

Perceived influence of Occupational Information on Vocational Choice of Secondary School Students in Onitsha South Education Zone of Anambra State

¹Arinze Kingsley Okeke
[*okekearinze84@gmail.com*](mailto:okekearinze84@gmail.com)

¹Okudo B. Ugochukwu
[*ugoben85@gmail.com*](mailto:ugoben85@gmail.com)

¹*Department of Educational Psychology/Guidance and Counselling
Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe
Anambra State*



Abstract

This study examined the perceived influence of occupational information on vocational choice of secondary school students in Onitsha South Education Zone of Anambra State. To guide the study, four research questions were generated. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study was 39,032 students in 32 Public secondary schools in the area of study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 100 students. A twenty-five structured questionnaire titled “Occupational information on Vocational Choice scale” (OIVCs) was used for the study. The reliability of the instrument was tested and reliability co-efficient was 0.97 using Cronbach Alpha. Mean was used for data analysis. The results show that occupational information helps undergraduate students to make right vocational choices, exposes them to available job opportunities and helps them to discover their abilities, interest, aptitudes and potentials in their vocational choices. Recommendations were made which include, among others, that there should be effective vocational counselling services in schools, ranging from primary to universities, and school authority should be flexible in placing students on course of study so that students should choose vocations that match their personalities and abilities.

Keywords: Occupational, information, vocational, choice, students, counselling

Introduction

Nigeria views education of her citizens as a means for the realization of her desires of having a strong and self-reliant nation. Moreover, the government sees the education of her citizens as a means of acquiring appropriate skills, abilities, competences and the right type of values for their survival and the survival of the Nigerian society

(Akpochafo & Alike, 2018). Every occupational information given to help the students can be regarded as guidance information. What is labeled information service in school guidance programme exists almost exclusively to enable students become better informed and thereby make better and more appropriate choices among the educational, vocational opportunities available to them (Agi & Amakiri, 2008).

Generally, the importance of information in every sphere of human endeavour cannot be over-emphasized hence, it is said that information is power and he that is not informed is undoubtedly deformed. Information according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English (2015) is defined as “informing or being informed, something told, news or knowledge given”. In guidance, information refers to all data that may be used to help people make choices. Such data/information could be in prints, audio, or visual; but what is important is that it is used to make people aware of self and the world (Nwadinaobi, Umezurlike & Eneasator, 2013).

Occupational information is defined by Oladele (2002) as the “fact about job for use in vocational guidance” or “a description of man’s work and its related conditions “and “information about the world of work”. Occupational information is a valid and usable data about positions, jobs, and occupations, including duties, requirements for entrance, conditions of work, rewards offered, advancement pattern existing and predicted supply and demand for further information (Ipaye cited in Nwadinaobi et al, 2013). According to Osuala (2010), occupational information is a systematically organized data used by guidance personnel for the purpose of helping persons make a vocational choice which includes information on the nature of work, duties performed, responsibilities, and compensation involved in various vocations, information about employment outlook, promotion opportunities and entrance requirements. Hayes and Hapson (2013) noted that occupational information are facts about jobs for use in vocational guidance; a description of a man’s work and its related conditions and information about the world of work or occupation.

Ekpenyong (2008) noted that based on the government’s national policy, occupational information should benefit youth and students in at least two ways (a) by the provision of career guidance and counselling services (b) through job placement. In the word of Odoh (2005), vocational choice is the right to choose an occupational liberally without demands from external influences. Ohiwerei and Nwosu (2009) defined vocational choice as a sequence of positions, jobs or occupation, which a person engaged in during his working life. Vocation takes a reasonable amount of years within a particular occupation for ten, fifteen and twenty year’s duration. It is a process of elimination or circumscription in which a person progressively eliminates certain occupational alternatives from further consideration.

Blau (2001) saw vocational choice as a developmental choice process that extends over many years. He further stated that there is no single time when young people decide upon one out of all possible careers but there are many cross-roads at which lives takes decisive turns which narrow the range of further alternatives and these influence the ultimate choice of career.

