

Parental Attitude and Occupational Aspirations of Secondary School Students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the influence of parental attitude on secondary school students' career aspirations in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve this aim, a random sample of 720 senior secondary two (SS II) students was selected from a total of 5,840 SS II students in 90 public secondary schools in the five Local Government Areas that make up the zone. A validated researchers-designed questionnaire with a Cronbach coefficient of 0.811 was used for data gathering. Data collated from the study were subjected to chi-squared analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that parental attitude significantly influenced female students' career aspirations but did not significantly influence that of the male students. Based on the findings, it was concluded that parental attitude significantly influenced female students more than their male counterparts. It was recommended, amongst others, that parents should consider the prevailing occupational information in advising their wards to make occupational choices rather than compelling them to take after their own careers.

Keywords: parents, attitude, occupation, aspirations, students

Introduction

The world of today calls for specialization of skills in occupations which has become varied in the world of work. It is on this note that Rojewski (2015) defined occupational aspiration or interest as an individual's expressed career-related goals or choices. He further reiterated that aspiration represents individuals' goals, given ideal conditions; while interest reflects an individual's emotional dispositions towards particular career options. From the above explanation it could be observed that career interests is sometimes used interchangeably with career aspirations.

Marcus (2017) defined attitude as one's predisposition to react positively or negatively to some degree toward objects, situations, ideas and institutions. That is to say, attitude influences one's responses to objects, situation, products and persons. Quardric (2018) posited that attitude is a

mental or neural state of readiness organized through experience. It exerts a directive and dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situation with which the individual relates. Different people have different attitude towards different objects, and it is necessary for the individual to identify and nurture them. Some parents who are professionals such as medical doctors, lawyers, and engineers encourage their children to study the same course they studied. Generally, attitude is seen as the sum total of man's inclinations, feelings, prejudices or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats and other conviction about any specific objects.

Studies have depicted significant relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspiration of students. For example, Uwaoma et al. (2014) asserted that the belief in one's competence can lead to many positive outcomes including good academic performance and career aspirations. The implications of this belief have been enormous for modern education; belief in the necessity of eliciting positive self-concept in students is fundamental of modern educational theory and practice. Several mechanisms by which this relationship may occur have been proposed. For instance, Ugwu (2015) stated that individuals intentionally choose actions that demonstrate to them that their perceptions are accurate.

Koki (2009) conducted research on the relationship between parental nurturing styles and career interest among senior secondary school students in Kano State. The objectives of the study among others was to identify whether significant relationship exists between career interests and parental nurturing styles of respondents. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between respondents and their career interest; Uwoama et al. (2014) conducted a study on family attitudes and students' occupational aspiration among secondary school students in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The findings showed that high family attitudes are more popular, co-operative and persistent in lives of students in general, exhibiting positive attitude towards occupational aspiration of student. Sanchez and Rodah (2016) carried out a study to determine the association and prediction between family attitude and students' occupational aspiration. They found out that a close association exists between family attitude and students' occupational aspirations; and their future success in career can be predicted upon using their attitude and those of parents.

Keller (2014) classified parental attitudes into four broad categories as indicated below:

- i. The silent attitude: Here parents do not discuss work openly due to lack of interest in the vocational life of their children. Parents here seldom discuss their own work and much less that of others. They do not make vocational plan for their children thus leaving their children's occupational aspirations to chance.
- ii. The resentful attitude: Parents with this kind of attitude only make incidental remarks about work. They leave their children's occupational choice to fate and schooling and never attempt to consciously discuss vocation with their children.
- iii. The participating attitude: Parents with this kind of attitude are keen on their jobs and discuss freely and with obvious enthusiasm with their children thus exposing them to those occupations.
- iv. The candid attitude: This describes parents that openly and candidly discuss all aspects of work, their advantages and disadvantages, with their children.

According to Keller (2014), children from these four categories will have different attitude towards work. Again, children from the participating and candid categories would mature vocationally earlier than children from silent and resentful categories.

