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Consistency Of Occupational Choice Between Counselling And Uncounselled Senior Secondary School Students In Northern Cross River State

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Introduction

One of the major problems facing Nigerian Secondary School students is the task of making an appropriate and realistic occupational choice. This then implies that it behooves on the Nigerian educationists to ensure that proper steps and measures are taken in order for the students to make the right choices occupationally. Denga (2001) posited that, choosing an appropriate career is one of the most difficult or serious decisions which a man or woman makes. Similarly, Bakare (1970) asserts that the most insistent problem confronting young people today involves choosing an appropriate occupation, preparing for it, liking it, and keeping it. In the olden traditional system in Nigerian according to Agbor (1990), occupational preference was not often a problem since an individual had to take on an occupation thrust on him/her by his elders in the society. Such decisions by the elders were made after a comprehensive review of the situation surrounding the individual and the identified interest pattern of both parents and the individual as well as that of the society in which he/she lives. Agbor (1990) further explained that in the present day Nigeria, such practices of dictating careers by parents and elders to their young ones has ceased to be functional and effective. This is because the Nigerian economy has become so complex in nature, ranging from high literacy level to high rate of technological advancement, which makes occupational choice on the part of the students a problematic decision to make. The decision is further fueled by the fact that the emerging new jobs are continually being created in the economy, such that the former traditional advice from parents and elders were often made in most cases in complete ignorance of these new professions and their requirements.

By the provisions of the National Policy on Education (2004) on the 6-3-3-4 system of education, it is stated that when students leave the Junior Secondary School to the senior level, such students need complete career counseling to enable them have a smooth transition to a specialized field of work, which shall eventually lead them to a desired occupational choice. However, the situation whereby career counseling in most cases is not carried out in our school system does not avail most of our students with the opportunity of being properly counseled on occupational choice; while in school. Those mostly affected are the students in the Senior Secondary School (SSS) section, who are almost at the verge of leaving this state of education.

Statement of the Problem

It seems many Nigerian students lack adequate knowledge about the available occupations marketable in their environment, their job demands and skill requirements. There is no doubt that it is this lack of adequate knowledge of career counseling and occupational choice and also occupational consistency which are responsible for some of the irregularities and the incongruencies observed in Nigerian workers in the field of work. It is as a result of this fact that the researcher would like to investigate into the consistency of occupational choice between counseled and uncounseled Senior Secondary School students.

Purpose of the Study

The study specifically seeks to find out the consistency in the occupational choice pattern of counseled and uncounseled students and the influence of gender on occupational preferences of counseled and uncounseled students.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were posed in order to help investigate into the consistency of occupational choice between counseled and uncounseled students.

1. There is no significant difference in consistency in the occupational choice pattern of counseled and uncounseled students.
2. Gender has no significant influence on the occupational preferences of counseled and uncounseled students.

Significance of the Study

The study would be of importance in the following areas:

1. Counseling – It would serve as a reference material to counselors in secondary schools and other institutions of learning. It shall be used by counselors in counseling situations, thereby freeing those students who would have been trapped in occupational preference misfits.
2. Parents, Teachers and other Family Members – It would inform parents, teachers and other family members not to force or pressurize their wards to choose careers they want but allow them a freehand in choosing an occupation of their own interest, ability, qualification and capability, which shall subsequently usher them to an appropriate and realistic life occupation.
3. Government – It would be of help to the government planning strategies for improving on career counseling service in schools; also make government see the need to include career counseling into the school curriculum and timetable, to provide a conducive atmosphere and infrastructures for counseling.
4. Students – They will be the overall beneficiary; freeing them from detectional careers by parents and enjoying good and appropriate subject combination which shall eventually lead them to a realist occupational choice.

Scope of the Study

The study was delimited to only Senior Secondary School students in the Northern Cross River State zonal Education Board, Ogoga. Students from both public and private schools in the zone were involved in the treatment.

