studied in the universities. Waudu (2008) noted that there were students who insisted on studying courses that were obvious that they do not have what it takes to study them in terms of academic abilities and aptitude. They end up changing course, dropping out of school and most of the time frustrated. It is against this background that the researchers want to examine the psycho-social factors that influence students' choice of course of study in Covenant University.

- 1 To ascertain the extent to which parents/guardians influence their wards' choices of career.
- 2 To examine the level at which academic performance/attainment influence students' career choices.
- 3 To ascertain the level at which the students' secondary school environment influenced their choices of career.
- 4 To ascertain the extent personal interests and aptitudes influenced students' choices of career.
- 5 To examine the extent the genders of students influenced their career choices.

1.1 Literature review

Career and Career Choice/factors Influencing Career Choice

Every individual in this planet aspire for good quality life and appreciable social status. The only determinant of these is a good choice of career. Weijer and Meijer (1996) in Adesina (2005) see career as the totality of man's experience in the world of work and education. Making a career involves an individual utilizing information and knowledge about self, world of work and opportunity in his or her society to make career decisions. Career selection is one of the most important choices students make, Undoubtedly, this decision will influence their activities throughout their lives. Career development is enhanced by appreciating the fact that a person's current vocational status was as a result of previous experience which when correlated may suggest the ideal future. The connection between present experience and dream of the future enables individuals to prepare to meet challenges of tomorrow. Choosing a career/occupation rests on a process of individuation that constitutes a vocational identity by unifying one's interest, needs, abilities and values (Walsh, 2003).

Salami & Salami (2013) opined that secondary school students are always concerned about their future as regards to job availability and occupational mobility. They further explained that to achieve future success, young people are to make good plans today for the anticipated future. Oyamo and Amoth (2008) listed some factors that affect career choices. This included motivation, the family and peer-group pressure. Durosaro and Nuhu (2012) noted that most undergraduates have problems in the course of their studies due to the absence of guidance in their choice of subject combinations. This initial mistake may rear its ugly head during search for jobs which may lead such students to doing jobs that negates their interests and aptitudes. Other factors that affect career choices as highlighted by Natalie (2006) are life context, personal abilities, natural propensity and academic achievement.

Watson, McMahan, Foxcoft & Els (2010) stated that a good number of boys have strong desire for investigative type vocation while girls aspire for social oriented type of occupations. Individuals who fail to develop convictions rooted in social interest pursue career plans that focus on power, possessions, and prestige. Rather than intrinsic goals, they pursue extrinsic signs of success. In so doing, they can achieve success, and even admiration from others, but the cost is the inner satisfaction one feels from sharing one's talents so as to enrich the community (Walsh, 2003).

According to Faleye and Adams (2008), schools encourage students to combine subjects that they identify to be in line with their abilities, aptitudes and interest. Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006) added that students who come from institutions that lack infrastructural facilities are adversely influenced due to lack of career information, resources and inadequate career counselling services. In his study of the systematic process influencing educational change in Izulu Medium School in South Africa, Ngesi (2003) found that poor economic background of undergraduates from remote areas negatively influence their abilities to choose the right course. These students wave off courses that are expensive to run and have longer years of study.

According to Maree (2009) "many learners passed through secondary school and they find it difficult to be admitted for into universities or other tertiary institution due to not receiving counselling and guidance on good subject combination while in senior secondary school. Salami (1999) found that lack of knowledge, inexperience, peer influence , parents and teachers' advice, fame associated with certain jobs without and lucrative nature of some profession were the major factors that influenced students' choice of career.

1.2 Research Questions

- 1 To what extent do parents/guardians influence the career choices of their wards?
- 2 How has academic performance/attainment influenced students' choices of career?
- 3 To what extent has the secondary school environment influenced students' choice of career?
- 4 To what extent has personal interests and aptitudes influenced students' choice of career?
- 5 To what extend has students' gender influenced their choices of career?