According to Parson (1998), occupational information is organized so as to assist the young people in choosing their career; it consists of systematic efforts to inform or furnish experiences, interest, abilities and their personal variables. According to Amasuomu (2014), for an adolescent who has graduated from post primary school, the major turning point in his life involves the occupational choice they will make in their post-secondary school training. This career or vocation selection is one major important choice students will make in determining future plans and this decision will impact them throughout their lives (Borchert, 2000). Reaffirming this, Nwadinaobi et al., (2013) opined that most Nigerian youths today engaged in all sorts of deviant behaviours because of lack of information especially in the areas of education and vocation. Decrying the ugly scenarios, they stated thus:

Wrong choice of career is one of the major causes of unemployment and vocational maladjustment today, which often leads to the victims engaging in acts capable of destroying the individual and even the society where he/she comes from. This stems from the fact that the individual is compared to the state of a pilot who suddenly finds him or herself in heavy cloud-bumps. The result is that he or she goes into turbulence and experiences great difficulty along with his or her passengers (p.g 2).

Occupational information is important and useful in several ways to pupils in the primary school, students in secondary school, graduates of colleges and universities and youth/people wishing to change their job (Hayes & Hapson, 2013). It helps in occupational decision making where people know the stability and prospects of a particular occupation before making a choice; they are saved from the problems of choosing that which are already saturated and which may have no prospects for them (Issacson, 2014). In the same vein, Darvin (2015) noted that people have very often chosen some occupations only to find out when it is too late, that they do not like the occupations and this leads to job disaffection and frustration. The provision of occupational information, therefore prevents job disaffection and frustration in a job, and eliminates inefficiency and low productivity.

Okorie (2005) opined that when students have a good knowledge of the occupation of their vocational choice, they are enabled to compare each quality they possess or lack with the special requirement of a given occupation. This will enable them choose only

those vocation they possess their requirements. Availability of occupational information to students helps them to know the amount of training required for a particular vocation and the demands of the vocations in terms of duties and responsibilities (Darvin, 2015). According to Happock (2014), occupational information is provided under these categories: (i) Type of education and vocational skills and knowledge required (ii) Salary and fringe benefits (iii) Pension scheme (iv) Attitudes (v) Self –understanding. Different sources of information on occupation include libraries, information bureau, counsellors, field trip, mass media, career conference, Parents Teachers Association (PTA), among others (Hayes & Hapson, 2013).

According to Iwuama (1991) objectives of occupational information include:

- ❖ To help students/youth to understand their abilities, interest, values, and other personality traits.
- ❖ To aid students to develop an acceptable self –image and realistic attitude to school achievement as necessary prelude to vocations.
- ❖ To help them identify different occupational areas that are available both in the immediate and more distant future and purpose of each and the direction to which each leads.
- ❖ To help student to understand the prevailing circumstance in the world of work and the worth of legitimate occupations as well as inculcating in them the dignity of labour.
- ❖ To assist students/youths develop and execute career plans which will help them in achieving their vocational goals by taking appropriate courses at the relevant steps/training after the secondary level that would qualify them for particular occupations.
- ❖ In addition, provision of occupational information helps the future of the youth to be stable and secure. Once an individual can make realistic career decision, well trained and gainfully employed with stable source of income, certainly such student or individual already has a secure future at the same time, and he or she would contribute to the development of the society.

According to Okorie (2005), there are several problems facing effective provision of occupational information and vocational guidance in schools. These problems include the following:

- ❖ Absence of professional guidance counsellors in schools.
- ❖ Inability to help and update students' vital records such as cumulative records etc.
- ❖ And failure to provide rehabilitation services in schools.

He posited that the above challenges render the vocational guidance and counsellor handicapped on how to render informed and intelligent advice to students on their vocational and career aspirations.

