

Peer Group Influence and Occupational Choice of Students in Some Selected Senior Secondary Schools in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of students in some selected senior secondary schools in Sokoto Metropolis. A descriptive correlational research of the correlational type was adopted in this study. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select 8 out of the 21 Senior Secondary Schools in Sokoto Metropolis. 346 students were selected using Research Advisor table of determining sample size in a given population. Two instruments were used for data collection in this study namely: Researchers' designed Occupational Peer Influence Questionnaire (OPIQ) to measure students' occupational peer influence and Adopted version of Bakare Motivation for Occupation Preference Scale (MOPS) to measure students' career aspirations. The data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation 'r' Analysis with the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of respondents. Based on this finding, it was recommended that school counsellors and teachers should try and encourage students to seek information on occupational choice rather than parading peer advice and also sufficient information on occupation should be made available to students.

Keywords: Peer Group Influence, Occupational Choice and Sokoto Metropolis.

Introduction

Choosing a career is an extremely important decision that impacts an individual's entire future. Navin (2009) has suggested that exploring career options before committing to a career increases future career success and satisfaction. Sociologists stress the forces in our society as the major determinant of career choice. Some consider the birth right of the individual as a most significant factor in career choice since it establishes the family, race, nationality, social class, residential district and to a large extent the educational and cultural opportunities for the person. Sociologists argue that the range of occupations that an individual will consider in choosing a career is determined largely by the status expectations of the social class to which he belong (Friesen cited in Sani, 2017).

In recent times, there has been growing interest in the interrelationships between occupational choice and peer group influence. More importantly the focus has been on the factors that enhance an individual towards an occupation. The success of children as they grow up has always been attributed to intense peer group influence. The young adolescent in school is expected to set high aspiration in him/herself and to work towards the achievement of those goals. More so, children are made to become aware of the prestige that goes along with successful occupational choice.

Peer pressure refers to the influence exerted by a peer on a person to change his/her attitude and values in order to conform with the norms of his/her group (Kirk, 2000) while most educators believe that peer pressure has an influence on children's academic performance, Kirk (2000) observes that few studies have been done to prove this believes. Peer pressure is also defined as when people of the same age group encourage or urge each other to do something or to keep doing something else, no matter if the person personally want to do it or not (Ryan, 2000). Peer influence is also known as peer pressure and it involves changing one's behaviour to meet the perceived expectations of others (Burns and Darling, 2002). In general, most teens conform to peer pressure on fairly significant things like music, clothing or hair styles, when it comes to more values, parents still remain more influential than the peer group (Black, 2002).

Empirical findings have confirmed to a greater extent, the impact of peer influence and objectives on children's choice of career. College students always choose their friends and they often choose roommates,

neighbors and classmates. They are likely to choose peers whose unobservable characteristics are systematically related to their own. Even when the choice of peers is not explicitly voluntary, there may be associations between characteristics of peers. For example, by enrolling in a difficult courses (or an advanced or honors section of a course) a good student would surround himself or herself with good peers (Daniel, 2017).

Several studies for example, Adams and Fitch (1982) Arnett (2000), Benabou (1991) Bryan (2005), Ding and Lehrer, (2006) confirm research findings that the value of the peer group with whom the school student spends the most time are stronger factor in the students level of academic success than the values, attitudes, the support provided by the family.

Occupational choice has today become a complex science with the advent of information technology, the emergence of post industrial revolution. It was a common practice in the olden days of feudalism to find careers becoming a family affair where for example the son of a blacksmith was destined to become a blacksmith and the individual born into the ruling family being regarded as born a leader (Kochung & Migunde, 2011). However, industrialization and post industrialization experiences have made it possible for common or poor persons to become rich as long as they have due skills and knowledge (Wattles, 2009). Currently, one has not only to make due career planning but also do exhaustive career research before making a career choice so as to adjust to the ever-evolving socio-economic conditions (Wattles, 2009).

