

# FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF NURSING AS A CAREER AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OREDO AND OVIA NORTH – EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF EDO STATE

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## Abstract

*This is a research on the factors that influence the choice of nursing among secondary school students in Oredo and Ovia North East Local Government Areas of Edo State. The aim was to assess factors associated with the choice of nursing as a career among secondary school students, to assess the perception of nursing being a lucrative job among secondary school students and to assess the difference between male and female students' perception of nursing. The target population was all the secondary school students (S.S.S. III). A descriptive survey research design was used. Simple random sampling was used to select 6 secondary schools in Oredo and Ovia North-East for the study. The total population was 4,021 students. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select 976 SSS III students from the selected schools for the study. A researcher developed questionnaire of 5-point Likert scale with a reliability of 0.90 was used for data collection. Results were presented in tables as percentages and means. Findings showed that several factors influenced the choice of Nursing. The highest influence was that the salary scale for nurses is attractive (mean=4.1). Nursing was also seen as a prestigious profession (mean=4.0) and the least influential factor was peer group in which friends say my attributes can make a good Nurse (mean=2.2). The basic perception of respondents regarding enrollment of males and females into nursing profession is because people expect nurses to be female (mean=3.75). The decision of choosing nursing as a career does not only depend on one single factor rather it involves the combination and interaction of several factors such as personal, economic, environmental societal parental or peer group factors. It is therefore recommended that the media should present nursing as a gender neutral profession. Career counselors in secondary schools should clearly explain the career opportunities of nursing profession.*

## Introduction

The choice of any vocation is based on some motivating factors which an individual considers to be crucial to his/her satisfaction and performance on a job. The person may be motivated by extrinsic factors such as parents, teachers, counselors, high salary, societal influence, environmental pressure and mass media. Career choice is one of the critical decisions adolescents are expected to make as effective choice will have positive impact on their self concept development and fulfillment in life.

It is unfortunate to notice that many inappropriate career choices have been made by school-age adolescents because of ignorance on their part on one hand and that of their parents on the other hand. Some parents tend to have fixed ideas on the vocation their children should choose irrespective of the child's interest and other

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capacities. Such wrong choices whether due to parental pressure or some other considerations have drawn some youths into untold psychological problems, some of which have marred their future prospects.

The choice of a career in school is one of the most difficult decisions in a person's life. Anastasi and Urbina (2013) observe that few areas of life are as important to people as their occupation, not only because of much time spent at work but also work which can provide opportunity for many intrinsic and extrinsic factors. To collaborate this, Denga (2011) notes that vocational choice involves a person's total life because it determines his/her income, choice of friends, pattern of life, dress sense, influence in the society and often times, the amount of risk an individual is exposed to. Nursing education in Nigeria is provided by both tertiary and hospital- based (health care) educational institutions. Secondary school leavers can enroll in both tertiary and hospital- based educational institutions with same O'level qualification with a minimum of five credit pass in English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

In an earlier study, Ikeotuonye (2007) has stressed that a person admitted into the Nursing training programme must have the greatest potential for effective nursing. These potentials according to the author derive not only from cognitive but also from the affective and psychomotor behaviours. Thus any force motivating the choice of nursing career must not just be external but must include intrinsic factors especially the possession of the required traits which play a dominant role in the career-decision making. Ikeotuonye (2007) notes with dismay a situation where decision making for admission or rejection of applicants into nursing training programmes in many states of the Nigeria federation, has been based on possession of secondary school certificate or its equivalent other prerequisite include entrance examination scores, interviews and other intellectual variables. Career choice is an opportunity or a decision one makes in an area of life for example Nursing, Medicine, Law and others. Making a good career choice is actually much more than choosing a job. It is about choosing something that will provide one with a lifestyle you seeks. A couple of developments such as proliferation of university nursing education programme and the enhanced practice have been able to encourage young ones to develop interest in Nursing.

This study was borne out of the researchers interactions with some student nurses about their choice of nursing as a career. Some of the students explain that they chose the profession because of the monetary gain while others said it was because they had not gained admission into studying medicine. Few of the students also inform that they chose nursing because they love to care for the sick. This prompted the researchers to want to know the factors influencing the choice of nursing as a career among selected secondary schools in Oredo and Ovia North-East Local Government Area. To find answer to the factors that influence the choice of nursing as a career the following research question were raised.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that influence choice of nursing as a career among secondary school students?
2. What is the perception of respondents regarding the enrollment of males and females into the nursing profession?
3. How does gender influence the choice of nursing as a career?

