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Gender and Occupational Preferences among Senior High School Students in Cross River State Nigeria (Pp. 327-341)

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study was carried out to investigate the influence of gender on the occupational preferences of senior secondary school students in Cross River State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 450 respondents; 225 male and 225 female randomly drawn from 2 (two) sampled schools, one school sampled from experimental group while the other was a control group. A well constructed and validated questionnaire (SOPI) constructed by the researchers was the instrument used for data collection. To achieve the purpose of the study one null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance using the (x^2) chi-square statistical test. The finding showed that gender has a significant influence on the occupational preference among counselled and uncounselled students. While one's sex group determines one's choice of occupation when choice was ignorantly made, such sex influence manifested as a major variable even after counselling and the subsequent enlightenment of occupational demands. Based on the finding, conclusion and recommendation were made.

Introduction

Career choice is one important decision that every human being makes sometimes in his/her life, it is a decision that nobody should make a mistake about since what a person does for a living affects him in the present, as well as for the rest of his life. One's career determines the kind of friends one keeps, where one stays, how one spends his spare time, where one works and other related variables.

From the economic stand point, it is a well known fact that one's take home pay at the end of the month (or any time period) is determined by the nature of work one does appraising this situation, Denga (2001) asserts that choosing an appropriate career is one of the most difficult or serious decision which a man or woman makes. In the same vein, Kinanee (2004) opinions that the most complex problem confronting youth today involves choosing a realistic and appropriate occupation, preparing for it, liking it and keeping it.

In the olden traditional system in Nigeria according to Agbor (1990) in Kinanee (2004) occupational preference was not often a problem since an individual has to take up an occupation trusted on him or her by their fathers and mothers after a review o the situation surrounding the family. Boys were encouraged to take to their fathers' occupation while girls took to their mothers' occupation.

In this modern era such practices are not in force, in the present day Nigeria. The practice of dictating careers by parent and elders to their young ones has ceased to be functional and effective. This is because the Nigeria economy has become so complex in nature to the extent that making occupational choice is a great problem and complicated issues among the youths (Agbor 1990 in Kinanee 2004).

The difficulty in career decision making among the youths coupled with the confusion and helpless unrelaxed on the young ones faced with such responsibilities has necessitated the formalized career counselling practices as introduced by the educational system (Denga 2001). Career counselling is aimed at equipping individual students with adequate and vital information about the world of work that can lead them into making appropriate career decision.

Since a person's occupation plays a vital role in his live, this quasi-experimental study seek to find out the influence of gender in occupational preference of secondary school student s in Nigeria.

This work is therefore based on the socio-cultural theories which emphasize the influence of one's cultural background, family aspiration, attitudes, values and social class' one's sex, place of birth, religious orientation to which one is exposed on the choice of a career.

In most parts of the country the cultural role expectations of men and women are known to be clearly defined.

Some studies have shown significant relationship between sex and occupational aspirations, preferences and choice. Since boys and girls undergo different socializing experiences, they tend to learn different sex roles and interests which later became dominant factors in career choice.

Gesinde, (1986) in his study of some determinants of vocational preferences among Nigeria secondary school students, found sex differences to be a dominant factor. Boys proffered engineering, medicine and agriculture while girls preferred nursing and teaching. Other research findings which have supported sex differences in career preferences and *choices includes the work of Vella (1993) who, in his study of some correlates of vocational orientations of some Nigerian secondary school students discovered that significantly more male students preferred realistic, investigative and enterprising careers than females: Miller and Budd (1999) study also showed that boys were significantly more interested in outdoor, mechanical and persuasive occupations than girls while girls were more interested in computational, artistic, literary and clerical activities.

Occupational Preferences among Male and Female Students in the Senior Secondary Schools

Early socializations, as well as self-efficiency have been identified as major influencing factors in promoting sex or male and female differences in occupational preferences (Farmer and Bohn 1970).

Bojuwoye and Imouokhome (1984) survey work on sex-role in occupation. Decision they used a sample of 232 male and female workers from various occupational fields in Ilorin Metropolis. These subjects were made to respond to a thirty-three (33) item self-report questionnaire. The simple percentage was used to analyze that data

The findings showed that both male and female workers considered their decisions to take to profession 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 were no significant differences in the perception of both males and females to taking to non-traditional occupational, the male workers did not view in favor of the female worker having to becoming pharmacists and secretaryship non-traditional occupations. Also the male workers who were nurses have 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 taking decisions into occupations. This study revealed a great need for career guidance and counselling to help the women identify and develop their talents as well as plan life goals which are commensurate to their male counterparts. Moreso, such a measure would enabled them shade of fertility and inferiority complex in their occupational preferences.