A persons' occupation plays important roles in his whole life. His social status and income, style of life, his choice of friends, and his mental and physical health are all influenced by the nature of his occupation (Denga cited in Ifedili & Ofoegbu, 2011). The process of vocational choice should be based on person's capabilities, aptitude, interest, and needs so that he can derive adequate satisfaction from his work with benefit to himself and society. He further pointed out that students cannot choose what they do not know or what they are not well informed about. Though, occasionally, vocational choice may be made accidentally, this accident may mean the luck of being there when someone with the candidate's type of qualification was needed to be employed. It may also mean the accident of being born of poor parents who could not finance student's education and so one had to drop out of school rather early and forced to enter a low –paying job.

Statement of the Problem

Psychologists and counsellors since the time of Frank Parson in early 1909 have been concerned with the problems of vocational choice and vocational decisions. This led to research in this area, and numerous problems with respect to how students make their career choices. Despite avalanche of information on various facets of occupational decision-making, no adequate road –map have been developed to explain how the multiplicity of factors within the environment and forces within students can react on each other so that individual could finally resolve the problem of their career choice. It is also being asserted by psychologists that careers chosen by an individual should be related to his interest, ability and aptitude.

However, a lot is still missing as little or no attention has been given to provision of effective occupational information for proper guidance of students in their vocational choice, thereby making the student to choose any career that they do not have interest out of frustration, which have brought so many social ills in Nigeria such as banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse, child trafficking etc. Also, inadequate trained counsellors and vocational workers is a problem that influences occupational information of vocational choice of students because there are no well trained counsellors who will direct and give information to the students on their best choice of occupation. Another problem is that counsellors are not duly recognized in Nigeria, therefore causing one to choose occupation he/she is not good at. The problem of this study therefore was centered on examining perceived impact of occupational information on vocational choice of secondary school students in Onitsha south educational zone of Anambra state.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised:

- 1) What are the roles of occupational information on the vocational choice of secondary school students?
- 2) What factors affect the vocational information of secondary school students?
- 3) What are the ways occupational information can be made available to secondary school students?
- 4) What are the challenges of vocational choice among secondary school students?

Methodology

The study was carried out using descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 39,032 students in 32 Public secondary schools in the area of the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 100 students. A twenty-five item structured questionnaire titled "Occupational Information on Vocational Choice scale" (OIVCs) was used for the study. The reliability of the instrument was tested and reliability co-efficient was 0.97 using Cronbach Alpha. Mean was used for data analysis. The instrument was structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4points), Agree (A=3points), Disagree (D=2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD=1). Mean rating between 0 – 1.44 is rated as SD, 1.5 – 2.44 is rated as disagree, 2.5 to 3.44 is rated as agree while 3.5 to 4.0 is rated as strongly agree.

Presentation of results/Discussions

Research Question 1: What are the roles of occupational information on the vocational choice of secondary schools students?

Table 1: Mean responses on the role of occupational information on vocational choice of secondary school students

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Occupational information helps students make right vocational choice	100	3.61	0.49	A
2.	Knowledge of occupation exposes student to job requirements	100	3.38	0.71	A
3.	Inadequate occupational information makes students choose vocation wrongly	100	3.41	0.66	A
4.	Occupational information exposes students to choices about education, vocational paths and specific jobs.	100	3.52	0.51	A
5.	Occupational information helps students to understand the world of work and the relationship between personal attributes, interests and vocational choice.	100	3.47	0.72	A
6.	Occupational information helps to make decisions on programme offerings, curriculum, and resource allocation and about improving linkages with employees.	100	3.46	0.70	A

Summary of result in table1 shows that the respondents agreed on all the items as the roles of occupational information on the vocational choice of secondary school students in Onitsha South Education Zone of Anambra State. The respondents agreed that occupational information helps them make right vocational choices (Mean = 3.61) and it exposes students to choices about education, vocational paths and specific jobs (Mean = 3.33) and use of assignment (Mean = 3.52). The implication of the result is that occupational information is instrumental in guiding students make right vocational choices that will equip them well on graduation to become self-employed and contributing members of the society.