## **Theoretical Framework**

A number of theories have been propounded to explain career choice by different theorists. These theories try to explain why individuals choose certain careers in life and the factors influencing such decisions. It is through the process of career development that an individual fashions out a work identity. One of these theories which underlie this study is reviewed:

### **John Holland's Theory of Career Choice**

According to John Holland's (1985) theory, there are six types of vocational personality which could make individuals better predisposed to certain occupations. The six vocational personalities include:

**Realistic:** Outdoor Type. These people tend to like and be good at activities that require strength and coordination. They are not keen on socializing. They also like working with (tools, machines etc). Examples of such jobs include farming, truck driving, carpentry and others.

**Investigative:** These are individuals who are interested in logic and concept. These people tend to enjoy and be good at abstract thought. They are often interested in science. They also like working with information (abstract ideas and theories). Examples of such jobs include nursing, chemists, statistics (Mathematicians), pharmacy (Pharmacists), dentistry (Dentists) and others.

**Artistic:** These ones tend to their imagination a lot. They like to express their feelings and ideas. Dislike rules and regulations as well as enjoy music, drama and art. They also like creating things. Examples of suitable jobs include art works, acting, dancing, fashion designing, composing, and painting and others.

**Social:** These personalities enjoy the company of other people especially to help them. They tend to be warm and caring people. Examples of these suitable jobs include nursing, librarian, counselling, physiotherapy etc.

**Enterprising:** These personalities also enjoy the company of other people, but mainly do this to dominate or persuade rather than help them. They like to enjoy actions more than thought. They also like to be the leaders. Examples of these suitable jobs include marketing and advertising, school administration (headmaster), law, management, journalism and others.

**Conventional:** These individuals like rules and regulations, structure and order. These people tend to be well organized with little or no imagination. Examples of these suitable jobs include nursing, secretarial jobs, clerical works, factory supervisors (worker) and others.

Holland's fundamental underlying hypothesis is that people will have the most job satisfaction in occupations that match their personality type and so tend to choose a career that is reflective of their personality. In the words of John Holland "people can function and develop best and find job satisfaction in work environments that are compatible with their personalities", Thus, this theory is based on what Holland (1985) calls "model personal orientation" or a "developmental process" established through

heredity and an individual's life history of reacting to environmental demands. More simply put, individuals are attracted to a particular occupation that meets their personal needs and provides them satisfaction.

The relevance of this theory to this study derives from the fact that nursing is stereotyped as having the traits of nurturing, caring, dependence and submission. These traits are common with the females which contrast with the perceived male traits of strength, dominance, leadership, pride, ego, honour, authority and aggression. Choice of nursing as a career depends on the interaction of so many factors which may affect an individual in a setting called environment. These factors as examined in this study include the personal, social/environmental, economic, job-related and career-related which in one way or the other affect an individual's aspiration to choose a particular career. According to Holland's theory, all these factors are within the environment in which man resides and this is what Holland terms the modal environment which interacts with the vocational personality making the individual better predisposed to certain occupations.

### **Empirical Review**

Kochung and Migunde (2011) conducted a study on the factors influencing students' career choices among secondary school students. The study was carried out in Maseno University, Kenya. Finding showed that a high number of students 47.3% strongly agreed that availability of jobs influenced their career choice, 23.3% agree while 11.7% were neutral, 8.7% disagreed and 8.1% strongly disagreed. It was further discovered that availability of advancement opportunities in the careers chosen was also an influential factor as 42.9% strongly agreed and 34.4% agreed, less than 10% disagreed that their career choice was not influenced by availability of advancement opportunity. Another factor that was also found to influence career choices was employment security. Report showed that more than 50% were in agreement, however a large number were neutral while 20% reportedly had the highest number of neutral respondents. Ability to choose career specialization within a given occupation was also considered influential with 35.6% strongly agreeing and 29.1% agreeing while more than 60% of the respondents reported that their career choice was influenced by their ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned. Only 12.8% did not consider this as an influential factor. The researchers concluded that students' career choices are influenced by numerous factors including outcome expectancies, individual variants such as gender, personal interests, learning experiences, environmental factors and personal factors.