Review of Literature

Career Counseling and Occupational Consistency among Senior Secondary School Students

Ifenwanta and Gardener (1980) carried out a study on the relevance of career development in Nigerian youths. They used 120 subjects, these subjects were subjected to chi-square statistical analysis. The findings showed among others need for well planned career information for the Nigeria students. This is because the result further revealed that many of them left the educational system without making any conscious and realistic career decisions. This handicap condition was attributed by them, as being due to little or no career counseling going on in the secondary schools. Their study further, showed that due to this lack of career counseling in schools, many of the students would graduate from schools with little or no knowledge of the basis requirement in the labor market and job demands; hence, they were not given any initial career counseling in relation to their subjects combination that will eventually usher them to their area of specialization. According to Ifenwanta and Gardener (1980), there is an urgent need for well planned career guidance and counseling services in schools; as these would go a long way to improve the apparent high rate of unemployment and misplacement of work in the work field, as well as shifting from one work situation to the other.

Hassan (1986) in his study of discriminate analysis of personality characteristics and occupational preferences of Nigeria adolescents, identified that the making of a rationale vocational decision has always been a major concern of guidance counselors as career educators, but a great impediment of achieving this objectives has always been that of inability to identify the personal characteristics of people that would be suitable to a particular job. Hassan's work revealed that most students preferred professional occupations like medicine, law, mechanical engineering and agriculture to trading, teaching, broadcasting, laboratory technology and town planning.

Also, Asagwara (1986) carried out an experimental study on the effect of vocational guidance on occupational preferences and value on secondary school student in Calabar. The findings showed that parents and peer group were influencing factors to students' vocational aspirations. Results from the pre and post treatment test showed that there was no significant difference in the consistency of the students' occupational preferences; though there was great vocational maturity in the consistency of experimental Group I and II about occupations like teaching, medicine and law. Their consistency in the chosen vocations was explained in terms of early socialization from parents, peer and significant differences in the number of changes on vocational preferences of the males and females despite the guidance session given.

Atsu (1989) using a sample of 150 students in Calabar municipality, in her experimental study on career guidance and occupational preferences of Senior Secondary School students found out that the level of counseling an individual receives, generally determines how realistic and appropriate his occupational choice is based on self-knowledge derived from the counseling situation more than those who were not counseled. The instrument used for eliciting responses from the students was a self-defined occupational preference inventory (OPI). The data was analyzed by the use of chi-square statistical analysis.

Occupational Preferences among Male and Female Students in Senior Secondary Schools

Early socializations as well as self-efficacy have been identified as major influencing factors in promoting gender or male and female differences in occupational preferences (Farmer & Bohn, 1970). In a study by Bojuwoye & Imouokhome (1984) on gender role in occupation decision findings showed that both male and female workers considered their decisions to take to professions such as law, engineering, pharmacy, medicine, nursing, police force, army, teaching, lecturing and secretaryship, as

a result of their early socialization on sex-role stereotyping. Although the result showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of both males and female towards taking to non-traditional occupation, the male workers did not view in favor of the female worker having to become pharmacists and secretaryship, non-traditional occupations. Also, the male workers who were nurses had a higher mean score than the female nurses, with respect to their perceptions of early socialization influences, as being an influencing factor to their choices.

The study in addition found out that poor-self-efficacy on the part of female workers made them to take decisions into occupations. This study revealed a great need for career guidance and counseling to help the female identify and develop their talents as well as plan life goals which are commensurate to their male counterparts. Moreover, such a measure would enable them shed off femininity and inferiority complex in their occupational preferences.

Finally, Singer (1974) investigated into gender difference and similarity in job preference factors in Colorado State University undergraduates. His findings were that the strong differences in their preferences was not due to sex stereotyped, but then in general, both sexes preferred occupations that offered them the opportunity to study so that they can achieve something tangible in the future. In addition, they all wanted jobs in which the workers would exhibit friendly co-existence. However, gender differences were observed in factors such as salary, job security and social recognition.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was purely quasi-experimental in nature. An experimental design is one which allows for variable (independent) to be manipulated and their effect on some other variables (dependent) observed or measured. Thus, to enable the appropriate study of this problem.

