

# GENDER AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS

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## **Abstract**

Over the years, people have begun to drift from their fields of study to other professions. For the field of Architecture, a male-dominated field, assessing the impact of gender on career aspiration of students has become important. For this reason, a survey of architecture students was carried out to determine how their gender influenced their career aspiration. Questionnaires were administered to students from two selected schools of Architecture in South-West, Nigeria. Interviews were also carried out. It was discovered that although most of the students wished to remain in the field of architecture regardless of their genders, most of them do not want to remain forever. Their career aspirations although similar, were in different preferential orders. For the male students the order beginning from the most preferred was animation, fashion, entrepreneurship, programming, furniture design, construction, interior design, piloting, real estate, agriculture, writing/blogging, automobile design and catering while for the females the choices in similar order was interior design, entrepreneurship, writing/blogging, fashion, animation, construction, catering, real estate, agriculture, furniture design, piloting and programming.

Keywords: Architecture profession, Architecture Students, Career aspiration, Gender.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Right from an early age, children are asked about their career aspirations and their answers to this question reveal biases that are typical to their background and way of upbringing [2]. Their answers to the question also reveal the way they are trained and the gendered nature of the society they are brought up in. For instance, if a young African girl were to say to those around her that she wanted to be involved in any of the professions in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) field, she would be ridiculed by those around her and this would discourage her from pursuing her dreams [2].

According to theories on gender, roles and work, masculinity is characterised traditionally as dominance and competitiveness, while, in contrast, women select careers that have regular work hours to enable them fulfil family obligations [2]. It is also suggested that women prefer work that is predictable, subordinate and less financially productive, with low stress levels, and they do not aspire to engage in leadership and decision-making positions. The foregoing argument suggests that career choices are usually a product of one's socialisation since society's gender role socialisation determines what roles males and females should aspire to.

Race, gender, socio-economic background and a host of other factors affect the career aspiration of an individual. Traditional single-sex organizations can infuse subtle social messages regarding the stereotypic gendering of subjects such as; what subjects are appropriate for females and males, at an early stage [6]. For example, compared with the boy scouts, the girls' guide present girls with fewer science activities and their badges carry more "playful" and less "career-oriented" language.

In the field of architecture little research has been done as regards gender and career aspiration. It is in light of this that the current study is aimed at identifying the career aspiration of architecture students and how these aspirations vary with the gender of the students.

### **1.1 Career Aspiration**

The process of making a choice is complex and unique for each individual depending on cognitive factors and the social structure of the individual. In career planning programmes, career choices are tentative from the standpoint that practically every choice involves some doubts about the credibility of the chosen career and the possibility that it can be successfully carried out over a little time. The

individual's uncertainties and unknown forecast may be affected by vast imminent technological changes.

A Recent study pointed to the possibility of a progressive separation between educational and occupational expectations and thus the weakening of the relationship between both expectations [4]. Regardless of the assumed link between educational achievement and productivity, the completion of a university education does not usually guarantee a well-paying job [5]. Due to the present flexibility in the labour market university graduates are more likely to deflect to other vocations that are entirely different from their educational achievements.

## 1.2 Career Theories

Various theories have been used in explaining career aspirations and choices. These include Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise, Social cognitive career theory, Holland's theory of vocational personalities in work environment, theory of work adjustment and so on. The most relevant to this study are Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise and Holland's theory of vocational personalities in work environment.

Gottfredson assumed that career choice is a process requiring a high level of cognitive proficiency. A child's ability to organise complex occupational information is a function of chronological age progression as well as general intelligence [7]. Gottfredson's developmental stages are; orientation to size and power- at this stage the child is between the ages of 3-5 and views occupation as roles taken by adults; orientation to sex roles – at this stage the child is between the ages of 6-8 and evaluates occupations based on which is appropriate for each sex; orientation to social valuation – at this stage the child is between the ages of 9-13 and views occupation based on social class such as occupations of high prestige and those of low prestige and orientation to the internal, unique self – at this stage the child is 14 years old or older and decides on a profession base on the knowledge he or she has gathered over the years and through the developmental stages. On the other hand we have Hollands Theory of Vocational Personalities in Work Environment which postulates that vocational interest is an expression of one's personality, and that vocational interests could be divided into six typologies, which are realistic (R), investigative (I), artistic (A), social (S), enterprising (E), and conventional (C). If a person's degree of resemblance to the six-vocational personality and interest types could be assessed, then it is possible to generate a three-letter code (e.g. SIA, RIA) to summarise the persons' career interest. The first letter of the code is a person's primary interest type, which would play an important role in career choice of the individual. The two other letters denote the persons' secondary interest which play a lesser but still significant role in their choice of career [7].

