Labour Market Information and Career Aspirations of Senior Secondary School Students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract
An ex post facto research design was adopted to investigate labour market information and career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Using systematic random sampling technique, a sample of 720 senior secondary II students was drawn from a population of 5,840 students of 2018/2019 academic session in the 90 public secondary schools in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. The instrument used for data collection was the researchers' designed "Students' Labour Market Information and Career Aspirations Questionnaire" (SLMICAQ). The instrument was validated by five experts and had Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .72. The data collected were analysed using Pearson contingency chi-square statistics. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significant level. The findings showed that labour market information (job availability, employability skills), has significant relationship with career aspirations of senior secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended, among others, that Cross River State Government should train and post more guidance counsellors to secondary schools to help students gather relevant labour market information needed to make realistic career plans.
Keywords: labour, market, information, availability, employability

Introduction
The most critical task facing many Nigerian secondary school students today is decision-making concerning appropriate career preference. This is as a result of absence of, or poor career guidance services in the secondary school system, and the unwillingness on the part of the students to avail themselves of these services. The problem has become complex within the context of globalization and the effects of industrialization,

technological development and urbanization which has resulted to increase in the range of career opportunities available in the world of work. Thus, making an appropriate career decision that will lead to effective employment and job satisfaction remains a challenge to the Nigerian secondary school student.

A person's career is one of the most important aspects of human endeavours because it involves one's total life. It determines one's income, choice of friends, pattern of dress, the extent of influence in the society as well as the amount of risk one is exposed to. Career is the totality of actions, positions and related activities involved in any vocation, occupation and jobs in an individual's lifetime of work. Super cited in Asuquo (2007) defined career to incorporate work and non-work related variables and the sequence of important positions occupied by an individual all through his/her pre-occupational, occupational and post-occupational life including work-related roles such as those of a student, employee and pensioner. This definition shows that career involves all the experiences from the time of aspiration, preparation or training, actual engagement in work, progression and to the point of retirement.

Career aspirations, as defined by Petters, Asuquo and Eyo (2015), are the thoughts, feelings and fantasies that individuals visualize about their jobs which are capable of affecting their motivations and decision-making with respect to their career choice. Rojewski (2005) defines career aspirations as an individual's expressed career related goals or choices, given ideal conditions. This means that career aspiration is a process of development that incorporates one's decision-making on one's interest, aptitude, abilities, adequate knowledge of occupational information and influence of home variables.

Career aspirations of secondary school students may be influenced by multiple factors which are either intrinsic or extrinsic. According to Kabir and Sajib (2014), these factors may include interest, self-concept, personality, cultural identity, role model, globalization, socialization, physique, gender, aptitudes, socio-economic status, educational attainment, and the careers that parents favour. Be that as it may, realistic career aspiration depends largely on the quality and amount of occupational information made available to youths especially at the secondary school level (Petters, Asuquo & Eyo, 2015).

The labour market is the platform from which human labour is bought and sold as a commodity (The Labour Market Context of Human Resource Management-HRM, 2018). The HRM further stated that it is through this platform that labour demand (the number and types of available jobs) is matched with labour supply (number and types of available workers). This mechanism ensures that the right persons with the right skill, knowledge and attributes are employed in the right jobs and positions, and also determines the opportunities available. It becomes imperative for any one aspiring to go into any career to have accurate and reliable information on the workings of the labour market and consider such variables as job availability in the labour market and skills required by employers of labour. Information on these areas may help students to make better career plans.

Lack of adequate information has resulted in students' aspirations being seen from their understanding of the ideal job as based on the subjects they are doing well at the secondary school level. Inadequate labour market information may lead to over production of graduates in one sector of the economy and hinder production in other sectors (Petters & Asuquo, 2009). Often some students after graduation enter occupations totally different from the ones they had aspired to go into and trained for because they realized their inadequacies and so change to occupations they can cope with.

