

Influence of Counselling on Career Preference among Secondary School Students in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of counselling on career preference among secondary school students in Ekiti State. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Two hundred students drawn from ten secondary schools in four Local Government Areas of Ekiti State were used in the study. A questionnaire titled "Influence of Counselling on Career Preference" (ICCP) was administered on the students. The findings revealed among others that vocational guidance significantly influenced vocational aspirations of the students. It was also discovered that prestige, economic and social values play dominant roles in the behaviour of the students and finally, gender parity was also seen to be a prime factor in their choices of occupation. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that schools should provide counselling sessions and career programmes for the students. Also counsellors should endeavour to organize visits to various factories and industries for students to get first hand information on their future careers.

Keywords: Counselling, career preference, guidance, behaviour

INTRODUCTION

In a situation where there are options for someone to choose from, one is likely to face the problem of choice. This is very common in the choice of career. This has been a very serious problem for most people especially, students who are faced with the task of choosing a life career. Most of the students that are found in the secondary schools fall within the ages of 11 and 20 years. This period of time is tagged adolescence. Because of the demand of this stage adolescents are concerned about their future, particularly in terms of selecting a vocation and majority of them are observed to have ended up with vocational and emotional maladjustments, dissatisfaction in work, frustration, conflicts and failure in life, unable to self-actualize, because of wrong choice of careers (Salami 1997 and Madu 1996). Record shows that the issue of career guidance has been emphasised by the Federal Government in the National Policy on Education (2004) which says *inter alia*, "in view of the apparent ignorance of young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustments among school children, guidance counsellors will be appointed in the post primary institutions. In reality, government made qualified guidance counsellors to function as career masters in the schools to nurture the vocational behaviour of the students. Egbockukwu (1997) explains vocational guidance as a facet of education and vocational tatics for assisting students to identify future occupations for themselves and at the same

time, make effective use of present educational experiences connected with such future choice. Okon (1997) and Olayinka (1994) discover that most young Nigerian secondary school graduates encounter problems when moving from school to work because of lack of relevant information about occupation, lack of personal and education requirements to progress on the job. It could be said that occupational preferences are not the only concerns, there are so many yardsticks by which a person can view his potential success in life. It is important that identifying oneself vocationally, however, depends upon coming to terms with one's personal characteristics, values, life purposes and orientation towards or away from jobs. It became very clear that the life style anticipated by the adolescent and the specific work he considers he might be able to do are important to the child and deserves consideration by the school counsellor. Several factors are responsible for varying choice of career among individuals, such as intellectual abilities, aptitude, schools, personality values, child rearing practices, relatives, parents and friends (Oladele 1997; Gesinde 1979; Makinde 2005). Stanley (1996) argues that prestige of a profession was a factor in occupational choice of students.

Ogunmola (2004) also emphasizes on gender parity as an influencing factor in career decision-making process. It is a known fact that the occupation that one prefers influences other aspects of his life, perhaps more than any other single factor. Gesinde (1979) opines that one's job determines how much money one earns, where and how one lives, on the overall how one spends a sizeable proportion of his lifetime. In the final years of secondary School III, the students who will soon graduate begin to choose the type of occupation that would be suitable for them in life. Salami (1997) confirms that many Nigerian students choose occupations at different level of education attainments. Some choose their occupation at the end of junior secondary school, some others, at the end of senior secondary school III, very few citizens enter post secondary institutions and choose their occupations. But for most of them their choice is being motivated by a variety of factors which in themselves are not the real indices of success in occupation.

At this crucial stage, the counsellor is supposed to provide a vocational basis that goes beyond personal experience or trial and error. As a matter of necessity, guidance services is urgently needed to help the student to relate his interest, aptitude, ability to current and future educational and occupational opportunities which are requirements to job satisfaction in order to help him determine who he is, what he will do and what he can do. More so, that the most convincing proof in our society of having grown up, appears to be the ability to find and hold a job. In view of the above the school counsellor is expected to perform the following function as highlighted by Ojirah (2004). To acquaint the student with the educational and vocational opportunities of the world and link the students with his personal interest and limitations, effort should also be made to help the child at the time of selection and decision making. The counsellor should be able to diagnose cases of vocational maladjustment, prevent it by making remedial treatment and rendered a sound follow up services. Adegoke (2004) confirms that today youths in Nigeria are gearing up in an increasingly complicated and fast changing society and the resultant effect is a complex need for personal, social adjustment, academic and career vocational awareness among

many youths. This need can only be met via well-integrated counselling services in Nigerian Schools. It is against this background that the researchers attempted to find out the influence of counselling services on the choice of career of students. Vocational behaviour is an aspect of the totality of the individual's behaviour and career development is just an area of the person's total personality. Also the list of vocations appear inexhaustible, likewise the variety of persons with varied attributes and certainly all persons are not suitable for all vocations because every vocation needs certain background, preparation and aptitude and only those having them succeed. More so, the advent of civilization, industrialization and technological development opened a wide variety of new occupations; the problem of selecting an occupation by an individual becomes complex and difficult. The problem of this study therefore is to determine whether guidance and counselling services, has influence on student vocational behaviour in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Taking into consideration, the following null hypotheses.