Vella (1993) examines the effect of occupational choice upon the level of wages and investigated the determinant of occupational choice. The evidence supports earlier findings that the wage different is course by demand discrimination within occupations. The author concluded that, if female had a less traditional attitude towards their roles in the labour market, they would generate an occupational distribution that would produce a higher wage.

Onyejiaku (1987) noted that although women are now struggling for equal right with men in difference sectors of life (occupation choices being one), not much achievement has been done to bridge the gap in occupational sex-stereotyping and roles as knowledge of such discriminations cannot be denied in our society. He samples 671 senior secondary I and II students comprising 320 girls and 351 boys from a cross sections of the country, with the sample percentage used for the data analysis the results indicated that 35.09% girls choose nursing as against no boy in that profession. 20.76% of girls choose teaching as against 5.9% boys. On the contrary, 13.51% boys choose engineering as against 0.88% girls. 19.41% boys chose medicine as against 5.16% girls.

The implication of this study is that occupations are still being discriminated, the girls low choices in medicine and engineering (non- traditional occupations) exhibits their low self-perception of incompetency in such jobs. This is in line with their imbibed female sex-roles of home caring and training.

Abiri (1977) randomly samples 1,254 third, fourth and fifth years grammar boys and girls in Ibadan to identify among other things their occupational aspirations. The students were made to respond to self developed questionnaires, prophetic ability questionnaire (PASQ), which was divided into 3 parts. The first part required information on parental background, as well contemporary circumstances and feeling. The second part required supplying information on future aspiration about themselves. While the third section required essay writing on one's future life with special references to education, occupation achievement, possessions, family life and his or her eventual demise.

With the used of the simple percentage for the data analysis, the findings showed that medicine, pharmacy were the student's most aspired occupations with 47.3% score. These were followed by engineering scoring 20%, police force was seen to be least aspired by them with just a score 0.01%. Although more junior students preferred medical to judiciary profession, more of the senior boys preferred engineering, University teaching, scientific occupation and military.

On sex related occupations, it was found that no boy chose nursing first as hardly girl choice engineering, politics and military work. Whereas the boys were more popular in scientific occupations, the girls were found to choose more of clerical, administrative and police force. There was however, no significant difference in the choice of boys and girls in profession such as teaching, trading or business, law and judicial services as both sexes were found on virtually equal strength.

Another significant finding of this study was that their occupational aspirations were largely unrealistic, because majority of them indicated their aspirations to have a doctorate degree in either science or medicine. The high aspiration of the students to choose occupations in medicine or pharmacy, engineering and science, portrayed the societal recognition of these occupations as being prestigious. On the other hand, the sharp distinction in aspirations of the boys and girls on nursing, engineering and political appointments was a clear manifestation of sex-stereotyping of vocations

The keen interest and inclination of Nigerian male students in medical and scientific occupations was further illustrated by Masque (1979) who studied the occupational interest of male secondary school leavers in Kano State. His sample was made up of 107 class five boys from middle class families. These students were asked to respond to interest blank inventory for males which

contain a list of occupations and their possible job opportunities in Nigeria. The independent t-test analysis was used. The study showed that these boys had poor interest in practical mechanical, musical and outdoor activities.

Singer (1974) investigated into sex difference and similarly in job preferences factors in Colorado State University undergraduate. His sample was made up to seventy-five (75) males and fifty-five (55) females totally 130.

Chi-square statistical analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings showed 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 achieves something tangible. In addition, they all wanted jobs in which the workers would exhibit friendly co-existence. However, sex differences were observed in factors such as salary, job security and social recognition.

Feather (1982) undertook a study to find out reasons why students in Australian University have preferences for entering a medical school. He investigated into their most important reason for choosing such a vocation as well as investigated if male and female students differed systematically in the way they approached their reasons. In addition, he also looked into where their general value priorities were, in order to find out whether their rating of importance for the different reasons was a function of values prioritized.

The sample for the study consisted of (87) eighty-seven male and fifty-two (52) females; totally (139) students, whose age range between 18-29 years and were in first and fifth years of study respectively. The students completed a survey questionnaire which presented them with two sets of eighteen values each. In addition, the also supplied information on their subjects background after possible reasons for choosing medicine as a career.

Findings showed that the students choose social or altruistic reasons and opportunity of becoming in challenging occupations as their most important reasons. Satisfying parent's wish or acquisition of societal recognition or prestige as well as financial benefits was lowly rated

Etta (1984) investigated the influence of sex on occupational choice. The sample used for the study was 771 students, 448 males ad 323 female; randomly selected from 20 secondary schools in 5 Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study instrument was a self-developed questionnaire designed by the researcher to measure family size, occupational preferences

of males and female students and socio-economic status of parents. The findings showed that both male and female students were fairly represented in all selected occupations, except nursing which was predominantly for female students.