The world of work has become so vast, complex, and competitive that a good knowledge and understanding of some of the factors that may influence appropriate career choice becomes imperative. The lack of information on the labour market has made setting appropriate career goals difficult for young people at the senior secondary school level. The need to have guidance counsellors in schools to help students in their career development process becomes imperative. This paper therefore seeks to examine the influence of labour market information on career aspirations among senior secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Job, according to Njama-Abang (2008), is a continuous period of paid employment with similar or related positions in a single institution, organization or establishment. Job is also seen as a group of homogeneous tasks related by similarity of function which when performed by an employee as an exchange for pay consists of duties, responsibilities and tasks that are defined and specific and can be accomplished, quantified, measured and rated (Business Dictionary, 2018). This source further said that a job is synonymous with a role and includes the physical and social aspects of a work environment. Individuals are often identified with their job roles in the society and also derive some motivation from the usefulness of their jobs as they help to meet some basic needs of the employers.

Jobs can be categorized in different ways. There are temporary jobs which lasts for a short period of time and do not have any form of security as the job could be terminated at any time when such services are no longer needed (Enya & Obot, 2009). The same authors also identified seasonal jobs which are done at particular times of the year and the workers often move from place to place as the opportunities present themselves. The third category of jobs by the authors is permanent or steady jobs. These jobs last for as long as the employee decides to stay in the job and are secure. These jobs usually influence different aspects of the life of the employees like where they live, friends they keep, status in society, lifestyle and so on. The different jobs done by individuals are meant to meet their personal needs and also help them contribute to the economic development of the society in general.

Secondary school students therefore need to be well-informed about availability of jobs in the labour market in order to make realistic career plans. It has been observed that many job vacancies are usually filled without advertisement. This implies that an unemployed worker must know where and what kind of work is available, the terms and conditions of the vacancies (Pillai, 2012). Asuquo and Inaja (2013) reported that current realities

characterized by pervasive poverty and unemployment have today tended to make people take what is available and not necessarily what they desire or what they are prepared for. Economic crises have caused an increase in unemployment and underemployment in many advanced, emerging and developing countries and students need to be equipped with the right kind of information before they begin to aspire for any career as choices are considerably wider nowadays.

Petters and Asuquo (2009) said that lack of appropriate information on occupations and labour market trends can indirectly promote increased unemployment among youth because industrialization, technical development and urbanization have opened ways for the emergence of new occupations. Many secondary school students are ignorant of the new career opportunities and as a result want to pursue career in occupations where there are limited job openings. According to Pillai (2012), an unemployed worker who does not know where work is available, what kind of work and terms and conditions of the vacancies are, will suffer more in the labour market as a result of ignorance. Students therefore need information on the labour market in order to establish appropriate preferences and make the right decisions in the face of competing educational, training and employment opportunities (Petters & Asuquo, 2009).

Skill is the ability and capability acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills) (Business Dictionary, 2018). It is a learned ability to do something with predetermined results within a given period of time. Skills are critical asset for individuals, business and societies and their importance is more pronounced in a rapidly changing and/or dynamic and globalized world (World Economic Forum, 2018).

Young people the world over are struggling to enter the labour market and as Hansen and Hansen (2015) put it, most job seekers wish they can unlock the secret formula for winning the hearts and minds of employers. Every employer, the authors said, is looking for specific skills from job seekers that match skills necessary for the performance of a particular job. Apart from these specific technical skills, there are basic skills and competencies expected by every employer at certain levels. The skill gaps usually reported by employers around the globe include a lack of generic or soft skills namely: teamwork, interpersonal skills, leadership, knowledge of foreign languages, readiness to learn, problem solving and ICT skills. According to the World Economic Forum (2018), the world of work is changing and some jobs are changing faster than others; it added that soon one will need to be as good as the skills one possesses. It observed that the gap between the skills people learn and the skills people need is becoming more obvious, as traditional learning falls short of equipping students with the knowledge they need to thrive. They suggested that today's job candidates must be able to collaborate, communicate and solve problems to succeed in the evolving digital economy. Considering these basic employability skills by job seekers, Hansen and Hansen (2015) identified some of them as: Communication skills, analytical/research skill, computer

literacy, adaptability/flexibility, interpersonal abilities, leadership/management skill, planning/organizing skill, problem-solving/reasoning skill and team work.

