



FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL PHYSICS STUDENTS IN ONITSHA EDUCATION ZONE

by

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Abstract

Career choice is a complex decision for students since it determines the kind of profession they intend to pursue in life. As students try to make career choice while in secondary school, they face problem of matching their career choices with their abilities and school performance. However, studies indicate that most students enter into careers that are totally different from the ones they choose while in secondary schools. The purpose of this study was to examine factors influencing career choice among secondary school physics students in Onitsha education zone. The study was conducted using descriptive survey research method. Sample was collected using simple random sampling method. A total number of 360 secondary physics students selected from the sampled secondary schools in Onitsha education zone were used for the study. The data was collected using close ended questionnaire and analyzed using simple percentage. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire instrument is 0.89. The findings of the study indicate that availability of career advancement, learning experiences, job security, career advancement among others have their influence when choosing a career. However, it was also discovered that gender does not play a vital role when selecting career choices among students.

Keywords: Influence, Career Choice & Physics Students

Introduction

Career choice has become a complex science with the advent of information technology, the emergence of post industrial revolution and job competition. It was a common practice in the old days to find feudalism

converting it into a family affair where the son of a blacksmith was destined to become a blacksmith and a feudal was born a leader. Industrialization and post industrialization has made it possible for a common person to be richer as long as she or he has due skills

and knowledge (Wattles, 2009). Today, one has not only to make due career planning but also exhaustive research before making a career choice so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions (Wattles, 2009). Most students in secondary schools do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate career choice.

According to Kerka (2000), career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self- concept, identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and financial. Bandura *et al.*, (2001), state that each individual undertaking the process is influenced by several factors including the context in which they live in, their personal aptitudes, social contacts and educational attainment. According to Hewitt (2010), factors influencing career choice can either be intrinsic or extrinsic or both. Hewitt further states that most people are influenced by careers that their parents favour, others follow the careers that their educational choices have opened for them, some choose to follow their passion regardless of how much or little it will make them while others choose careers that give high income. Students perception of being suitable for particular jobs also has been found to be influenced by a number of factors including ethnic background, year in school, level of achievement, choice of science subjects, attitudes and differences in job characteristics (McQuaid and Bond, 2003).

In a study by Perrone *et al.*, (2001), on role model influence on the career decisiveness of college students, it was found that role model supportiveness and quality of relationship contributed to the career choice of students. The same study indicated that majority of the students selected same

gender role models. Research on the role of spirituality and religion in career development although limited in scope has suggested that such factors relate positively to desirable career development outcomes such as decisions. For many people with spiritual or religious commitment, faith plays a critical role in the career decision making process (Duffy and Dick 2009). A Study on career choice in Ethiopia (2007), indicated that the students had an external locus of control and believes that there are numerous external factors which influence on their career choices. These external factors include political and economic considerations, previous work experience and the influence of key individuals in a person's life. Pummel, Harwood and Lavalley (2008), reports that external influences that helps to shape an individual's career choice are also influenced by significant others through social support from peers.

In a study by Natalie (2006), young adults through interaction with the context of family, school and community learn about and explore careers which ultimately lead to their career choice. One consistent finding in research suggests that adolescents own aspirations are influenced by their parent's aspirations or expectations. Parental support and encouragement are important factors that have been found to influence career choice. Children may choose what their parents desire simply to please them (Taylor *et al.*, 2004). According to Oyamo and Amoth (2008), studies in Kenya show that rural students tend to seek help from parents more than urban students and that parents more than teachers play a major role in the career choice of students.

Generally, the choice of a career is influenced by parents, friends, and counsellors.

Variations occur from one population to the other. In Kenya, every secondary school student's make their career choices before sitting for their final West African Examination Council. The result of this final examination determines who joins university since admissions into careers are determined by grades obtained from this standard examination. Before making their career choices, students are often provided with a list of careers from which they are to make choices. Most of the students lack adequate information regarding various careers hence the choices that they make are embedded in their perception of the ideal job and the subjects they study in secondary school. The only support students get within the school is from career masters or counsellors as they are mostly referred to and the teachers who are expected to support them in their career. When the final examination results are released and depending on the grades, students are then admitted to the universities based on the career choices that they had made while in school. When these students graduate from the universities, some of them enter into occupations that are totally different from the ones they had chosen and trained for. The purpose of this study was to examine the factors influencing career choice among secondary school physics students in Onitsha Education zone.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the factors that influence career choices among secondary school physics students in Onitsha education zone.
2. To determine if gender as an individual variant play a role in career choices of physics students in Onitsha education zone.