In the study, Olayinka (1973) used 173 youths (96 boys and 77 girls) in Lagos State. He administers a self-developed questionnaire to them to find factors influencing youths in their occupational choices. Independents t-test analysis was used to analyze the data

Findings showed that most youths were enticed to choose a job simply because it has a high rate of payment or prestige attached to it. He observed that girls indicated some interest in a certain jobs which were formerly regarded as men's occupations.

Achebe (1972) also found out that sex discrimination exists in student's occupational aspirations. In her study, a sample of male and female student, in urban and rural schools in former East central state of Nigeria was take and data collected through a questionnaire and analyzed with sample percentage.

The findings showed that due to cultural beliefs, the girls were discriminated against taking to occupations that required high skill because those would definitely require high and longer time and so would disturb them from being married than did the boys. Due to these findings the researcher recommended the establishment of guidance and counseling program in the Nigerian secondary schools to serve as an enlightening agent for students' knowledge of occupations.

Tunner (1964) investigating whether women career patterns were different from their men counterparts due to their traditional roles of biological make up, used a sample of one thousand four hundred and forty-four (1,444) high senior school women. She found that from the data analyzed with independent t-test; women's ambitions were more complex than men. They may for example manifest themselves in the educational or occupational level which they want from their husbands. She further discovered little or no relationship between materials ambition and educational occupational aspirations. This observed trend was quite opposite pattern to those men. She concluded that women have different patter of ambitions and that these may be manifested in numerous ways which tend not to relate to that of me.

Okpara (1983) studies the patterns and value systems in occupational choice among youths. He uses a sample 120 students and applied a simple percentages analysis on it.

From the result, he concluded that Yoruba youths refused to accept wage labour, if it would involve being a servant, whereas the Ibos would accept any type of as long as it pays well.

Hypothesis: Gender has no significant influence on the occupational preferences of counseled and uncounseled students.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the influence of gender (sex) on occupational preferences of counseling and counseled students.

Methodology

The research design used for the study was purely quasi experimental in nature. In the process the pre-test, post test, were manipulated during the counseling seasoning to bring about a better understanding of self, gender and career. The effect of the manipulations was then compared with the control group for the results as shown on table 1.

Four hundred and fifty (450) sample size of Senior secondary school students from three secondary school with the Cross River State were randomly selected and used for with the assumption that students at this level are almost stabilized in their career choice and preference. The students in the two (2) schools were deliberately grouped into school A – experimental group and school B-control group. The total number of sample in experimental group was 300, 150 male and 150 female while the control group was 150, 75 males and 75 female.

The instrument used in collecting respondents' opinion on their preferred occupation was self-designed well validated occupational preferred inventory (SOPI). The instrument (SOPI) had two sections, A and B, which section A elicit personal information of the subjects (including gender) and section B sought to identify the subjects most preferred occupation.

This was administered by the researchers to all subjects in the two groups before and after the experiment (pre-test and post-test).

Chi-square statistic analysis was therefore used in analyzing the data.

Treatments

The nature of treatment given to the subject in the two groups A, and B were different. Hat and draw method of random sampling was used in the distribution of the subjects for the treatment. School A was assigned the experimental group I, while the school B was the control group. The treatment given to each of the groups was as follows:

1. Experimental Group

The subjects in this group were made to understand that based in the occupations they had earlier selected in their response to the instrument, the researchers will be discussing with them the different requirements of each of the four occupation for a period of six (6) weeks. The researchers ensured that adequate and proper interaction between them and the group members existed within the experimental period.

The career information which was deemed relevant to the subjects concerning each occupation were given, such as, the importance, social relevance in Nigeria, academic qualification required for entry, personal qualities and psychological characteristics required.

In addition special attention was also given to the place of training, length and cost of training conditions while on training, like scholarship, allowance, accommodation, and qualification after training. Besides, subjects were given proper information on method of application for employment, working conditions, fringe benefits, job security, thrills, hazards and opportunity for advancement.

Lecturing and discussion methods were used by the researchers in teaching to ensure their proper understanding and comprehension of the materials. Through continuous feedback from the students in form of intermittent questioning and responding, the researchers ensured that the students were properly following the trend of the information or teaching, as areas that looked confusing were re-explained. Indeed, questions for clarification from the groups were treated with dispatch. At the end of each lecture, the students were asked to submit a short write-up on the occupations including area of preference. This was a way to reinforce learning. They were also required to search for more information about the occupation when at home; and these were discussed in the next lesson/session.