These are all critical skills needed for employability and success in the work place. This is even so important because, according to the World Economic Forum (2018), employers continue to be concerned with skills deficits; despite high unemployment in many countries, specific sectors and occupations are still unable to fill job vacancies due to difficulties in finding workers with required skills. In their report of 2016 contained in 'The Future of Jobs', they looked at employment, skills and workplace strategy for the future and came up with ten top skill required for job performance in 2020 which include: Complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, coordinating with other, emotional intelligence, judgment and decision making, service orientation, negotiation and cognitive flexibility.

It has been observed in the Nigerian context that many graduates lack these employability skills and most of them cannot cope with work demands nor fit into some employment positions. Bassey and Atan (2012) asserted that graduates at different levels play crucial role in generating human capacities for leadership, management and technical expertise. But this assertion has not been fully realized among Nigerian graduates. Messa (2013), on this note, advised that with the complexities of unemployment and the technological shifts in today's labour market, young people need not only information but also the skills they can get to ensure they make sound career decisions and fit into the labour market. In another study, Jonick and Walt (2015) compared private and public sectors' evaluation of employability skills of employed graduates in Manguang area of South Africa. An ex-post facto research design was used; and questionnaire was employed for data collection while descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. A sample of 503 subjects, 250 private sector and 253 public sector graduate employees were studied. The results showed that the only statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of employability skills are self- responsibility and interpersonal skills. The result is indicative that the employability skills sought by public and private sectors are similar.

Purpose of the study
Generally, the purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of labour market information on senior secondary school students' career aspirations in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the following:
    1. The influence of the level of adequacy of information on job availability on students' career aspirations.
    2. The influence of the level of adequacy of information on required employability skills on students' career aspirations.

Hypotheses
This study was guided by the following null hypotheses:
    Ho1: There is no significant influence of adequacy level of information on job availability on secondary school students' career aspirations.

Ho2: Adequacy level of information on required employability skills does not significantly influence secondary school students' career aspirations.

Methodology

This study adopted the ex-post facto research design. This design is considered because of its capacity to ascertain the extent to which the independent variables have impacted on the dependent variable without the necessity for manipulation of the former.

The population of this study consists of all the senior secondary two (SSII) students of 2018/2019 academic session in the ninety (90) public secondary schools in the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. The stratified random sampling technique is used in the selection of schools, since the five (5) local government areas in the zone do not have equal number of schools. Therefore, the schools were stratified according to local government areas, and 40% of schools were taken from each of the local government areas. The sample for this study is made up of 720 SSII students, drawn from 36 public secondary schools sampled from the five local government areas that make up the Ogoja Education Zone. The sample comprised 386 male and 334 female students with ages ranging between 12 and 18 years.

The instrument used for data collection was the researchers' constructed "Students' Labour Market Information and Career Aspirations Questionnaire" (SLMICAQ). The Students' Labour Market Information and Career Aspirations Questionnaire was divided into three (3) sections – A, B, and C. Section A contained student's demographic data. Age has four levels; Sex has male and female; Educational qualification of parents was measured in six levels; Parental occupation has four levels; Family type with four levels and Residential location having two levels. Section B consisted of twenty two (22) items concerned with the sub-variables of labour market information drawn on a four (4) point scale of Highly Adequate (HA), Adequate (A), Inadequate (I) and Highly Inadequate (HI). Each of the sub-variables of job availability has five (5) items, while employability skills has six (6) items. These items are drawn with simple statements requiring the students to tick (√) one response which best applies to them. Section C consisted of eleven (11) items designed to measure major career aspiration variables such as architecture, armed forces, accountancy, banking and finance, teaching, engineering, ICT, medical sciences, law, trading/entrepreneurship and agriculture. Respondents were advised to choose only one preferential career of interest. The data collected was analysed using the Chi - Square test statistics which was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant influence of the adequacy level of information on job availability on secondary school students' career aspirations.

