

***Parental Moral Values and Students' Subject Choice and Career Aspirations in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria***

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the influence of parental moral values on students' subject choice and career aspirations in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State. The study adopted the Ex-post facto design for investigation. A sample of 200 students was drawn from a population of 779 SS3 students through random sampling. Students' Subject Choice and Career Aspiration Inventory (SSCCAI) was the instrument used for data collection. Two hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Data collected were analyzed statistically using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results revealed that parental moral values did not significantly influence students' choice of school subjects and career aspirations respectively. Based on these findings, conclusion was drawn and some recommendations made.*

**Keywords:** Parent, moral, values, subject, choice, career, aspirations.

**Introduction**

One of the most important decisions one makes in life is that of career choice. This is perhaps why the issue of subject offering and career aspiration and choice always attract the attention of parents, guardians, teachers, significant others and peers. Thus, most adolescent students find themselves in dilemma as they are trapped between the wishes of parents, guardians, teachers, significant others, peers and their personal interests, needs and values. Okpoko and Nfon (2008) defined values as principles that control the behaviour of a person. They determine what is morally good and acceptable form of behaviour and what should be regarded as bad and unacceptable to an individual or group within a given environment. Denga (2011) stated that moral values are guides by which individuals judge how reasonable and appropriate their relationships with their fellowmen are. He stated further that moral values include honesty, goodness, rightness, social justice, loyalty, fairplay, respect for other people's interests and property, respect for human dignity and life, truthfulness, diligence, self-discipline and other miscellaneous values peculiar to various cultures and sub-cultures.

Scholars assert that moral values can be learnt and so they can be taught to children. They also believe that children imitate their parents' behaviour, identify with their values and internalize their prohibitions (Graham, 2006). Commenting on the influence of parental moral standards on the child, Anwana in Akpama (1992) posited that if parents have inordinate high moral standards, this may affect the child growing up in such a home in two ways:

a. The child accepts the teaching of his parents as the gospel truth and wants to behave accordingly. As he discovers that in actual life, people do not keep to such strict standards, he begins to see himself as a saint and finds it difficult to adjust.

b. The child first accepts the moral standards of his parents but as he enters the wider society, he sees that people do not behave in such strict ways, turns round to be the complete opposite of what his parents want him to be and this leads to a rejection of all parental precepts.

Cohen in Echeng (2000) in a study of seven families with varying religious, moral values and background, found that the educational programmes each of the seven categories of the parents desired for the children were influenced by their educational, religious and moral values. Cohen observed further that beside children who were ferociously loyal to their parents and the choices which they made for them, many other children had their choice of subjects influenced by the parental religious and moral values.

Furthermore, Okwulanya (2003) reported that there existed a strong relationship between family background and types of subjects being offered by students at graduate level. Walker and Clark (2010) observed that though parents would want their children to have better education than they did, they place importance on moral values. Also Sahlan (2014) asserted that in creating quality individuals, there are parents and students who select religious high schools because of their family values whereby they begin to appreciate the importance of loyalty to their religion and place importance on moral values such as discipline and mutual respect.

Similarly, Maizatul and Zakaria (2012), in a study to investigate the perception and expectation of parents and students regarding choice of school type taking into consideration the influencing factors, used quantitative research design for the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Quantitative analysis using Pearson correlation was used to find out whether there was a significant relationship between parents and students perceptions and expectations in the selection of type of secondary schools and subjects. The findings showed among others that the culture and values of the family influence and shape the attitude, beliefs and choices of students. Also Walaba and Kibous (2013) investigated the factors which influence undergraduate students' choice of Christian Religious Studies (C.R.E.) as a school teaching subject.

Data was collected using questionnaire and interview from 316 Education students at Moi University's main and Eldoret West Campuses. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that parents influence the choice as C.R.E. is viewed as a means of instilling moral development and restoring moral and social order in society.

However, contrary to the above views, Gene and Ronald in Ugbuta (1995) were of the view that though parents are known to exert influence on the child during adolescence, through increased intellectual development, experience, interactions and discussions with peers from different religious, moral and social class backgrounds, the adolescents at times begin to question adults values and set new ones for themselves. This according to Gene and Ronald could influence their choice of subjects which may not reflect the moral values of their parents. In support of the above view, Anwana in Asuquo (1992) maintained that though parental moral standards influence the child, this may be at the initial stage, but that the child can turn round to be a complete opposite of what his parents want him to be when he enters the wider society and discovers that people do not keep to such strict ways. This according to Anwana, can lead to rejection of parental values and may inturn affect the child's choice of school subjects.