1.3 Research Hypothesis

- There will be no significant influence of parents/guardians, student's academic attainment/ performance, secondary school environment, personal interest, technological advancement and gender on student's choice of career

1.4 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is premised on the fact that students encounter problems in making appropriate career choices, thus, the significance of this study are that:

- 1 students begin to explore real career possibilities before securing admission into the institutions of higher learning.
- 2 Students are encouraged to make appropriate career choices freely without any undue influence
- 3 Students can begin to make subject combinations correctly
- 4 school counsellors are motivated to perform their vocational counselling services effectively.
- 5 Parents/guardians will begin to give their wards opportunity to make career choice without interference.
- 6 Awake the interest and of the government and other stakeholders in educational sector to make provision in the school for effective career planning and development.

1.5 Theories of Career Counselling

Two career choice and development theories shall be discussed in this study. These are:

- 1 Trait and factor theory by Frank Parsons (1920's) - matching personal traits to occupation.
- 2 Personality theory by Hollland (1980's) - personality types matching work with environment.

1.5.1 Trait and Factor Theory

In this theory, Parson suggested that in career choice decision making, an individual should be studied and then matched together if there is a good blend between the two of them. The key characteristics of this theory is the belief that persons are specially gifted and assigned to various jobs accordingly. Simply state, it connotes marrying a person's trait with the expectations or occupational job demands. The role of individual values in the career decision making process has been highlighted in this theory. The trait-and-factor theory emphasized the need to get verifiable information about individual and occupation through the use of psychometric test and assessment instruments for ease of matching the person and occupational demands.

1.5.2 Theory of Vocational Type

This theory was propounded by Holland who explained that a person's personality and or behavioural style influence in career choice. He went ahead by noting that occupational choice is an expression of one's make up and that those that belong to the occupational group may display the same characteristics or personality.

Holland's theory emphasized job satisfaction, which he called "congruence" and can be predicted by matching personal interest with career that gives one the opportunity to exercise their skills, abilities and attitudes. Therefore, job homogeneity provides the best way to self-fulfillment and consistent career pattern. He classified career type into six personality types namely investigative, artistic and realistic. Others are social, enterprising and conventional. From the above, the two theories presented made good references to this study and indicate that career development is a reality, a process, fostered by numerous factors and changes continuously for life. To help foster commitment to a vocational identity, career counsellors usually assist clients to learn more about their occupation abilities, vocational interest and work values.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Design

This is a survey descriptive research.

2.2 Population

Covenant University students constituted the population of interest. for the study is. A sample of 400 students was used for the study.

2.3 Sampling Techniques

Four hundred (400) students were randomly selected from four Colleges viz college of Engineering, Leadership development Studies, Business and Science and Technology. These are the four Colleges in Covenant University.

2.4 Instrumentation

The data for the study were collected using questionnaire titled "Career Choice Questionnaire which consists of 30 items on the various psycho-social determinant of students' career choice. The questionnaire has two sections. Section A contain the demographic data of the respondents while section B contained items used to measure psycho-social factors that influence career choice based on 4 likert-type scale -Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The reliability coefficient was estimated at 0.75 using Cronbach Alpha.

2.5 Procedures for Data Collection and Administration

The instruments were administered by the researchers. The completed questionnaires were collected on the spot. Of the 400 questionnaires, only 393 were properly filled and fit for statistical analysis. This constitutes 98% response rate.

2.6 Procedures for Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Independent t-test

3 RESULT

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Gender, Age, Level and College

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	198	51%
	Female	195	49%
	Total	393	100%
Age	15-17yrs	168	43%
	18-21yrs	214	54%
	22 above	11	3%
	Total	393	100%
Level	100	66	17%
	200	275	70
	300	52	13%
	Total	393	100%
College	CLDS	102	25%
	CBSS	100	25%
	CST	100	25%
	COE	91	25%
	Total	393	100%

From the table, the percentage of the respondents was 51% male and 49% female. With respect to age, participating students below the age range between 15 – 17 years constituted 43%, those between 18 - 21 years of age were 54%, while those above 21 years of age were 3%. Hence, most of the students who participated in this research were those between 18 – 21 years of age. With regard to the level of the respondents, 17% students were in 100 level, 70% were in 200 level, while 13% were in 300 level, indicating that most of the students who participated in this research were 200 level students. With respect to the colleges 27% of the respondents were from College of Leadership and Development Studies (CLDS), 25% students were from College of Business and Social Studies (CBSS), 25% from College of Science and Technology (CST), while 23% were from College of Engineering (COE). Hence, all the colleges were adequately represented.