At the point of analysis, the data collected from the respondents were recoded to reflect the discrete responses (adequate and inadequate information) used in the analysis.

Therefore all respondents' scores that were below 13 points (2.5 x 5 = 13 points on this measure) were recorded as inadequate information on job availability while those with 13 points and above were recorded as having adequate information on job availability. With this, the independent variable was therefore categorised into two groups. From data evidence, a total of 106 respondents have inadequate information on job availability while a total of 614 respondents have adequate information on job availability. Furthermore, the dependent variable was the students' career aspirations. This was measured on section C of the instrument used. A total of eleven (11) career options were used for respondents to select only the most preferred. Therefore, the dependent variable was a discrete variable with eleven (11) levels.

Since both the independent and the dependent variables were categorical, the contingency chi-square was used to test the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Therefore the 2 x 11 contingency chi-square was used. The test was carried out at .05 level, with the observed and expected cells (in brackets). The results of the analysis are presented on table 1.

Table 1: Results of the 2 x 11 contingency chi-square of the relationship between information on job availability and students' career aspirations

S/N	Information on job availability	Inadequate information	Adequate information	Total	χ^2	P	df
1.	Architecture	0 (3.1)	21 (17.9)	21			
2.	Armed Forces	6 (6.9)	41 (40.1)	47			
3.	Accountancy	4 (6.6)	41 (38.4)	45			
4.	Banking and finance	18 (13.4)	73 (77.6)	91			
5.	Teaching	3 (6.6)	42 (38.4)	45	23.311*	.010	10
6.	Engineering	8 (11.3)	69 (65.7)	77			
7.	ICT	3 (3.7)	22 (21.3)	25			
8.	Medical Sciences	45 (30.0)	159 (174.0)	204			
9.	Law	14 (3.1)	75 (75.9)	89			
10.	Entrepreneur/Trading	2 (4.1)	26 (23.9)	28			
11.	Agric	3 (7.1)	45 (40.9)	48			
	Total	106	614	720			

From table 1, the observed and expected values have been presented. The calculated chi-square values was 23.311 (p<.05) while the P-value was .010 at df = 10. Since the calculated P-value of .010 was less than alpha, the null hypothesis was rejected. To this end, the study concluded that based on data evidence, information on job availability has a significant relationship with student's career aspirations.

Ho2: Adequacy level of information on required employability skills does not significantly influence secondary school students' career aspirations.

In this hypothesis, the independent variable was adequacy level of information on required employability skills. This was measured using items 6 to 11 on the instrument. The items were defined on a four point interval scale with highly adequate (HA), adequate (A), inadequate (I) and highly inadequate (HI) as response options. The sum of the scores obtained by each respondent on these items reflected a measure of the variable. To this end, the maximum score by any respondents on this variable was 24 points (i.e. 6 items x 4 points).

In order to carry out the analysis to achieve research objective, the variable (adequacy level of information on required employability skills) was recoded to create two dichotomous levels viz: scores below 15 points represented inadequate information on employability skills while scores from 15 points and above were recoded as having adequate information on required employment skills. The critical point being 15 points (i.e 2.5 x 6 items = 15).

With this criterion and recoding, the independent variable was, therefore, categorized into two independent levels; adequate and inadequate levels of information on required employability skills. Furthermore, the dependent variable was the students' career aspirations measured discretely using eleven (11) levels; as explained earlier in this work. Thus, the dependent variable was categorical with eleven (11) levels. Since the independent variable was categorical with two levels and the dependent variable with 11 levels therefore, the 2 x 11 contingency χ^2 was used and the χ^2-statistics was the test statistic used to test the hypothesis at .05 level. The results are presented on table 2.