According to Nwaubani (2009), before something is a value, it must be (a) chosen freely (b) chosen among alternatives (c) chosen after due reflection (d) prized and cherished (e) publicly affirmed (f) acted upon and (g) repeated. Thus, it can be inferred from this view that the type of school, educational training and subject offerings which parents desire for their children are reflections of their occupational preference and values. Such values could impinge on the child's career aspirations. This view is also held by Okorodudu in Fareo (2018) who opined that the family is the first contact of the child and that interaction of the child with members of the family internalizes some values, ideals, norms and develop a sense of career in the child. Super in Akpama (1992) maintained that religious values which affect behaviour could also affect career preferences. In the same line of thought, Denga (1990) opined that some families avoid certain occupations because their religious beliefs and values seem to be violated by certain occupational practices. Elegbede (1997) also in his study of non-preferred occupations of secondary school students and reasons for non-preference found that his subjects did not aspire for law because "it perpetuates injustice, corruption and immoral dealings".

Contrary to the above views, Denga (1992) contended that the young ones today do not share many value patterns with their elders and those in secondary school may fail to appreciate some of the corrective restrictions imposed by the school which they may regard as being archaic. In support of the above view, Olutola in Echeng (2000) observed that the glamour of some occupations leading to career choice in them often

turn out to be an illusion. According to him, in a valedictory speech at Ibadan in 1983, the outgoing commissioner of police in Oyo State vowed not to allow any of his children join the police force because of the nature of the job. In this study, the influence of parental moral values on students' subject choice and career aspirations was investigated.

### **Statement of the problem**

The hopes of many parents who send their wards to school as means of liberating the family from its educational and economic predicament have been shattered by the plague of poor quality of academic attainment and unemployment among school leavers. This is perhaps due to the fact that the programmes of schools in some cases do not meet the needs of individuals and the society. It is also observed that many of our secondary school youths lack the ability to choose the right subjects and career. Besides, several youths lack self and social understanding which are necessary for a smooth transition from school to work and for realistic subject choice and career aspirations.

The resultant effect of all these is that subject choice, career aspirations and eventual choice are haphazardly done. This practice relegates to the background such factors as abilities, needs, aptitudes, interests, values and other personality characteristics as the basis for students' subject choice and career aspirations. It thus appears that besides the numerous factors which influence secondary school students' subject choice and career aspirations, parental moral values may also exert intractable influence. It is on this premise that this study was carried out to investigate the extent to which parental moral values influence the subject choice and career aspirations of our secondary school students.

### **Hypotheses**

Ho1: Parental level of moral values does not significantly influence students' subject choice.

Ho2: Parental level of moral values does not significantly influence students' career aspirations.

### **Methodology**

Ex-post facto design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised all SS3 students in public secondary schools in Obubra Local Government Area as at the time of this study numbering 779 students. The sample size was 200 SS3 students randomly drawn from the study population. To achieve this, a table of random numbers was prepared. A list of all SS3 students from each of the five schools sampled for the study was collected and arranged alphabetically with their surnames and numbers assigned to them. Using this table of random numbers, a mechanically generated set

of forty (40) students was obtained from each of the five schools. The outcome of this procedure was that 200 SS3 students (131 males and 69 females) were gotten. This formed the sample for the study.

The instrument used for the study was Students' Subject Choice and Career Aspirations Inventory (SSCCAI). The instrument was made up of three sections. Sections A and B dealt with students' and parents' demographic data respectively. Section C had a six point Likert scale ranging from Very Strongly Agree (VSA), Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) to Very Strongly Disagree (VSD). This section consisted of thirty six (36) items and was used to elicit information on the influence of parental moral values on students' subject choice and career aspirations. In the six response choice, the most positive response was scored 6 while the most negative response had 1. This meant that scoring was reversed for negatively worded items. The instrument was validated by experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar. Test-retest reliability method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which was 0.68. This was considered high enough to justify the use of the instrument. ANOVA was used in analysing the data generated from the study.

### **Presentation of results**

**Ho1:** Parental level of moral values does not significantly influence students' subject choice.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in testing the hypothesis. Parental moral values was categorised into high, moderate and low. The results are presented in table 1. The results revealed that the calculated f-value of 0.14 is less than the critical f-value of 3.04 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 197 degrees of freedom. This meant that parental level of moral values does not have significant influence on students' subject choice. With this result, the null hypothesis was retained.

