

PERSONAL FACTORS AND OCCUPATIONAL PREFERENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.

Dr. Uto I. Archibong

Abstract

The study assessed personal factors and their influence on occupational preferences of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. The population of the study consisted of all 5059 male and female senior secondary two students in the 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area in the 2015/16 school year. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw 519 students at equal gender basis, from seven public secondary schools which were selected randomly for the study. The instrument used was a self-developed "Personality Variables and Occupational Preferences Questionnaire (PVOPQ)". Two research questions and hypotheses respectively, were raised and tested using inferential statistics (independent t-test and analysis of variance). The results revealed significant influences of self concept and gender on occupational preferences of secondary school students. One of the recommendations made was that students who have low or negative self concept should be encouraged with acceptance and should be assisted by parents and teachers to see themselves as achievers who are as competent as other adolescents and peers. It was also recommended that career counseling which is seen as an imperative to appropriate career development should be given priority in school administration. Professional counselors should harness the factors highlighted in this study for counseling of students with respect to appropriate career development.

Keywords: Personal factors, occupational preferences, secondary school students

Occupations play a very fundamental and significant role in the life of the individual not only because they determine the pattern of income, but also because they affect the individual's personality and concepts in life. Thus, according to Denga (2001), occupation moulds one's character, determines one's social status, income, style of life, choice of friends and mental and physical health. This implies that the choice of occupation has a persuasive connection with one's entire way of life.

In choosing an occupation, many variables come to play. These variables operate to decide which occupation an individual chooses and every effort put forth translates in the light of significant factors, to an effort to limit oneself from choosing a wide array of occupations. In other words, occupational choices made imply foregoing several alternatives. A number of these factors tend to impact more strongly than others. What may significantly influence the occupational preference of one person may have less significance for another owing to individual differences. Still, to Onyejiaku (2001), it is not uncommon for individuals to get into an occupation by chance or accident.

Myriads of factors have been known to influence the occupational preferences of students. These factors can be divided into two categories: factors in the external environment in which the individual exists and factors internal to each individual. External factors are those factors which the

individual has no power or control and which cannot be changed, while internal factors are unique to each individual and are rooted in individual personality.

The personal factors which influence occupational preferences include interest, gender, self-concept, parent's occupation, among others. The preference for occupation constitutes an implementation of the self concept construct requiring a person to recognize himself as a distinctive individual and to be aware of the similarities between him and others. Thus, knowledge of self may be crucial in making an adequate and wise occupational choice.

Meyer (2005) describes self concept as how a person views himself (self image), and how one will like others to view him (described self). To Kelly (2004), self concept is the awareness of one's attributes, judgments, and values in relation to one's behavior, abilities and capabilities. This will help the individual to feel capable, likeable, adaptable and strong. Denga (2001) views self concept as an organized configuration of perceptions of self which are admissible to awareness. According to Denga, self concept is what determines the goals that are set, attitudes, behaviour, and responses that one makes towards others. Onyejiaku (2001) affirms that the "perceived self" influences the individual's perception of the world of work and his behaviour which in turn influences occupational preferences. This is also in line with Echebe (2009) who stated that individuals select occupations they perceive as falling in line with their self concept. This implies that most youths tend to implement self-image in choosing their occupations. Thus, a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of self and the world of work may help an individual to make a wise occupational choice.

Udeanyi (2002) in study of self concept in occupational choice observed that females have high positive self concept and seem to have confidence and see themselves as achievers, and males also have positive self concept similar to females. Zakaria (2005) investigated self concept as motivation for occupational interest. Result indicated no significant difference in the opinion of students on motivation for self concept, arising from the finding was that students' education has to be enriched for them to make a realistic occupational interest. Petters, Asuquo, and Eyo (2015) investigated the influence of some psychological factors on occupational aspirations of secondary school students in Calabar, Cross River State. Specific factors examined in the study were self concept, gender and parental role. The research adopted the ex-post facto research design. Two hundred students constituted the study sample. A questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.815 was used for data collection. Three hypotheses of the study were tested using independent t-test. Result of the study revealed a significant influence of self concept on occupational aspirations of respondents in the study.