Occupational aspiration tends to be a persistent problem for students in the contemporary society. The reason is because some adolescents in secondary schools tend to have limited knowledge on occupational aspiration and as such they turn to their parents for guidance on issues relating to occupational choice instead of consulting guidance counsellors. Some parents in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) undermine the interest their children have towards some careers and underestimate the capabilities of their children. Such students are expected to seek acceptance by adopting parental ideas and leaving out their dreamed career aspiration. Under such situation, parental attitude tends to be the most influential factor in students' occupational aspiration.

More often than not, parents owing to personal idiosyncrasies, pressurize their children into taking up family occupation and even other occupations, even when the students do not possess the requisite abilities. What this usually results in the end is job dissatisfaction, underperformance, frustration and inefficiency; all of which translate in the long run to national economic crisis. It is in the light of this situation that these researchers would want to understand the nature of the relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspirations of secondary school students especially in developing economics like Nigeria. This study essentially examines the case in Ogoja Education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria; with the aim to find out if parental attitude to occupations affects their children's aspirations.

Research question

1. What is the relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspirations of male and female secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State?

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspirations of male and female students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

Methodology

The design used in this study is a correlational research design. According to Nworgu (2006), correlational design is a statistical technique used for establishing the extent of relationship or association between two or more variables. The researchers adopted this design because the study sought to establish the relationship between parental attitudes and occupational aspirations of secondary school students.

The area of the study is Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria; this comprises of Obanliku, Obudu, Bekwarra, Ogoja and Yala Local Government Areas. Ogoja Education Zone is located between longitude 8⁰47' and 8⁰58' East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude 6⁰39' and 6⁰41' North of the Equator. The area is bounded with Benue State in the North, Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas in the South, Ebonyi State in the West and the Republic of Cameroon in the East. The main occupation of the people is farming. They produce yam,

cassava, rice, banana, plantain, cocoa, palm oil, among others. There are various centres of attraction in the area. One of such centres is the Obudu Cattle Ranch. Obudu Cattle Ranch is located in the area with a height of over 5000 metres above sea level. The Ranch has a beautiful and wonderful climate which provides a major tourist attraction for people from far and near.

The population of the study consists of 5,840 senior secondary 2 (SS 2) students; made up of 3,254 males and 2,586 females in 90 public secondary school across the five Local Government Areas that make up Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. The sample size for this study was made up of 720 respondents which consisted of 401 male and 319 female students drawn from SS 2 classes of 2020/2021 academic session. A multi-stage sampling technique was used in choosing the study's sample. The use of SS2 is because other classes such as the SS3 were engaged with final examination preparation while SS1 were assumed not to have effectively made up their minds towards particular occupations. The researchers used stratified random sampling technique to draw the 720 SS2 students for the study. To draw respondents from each of the Local Government Areas, 12.33% of 5,840 representing the population of the study was used and this procedure gave a total of seven hundred and twenty (720) respondents. This method was adopted based on Aneke (2015) assertion that if the population of the study is in a few hundred a 40% or more sample will do, if many hundreds a 20% sample will do, if in few thousands a 10% sample will do and if in several thousands 5% sample will do. Since the population is in thousands, the use of 12.33% to draw the sample size is therefore justified. The sample was further stratified into male and female, and using proportionate sampling technique gave a total sample of 401 males and 319 females.

The instrument used for the study was a researchers-designed questionnaire titled "Parental Attitude and Career Aspiration Questionnaire (PACAQ) which was validated by three experts, (two in Guidance and Counselling and one in Measurement and Evaluation) with a Reliability index of 0.811) through Cronbach Alpha Co-efficient method. The instrument was divided into three sections: A, B and C. Section A elicited information on personal data of the respondents and their parents while section B measured attitudes of parents with 10 items. This section was designed in line with four point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Section C consisted of 11 items designed to measure major occupational variables. Respondents were requested to choose only one occupational option by ticking (✓) from the list of the occupational choices.