Research question 2: What are the factors affecting vocational choice of secondary school students?

Table 2: Mean responses on the factors affecting vocational choice of secondary school students

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
7.	The vocational choice made by their peers	100	3.29	0.69	A
8.	Parental financial status	100	3.20	0.69	A
9.	Parent's educational background	100	3.23	0.71	A
10.	Religion of the student	100	3.17	0.83	A
11.	Health of the student	100	3.19	0.83	A
12.	Occupational opportunities available	100	3.31	0.63	A

Summary of result in table 2 shows that the respondents agreed on all the items as the factors affecting vocational choice of secondary school students in Onitsha South Education Zone of Anambra State with occupational opportunities available (Mean = 3.31) and the vocational choice made by their peers (Mean = 3.29) ranking highest among the factors. The implication of the result is that students should be guided not to allow vocational choice of their peers influence their choice of vocation as against the rich occupational information provided in school and should be more creative and not depend solely on the occupational opportunities available in making decisions on vocational choices.

Research Question 3: What are the ways occupational information can be made available to secondary school students?

Table 3: Mean responses on sources of occupational information to secondary school students

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
14.	Employing efficient vocational counsellors in secondary schools	100	3.24	0.74	A
15.	Organizing vocational sensitization programmes and seminars in secondary schools	100	3.39	0.71	A
16.	Establishing vocational resource library in schools	100	3.20	0.79	A
17.	Vocational awareness via mass media	100	3.23	0.71	A
18.	Field trip/excursion	100	3.17	0.73	A
19.	Group assemblies	100	3.19	0.73	A
20.	Group guidance sessions	100	3.28	0.76	A

Summary of result in table 3 shows that the respondents agreed on all the items as the ways occupational information can be made available to secondary school students in Onitsha South Education Zone of Anambra State with vocational sensitization programmes, and seminars in secondary schools (Mean = 3.39) and Group guidance sessions (Mean = 3.28) ranking highest among the ways. The implication of the result

is that students can enrich and equip themselves with useful occupational information that will help them make rightful vocational choices through above sources.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges confronting secondary school students when making vocational choice?

Table 4: The mean responses on challenges confronting secondary school students in vocational choice making

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Decision
21.	Inadequate information on available job opportunities	100	3.42	0.69	A
22.	Peer group influence	100	3.17	0.70	A
23.	Government policy on students' placements	100	3.22	0.61	A
24.	Environment in which student find him/herself	100	3.27	0.63	A
25.	Students' conflicting interest.	100	3.47	0.65	A

Summary of result in table 4 shows that the respondents agreed on all the items as the factors affecting vocational choice of secondary school students in Onitsha South Education Zone of Anambra State with students' conflicting interest (Mean = 3.47) and inadequate information on available job opportunities (Mean = 3.42) ranking highest among the challenges. The implication of the result is that students should be guided not to allow the challenges influence their choice of vocation and school guidance counsellors should prioritize counselling students early to guide them in making the right vocational choices that will help them to be employable, self-employed cum employers of labour after schooling.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that an individuals' vocation is a life-long affair; therefore adequate attention must be given to it to avoid making mistake in choosing it. Wrong vocational choice is devastating because it can lead to unemployment or dropping out of schools among students. It is therefore, very important that occupational information given to a child must be concise and adequate. The vocational school counsellor has to be aware of some intervening variables in making choice of vocation when advising students. Also, students must take into consideration their abilities and potentialities before making choice of vocation, which should match the qualities of the occupation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School authorities should ensure there are provisions for professional counsellors and vocational counselling services in secondary schools.
2. Vocational seminars and workshops on vocational choice should be regularly organized for students in schools.
3. Students should choose occupations that match their personalities and abilities.
4. School authority should be flexible in placing students in their course of study.
5. Secondary school students should be exposed to the importance of guidance services and what counselling is all about in order for them to make good and sustainable vocational choices.

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