- H₀1: There is no significance difference in the external influence for choice of career and vocational counselling among secondary school students in Ekiti State.
- H₀2: There is no significance difference between prestige value and economic value on students' occupational choice in Ekiti State.
- H₀3: There is no significant difference in choice of career and gender parity among students in Ekiti State.

METHOD

This study adopted descriptive survey method. The sample for this study is made up of two hundred secondary school students randomly selected from Ekiti State Secondary Schools. The techniques used in the selection of the sample were stratified and multistage random sampling. The research instrument used was self constructed questionnaire entitled "Influence Counselling on Career Preference" (ICCP). The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A contained personal information on the student. Section B was designed to identify the influencing factors for preferring one career to the other. A 5 point Likert rating method was used. The face validity of the instrument was enhanced by wording the items in simple and straight forward manner which removed ambiguity. The reliability of the instrument was established by the calculation of the coefficient Alpha, which was 0.75. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire on the respondents in different schools. The statistical analysis used was independent t-test to find out if there was any difference between the variables involved in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reveals that there is a significant difference in the external influence for choice of career and vocational guidance and counselling among secondary school students in Ekiti State. This is so because the observed value 7.00 is far higher than the critical or table value, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected. From the table 2, the result indicated that the t-observed is greater than the t-critical. Hence the null hypothesis generated above is rejected meaning that there is significant difference in the influence between prestige value and economic values on students' occupational choice in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Looking at

the statistical data of the t-test the t-calculated is greater than t-critical; as such the null hypothesis is rejected. This simply shows that gender has a prominent role to play in the vocational aspiration of scholars. From the entire study and findings, it is clear that counselling is actually influencing the career choices of students in secondary schools in Ekiti State. The study reveals that external influence is a major factor in career decision-making. This finding corroborated the report of Oladele (1987), Gesinde (1986) that there are several factors generally accepted as influencing the occupational choice of the students such as intellectual abilities, aptitude, schools, personality, values, child rearing practices, parents, relatives, environment, friends and others. It depicts that a counsellor needs to look outside the potentials of the students while giving vocational counselling. Furthermore the result of the finding equally shows that to some students, the prestige a person enjoys in a vocation serves as a force that draws one to that vocation. This present result agrees with the findings of Stanley (1996) who posits that prestige attached to a profession is one of the factors which influences students to make their vocational choices.

Specifically in a study on factors informing students' choice of medicine, Oladele (1982) finds that the students' preferences for medicine were based mainly on doctor's professional and social prestige. It was also discovered that economic values equally play a significant role in career decision making. This is supported by the view of Gesinde (1979) that one's job determines how much money one earns, where and how one lives and one spends a sizeable proportion of his life time. Gender parity was equally discovered to have a significant role to play in the vocational aspirations of students. This corroborated the submission of Oladele (1997) that differences in relative masculinity and femininity are related to, in many ways, occupational choices. For example, in Nigeria certain fields have tended to develop as men's field, for example, engineering, electrical installation including allied vocations as piloting. Also certain fields have tended to develop as women's field for example, Nursing, teaching and receptionist work.

Table 1: t-test summary of the analysis on difference in the external influence, Vocational Guidance and Counselling needs

Variable	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-value	P
External influence	200					Significant
Vocational guidance	200					
Counselling needs	200					

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 2: t-test summary of the difference between prestige and economic values on students' occupational choice

Variables	Total Score	X	SD	t-cal	t-value	P
Prestiget Value	165	163	186	8.5	1.645	Significant
Economic Value	7082	142	105			

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 3: t-test summary of the difference in choice of career and gender parity

Gender	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-value	P
Male	120	81	60	3.91	1.645	Significant
Female	80	55	40			

Source: Survey, 2011

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When considering the educational stage at which choice is to be made, secondary school is the best option. The tertiary level of education is the level of education is the level at which students limit themselves to a specific area of proficiency based on the foundation level while in the secondary school level. It is on this premises that this study conclusively maintains the great majority of the students are deeply and highly influenced early in their lives as to career choice and most of these students choose jobs without relating them to their interests, satisfaction and capacity to cope with the nature of the job. Owing to the finding of this study it was recommended that: schools should be supplied with sufficient manpower in terms of trained counsellors who will be able to guide, direct and assist the students towards achieving their ultimate goal in life. Schools should also provide counselling sessions and career programme for the students, parents and guardian and given them information regarding the capabilities, intellectual abilities and limitation of their children. Counsellors should be encouraged to organize visits to various factories and industries for students to get first-hand information on their future careers. Students should also endeavour to visit libraries where they could acquaint themselves with available vocational textbooks and journals. Career clubs should also be introduced in schools which would make available, career literature and talks from employers of labour. Finally, media houses such as the television, Radio and the print should set aside programme and columns respectively where copious information about the existing occupation should be disseminated.

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