**Table 1:** One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of parental level of moral values on students' subject choice

Level of parental moral values	N	Mean	SD
High	45	32.20	2.42
Moderate	90	32.43	2.88
Low	65	32.46	2.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>32.36</b>	<b>2.51</b>

  

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	f
Between group	0.92	2	0.46	0.14
Within group	631.04	197	3.20	
<b>Total</b>	<b>631.96</b>	<b>199</b>		

Not significant at .05 level; df=2 and 197; critical f=3.04.

The result in table 1 is statistically insignificant. A close observation of the table also reveals non-significant difference in the mean scores between groups.

**Ho2:** Parental level of moral values does not significantly influence students' career aspirations.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The level of parental moral values was categorised into high, moderate and low. The results are presented in table 2. The results indicate that the calculated f-value of 1.91 is less than the critical f-value of 3.04 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 197 degrees of freedom. This showed that parental level of moral values does not have significant influence on students' career aspirations. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was upheld.

**Table 2:** One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of level of parental moral values on students' career aspirations

Level of parental moral values	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
High	45	28.50	3.13
Moderate	90	27.88	3.48
Low	65	28.76	3.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>28.37</b>	<b>3.24</b>

  

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	f
Between group	18.59	2	9.30	1.91
Within group	958.92	197	4.87	
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.51</b>	<b>199</b>		

Not significant at .05 level; df=2 and 197; critical f=3.04.

The results in table 2 above is statistically insignificant. A close observation of the table also shows non-significant difference in the mean scores between groups.

### **Discussion of findings**

The result of hypothesis 1 shows that the level of parental moral values does not significantly influence students' subject choice. This is contrary to the findings of Walker and Clark (2010), Sahlan (2014), Walaba and Kibous (2013) etc on the influence of parental moral values on students' subject choice. However, it is in consonance with Gene and Ronald in Ugbuta (1995) who maintained that though parents are known to exert influence on the child during adolescence, but through increased intellectual development, experiences, interactions with peers from different religions, moral and social class background, the adolescents at times begin to question adults' values and set new values for themselves. This result also upholds the view of Anwana in Asuquo (1992) that parental moral values or standard may influence the child to some extent as some children sometimes turn round to be a complete opposite of what the parents want them to be as they enter the wider society and discover that people do not keep to such strict ways.

A cursory look at the analysis of the result also revealed non-significant difference in the mean scores between the groups. This could be attributed to the intractable impact of "generation gap" and self-assertiveness among the present day youths. This perhaps also unfolds the weakening parental grip on adolescents in terms of moral values and disciplinary upbringing of the youths in our contemporary times.

The result of the analysis in respect of hypothesis 2 indicated that the level of parental moral values does not significantly influence students' career aspirations. This finding contradicts the findings of Okorodudu in Faero (2018), Elegbede (1997) and Super in Akpama (1992) etc on the remarkable influence of parental moral values on students' career aspirations. Nevertheless, the result corroborates the finding of Denga (1992) that the young today do not share many value patterns with their elders and those in secondary school may fail to appreciate some corrective restrictions imposed by the school which they see as archaic. This result also agrees with the position of Olutola in Echeng (2000) who observed that in a valedictory speech at Ibadan, an outgoing commissioner of police in 1983 vowed not to allow any of his children join the police force because of the nature of the job.

This result could also be ascribed to the attitude of the youths today who easily mortgage their conscience (moral values) in their quest for making money quickly. It is common experience today in Nigeria, like elsewhere, to find many youths clamouring for those occupations which create avenues for making money quickly regardless of the level of immorality and risk involved.

## **Conclusion**

The finding of this study revealed that parental moral values does not exert significant influence on students' subject choice and career aspirations. From this finding, it can be deduced that many of today's youths are more on their own in terms of moral values as they affect the choice of school subjects and career aspirations.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Both the government and school heads should ensure that guidance and counselling services are stepped up in schools to assist students in value formation and clarification.
2. Parents should strengthen their role in terms of value formation, moral and disciplinary upbringing of the youths.
3. While parents and guardians assist their children and wards in the choice of school subjects and career aspirations, they should liaise with the school counsellor to ensure that such choices and aspirations reflect the child's ability, interest, values, needs and other personality characteristics as these factors are uppermost in this direction.

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