The socialization model holds that men and women are expected to have different behaviours due to the fact that they are socialized to act in different ways. Men are believed to be more competent, independent objective, competitive, ambitious, dominant and self-confident than women [3]. A research article by Dr. Camilla Benbow and Dr. Julian Stanley asserted that boys are genetically better at math than are girls. Girls, they claimed, would be less frustrated if they recognized that they have limited abilities in the study of mathematics and ended their struggle to excel at it [1]. It is important to note that Dr. Camilla Benbow is a woman and that the stereotype of males being better at STEM courses is not just believed by men alone but by women also.

## 2 METHOD

The sources of data used in this research were primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained based on the analysis of the data gathered from students of architecture in Covenant University and University of Lagos, both in South-West, Nigeria. The secondary data was retrieved from articles which have already been stated in the theoretical framework of this study. Data were collected between January and March, 2016. The questionnaires were administered to random selection of students from all levels of study in the schools except 100-Level students who are believed to be unfit to participate in the research due to their lack of experience in the course. The 200-Level students were 45 in number, 26 males and 19 females, the 300-Level students were 62, 36 males and 26 females, the 400-Level students were 66, 47 males and 19 females, the MSc 1 students were 27, 18 males and 9 females and the MSc 2 students were 12, 11 males and 1 female. In total, there were 212 respondents, 138 males and 74 females.

Data acquired from the questionnaires on the personal profiles and performances of the students were analysed using frequencies and mean scores. To identify the design process that the students

adopted, frequency and cross-tabulation analysis were also carried out using the statistical package for social scientists (SPSS). Regression analysis was also carried out to investigate the influence of the design process on the performances of the students.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65.1
	Female	34.9
Age group	16-20 years	61.3
	21-25 years	34.0
	26-30 years	4.7
Year of study	200	21.2
	300	29.2
	400	31.1
	MSc 1	12.7
	MSc 2	5.7
Choosing architecture as a course of study	Very difficult	2.8
	Difficult	9.9
	Neither easy nor difficult	41.0
	Easy	33.0
	Very easy	13.2

Table 2: Factors that influence choice of architecture as a course of study

Factors	Male			Female		
	N	Mean	Ranking	N	Mean	Ranking
Level of personal interest in architecture influence	138	4.2029	1	74	4.4324	1
Level of aptitude for architecture influence	138	3.8841	2	74	4.1622	2
Level of SSCE qualification influence	138	3.3623	3	74	3.3919	3
Level of influence of peers, parents, relatives and society	138	2.8623	4	74	2.8514	5
Level of mentors' influence	138	2.8261	5	74	2.9054	4
Level of ability to pay fees influence	138	2.4710	6	74	2.1216	6
Level of expectation to inherit a practise influence	138	1.6957	7	74	1.5811	7

The factors that most influenced the choice of course both for males and females was the level of personal interest in architecture while the least influential factor in choice of course both for males and females was the level of expectation to inherit a practise.

Table 3: Most likely career path

Career path	Male		Female	
	(%)	Ranking	(%)	Ranking
Architectural design firm	34.8	1	31.1	1
I am undecided	18.1	2	17.6	3
Construction	11.6	3	8.1	5
Landscape design	8.0	4	9.5	4
Others	8.0	4	2.7	7
Fields totally unrelated to architecture	7.2	5	4.1	6
Interior design	7.2	5	24.3	2
Teaching architecture	3.6	6	1.4	8
Component production factory i.e doors, roofing sheet etc	1.4	7	1.4	8

The most likely career path for both male and female was architectural design firm while the least likely career path was component production factory but for the females teaching architecture was also among the least likely career path.