Table 2: Summary of 2 x 11 contingency chi-square test of the relationship between information on required employability skills and students' career aspirations

S/N	Information on job availability	Inadequate information	Adequate information	Total	χ^2	P	df
1.	Architecture	5 (3.2)	16 (17.8)	21			
2.	Armed Forces	6 (7.1)	41 (39.9)	47			
3.	Accountancy	11 (6.8)	34 (38.2)	45			

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4.	Banking and finance	7 (13.7)	84 (77.3)	91			
5.	Teaching	3 (6.5)	40 (36.5)	43	21.146*	.020	10
6.	Engineering	11 (11.6)	66 (65.4)	77			
7.	ICT	3 (3.8)	22 (21.2)	25			
8.	Medical Sciences	30 (30.7)	174 (173.3)	204			
9.	Law	14 (3.14)	75 (75.6)	89			
10.	Entrepreneur/Trading	3 (4.2)	25 (23.8)	28			
11.	Agric	15 (7.2)	33 (40.8)	48			
	Total	108	610	718			

From table 2, the observed values from data evidence are shown in each column while the expected data are below it for each level of the required information on the employability skills. Data evidence from the χ^2 analysis showed a calculated χ^2 value of 21.146; which was greater than the critical χ^2 value of 3.940 (df = 10, α= .05). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. To this end the study concluded that adequacy level of information on the required employability skills significantly relate to secondary school students' career aspirations.

Discussion of the findings
The result of hypothesis one showed that information on job availability has a significant relationship on senior secondary school students' career aspiration in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The sample distribution also indicated that 85.3% of the respondents had adequate level of labour market information on job availability; this means that a reasonable number of the respondents believe that information about availability of job in the labour market was a factor in their career aspiration. This finding is in disagreement with an earlier study done by Petters and Asuquo (2009) on the awareness of occupational and labour market information among in-school youths in Calabar, Nigeria. The finding of that study showed that students were not aware of recent occupational and labour market information trends as only 37% of the 300 respondents were aware of the concept of labour market information. It is important for secondary school students to have adequate information on job availability in the labour market in order to make realistic career plans. This will also help reduce unemployment, unemployability and job floundering.

The result of hypothesis two showed that information on required employability skills significantly influence the career aspirations of students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross

River State, Nigeria. The sample distribution indicated that 85.0% of respondents had adequate level of labour market information on required employability skills. The result of this study corroborates the findings of Asuquo and Inaja (2013) who examined employers' perspective on personal change management and adaptation characteristics relative to young people's career development and employability in Cross River State, Nigeria. The research findings showed that continuous learning, teamwork, persistence, risk-taking, optimism and flexibility were most popular qualities while goal-orientation, continuous learning and responsiveness were highly rated in terms of their relative importance. The study done by Jonick and Walt (2015) also agreed that skills significantly influence employability. The researchers compared private and public sectors evaluation of employability skills of employed graduates in Manguang area of South Africa. The result showed that employability skills sought by private and public sectors are similar. The only difference between the two groups was in terms of self-responsibility and interpersonal skills.

Conclusion
This study examined the relationship between labour market information and career aspirations among senior secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The conclusion reached from the findings of this study was that labour market especially as it concerns job availability and employability skills is necessary to enable students make adequate career plans and develop healthy aspirations to jobs that will provide future satisfaction. The need for students to be aware of the operations and demands of the labour market cannot be over emphasized especially at this time of industrialization, urbanization and high technological advancements; students need information in order to fit into the system when they eventually graduate.

Recommendations
The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:
1. Cross River State Government should train and post more guidance counsellors to secondary schools to help students gather relevant labour market information needed to make realistic career plans.
2. Guidance counsellors should ensure that the information service of their school guidance programme is vibrant enough to help students source for accurate and reliable information to enable them make appropriate career decisions.
3. The school administrators should provide basic facilities for the school guidance counsellors to function in the schools in guiding and counselling the students.
4. Ministry of education through Inspectorate Department should ensure that guidance counsellors posted to schools are allowed to function as counsellors rather than being burdened with other administrative or teaching responsibilities.
5. There should be active participation of parents in curriculum design to enable them have realistic career expectations of their children and design courses to meet realities of modern labour market. Also, parents should be made to realize and respect their children's career aspirations rather than imposing their wishes on them.

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