

ASSESSMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AND CAREER CHOICE OF STUDENTS IN ECONOMICS IN FCT ABUJA, NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLORS AND POLICY MAKERS

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Abstract

This study assessed the relationship between psychological factors and career choice of senior secondary school students in Economics in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. The study employed correlational survey research design. The population for the study were 3567 Economics students in the six areas council in FCT. Multistage sampling techniques was used to sampled two areas council with 385 Economics students. Questionnaire on Psychological Factors and Students Career Choice in Economics (PFCCE) was used for data collection. A PFCCE consist of the personal information of the respondents while section B consists of 15 items each to measure psychological factors and 5 items are to measure career choice in Economics. Hence responses are in five scale using Strongly Agree (SA), 4 Agree (A), 3 Undecided (U), Disagree (D) 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1. The cut-off point considered as agreement for the responses is 2.5. While anything below 2.50 signifies disagreement. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the formulated hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. This was considered appropriate for this study because it is a parametric statistic for treating data. Data generated for the study were analyzed on the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Findings from the study revealed that there is relationship between psychological factors and career choice of senior secondary school students in Economics in FCT. It was recommended among other that students considering to make career choice decisions should carefully evaluate available career opportunities against their interests and attitude.

Keywords: Interest, attitude and career choice

Introduction

In this 21st century, career indecision has become a major concern of career psychologists, practitioners, researchers, and educators. The inability to make career related decisions is a common occurrence for the students. Career choice is a complex decision for students, since it determines the kind of profession that they intend to pursue in life. As students try to make career choice while in secondary school, they face problems of attaching their career choice with their abilities and school academic performance in the selected subjects they offer. Intellectual ability, personality and interest do not always match abilities. The choice for profession cannot be made based on interest alone. The abilities and personality are important in making a career choice. Experience gained in a variety of work place situations will help students to prepare for transition to a work environment, or to post-primary school. Alutu (2011) observes that career development and choice should be initiated as early as the nursery school years through the primary, secondary and to the tertiary school level. It is against this background.

Ajaero (2010), observes that many secondary schools now offer a career week to address personal career development issues which is a continuation of the career day. One or two days of the week is dedicated to introducing seniors to career options by seasoned professionals in the community. The rest of the career week is dedicated to assessments much like those offered by personal career development coaches. Furthermore, personal career development assessments allow secondary school students to explore their interests, values, strengths, and weaknesses. Once the secondary school students have completed the personal career development assessments and explored career options, each secondary school student ought to engage in a personal career development interview with a secondary school counsellor or personal career development coach.

Career education is the series of educational experiences given to the child from cradle to the age of an adult where the child can make career decision. As the child goes through educational system, the child will acquire series of skills that will help the child to make various choices and decisions for career development. The students' personality traits, intellectual capabilities and interests are exposed to various occupations available in the society. The educational information available at each stage of development helps the child to make career choice at the end of the process. It is also necessary to note that the career development of children is influenced by the policy and economy situation of the country of the child. For the policy, at 21st century, any job opportunity emphasizes not above 25-30 years. Since the area of specialization at the work place is needed, choosing a career is not an easy and straight forward undertaking. It is a complicated and daunting task because the decision is influenced by various factors – extrinsic, intrinsic or a combination of both (Hewitt, 2010). Studies have shown that the main intrinsic factors responsible for influencing career choice decisions include an individual's personality, interests, self-concept, attitudes and cultural identity. On the other hand, the main extrinsic factors include social contacts, role models; availability of resources such as information and finances, globalization, ethnic background, level of educational attainment, choice of subjects of study

The democratic society enjoys freedom of choice in occupational development and adjustment, but Nigerian has made nonsense of this free choice. You hear parents tell their children the course and subjects they take in school certificate examination, JAMB or poly

jamb, etc. In fact, parents assign occupations among their children and they are excited answering 'mama lawyer, or papa doctor'.

In some part of the countries, there are no jobs while some other parts employed people on contract basis. In fact, people are moving into occupations that are available irrespective of the necessary conditions that make for job satisfaction. The children may have the ability but not the interest or aptitude for that particular job, for instance an engineer teaching mathematics in secondary school. Thus, the Nigeria child who must have prepared and planned for career in his/her own area of choice may have problem securing job in that particular field. Nigeria children have problem of dependency and by custom, children are tied to the apron string of the elders or parents. Students therefore depend on parents or elders for decision making in almost every area of their lives. The problem of finance cannot be overemphasized. Parents are aware of gains of education but poverty has made some of them not to allow their children attend great heights academically. For instance, some professions are very expensive and children from very poor homes rarely turn their eyes in such professions even though they might have the ability, capacity and interest.