Another variable that may influence students' occupational preferences is gender. Behaviours and preferences across a variety of contexts are influenced by gender. Gender-role orientation is a personal trait or attribute conditioned by a traditional social system in which men are expected to think and behave as men (masculine) and women are expected to think and behave as women (feminine). Within such a social system, some behaviours, roles and careers are stereotyped as masculine while others are stereotyped as feminine. Masculinity is a cognitive focus on getting the job done. One aspect of behaviour that is stereotyped as masculine includes aggressiveness. Femininity is an affective concern to the welfare of others and the harmony of the group. Expressive behaviours and attitudes that are stereotyped as feminine include submissiveness, dependence, deference, cooperation, caring and nurturing. Based on the conceptualization of masculinity and femininity as independent

dimensions of gender role orientation, researchers explain variations among students in occupational preferences (McCabe, Ingram, & Dato-on, 2006).

Nwankwo, Kanu, Marire, Balogun and Uhiara (2012) explained that although men and women are essentially the same, gender differences are due to the fact that women are deprived of opportunities such as education and discouraged to develop their full capacities. Gender differences in occupational preferences may be explained through the fact that females have unequal access to resources or face gender-based discrimination. Karimi, Biemans, Lans, Chizari and Mahdei (2013) maintained that gender difference is a socio-cultural dimension that influences the kinds of occupation people prefer.

Gupta and Bherve (2007) postulated that expressive behaviour and attitudes that are stereotyped as feminine including submissiveness, dependence, difference and caring are negative associated with entrepreneurial intentions among female students. In a similar view, Echebe (2009) posited that certain occupations are designated for females. More girls, according to the author seem to have preferences for nursing, teaching, home economics, home management, cosmetology, weaving technology. Males however are found to go for engineering, building, accounting, mining, military services and other occupations that require physical activities. Emenyonu (2004) observed that there is perceived restriction in the kind of occupation that girls are opportune to prefer. Such occupations excluded some of the technical, scientific and professional occupations.

Eyo and Edet (2011) carried out a study on gender and occupational preferences among senior high school students in Cross River State, Nigeria. This quasi-experimental study used a sample which consisted of 450 respondents; 225 male and 225 female randomly drawn from two sampled schools, one school sampled form experimental group while the other was a control group. A questionnaire (SOPI) constructed by the researchers was used as instrument for data collection. One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance using the chi-square statistical test. The finding showed that gender has a significant influence on the occupational preference among counseled and uncounseled students.

This research study delves deeply and specifically into the influence of personal variables such as self concept and gender on the occupational preferences of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Occupational preference tends to be a persistent problem in the society. Nwanadi (2015) asserted that most students in secondary schools do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate career choices. That is why it is not uncommon for students to get into occupations that are not quite suitable to their abilities. Most secondary school students are inexperienced, ignorant and are not well guided. They opt for occupations mainly because of the prestige attached to the job without considering personal factors with regards to their interest, self concept, gender and other factors that would enable them to maximize their potentials. This results in job dissatisfaction, underperformance, malfunction, frustration and inefficiency, aggressiveness and withdrawal (Petters and Asuquo, 2009).

Individuals who make wrong choices of occupation find it difficult to be productive and contribute meaningfully to economic growth and development of a nation. This problem which has plagued many secondary school students for quite some time must be looked into, if students at this level of education must become productive and well integrated individual members of the society in

future. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of personal constructs on occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following research questions formed the basis of this study:

1. To what extent does self concept influence occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area?
2. What is the extent of gender influence on occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

1. Self concept does not significantly influence the occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
2. There is no significant influence of gender on occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Methods

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. A total population of 5059 senior secondary students in all the 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area in the 2015/16 academic year was used for the study. The participants were senior secondary two students. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw up 519 senior secondary two students (10 percent of the population) for the study. The instrument used for this study was developed by the researcher and was called "Personality Variables and Occupational Preferences Questionnaire (PVOPQ)". Being divided into three sections: A, B and C which featured personal data including gender, five items on self concept; and a list of occupations which were divided into professional occupations, military/paramilitary occupations, artistic occupations, service occupations and business occupations; respondents were required to tick just one of the occupations they preferred.