In another study by Stebleton (2007) on career choice, conducted in Ethiopia, it was revealed that students had external locus of control and believe that there are numerous external factors which influence their career choices. These external factors include; political and economic considerations, previous work experience and the influence of key individuals in a person's life. The researcher concluded that economic reasons have the most influential factors when it comes to career choice. A study by Natalie (2016) on factors influencing career choice of adolescents and young adults in rural Pennsylvania and published reported that young adults through interaction with the context of the family, school and community learn about and explore careers which ultimately lead to their career choice.

In a study on adolescents' perception and choice of nursing as a career in selected senior secondary schools in Jos 2011, Nigeria to determine factors that may

influence their choice and perception, the study revealed that 83.33% were of females and 16.67% were males who chose nursing as a career while 80% made their career choice willingly, 7.50% were influenced by role models. In addition, 91.25% of respondents revealed that nurses are respected and valued while 2.5% and 6.25% of respondents disagreed and were undecided respectively

In yet another study by Wilson (2005) on the experience of males entering nursing, a phenomenological analysis of professionally enhancing factors and barriers carried out at an Australian Regional University, it was found out that males in nursing have low self confidence and no career satisfaction. The findings also proved that lack of male in nursing profession was as a result of inherent belief in the naturalism of women as nurses, poor working condition, low pay and inability of males to shake off the low reputation men have in nursing.

In a study conducted by O'lynn (2014) on gender-based barriers for male students in nursing education programme: prevalence and perceived importance in Montana State University Bozeman College of Nursing established that nursing education as a whole has failed to provide an environment optimally conducive to attracting and retaining males as students and thus preparing men for nursing profession.

Africa countries recorded similar results from similar studies. In a study carried out by Kwesi (2016) on males in nursing profession in Ghana, indicated in its findings that an average of 4.21 % of registered nurses in five Ghanaian Schools of Nursing from 1900 to 2002 were males, 3.92 % were males in Libya and 4.8% males in Egypt in the same period.

## **Methodology**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate for this study because it allowed for description of the phenomenon as they existed in their natural setting at the time of the research. The population of this study consisted of all the senior secondary school students (SSSIII) in public secondary schools in Oredo and Ovia North- East Local Government Areas of Edo State. The choice of public secondary schools was based on the fact that they had homogenous regulations governing them than schools owned by religious and private bodies (individuals). The choice of SSS III students was also based on the fact that they were at the point of decision-making for career choice. Statistics gotten from the Ministry of Education (2017) at Oredo Local Government Area had 12 public schools with a total number of 2737 SSS III students while Ovia North – east had 26 public secondary schools with a total of 1284 SSS III students thus the study population was 4021. A sample of 400 SSS III students which was a representative of the target population was obtained from the Six (6) randomly selected public secondary schools in Oredo and Ovia North – East local government areas. The schools were selected from each of the Local Government Area using a simple random sampling technique without replacement. The total number of the students selected from each school was formed the sample for the study. Data were collected using a questionnaire developed by the researchers. Questions generated were guided by the objectives set for the study. The instrument had two sections. Section A comprised two (2) items on demographic characteristics which attempted to elicit information on the age and gender of the respondents while section B was made up of 11 items which attempted to answer the research questions. Ten items were scored on a five point modified Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) while 1 item is a

direct yes or no question. Pilot study was carried out with similar background of the target population. The instrument was administered once to 40 SSS III Science students representing 10% of the sample. Data generated from pilot study were computed, split-half method was employed and Cronbach’s Alpha was used to establish the consistency reliability coefficient of 0.827

**Method of Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed item by item to indicate the mean of each item on a 5 point modified likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5). The critical mean score will be 2.5. Therefore a mean score of any item from 2.5 and above was considered as an important influencing factor while a mean score below 2.5 of any item was considered as less important influencing factor. The result of the analysis was extracted and presented in tables below.

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors that influence the choice of Nursing Career?