Students' academic performance in Economics refers to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies (Scottt, 2012). Ward, Stocker and Murray-Ward (2006) opined that academic performance refers to the outcome of education; the extent to which the students, teachers or institutions have achieved their educational goals. Academic performance is also the cognitive ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate one's knowledge verbally or written on paper. In the context of this study, students' academic performance refers to the extent to which students have achieved mastery of the objectives of the Economics they are exposed to in school. Grades are the most well-known indicator of academic performance. Grades are the student's "score" for their classes and overall tenure. Grades are most often a tallying or average of assignment and test scores and may often be affected by many factors.

Factors affecting academic performance of students in Economics vary and are unclear academic performance is affected either by social, psychological, economic, environmental or personal factors. Any of these factors may have a powerful influence on academic performance of students either positively or negatively, but this vary from one society to another. The factors may include negative attitudes of students towards chemistry, methodology used by teachers, students' inability to manage their time, peers influence, family factors and the likes (Oginni, Alaka & Saibu, 2013; Igboanugu, 2015).

There is a general common problem now among our secondary school students that is the problem of waiting for their West Africa School Certificate results to help them make a choice of career. Instead of students choosing subjects that will lead to specific careers, they rather wait for the result to help them choose. This is a very serious challenge which counselor must tackle. The counselors must let the teachers know that they should relate their subjects to careers as they teach these students. They should know that career development is a life time process and not on the spot decision. This will help the students to know the subjects they must take that will lead them to specific careers.

Kimongo, Nyaga and Benard (2016) found out that there is a relationship between personality types, and career choice. Most of the students were satisfied with the course they selected before entering the university which indicates that suitable career choice for students would improve satisfaction and success in their course of study and future

employment. But on the other side, when students make changes in their course section it indicated that the choices of subject selection did not go in line with their future career choices. Adamu (2013) found a remarkable gender difference in occupational choice of students. Males were found to have preferred courses in social, science, persuasive and artistic while females favored courses in social, clerical and science. Nworah (1997) found out that boys preferred professional courses like Law, Medicine and Geology. 98% of the girls preferred people-oriented courses such as Banking, Broadcasting and Teaching. Those students chose careers without considering the factors that influenced career choice such as interest, intellectual ability, personality of the individual and aptitudes.

Research by Newman, Lohman, Newman, Myers, and Smith (2000) found out that students with learning disabilities were more likely to have lower GPAs. These students also had poorer decision-making and problem solving skills and were less likely to have participated in work/volunteer activities. These students may not have confidence in themselves and may not have been taught or had the opportunities to practice and improve these skills. When students are living in impoverished environments, there may be less time to contemplate what will happen in the future. Abdul (2016) found that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and career choice.

Ngozi, Attah, Nwoji, Ugwuanyi Okeke and Uchechukwu (2020) found out there is a significant relationship between attitude and students' academic performance in chemistry, there is a significant relationship between motivation and students' academic performance in chemistry and that there is a significant relationship between self-regulation and students' performance in chemistry. There are many factors that can influence career choice of students. Among them are intellectual abilities, aptitudes, family, schooling, personality, sex differences, interest, etc. These factors affect the individual in making career choices and preferences, preparing for vocational entering into it and progressing in it. It is therefore important that vocational counselors become aware of them as they affect the ability of the individual to show competence as a worker. The system of education in Nigeria has failed abysmally to launch the nation to technologically advancement as envisioned by the Education policy makers.

Many Nigeria students leaving secondary schools have neither the awareness of the diversity of occupation available nor the one to develop interest in. In most of these schools, there are insufficient counsellors to assist the students make appropriate career choice based on their intellectual ability, personality, self-concept and interest. This is because self-concept has been proved to affect occupational maturity, occupational aspiration and motivation. When learners lack interest, they may not cope with the courses they wish to read. In Nigeria, many inappropriate career choices are being made because of ignorance and illiteracy of parents. They have a fixed idea of the vocation that their children should follow irrespective of the child's intelligence, interest and other capabilities. Innumerable instances can be cited of poor choice of courses in relation to the student's ability combined with high ambition. Thus, sometimes, high intellectual ability coupled with low level of aspiration creates equally serious problems. Wrong choices have led to a great number of youths into untold psychological problems arising from series of academic failure or absence of job satisfaction for those in employment already. Abilities and interest for making vocation of choice change with time, especially in the contemporary societies. This study therefore focused on relationship between psychological factors and career choice of senior

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between attitude of students and career choice of senior secondary schools in Economics in FCT, Abuja?
2. What is the relationship between interest and career choice of senior secondary school students in Economics in FCT, Abuja?