Study Area

The study area was Northern Cross River State. This area is made up of five Local Government Areas. There are two educational zones in the area. These are the Ogoja Educational Zone, which controls schools in Ogoja, Bekwara and Yala Local Government areas, and the Obudu Educational Zone, which takes charge of schools in Obudu and Obanliku Local Government areas respectively. The headquarter of the two educational zones are located at Ogoja and Obudu respectively.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of all secondary schools in Northern Cross River State. The researcher selected subjects for the study from three secondary schools randomly. The choice of the three schools was motivated by the fact that they were among the oldest secondary schools in the state. Another reason was that the distance between these schools was such that could help in controlling interaction between the controlled group and the experimental groups.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique for this study was the stratified simple random sampling technique. The Northern educational zone which comprises of two sub-zones was stratified. The 2 sub-zones had 39

and 33 schools respectively. The names of the schools were all written out. The researcher using the simple hat and draw sampling technique picked out two schools from the zone with 39 schools and one school from the zone with 33 schools. The two schools were used as the experimental group while the other one school was used as the control group. This sampling technique was also used to draw up the respondents of 450 from the three schools of 150 per school.

Sample

The sample for this study was 450 students comprising of 225 males and 225 females. In each of the 3 schools selected for the study, the simple random sampling of the hat and draw sampling technique was used to sample the respondents. In school one, the names of all the students in Senior Secondary one, two and three were written down. Yes and No was written on only fifty of the pieces of papers folded, mixed all those who picked the required number of yes were used as the respondents while those who picked no, were dropped. This was done for the three classes in schools 'A' to get 150 respondents. The same method was used in school B and C, which brought the total sample to 450 students used for both the pretest and posttest, sampling 150 respondents from each school.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was Students Occupational Preference Inventory (SOPI) which was designed by the researcher to elicit the respondents' opinion on their occupational preferences. The students' occupational preferences inventory (SOPI) was made up of two parts, A and B. Part A dealt with personal information of students while Part B sort to identify the students' most preferred occupation.

Validation of Instrument

The researcher constructed a simple inventory of elicit information on the students' occupations. The instrument was certified to be appropriate for use by experts in the field.

Administration of the Instrument

The researcher obtained a former permission from the authority of each of the schools in the administration of the instrument. The administration of the Students Occupational Preferences Inventory (SOPI) were responded to by 150 SS I – II students in each of the three schools selected.

Data Analysis Procedure

The aim of the experiment was to assess the consistency of counseled and uncounseled students' occupational choice. The research hypotheses formulated guided the process of data analysis.

Results and Discussions

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that, there is no significant difference in consistency in the occupational choice pattern of counseled and uncounseled students. In order to test this hypothesis, two categories of sampled students were identified, the experimental group (those who receive treatment) and the

controlled group (those who did not receive any treatment). The sampled elements responses on pre-treatment and post treatment instrument regarding their occupational choice pattern were noted and grouped into congruence or incongruence (i.e. those who retained or changed their careers). The resulting frequencies of these two classes of variation were used to compute the chi-square value which from the basis for testing the hypothesis.

From table 1. It is observed that the calculated value of chi-square resulting from the effect of counseling is 89.34. This value is greater than the critical chi-square of 3.84 at one degree of freedom $\alpha = 0.05$. The implication of the test is the rejection of the null hypothesis. To this end, the test is significant and therefore it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the consistency of the occupational choice of counseled and uncounseled students.

Table 1: Chi-square Analysis of the Difference in Career Choice among Counseled and Uncounseled Group of Students

Groups	Congruence	Incongruence	Total	χ^2
Counseled	49 (92.67)	251 (207.33)	300	89.34*
Uncounseled	90 (46.33)	60 (103.67)	150	
Total	139	311	450	

*significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; df = 1

Hypotheses 2

Gender has no significant influence on the occupational preferences of counseled and uncounseled students. To test this hypothesis, the sampled students were classified into two groups, consisting of those in experimental group I and II. The groups were further subdivided into counseled males, counseled females, uncounseled males and uncounseled females. The responses of each of the students in each of these subgroups were enclosed as congruent – incongruent (those who retained and changed their occupation) based on the pretreatment and post treatment responses. The resulting frequencies formed the basis for the chi-square statistical analysis for the testing of the hypothesis under consideration.

From table 2 below, the calculated χ^2 value is 98.17 whereas the critical chi-square is 7.815 at df 3, = 0.05 significance level. Since the calculated chi-square value is greater than the critical chi-square value, the test is significant. The implication is that the null hypothesis is rejected. To this end, gender significantly influence students' occupational preferences of both counseled and uncounseled students.