The content validity of the instrument was determined by experts in Tests and Measurement who matched each item of the questionnaire with the research hypothesis to ascertain whether the instrument actually measured what it was supposed to measure. Also, the reliability of the instrument was determined through split-half technique using 30 respondents who were not part of the actual study. A Pearson Product Moment coefficient ranging from 0.66 to 0.74 was obtained indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Research assistants helped in the instrument administration. All the instruments retrieved were valid and usable. The data collected from the instrument were analyzed using means and standard deviation to answer the research questions; and analysis of variance and independent t-test for testing the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question one

To what extent does self concept influence occupational preferences of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area?

Personal Factors and Occupational Preferences of Secondary School Students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of influence of self concept on occupational preferences of students.

Self concept	N	X	SD
High	263	43.06	21.56
Moderate	182	41.85	20.91
Low	94	37.88	19.09

The result of data analysis in Table 1 indicates that 263 respondents had high self concept with mean and standard deviation ($x = 43.06$, $SD = 21.56$), 182 had moderate self concept with mean and standard deviation ($X = 41.85$, $SD = 20.91$) while 74 had low self concept with mean and standard deviation ($X = 37.88$, $SD = 19.09$). The implication of this is that self concept influences students' occupational preferences to a high extent.

Research Question Two

What is the extent of gender influence on occupational preferences of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores of gender influence on occupational preferences of students

Gender	N	X	SD
Male	178	57.94	22.21
Female	341	45.52	19.20

The result in Table 2 reveals a high influence of gender on occupational preferences between male and female students. The mean score for male students ($X = 57.94$) was found to be greater than the mean score of female students ($X = 45.52$). This means that male students have higher occupational preferences than female students.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

Self concept does not significantly influence the occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Table 3: One way analysis of variance of the influence of self concept on occupational preference of students

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f-cal	f-crit
Between groups	26455.61	2	13227.80	31.92	2.29
Within groups	621709.25	517	414.47		
Total	648164.86				

*Significant $p < .05$, $df = 2, 517$

The result of data analysis in Table 3 reveals that the calculated f-value of 31.92 at .05 level of significance and 2, 517 degrees of freedom was greater than the critical f-value of 2.29. This implies that self concept significantly influence occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo

Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Given the significance of the hypothesis, post hoc test was carried out using Scheffe's multiple comparison test. This is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Scheffe's post-hoc analysis of self concept influence on occupational preference of secondary school students

(I)Level of self concept	(J) Level of self concept	Mean difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Low	Moderate	1.207	1.468	.411
	High	5.181*	1.844	.000
Moderate	Low	-1.207	1.468	.411
	High	3.975	1.452	.006
High	Low	-5.181*	1.844	.000
	Moderate	-3.975	1.452	.006

The Scheffe's test analysis as shown in Table 4 shows three possible pair wise mean difference in self concept (high, moderate and low). The analysis indicates that the paired mean difference between low and high self concept was highly significant (.000). Hence, the group of low self concept that significantly contributed to the observed difference in occupational preferences was those with low self concept when compared with high self concept.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of gender on occupational preference of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5: Independent t-test analysis of influence of gender on occupational preference of students

Gender	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit
Male	178	57.94	22.21	9.14*	1.96
Female	341	45.52	19.20		

*Significant $p < .05$; $df = 517$

The result of data analysis in Table 5 reveals that the calculated t-value of 9.14 at .05 level of significance and 517 degrees of freedom was significantly higher than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This implies that gender has a significant influence on occupational preference of secondary school students.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of data on research question one revealed that self concept exerts high influence on occupational preference of secondary school students. It was also revealed that there is a significant influence of self concept on occupational preference of students, as evidenced in the result of data analysis in Table 3. In the Table, the calculated f-value of 31.92 at .05 level of significance and 2, 517 degrees of freedom was greater than the critical f-value of 2.29. This finding agrees with Petters, Asuquo, and Eyo (2015) who investigated the influence of some psychological factors on occupational aspirations of secondary school students in Calabar, Cross River State and found a significant influence of self concept on occupational aspirations of respondents in the study.