Table 4: Factors that influence choice of career path

Factors	Male			Female		
	N	Mean	Ranking	N	Mean	Ranking
Influence of interest	138	4.3406	1	74	4.5946	1
Influence of tendency to give feeling of achievement	138	4.3261	2	74	4.5270	3
Influence of opportunity to apply skills and knowledge	138	4.3116	3	74	4.4865	6
Influence of fulfilling your potentials	138	4.2899	4	74	4.5405	2
Influence of passion for the career	138	4.2391	5	74	4.4865	6
Influence of potential of independence	138	4.2029	6	74	4.3378	8
Influence of self-employment opportunity	138	4.1884	7	74	4.4324	7
Influence of good future earning potentials	138	4.1739	8	74	4.5000	5
Influence of good career opportunities	138	4.1232	9	74	4.4865	6
Influence of possibility of job satisfaction	138	4.0942	10	74	4.5135	4
Influence of contribution to the society	138	4.0725	11	74	4.2703	9
Influence of ability to choose career specialisation	138	4.0145	12	74	4.1622	
Influence of possibility of having flexible working hours	138	4.0145	12	74	4.2568	10
Influence of learning experiences in the study of architecture	138	3.9420	13	74	4.0946	13
Influence of prospect for employment	138	3.8696	14	74	4.2568	10
Influence of job security	138	3.8333	15	74	4.2027	11
Influence of prestige/ social status	138	3.8043	16	74	3.9189	16
Influence of possibility of variety of tasks	138	3.7899	17	74	3.9865	15
Influence of good graduate salary level	138	3.7609	18	74	4.0811	14
Influence of job availability	138	3.7319	19	74	4.1892	12
Influence of standard hours of work	138	3.6087	20	74	3.8514	18
Influence of grades in architecture school	138	3.2464	21	74	3.8784	17

The most influential factor in choice of career path both for males and females was interest while the least influential factor in the choice of career path for males was the influence of grades in architectural school while for females it was the influence of standard hours of work.

Table 5: Most liked characteristics about your future profession

Characteristics	Male		Female	
	(%)	Ranking	(%)	Ranking
Versatility	44.9	1	48.6	1
Income	16.7	2	10.8	4
Tasks to be undertaken	13.8	3	14.9	3
Continuous training	10.9	4	17.6	2
High demand	8.7	5	1.4	6
Others	5.1	6	6.8	5

The most liked characteristics about future profession for both male and females is the versatility.

Table 6: Least liked characteristics about your future profession

Characteristics	Male		Female	
	(%)	Ranking	(%)	Ranking
Timetable	33.3	1	29.7	2
Competitiveness	27.5	2	31.1	1
High specialization	13.8	3	16.2	3
Low demand	13.0	4	16.2	3
Others	12.3	5	6.8	4

From the analysis, it shows that the least liked characteristics about future profession for males is the timetable while for females it is the competitiveness.

Table 7: Career plan on completion of degree

Career plan	Male		Female	
	(%)	Ranking	(%)	Ranking
Remain in architecture	29.0	1	24.3	1
Animation	10.1	2	5.4	6
Fashion	9.4	3	6.8	5
Entrepreneurship	9.4	3	14.9	3
Programming	8.0	4	1.4	9
Furniture design	8.0	4	2.7	8
Construction	8.0	4	5.4	6
Interior design	6.5	5	16.2	2
Piloting	3.6	6	1.4	9
Real estate	3.6	6	2.7	8
Agriculture	1.4	7	2.7	8
Writing/Blogging	1.4	7	12.2	4
Automobile design	.7	8	0	10
Catering	.7	8	4.1	7

The career path on completion of degree for most males and females was to remain in architecture while the least career paths for males was automobile design and catering, while for females its was programming and piloting.

#### 4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aim of this research was to assess and document the various career aspirations of already enrolled architecture students in south-western Nigeria and the effects of their gender on their various aspirations. From the research, it was discovered that most architecture students across both genders were well satisfied with their choice of architecture as a course of study and would like to remain in the field of architecture. Their career aspirations however, varied by gender. For the male students, the career aspiration beginning from the most preferred was for; animation, fashion, entrepreneurship, programming, furniture design, construction, interior design, piloting, real estate, agriculture, writing/blogging, automobile design and catering while for the females the order differed. In similar order, their career aspirations were interior design, entrepreneurship, writing/blogging, fashion, animation, construction, catering, real estate, agriculture, furniture design, piloting and programming.

From the results of this study it was seen that gender played a significant role in the order of the career preferences of the students. This was attributed to the fact that gender roles make more aspects of architecture more attractive to females than others and also because there were inadequate female role models in the areas chosen by the males to attract the females. It is thus vital to have more female role models and tutors who should be encouraged to actively join the profession to encourage female learners and further help bridge the gap. Also, more specialized design related fields should be added to schools of environmental sciences such as; interior design, furniture design and so on to encourage those who do not want to remain in the field of Architecture but can thrive in other design related fields. Finally, females who aspire for careers traditionally regarded as male-dominated like architecture and are adequately talented should be empowered and encouraged by teachers, parents and siblings to pursue their desires.

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