**Table 1:** Respondents’ distribution of source of career influence

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Parent	3.3	4
Personal	4.0	2
Economic/Financial	4.1	1
Peers/ Friends	2.2	5
Society/Environment	3.8	3

Five (5) items were generated to answer this research question which were subjected to descriptive analysis using means. Data were analyzed item by item and the mean scores from each item was presented on table 2. The mean score ranged from 2.2 to 4.1. The higher the mean score, the weightier the item as a factor. The result revealed that the most influential factor in the career choice of nursing was the third item which stated that “ The salary scale for nurses is attractive” ( mean = 4.1 ) followed by the stated item “ Nursing is a prestigious profession” ( mean = 4.0 ). The least influential factor is the peer/friends group influence “ Friends say my attribute can make a good nurse” (mean = 2.2 )

**Research Question 2:** What is the perception of respondents regarding the enrollment of males and females into the nursing profession?

**Table 2:** Respondents perception of enrollment of males and females into the nursing profession

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Nursing traditionally has been viewed as a female profession	3.28	3
Male nurses feel inferior	2.10	5
Female nurses feel more confident practicing the profession	2.65	4
Tender care is expected from female nurses	3.56	2
People expect nurses to be female	3.75	1

Five (5) items were generated to answer this research question. The data was analyzed item by item by the means and were presented on table 2. The most dominant perception of male and female students towards the nursing profession revealed that “People expect nurses to be females” (mean = 3.75 ) and “Tender care is expected from female nurses” ( mean = 3.56 ). The least dominant perspective of students reveals that “ Male nurses feel inferior” ( mean=2.1) and “Female nurses feel more confident practicing the profession” (mean=2.65)

**Research Question 3:** How does gender influence the choice of nursing career?

**Table 3:** Gender distribution of respondents who would like to consider nursing as a career

Sex	Frequency	%
Male	377	68.5
Female	388	94.6

The result on table 3 revealed that a lesser percentage of males when compared with females will choose nursing as a career ( 68.5% of males and 94.6% of females) while 31.5% male and 5.4% female will not choose nursing as a career.

**Discussion of Findings**

The result as shown on table 2 indicates that a high number of students were influenced to choose nursing because of the economic effect. Salary scale for nurses is attractive” (mean=4.1) and personal influence “nursing is a prestigious profession” (mean=4.0) then other factors such as the environment (society )“society sees nursing as a noble profession” (mean=3.8) parental influence “my parents wants me to be a nurse (mean=3.3) and lastly, peer influence “friends say that my attributes can make a good nurse” (mean =2.2). This is in agreement with Dlamini (2014) and Stebleton (2007) who reported that economic reasons was the most influential factor when it comes to career choice.

Further findings revealed that people expect nurses to be female (mean=3.75), another important findings is that “tender care is expected from female nurses” (mean=3.5). This insinuates that sex of an individual is considered important in practicing nursing from the perception of the society. Thus is in line with the study of Ogunyewo, Afemikhe, Ajio and Olaniesi (2014) where an appreciable number (47.5%) who agreed that “Nursing is a Feminine profession”. Ozdemir, Akansel & Tunk (2008) were also is in support that the gender of an individual constitutes a barrier in career decision making. Price (2011) established that students’ pre-entry perceptions of nursing are affected by the stereotypical portrayal of nursing in a popular culture.

Another finding that was considered to be important in influencing career choice among students was gender. Findings reveal that 377 (68.5%) males and 388 (94.6%) females would consider nursing as a career. This is in line with Kochung and Migunde (2011) who revealed in a study that most respondents did not consider gender as an influential factor in their career choices. However, 49.2% disagreed that gender did not influence their career choice. This is in disagreement with Knight, Abdallah, Findeisen, Devereaux and Dowling (2011) who found in their study that the choice of career was often based on gender stereotyping instead of awareness of the opportunities in the field of career.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made: The choice of nursing as a career does not solely depend on one single factor. It involves a combination of factors and the interaction of all the factors. Economic factor/ financial benefit were the most influential factor as well as personal interest. Students' interaction with family members on career choices or options are most important than the advice gotten from peers. Respondents' perception regarding enrollment into nursing profession revealed that people expect nurses to be females more and so gender plays significant role in career choice decision making in nursing.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be educational/career enlightenment programmes on the importance of nursing profession to the public. This may help to improve the status of the profession.
2. The media should present nursing as a gender neutral profession via strategies such as pictorial representation of male as nurses.

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