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors influencing career choice among senior secondary physics students in Onitsha education zone. In order to achieve this, the students

3. To determine if learning experiences have a role in choosing career of physics students in Onitsha north education zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this work:

1. What are the factors influencing career choices among secondary school physics students in Onitsha education zone?
2. Does gender as an individual variant play a role in career choices of secondary school physics students in Onitsha education zone?
3. Do learning experiences have a role in choosing career among secondary school physics students in Onitsha education zone?

Research Design

This study was conducted using descriptive survey research design. The study was done in Onitsha education zone. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 360 students who took part in this study. Data for this study was collected using close ended structured questionnaire. In order to remove the ambiguity and biasness and make instruments reliable, a pilot study was conducted in three schools that did not form part of the study sample. The reliability of the questionnaire instrument determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation method is 0.89. On the spot method was adopted by the researcher for questionnaire administration and all the questionnaires administered were collected. Data was analyzed using simple percentage.

were provided with a list of pre-determined factors so that they could indicate how much each of the factors influenced their career choices and the results of which are presented in the following section.

Research Question 1: What are the factors influencing career choices among secondary school physics students?

Table 1: Factors influencing Career Choices among Secondary School Physics Students' in Onitsha Education Zone

Factors	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Availability of advancement	140	38.9	110	30.6	70	19.4	40	11.1
Availability of jobs	180	50	120	33.3	40	11.1	20	5.6
Employment security	111	30.8	95	26.4	85	23.6	69	19.2
Career flexibility	150	41.7	120	33.3	60	16.7	30	8.4
Prestige associated with the profession	140	38.9	100	27.8	80	22.2	40	11.1
Self-employment	170	47.2	110	30.6	60	16.7	20	5.6
Opportunity to apply Skills and knowledge	148	41.1	120	33.3	50	33.3	42	11.7

The result presented on table 1 indicates that a high number of students 47.3% strongly agreed that availability of jobs influenced their career choice, 24.3% agreed while 11.7% were neutral. 8.7% disagreed and 8.1% strongly disagreed. Availability of advancement opportunities in the careers chosen was also influential with 42.9% strongly agreeing and 34.4% agreeing which is more than half of the respondents. Less than 10% disagreed that their career choice was not influenced by availability of advancement opportunity. Employment security reported more than 50% agreeing. However, 20% reporting the highest number of neutral respondents. Ability to choose career specialization within a given

occupation was also considered influential with 35.6% strongly agreeing and 29.1% agreeing. More than 60% of the respondents reported that their career choice was influenced by their ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned while only 12.8% did not consider this as an influential factor.

Career flexibility was also considered influential in students' career choices with 35.7% strongly agreeing and another 33.5% agreeing. Only 8.3% disagreed to this while 5.5 % strongly disagree. Prestige associated with the profession reported 55.6% of the respondents responding in the affirmative, 19.9% were neutral and 24.6% responded in the negative. Most of the students' choices

were also influenced by the opportunities for self-employment. From the results, 29.9% strongly agreed, 28.3% agreed, 17.9% were neutral, 14.2% disagreed and 9.7% strongly disagreed. In general, all the above factors

reported more than 50% of respondents agreeing that their career choices were influenced by the 7 factors.

Research Question 2: Does gender as an individual variant play a role in career choices of secondary school physics students in Onitsha education zone?

Another factor that was considered to be important in influencing career choice among students was gender. The results of the influence that gender has an individual variant on career choice is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Gender as Individual Variant in Choosing of Career by Secondary Physics Students in Onitsha Education Zone.