Table 2: Chi-square Analysis of the influence of Gender on the Occupational Preferences of Counseled

and Uncounseled Students

Groups	Congruence	Incongruence	Total	χ^2
Counseled males	35 (46.33)	115 (103.67)	150	
Counseled females	14 (46.33)	136 (103.67)	150	
Uncounseled males	49 (23.17)	26 (51.83)	75	
Uncounseled females	41 (23.17)	34 (15.830)	75	98.17*
Total	139	311	450	

*significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; $df = 3$

Discussions

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that there is no significant difference in consistency in the occupational choice pattern of counseled and uncounseled students.

The findings showed that significant difference exists in the level of consistency in occupational choice between the counseled group and the uncounseled groups. This results implies that irrespective of the depth of counseling given, those privileged to be counseled will always manifest self understanding and career awareness as well as possess the decision making skills necessary for effective career selection than those who did not receive career counseling.

This difference could be traced to the counseling process where exposure of individual's interest, values, aptitude, self-concept, personality, projection and socio-cultural realities were evaluated vis-à-vis the work requirements, demands, prospect and status ascription. Such exposure consequently fortified the individual with enough skills to synthesize his/her option from all categories of profession. Such understanding was often or almost absent or lacking in situations where such information was not given but was not appropriately matched. This could account for the difference between counseled and uncounseled groups in their choice of occupation.

This findings is supported by Osafehint (1986) who asserted that students who were not counseled in school were ignorant of the vast array of career opportunities opened to them. In the same vein, Joe (1986) opined that many of our students require career counseling so that they can choose occupations that they are interested in, and would derive job satisfaction from them. Also, Onyejiaku (1987) in support of this finding contended that professionals should be invited to schools to speak, teach and counsel students about occupations.

Hypothesis 2

Gender has no significant influence on the occupational preference of counseled and uncounseled students. Results showed that there was a significant difference existing in occupational preferences of both counseled and uncounseled groups due to the influence of gender. This implies that being a male or female to a larger extent determines how an individual chooses an occupation despite the state of enlightenment or information provision made. Correspondingly, it could be observed that gender influence was exerted between counseled groups' rate of consistency in occupational selection as well as within the counseled groups.

It could be implied that as the gender of an individual tends to have an impact on occupational selection made through 'ignorance' or relevant factors in occupational process before counseling variation obviously would exist in occupational selection made after counseling process and consequent information provision. However, the pattern of occupational selection could be observed to be loaded with gender bias. This finding was in consonance with some scholars' postulation that distinct difference existed between male and female occupational choice patterns.

For instance, Turner (1964) found out in his study that females tend to select occupations distinctly different from males. The author concluded that due to the biological make up of females, their occupational choice patterns were more complex and different from that of the males. Achebe (1972) in support of this findings asserted that due to cultural beliefs, the girls were discriminated over taking to occupations that required high skills, because those would require higher and longer time and so would disturb the girls from being married early in their lives than did the boys.

Conclusion

On the basis of the experiment, the following conclusions were made

1. Counseling services help students in their career choice.
2. Teaching of occupations in schools give students more information about each occupation in terms of nature or work, prospect and risk.
3. With more effective career counseling strategies, the Senior Secondary School students would be able to widen their occupational preferences.

Recommendations

In the light of the research findings of this study, the following recommendations were made for the improvement of career counseling of students and their occupational preferences:

1. Career talk seminars and career days should be organized regularly in schools to help students gather reliable occupational information on different work types from different professionals. This would curb the youth unsteadiness on jobs.
2. Posting of trained, qualified and professional guidance counselors to schools: the State Ministry of Education in collaboration with the secondary school board and science and technical board should

ensure that at least guidance counselors are employed and posted on full time basis to man each of the secondary schools in the state. With this measure, the counselors will devote more time to effective career counseling strategies which would enable the students' realistic occupational preferences.

3. Provision of equipment and counselor's offices: each school should have equipment such as audio and audio-visuals like radio, tape recorders, television, overhead projectors with occupational films for a more effective career counseling of the students. Also, career bulletin boards be provided where information about different career can be displayed for the students.

4. Modification of the school curriculum: The Nigerian Educational Curriculum should be modified and reviewed to incorporate systematic career counseling programs for Nigerian students from the primary to tertiary levels of education.

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