Contrary to the findings of this study, Zakaria (2005) in an investigation of self concept as motivation for occupational interest found no significant difference in the opinion of students on motivation for self concept, arising from the finding was that students' education has to be enriched for them to make a realistic occupational interest.

Analysis of hypothesis two on gender influence on occupational preferences of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State was also significant. This was due to the fact that a calculated t-value of 9.14 at .05 level of significance and 517 degrees of freedom was significantly higher than the critical t-value of 1.96. The implication of this is that gender has a significant influence on occupational preferences of secondary school students. This finding corroborates an earlier finding by Eyo and Edet (2011). In their study on gender and occupational preferences among senior high school students in Cross River State, Nigeria, a significant gender influence on the occupational preference among students who were counseled and those who were not, was found.

Conclusions

On the basis of the research findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Self concept significantly influences students' occupational preference in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
2. Gender has a significant influence on students' occupational preference in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Individual's personal factors should be examined and always taken into consideration when choosing an occupation. The imposition of occupation on students should be discouraged. Children should be allowed to diversify as far as occupational choice is concerned.
2. Students who are already laboring under low or negative self concept should be encouraged with a lot of acceptance and should be assisted by parents and teachers to see themselves as achievers who are as competent as other adolescents and peers.
3. Career counseling should be seen as imperative to appropriate career development and as such be given priority in school administration. Professional counselors should harness discriminately the factors highlighted in this study for counseling of students with respect to appropriate career development.

References

- Echebe, P. I. (2009). *Basic foundations of career choice*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Emenyonu, E. N. (2004). *Ideas and challenges in Nigerian education*. Enugu: New Generation Books.

- Eyo, M. B. & Edet, P. B. (2011). Gender and occupational preferences among senior high school students in Cross River State, Nigeria. *African Research Review*, 5(1), 327-341. Available at www.afrevjo.com.
- Denga, D. I. (2001). *Guidance and counseling in schools and non school setting* (2nd ed.). Port Harcourt: Double Diamond Publications.
- Gupta, A. M. & Biherve, E. A. (2007). Who wants to be an entrepreneur? A study of adolescents interested in a young enterprise scheme. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 12(3), 465-478.
- Karimi, S., Biemans, J. A., Lans, T., Chizari, M. & Mahadei, K. M. (2013). Understanding role models and gender influences on entrepreneurial intentions among College students. *Procedia- Social Behaviourial Sciences*, 93, 204 – 214.
- Kelly, T. (2004). *Positive psychology and adolescent true breakthrough*. Retrieved from <http://www.nebinhgov/entry/query>.
- Onyejiaku, F. O. (2001). *Psychology of adolescents*. Calabar : Rapid Publishers.
- McCabe. A. C., Ingram. W. R & Dato-on, M. C. (2006). The business of ethics and gender. *Journal of Business Ethics* , 64(2), 101-116.
- Nwankwo, B. E., Kanu, G. C. , Marire, M. I., Balogun, S. K. & Uhiara, A. C. (2012). Gender-role orientation and self efficacy as correlates of entrepreneurial intention. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 1(6), 9-26. Retrieved from <http://www.ejbss.coc/rcent.aspx>.
- Meyers, D. G. (2005). *Social psychology* (8th ed.) Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Nwanadi, L. (2015). Students' interest as correlate of career aspiration of senior secondary school students in Rivers State. *Global Journal of Educational Research* 14(1), 61-66.
- Petters, J. S., Asuquo, P. N. and Eyo, M. (2015). Psychological variables in occupational aspirations of secondary school students in Calabar, Nigeria. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 2(7), 89-
- Udeanyi, R. E. (2002). *Self concept and academic performances among secondary school students in Bornu State*. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Maiduguri.