The researchers with their research assistants visited the schools during the first term of 2020/2021 academic session and administered the instrument on the SS 2 students of each school selected. The administration of the instrument lasted for two weeks. At the end of the exercise, the researchers made sure that the entire copies of the questionnaire that were administered were all retrieved. That is to say that the 720 copies of the instrument presented to the respondents were all retrieved. The researchers achieved a 100% return rate. The responses were coded and the chi-square test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance using the SPSS version 21.0.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspirations of male and female secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

The index of relationship obtained for parental attitude and occupational aspirations of male and female students was subjected to a test of significance at 95% confidence level using contingency Chi-square (χ^2). Summary of results are presented in tables 1, 2 and 3

Table 1: 2x12 Contingency Chi-Square test of the relationship between parental attitude and male students' occupational aspirations

S/N	Parental attitude	Law	Med	Teach	Engr.	Pharm	Banking	Arch	Bus	ICT	Para/Military	Agric	Others	Totals	df	χ^2
Male students																
1.	Negative attitude	10 (11.2)	9 (11.8)	2 (2.7)	23 (18.9)	2 (1.6)	2 (3.8)	2 (1.6)	1 (2.7)	5 (3.1)	4 (2.5)	0 (0.3)	3 (3.0)	63 (63.0)	11	7.427
2.	Positive attitude	61 (59.8)	66 (63.2)	15 (14.3)	97 (101.1)	8 (8.4)	22 (20.2)	8 (8.4)	16 (14.3)	15 (16.9)	12 (13.5)	2 (1.7)	16 (16.0)	338 (338.0)		
	Total	71	75	17	120	10	24	10	17	20	16	2	19	401		

Not significant at .05 level.

Table 2: 2x12 Contingency Chi-Square test of the relationship between parental attitude and female students' occupational aspirations

S/N	Parental attitude	Law	Med	Teach	Engr.	Pharm	Banking	Arch	Bus	ICT	Para/Military	Agric	Others	Totals	df	χ^2
Female students																
1.	Negative attitude	9 (14.0)	13 (13.0)	10 (6.8)	4 (2.5)	5 (1.9)	3 (7.4)	1 (1.1)	2 (3.9)	3 (0.9)	0 (0.4)	1 (1.8)	5 (2.5)	56 (56.0)	11	25.521*
2.	Positive attitude	71 (66.0)	61 (61.0)	29 (32.2)	10 (11.5)	6 (9.1)	39 (34.6)	5 (4.9)	20 (18.1)	2 (4.1)	2 (1.6)	9 (8.2)	9 (11.5)	263 (263.0)		
	Total	80	74	39	14	11	42	6	22	5	2	10	14	319		

*Significant, $p < .05$, critical $\chi^2 = 19.68$, $x = 0.05$, $df = 11$

Table 3: 2 x 12 Contingency chi-square test of the relationship between parental attitude and students' occupational aspirations

Parental Attitude	Law	Med	Teach	Engr.	Pharm	Banking	Arch	Business	ICT	Para/Military	Agric	Others	Totals	Df	χ^2
Negative attitude															
	19 (25.0)	22 (24.8)	12 (9.3)	27 (22.2)	7 (3.5)	5 (11.0)	3 (2.7)	3 (6.5)	8 (4.3)	5 (3.2)	1 (2.0)	8 (5.5)	120 (120.0)	11	21.69*
Positive attitude															
	131 (125.0)	127 (124.2)	44 (46.7)	106 (110.8)	14 (17.5)	61 (55.0)	13 (12.3)	36 (32.5)	18 (21.7)	14 (15.8)	11 (10.0)	25 (27.5)	600 (600.0)		
Total	150	149	56	133	21	66	16	39	26	19	12	33	720		

*Significant, calculated $\chi^2 = 21.69$, $P = .027$, critical $\chi^2 = 19.68$, $\infty = .05$, $df = 11$

The summary of result on Table 1 reveals that the calculated χ^2 value was 7.427 which was less than the critical χ^2 value of 19.68. The researchers therefore accepted the null hypothesis

and concluded that there is no significant relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspirations of male students. This implies that parental attitude does not significantly influence male students' occupational aspiration.