Objectives

1. Establish the relationship between attitude of students and career choice of senior secondary students in Economics in FCT, Abuja
2. Determine the relationship between interest and career choice of senior secondary school students in Economics in FCT, Abuja.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between student's attitude and career choice of student in senior secondary schools in Economics in FCT, Abuja
2. There is no significant relationship between interest and career choice of students in senior secondary schools in Economics in FCT, Abuja

Research Method

This study employed correlational survey research design. The population for this study is 3567 students in the six areas council in FCT. Multistage sampling techniques were used to sample two areas council with 385 Economics students. Questionnaire on Psychological Factors and Students Career Choice in Economics (PFCCE) was used as an instrument for data collection. A PFCCE consists of the personal information of the respondents while section B consists of 15 items each to measure psychological factors and 5 items are to measure career choice in Economics. Hence responses are in five (5) scale using Strongly Agree (SA), 4 Agree (A), 3 Undecided (U), Disagree (D) 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1. The cut-off point considered as agreement for the responses is 2.5. While anything below 2.50 signifies disagreement. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test formulated hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. This was considered appropriate for this study because it is a parametric statistic for treating data. Data generated for the study were analyzed on the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between attitude of students and career choice of senior secondary schools in Economics in FCT, Abuja?

Table 1

Relationship between attitude of students and career choice in Economics

Variables	Mean	SD
Attitude	2.63	1.14

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the relationship between attitude of students and career choice in Economics in FCT, Abuja. It is evident that the variable with highest mean is attitude represented by 2.63 with the standard deviation of 1.14. Respondents from career choice have the mean of 2.36 with the standard deviation of 1.02. In the same vein, the implication of the finding is that all the variables that were used for the study have responses above the scale mean of 2.50 on the relationship between attitude of students and career choice of senior secondary schools in Economics. This is an indication of a generally positive school career choice in Economics.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between interest and career choice of senior secondary school students in Economics in FCT, Abuja?

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation of interest and career choice in Economics

Variables	Mean	SD
Interest	2.57	1.16
Career Choice	2.69	1.34

Scale Mean = 2.50

Table 2 shows that the variable with highest mean is career choice represented by 2.69 with the standard deviation of 1.34. Respondents from interest have the mean of 2.57 and the standard deviation of 1.16. In the same vein, the implication of the finding is that all the variables that were used for the study have responses above the scale mean of 2.50 on the relationship between personality and career choice of senior secondary schools. This is an indication of a generally positive of students' career choice in Economics.

Testing of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between student's attitude and career choice of student in senior secondary schools in Economics in FCT, Abuja.

Table 3
Relationship between student's interest and career choice in Economics

Variables	Co-efficient	t-value	Standard Error	R	R ²	R ² Adjustment	F ratio	Significance
Interest	1.2423	6.700	0.026	0.686	0.640	0.622	21.604	0.00
Career Choice	3.413	5.903						

Table 3 shows majority of the respondents agreed that student's interest brings about career choice of student in senior secondary schools. The result reveals a good degree of

dependency of the relationship between student's interest and career choice of student in senior secondary schools. The coefficient of determination (r^2) which is the proportion of the total variations in student's interest and career choice of student in senior secondary schools explained by the students' interest shows an average performance score of 0.640 in career choice of student. The adjusted r squared ($r-2$) which shows the actual variations in student's interest to the variations in career choice of student in Economics reveals the actual variation 0.622 as against the 0.640 suggested by r^2 .