Control Group

After the first pre-treatment of the occupation preference inventory, this group was left completely alone-without further interaction with the researchers for a period of six weeks. The researchers however visited the group from time to time but consciously avoided discussing anything that was related to the experiment which was in session. The group was neither taught, counselled on occupations nor was any other information given. Close interaction between the control group and the experimental groups was not allowed as there were in different schools.

Post-Test Measures

At the end of the experimental period of six (6) weeks, the pre-test (pre-treatment) instrument earlier given to all the subjects irrespective of the group belongingness was re-administered on the entire samples. This is regarded as post treatment test to enable the researchers ascertain whether any significant counselling influence had been registered during the experiment. It was also geared at ascertaining the level of congruence or divergence between the formally selected occupation.

The result of the post-test preference occupation as indicated in subjects responses to the instrument constituted the mode of data collection for this study (see table I). Table I below shows the sequences of steps in the experiments indicating the type of treatment and number of sessions each group received. From the data collected, analyses were made.

Data Analysis and Results

The hypothesis states that gender has no significant influence on the occupational preferences of counseling and uncounseling students. To test this hypothesis, the sampled students were classified into two groups, consisting of those in experimental group and controlling group. The groups were further subdivided into counseled males, counseled females, uncounselled males and uncounselled females. The responses of each of the students in each of these subgroups were enclosed as congruent, incongruent (those who retained and changed their occupations) based on the pretreatment and post treatment.

Thus the resulting frequencies formed the basis for the chi-square statistical analysis for the testing of the hypothesis under consideration. The result of the analysis is presented in table 2.

From table 2, 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 influences students' occupational preferences of both counseled and uncounseled students.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that gender has a significant influence on the occupation preference among counseled and uncounseled students. While one's sex group determines one's choice of occupation when choice was made ignorantly, such sex influence also manifested as a major variable even after counselling and the subsequent enlightenment of occupational demands.

This implies that being a male or female to a larger extent, determined how an individual chose an occupation despite the state of enlightenment or information provision made.

Also, it could be observed that sex influence was exerted between counselled groups' rate of consistency in occupational selection as well as within the counselled groups.

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

For instance Turner (1964) found out in his study that women tend to select occupations distinctly from men. He concluded that due to the biological make up of women, their occupational choice patterns were more complex and different from that of the men. To the researcher, such choice could manifest in different forms; sick women have different patterns of ambition from men. Thus, it could be asserted that the divergence in occupational selection found not only between the counseled and uncounseled groups but also between males and females with each of the group could not have been any other thing but the highlighted variation in career ambition of women and men. Such factor brought about the significant difference found.

Achebe (1972) in support of this finding asserted that due to cultural beliefs, the girls were discriminated over taking to occupations that required high skills, because those would required higher and longer time and so would disturb the girls from being married than did the boys.

Generally, it could be said that career counselling has effective and significant influence in sharpening the subjects career awareness scope when compared to uncounselled group. This finding further unearthed the fact that the more in-depth the career counselling, the better aware and more equipped the individual is in effective and realistic decision taking. Correspondingly, despite the level of career counselling given, an individual's occupation choice tended to cluster around sexually biased notion of occupational grouping. This factor often affected the individual's determination of occupation not only because of its prominences when aggregated across counsellors in the counselling process but because the notion of modern trend in occupational world demanded the purging of such traditional and obsolete perception of occupation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the finding of the study it is concluded that gender is a great determine out of occupational preference of students

It is therefore recommended that Parents, Teachers Guidance counselors and significant others should continue to motivate both boys and girls by providing them with appropriate materials that will help them in career decision making, so that they can achieve self actualization and self fulfillment.

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Table 1: Sequence of steps in the experiment

Type of treatment	Expt. Group 1	Session	Control group	Session
Pre-treatment students' preferences inventory (SOPI)	Yes	1	Yes	1
Pre-experimental instructions teaching and counseling.	Yes	2	Yes	2
Medicine				
(i) Teaching and Counselling	Yes	3	No	-
(ii) Discussion	Yes	4	No	-
Engineering:				
(i) Teaching and counselling	Yes	4	No	-
(ii) Discussion	Yes	5	No	-
Law:				
(i) Teaching and counselling	Yes	5	No	-
(ii) Discussion	Yes	5	No	-
Business Administrative				
(i) Teaching and counseling	Yes	6	No	-

(ii) discussion Post-treatment test students Yes 5 No occupations preferences inventory (SOPI)

Table 2: Chi-square analysis of the influence of gender on the occupational preferences of counseled and uncounseled students

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

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

(a) Expected frequencies are in the brackets

* Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; $df = 3$.