	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Does gender has a role in your choice of career?	60	16.7	30	8.3	190	52.8	80	22.2

The result shows that most respondents did not consider gender as an influential factor in their career choice with 52.8% strongly disagreeing and 22.2% agreeing which is more than half of the population.

However, 16.7% strongly agreed that gender has influence on their choice of career. This shows that most students were not influenced by their gender when choosing their career.

Research Question 3: Do learning experiences have a role in choosing career among secondary school physics students in

Onitsha education zone?

The researcher was interested in finding out if learning experience of a student has any influence on his or her career choice. This was important because while students are in school they go through varied learning experiences as they interact with curriculum depending on the courses and subjects that they learn in school. The students were therefore asked to indicate the level of agreement on the extent to which learning experiences influenced their career choice and the students' response is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Learning Experience as a Factor Influencing Physics Students Career Choices in Onitsha Education Zone.

	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Does your learning experience affect your choice of career?	148	41.1	78	21.7	60	16.7	74	20.6

The results in table 2 shows that 41.1% strongly agree that their learning experience affect their choice of career. while only 16.7% strongly disagree. This shows that learning experiences influenced most of the students' careers choices.

Discussion of Findings

The main objective of this study was to find out factors influencing career choice among secondary physics students in Onitsha education zone. The analysis of the study was based on influences like availability of jobs, career flexibility, career advancement, employment security and others.

The result from table 1 shows that 83.3% which is above half of the students believe that availability of jobs is an influence on the career they will choose while 30.5% disagree on this. 57.2% of the participants agreed that employment security of the career is an influence to them while 42.8% is on the disagreement. 75% of the students choose career flexibility as the drive behind their career choice while 35.1% choose otherwise. 66.7% of the students is of the

opinion that prestige associated with the career is a driven force for them while 33.3% doesn't think the same. 77.8% of the students choose self -employment also as career influencing for them while 22.3 does not think same. On career advancement, 69.5% of the students believe that advancement of any career is an influence on them when choosing career choices. Also 74.4% believe that ability to apply their skills and knowledge is a yes for them while choosing career choice. This shows that when students are making career choices, outcome expectations play a very influential role in their final decisions. These results are similar to those of Khami *et al.*, (2008), Rodrigo *et al.*, (2005), Perrone *et al.*, (2001) and Myburgh (2005) who also found out that outcome expectations influence individuals' career choices. These similarities confirm that when students make career choice their decisions are much influenced by what a particular career is likely to give in returns.

As to whether gender influences career choice or not, this study shows that most students who took part in this study are not influenced by gender. However, a few of the

students still consider their gender when making their choices. These results differ from those of Hall (2010), who reports that individual's career choices are influenced by gender. This difference in the research findings could be as a result of the fact that Hall (2010), based his research on respondents who are already in the job market while this study is based on secondary school students. These findings demonstrate that there are other factors that influence student's career choices rather than gender.

The results on learning experiences indicate that over 41.1% strongly agreed and also 21.7% agreed that learning experiences influence their choice of career. These results agree with those of Dlamini *et al.*, (2004), Myburgh (2005) and Khami *et al.*, (2008), who reported intellectual challenges, performance and educational reasons respectively as influential in student's career choices all of which fall under learning experiences. The influence of learning experience may be due to the fact that it is in schools that students learn about and explore various careers before they make their career choices and choose subject combinations that eventually lead to their career choices. It is also through their learning experiences while in school those students decide on what they will want to pursue in future in relation to their careers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Student's career choices are influenced by numerous factors which includes availability of jobs, employment security, career flexibility, career advancement, prestige associated with the profession as well as opportunity to apply skills and knowledge and individual variants such as gender.

However, gender play a very minimal role when it comes to career choice. There are variations in the level of influence each factor has on student's career choices.

Based on the conclusions, this study recommends that career counsellors should provide students with experiences that expand the exploration process and a wide range of career information on all the available careers so that they can be able to explore widely before making their choices. The study further recommends that, after initial career decisions have been made, career counsellors can continue to encourage successful career development by identifying sources of psychosocial support available to students. Persons that offer career advice to students should ensure that they are well informed so as to provide accurate information that will lead students to make the right career choice.

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