Research shows that occupational choices of students are poorly matched with labour market trends, and this contributes to unemployment problems which in turn pose a huge problem for career development (Stead & Watson, 2006). One of the major reasons that have been attributed to poor career seeking behaviour is lack of access to relevant information on careers and the labour market (Watson, Stead & De Jager cited in Nyarko-Sampson, 2013). Although many people view occupational choice as a natural aspect of the life, for an adolescent it is a major decision in establishing career path that may open up or close opportunities. An important turning point involves making occupational choice while in secondary school (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). Career decision making in secondary schools provide the students (who are mostly adolescents) with the competencies they need to advance in their occupations because when professional school counsellors provide occupational and educational guidance to their students, they influence the future by helping clarify developmental decisions that often last a lifetime (Erford, 2003). At the senior secondary school (between ages 15 and 19) the student is within the mid- to late-adolescent stage of life. At the cross road of life typified by the stage in which the student finds him/herself – a period of turmoil resulting in a transition from childhood to adolescence – the key characteristics of this stage of development according to Erikson (1963) the search for identity. This stage is a critical period of development in the life of the adolescent. The major danger of this period is role confusion; thus, this stage is often designated “identity versus confusion” (Zunker, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there has been growing interest in the interrelationships between occupational choice and peer group influence. More importantly the focus has been on the factors that enhance an individual towards an occupation. The success of children as they grow up has always been a matter of intense peer group influence. The young adolescent in school is expected to set high aspiration in him/herself and to work towards the achievement of those goals. Moreover, children are made to become aware of the prestige that goes along with successful career choice. All these are problem that must be looked into, knowing fully well that the place of secondary education cannot be over emphasized in the educational development of a Nation.

To the best of the researchers’ knowledge and available literature, there is no adequate readiness into the world of work by the secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis as a result of the fact that students are not adequately oriented and prepared right from schools. They do not understand their own abilities, interests, aptitudes and values. These circumstances lead to frustration, such victims drop out of school and end up roaming the streets or constitute public nuisance (Nyarko-Sampson, 2013).

It is in line with the above observation that, that this study was designed to investigate the relationship among peer group influence, school subject selection and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

Research Questions

To guide the study, one research question was raised:

1. Is there any relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis?

Objectives of the Study

This study was to find out the relationship:

1. Between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis;

Research Hypothesis

One hypothesis was formulated for the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out the extent of relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto, Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a descriptive correlational research survey of the correlational type in order to collect data on the relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of some selected senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. The design enable the researchers to ascertain the extent to which variations in one variable were associated with variation in another therefore, correlational design was adopted. The justification for adopting this design for this study was that, it allows the researchers to measure the extent of relationship between two variables; this is to say that, this method allowed the researchers to study how variables either single or in combination affected a particular pattern of behaviour. In this study, the variables of interest include; peer group influence and occupational choice among senior secondary school students.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population for the study consisted of all the senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. There are twenty one (21) secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis with total population of (6088) senior secondary school students. Purposive sampling was used to select 8 selected senior secondary schools out of twenty one (21) that are in Sokoto metropolis. Purposive sampling can be very useful for situations where the researcher need to reach the targeted sample quickly. The Research Advisor (2006) table for determining sample size from a given population was used to arrive at 346 participants that were drawn out of the 2932 students. Proportionate random sampling technique was also used to select respondents.

In selecting students to represent the sample in each school, the researcher used simple random sampling by writing 'YES' and 'NO' on folded piece of papers. All those students that picked 'YES' were selected to represent students sample of the population while those that picked 'NO' were not be selected in this study which indicated that all students were given equal chance of being selected. The number of respondents to be selected in each school is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size of the Study

S/NO	Name of school	No. of SSII Students	Sample size required for the study	Percentage%
1.	Arkillia Secondary School, Sokoto	298	11	31%
2.	Army Day Secondary School, Sokoto	319	36	43%
3.	Gidan Salihu Secondary School, Sokoto	110	12	11%
4.	Giginya Memorial Secondary School, Sokoto	305	34	31%
5.	Kofar Marke Secondary School, Sokoto	250	28	26%
6.	Nana Girls Secondary School, Sokoto	896	100	94%
7.	Tudun Wada Secondary School, Sokoto	422	47	41%
8.	Sultan Atiku Secondary School Sokoto	332	37	34%
	Total	2932	346	100%

Source: Ministry of Education, Sokoto (2018)

Research Instruments

Two sets of instruments were used by the researchers to measure the students' peer group influence and occupational choice. These instruments were as follows:

- i. Researchers' Designed Occupational Peer Influence Questionnaire to measure Peer group influence.
- ii. Adopted version of Bakare's (1980) Motivation for Occupation Preference Scale (MOPS) to measure students' Occupational choice.

Description of Researchers' Designed Occupational Peer Influence Questionnaire (OPIQ)

The Researchers' designed Occupational Peer Influence Questionnaire was developed to measure students peer influence on occupational choice. The questionnaire had twenty items that sought information on peer influence from students. The students are required to choose the response which applied to them from a four-point Likert-

scale of “Always True of Me”; “Often True of Me”; “Seldom True of Me”; and “Never True of Me”. The questionnaire has twenty five items.