Also, the result of table 2 shows that the calculated χ^2 value was 25.521, which is greater than the critical χ^2 of 19.68. The researchers therefore rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there exists a significant relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspirations of female secondary school students; that is to say that parental attitude significantly influences female students' occupational aspirations.

Furthermore, table 3 revealed that the calculated χ^2 value of both male and female students was 21.69 which is greater than the critical χ^2 value of 19.68. The study therefore rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there exists a significant relationship between parental attitude and occupational aspirations of both male and female students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

Furthermore, the results of the test of the hypothesis on tables 1, 2 and 3 showed χ^2 value of 7.427 ($p > .05$) for male students, $\chi^2 = 25.521$ ($p < 0.05$) for female students and for all the students, the χ^2 value was 21.69 ($p < .05$). The implication of these results is that parental attitude did not significantly influence male students' career aspiration but significantly influenced female students' career aspirations and also, in the combined population, significantly influenced both male and female students.

Discussion of the findings

The outcome of the result of table 2 and table 3 is in line with earlier works of Koki (2009), Uwaoma et al. (2014) who had reported that parents have a significant influence on the students' choice of career. Also, Petters, Asuquo and Eyo (2015) reported that parents usually prepare their children for career choice education. It must be noted that in preparing children for career choice and future responsibilities, the parents are the first agents of socialization, the first counsellors and chief advisers. Whatever attitude that is put forward in the course of advising and preparing the child for future career is inevitably bound to influence the students' career aspiration. This study has shown that such explanation is true for female children. However, the study equally showed that parental attitude does not significantly influence male students' occupational aspirations. This is perhaps true, since male students, most times are independent minded and may choose their careers based on other variables intrinsic to them.

Furthermore, in all cases, the association between parental attitude and students' career aspirations was positive indicating direct relationship. The works of Sanchez and Rodah showed that positive relationship exists between the educational aspiration of students and their parental attitude. The attitude of parents significantly influences their children's disposition in terms of the career aspiration. Such attitudes may be based on certain perceived inadequacies by the parents which also influence their choice of courses or career aspirations. To buttress this assertion, Uwaoma et al. (2014) postulated that parental attitude in terms of support and encouragement are critical factors influencing career aspirations. Furthermore, Ugwu (2015)

had shown that successful students maintain their occupational aspirations with family's positive attitude and the students' self-confidence in their ability to cope successfully with life, and that girls have more effect of family attitude than boys. This corroborates the outcome of this work. Girls will want to take up the family way while boys will want it their own way to make the difference.

In the same way, the findings of this study is supported by the works of Mishra and Singh (2017) which showed that differences in attitude significantly influence students' career choice, and that positive attitude predicts occupational aspirations of students while negative attitude does not predict students' occupational aspirations. Data evidence in this study showed that about 15.7% of the male students' parents have negative attitude while 84.3% of them (328 out of 401) have positive attitude; and that 17.6% of the female students' parents have negative attitude while 82.4% (263) have positive attitude. Given the high percentage of positive attitude in the explanation of career aspiration, it was easy and statistically evident, according to Mishra and Singh (2017), to predict and explain students' career aspiration on the basis of this differential in parental attitude.

Finally, Uwaoma et al. (2014) asserted that many complex variables shape parental attitude which include, but not limited to parental and family influences, interpersonal relationships, cultural belief, values, employment markets and the political atmosphere. Ugwu (2015) opined that family members' career choices might subtly influence students' career aspiration. Cases abound where students take up careers after their parents or mothers or siblings. Sanchz and Rodah (2016) had observed that the level of interest in students and the position of the parents in the society sometimes have tremendous influence in the students' study of some vocational subjects and choice of careers. Therefore, parental attitude has powerful influence on students' career choice.

Conclusion

Based on the findings it was concluded that parental attitudes significantly influence career aspirations of secondary school students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Parents should consider the prevailing occupational information in advising their wards to choose occupational choice rather than compelling them to take after their own careers.
2. Students should choose occupation based on their interest, ability and capability provided they have enough information on occupations available in the labour market.

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