Hypotheses 2

There is no significant relationship between interest and career choice of students in senior secondary schools in Economics in FCT, Abuja

Table 4

Significant relationship between interest and career choice of students								
Variables	Co-efficient	t-value	Standard Error	R	R²	R² Adjustment	F Ratio	Sign
Interest	8.312	6.430	0.014	0.686	0.690	0.678	19.04	0.000
Career choice	2.016	5.868						

Table 4 shows the relationship between personality and career choice of students in senior secondary schools. The coefficient of determination (r^2) 0.678 obtained from the results indicates an average relationship between the two variables. The regression explains 0.69 of the total variation of personality as explained by the career choice of students in senior secondary schools. The relationship is significant, given the value of the coefficient of determination and the t-statistics of 5.868. This implies that a large proportion of the total improvement in personality is attributed to provision of career choice of students in senior secondary schools, which is major quality of successful career choice of students in senior secondary schools. It does not, however, explain the sufficiency of the personality compared to career choice of students in senior secondary schools.

The standard error of 0.014 suggests that the independent variable (students' personality) is significant in explaining the variation in career choice. The t test of significance (5.868) shows that the existing relationship between students' personality and career choice is a true reflection each other. The F statistic which shows the overall significance of the model and goodness of fit of model shows that the model has a good fit because the calculated F-ratio of 19.04 is greater than the table value of 3.92 at 5% level of significance. The study shows that there was significant relationship between students' interest and career choice of students in senior secondary schools.

Discussion of Findings

First finding of the study shows that there was significant relationship between students' attitude and career choice of Economics student in senior secondary schools in FCT, Nigeria. This finding agrees with Bellamy (1997) who found that there were significant differences in career aspirations and expectations. This finding agreed with work of Kimongo, Nyaga and Benard (2016) who found out that there is a relationship between personality types, and career choice. The finding also agreed with work of Ngozi, Attah, Nwoji, Ugwuanyi Okeke and Uchekukwu (2020) who found there is a significant relationship between attitude and students' academic performance in chemistry, there is a

significant relationship between motivation and students' academic performance in chemistry and that there is a significant relationship between self-regulation and students' performance in chemistry. There are many factors that can influence career choice of students. Among them are intellectual abilities, attitudes, family, schooling, personality, sex

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Second finding from the study revealed that there is significant relationship between interest and career choice of students in Economics in senior secondary schools. This finding corroborates with Nworah (1997) who found that boys preferred professional courses like Law, Medicine and Geology. of the girls preferred people-oriented courses such as Banking, Broadcasting and Teaching. Those students chose careers without considering the factors that influenced career choice such as interest, intellectual ability, personality of the individual and aptitudes. The finding also agreed with the work of Bellamy (1997) found out that there were no differences in career aspirations and expectations either by race or by Holland's social personality type; the only difference in career beliefs by race was that African-Americans scored higher than Whites and Hispanics in their beliefs that approval of others was not important in choosing a career. The finding further agreed with Abdul (2016) who found out that that there is a significant relationship between personality traits and career choice.

Implications for Counsellors and Policy Makers

According to Social Learning Theory propounded by Krumboltz (1996) proposed that the role of a career counselor is to help clients expand their career choices and help clarify beliefs that can interfere or promote their career plans. Culture has a major influence on people's beliefs therefore, it is integral that career counselors are able to provide culturally responsive career directions to guide the youth in the pursuit of their career aspirations. Family support is important for all youths as they navigate their career explorations, especially for migrants. The role of counselors is not only limited to the students; it can also benefit the entire family. Essentially, counselors can attempt to engage not just the youths in exploring academic and vocational opportunities, but also offer avenues for families to become involved and connected to the career decision-making processes. Counselors can seize this opportunity to provide companionship and direction as the children figure out their career pathways significance of a school environment that is conducive and embraces the racial and academic identity of its students can be a huge asset to boost youth morale. Gonzalez et al. reported that students who feel culturally validated by others at school and experience positive ethnic regard, have more confidence in their career aspirations. Career counselors together with other educators and service providers hold influential positions as they can furnish academic, cultural and social support that family members alone cannot provide.

Conclusion

Parental intervention is understood as a requirement to support their children's efforts and equip them to be responsible and economically productive. Meanwhile, the standard practice in individualistic societies is for parents to endorse their children's opinions and encourage them to choose careers that make them happy. It has been observed that while students aim at such prestigious occupations when still in secondary school, it has

not been possible for many to achieve their aims for one reason or the other. Such reasons often include among others; poor academic performance, poor choice of subjects for the school certificate examination, lack of financial support to pursue their education which makes it impossible for such boys and girls to get their required training that would qualify them for the jobs of their choice.

Recommendations

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2. Parents should have good attitude towards students' career choice and career guidance and counselling staff should have endeavour to procure as much data as possible on a student's career choice.

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