3.1 Test of Hypothesis

There will be no significant influence of parents/guardians, student's academic attainment/ performance, secondary school environment, personal interest, technological advancement and gender on student's choice of career

Table 2: A Chi-square analysis showing influence of parents/guardians on wards choice of career. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Chi Squ	df	Sig.
Parents	393	2.42	1.05	15.153	3	0.002
Performance	393	2.49	1.023	20.608a	3	.000
Sch. Environment	393	2.13	.926	70.481a	3	.000
Interest/Aptitudes	393	3.13	.877	141.341a	3	.000

Data in Table 2 showed the influence of parents/guardians on wards' choice of career. The calculated Chi-square value of 15.15 is significant at 3 degree of freedom since the significant $P = 0.002 < 0.05$. Hence, there is a significant influence of parents/guardians on wards choice of career. Influence of student's academic attainment on choice of career shows a calculated Chi-square value ($X^2 = 20.61$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.000$). Hence, there is a significant influence of student's academic attainment/performance on choice of career. The influence of students' secondary school environment on choice of career shows a calculated Chi-square value ($X^2 = 70.48$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.000$). Based on this, there is a significant influence of students' secondary school environment on choice of career. Also indicated on table 2 is the influence of personal interest on choice of career ($X^2 = 141.34$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.000$). This result shows a significant the influence of personal interest on choice of career.

Table 3: Independent t-test of influence of gender on student's choice of career (N = 393)

Group	No of Cases	Mean	SD	df	t value	Sig.
Male Students	198	12.90	3.12	391	1.78	> .05
Female Students	195	12.43	2.67			

Data in Table 3 is showing the influence of gender on student's choice of career. The calculated t-value of 1.78 is not significant at 0.05 level of significance and 391 degree of freedom, because the calculated value is smaller than the critical value (1.96). Hence, there is no significant influence of gender on student's choice of career.

3.2 Summary of findings

The study showed significant influence of parents/guardians, student's academic attainment/performance, secondary school environment, personal interest, and technological advancement on student's choice of career. However, gender was not a significant influence on student's choice of career.

4 DISCUSSION

The study from the hypotheses found a significant influence of parents/guardians on wards choice of career. This finding aligned with the findings of Bojuwoye & Mbanjuwa (2006). The study reported that parents have significant influence on their children/wards career decisions. In the second hypotheses, there is a significant influence of students' academic attainment/performance on choice of career. This is supported by Natalie & Penny (2006) with the assertion that academic achievement and educational attainment influence students' choice of career. The third hypotheses also showed a significant influence of secondary school environment on choice of career. This agreed with Weishew & Perk (2012) who opined that the school one attends plays a good role on one's choice of career. Hypotheses four found that personal interest has a significant influence of career choice. This is in line with Kerka (2002) who sees personal interest and self-concept as one of the factors determining student's choice of career. Finally, Gender was not significant in student's choice of career. This contradicts Watson, McMahon, Foxcoft & Els (2010) findings that majority of boys aspires for investigation type occupation while girls aspire more to social type of occupation.

5 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that students career choices are influenced by numerous factor such as parents/guardians, secondary school environment, academic attainment and personal interest. Based on this, the study recommends that parents/guardians should be adequately informed on the extent they should be involved in the career choices of their wards and that secondary school teachers and school counsellors should endeavor to make the school environment conducive, informative and educative to enhance student's choice of appropriate career.

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