Validity of Occupational Peer Influence Questionnaire (OPIQ)

In order to validate this instrument, the researchers exposed the instrument to experts in the field of educational guidance and counselling and other experts in the field of educational measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto to check how well the items were developed and whether the items are relevant in answering the research question and hypothesis. They also scrutinized unclear, biased and deficient items and evaluated whether the items are fit. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated in the corrections made for the final instrument, which was adjudged to have content and construct validity.

Reliability of Occupational Peer Influence Questionnaire (OPIQ)

The reliability of the questionnaire was obtained by researchers through a test-retest with a 2 weeks interval, to determine both the stability of the scores over time and the internal consistency reliability of the response. Cronbach’s alpha was used to calculate the internal consistency of the items and a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.88 which was considered high enough to have reliability.

Scoring of Occupational Peer Influence Questionnaire (OPIQ)

The scoring of the instrument range from 4, Always True of Me to Never True of Me i.e (4 = Always True of Me, 3 = Often True of Me, 2 = Seldom True of Me and 1 = Never True of Me). The highest score for the scale was 80 whilst the lowest score was 20. The range is 60 and the median is 30.

Adopted Version of Bakare’s (1980) Motivation for Occupational Preference Scale (MOPS).

The instrument that was used in data collection is an adopted form of motivation for occupational preference scale (MOPS) developed by Christopher G. M. Bakare. Motivation for Occupational Preference Scale (MOPS) has three sections A, B and C. Section A consists of personal information such as sex, age etc section B consists of parent occupational choice for their children with five questions and section C consists reason for occupational preference with five sub-section A – E with twenty one (20) questions.

Validity of Occupational Preference Scale

The validity of the instrument was established by using the content validity method, hence, the items in the questionnaire aimed at meeting the content specification set for it. That is the item represents the content of the test to which it is designed to measure in validating the instrument. In view of the above the researcher took the items to the lecturers in the educational foundation of faculty of education and extension services of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto and Shehu Shagari College of education school of education validation. In the four point Likert scale table of motivation for occupational preference scale table, the correction that was made on the table was a change from the word important to influence while a space was made to be created in the choice of subjects. Also a list of occupations was to be mentioned. Finally section E was created for the parental preference on the vocational aspiration questionnaire. After the scrutiny and correction of items in the instrument the researcher effects all the corrections. Hence, the obtained independent judgment from the experts were meant to indicate the degree to which the item can actually measure what they are designed to measure. Thus, this researcher will adopt it for use.

Reliability of Occupational Preference Scale

The reliability of motivation for occupational preference scale was obtained using test re-test method, by administration of the instrument to the respondents and re administration after an interval of four (4) weeks and use Pearson product moment correlation. Coefficient statistics to analyze the score and reliability coefficient index of 0.75 was obtained and is therefore adjudged to be reliable the study and the current researcher adopted it for use in this study.

Scoring of Occupational Preference Scale

There are (20) twenty items for the motivation for occupational preference scale and the score using four (4) point Likert scale for all positive items indicated in the answer. The symbol Extremely Influenced (E.I) is 4, Fairly Influenced (F.I) is 3, Little Influenced (L.I) is 2 and Not Influenced (N.I) is 1.

Data Analysis

The data collected were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient ‘r’ statistics at 0.05 level of significance with the use of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0.

Hypotheses Testing:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

Table 2: Relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis (N= 346)

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r-Cal	P-value	Decision
Peer Group Influence	346	54.97	10.817	.154	.012	Significant
Occupational Choice	346	62.72	6.461			

Source: Statistical Package for Social Science 20.0 version.

From the above table 2, it can be seen that the relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students has a calculated r-value of .154. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is significant relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis because the p-value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore, hypothesis which states there is no significant relationship between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis was rejected.

Discussion of Finding

A significant relationship was found between peer group influence and occupational choice of senior secondary school students. The reason for this might be that children may choose what their peer desire, simply to be with them, and as the peer influence increases, there will be a corresponding increase in students' occupational choice. This finding is in agreement with the study of Maxwell (2014) found a significant differences among e secondary school students in their career choice in terms of; prestige of a profession. Regardless of whether the children are exposed to other factor or not, Adeleke (2005) disclosed that peer influence appears to take upper hand and to be determining factors that push peers to their occupations. Thus, peer influence can provide many positive elements in an adolescent's life. It is important, however, to remember that peer influence can potentially have a deadly impact or other various negative effects on adolescents' occupational choice.

Conclusion

From the analysis of data and interpretation of results, it was concluded that peer group influence affects senior secondary school students' occupational choice.

Recommendations

In view of the above findings, it is recommended that:

1. School counsellors and teachers should try and encourage students to seek information on occupational choice rather than parading peer advice and also sufficient information on occupation should be made available to students.

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