



## THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY TRAITS ON CAREER DECISION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN YAKURR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract:

This study investigated the influence of personality traits on career decisions among secondary school students in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The research design adopted was the survey design. 200 students drawn from 10 public schools in the area of study, made up the sample of the study and this was done through stratified random sampling technique. The major instrument used for data collection was the personality traits and students' career decisions questionnaire (PTSCDQ) and data generated were analyzed using the independent t-test analysis. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained indicated that personality traits of attitude and perception have a significant influence on career decision among secondary school students. Based on this among others, it was concluded that career decision among students are not only influenced by their parents and image figures but their attitude, perception and individual traits depending on how they think about such careers. It was therefore recommended that, professional counselors, parents/guardians, teachers and administrators alike should strive to create career awareness and give more attention to the personality trait of attitude and perception as displayed by students.

**Keywords:** influence of personality traits, career decision, secondary school students, Yakurr local government

## 1. Introduction

Career decisions are made by students at different period of time in their learning process in school. Some of them begin to make their career choices during their secondary school education, for some occupational aspirations begin by the time they enter their final year, while others, their career aspiration and choice are quite fixed even before they enter school. Just as career decisions differ among students, so are their corresponding characteristics for such decisions peculiar to individual persons. The personality traits that are likely to influence these decisions include students' perception of a career path, interest, self-concept, anxiety for a career, aptitude and ability. In addition to these traits are other factors intrinsic and extrinsic in the individual, which can also affect what career he or she may choose. Also, some professions have greater percentages in students' admission process and others low, this also affect career decision making. Another external factor that influences students' decision on career is the people or role models in his or her life and how he or she perceives these persons. These role models may include parents, siblings, teachers, counsellor or a current employer. In choosing a career, students may not have all the information necessary about the job they are pursuing. On discovering the job involve more of mathematics or science, the student who is not well prepare and does not have the interest and skill for science can altered his decision and go in for a more convenient career. Therefore, as counsellors, appropriate information and tools that can help students in their decision are needed, these are, career fairs, job shadowing, or internship and field-trips. These expose students to different career fields and their hazards. Without these information and awareness, a lot of students go through college without knowing what career path they want and what is expected and involved in such career.

Similarly, career decision has become more complex with the advent of information technology, the emergence of post industrial revolution and job competition. It was a common practice in the past to find feudalism converting one's career into a family affair, where the son of a blacksmith was destined to become a blacksmith and a feudal was born a leader. Industrialization and post industrialization has made it possible for a common person to be richer as long as he or she has due skills and knowledge (Wattles, 2009). He also observes that, today, one has not only to make due career planning but also exhaustive career research before making a career choice or decision, so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions.

Furthermore, it is imperative that most secondary school students do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate

career decisions. Kerka (2000) stated that career decision is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interest, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and finance. In this view, McQuaid and Bond (2003) affirmed that student career decisions therefore have been found to be influenced by a number of factors inherent in the individual including ethnic background, year in school, level of achievement, choice of science subjects, attitudes and differences in job characteristics.

Based on these, the researchers were motivated to investigate the influence of personality traits such as students' perception of a career path, interest on a career, self-concept, aptitude and attitude to career and how they affect the students' decision on his or her career.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Personality type theory of Carl Jung 1921 is related to this study. He believes that attitude is a person's predisposition to act in a certain manner, and stated that, there are two contrasting attitudes – extroversion and introversion which are often depicted in a person's inner world than his environment -focuses on his or her fantasies, ambitions, feelings and actions. While the extrovert person gives more attention to what is happening outside his inner world. His inner cognitive processes are often set aside as he gets influenced by his environment. Objectivity for this kind of person is greater than subjectivity.

Carl stated four important functions of personality which he enumerated as:

1. Feeling: this is when a person recognizes the worth of his conscious activities.
2. Thinking: this makes a person learn the meaning of something
3. Sensation: this allows the person to know that a particular thing exists.
4. Intuition: this is knowledge about something without having a conscious understanding of where that knowledge originated.

In summary, when these four functions are combined with one of the two types of attitudes, the result would be eight varying types of personality. These varying personalities determine the way and quality of a person's decision including decisions about his or her career. The bases of this theory is relevant to this study because it emphasizes on an individual's ability to make appropriate decision about career choice without being influenced by factors outside of him while being conscious of those external influences.

### **3. Statement of Problem**

In the stages of development, an individual is confronted with the issue of occupational or career choice. From the onset, in the secondary level, students when required to make their choices on their study programmes leading to their prospective careers, seek help from their parents' assistance and decision to select their careers; or to teach teachers, career officers or psychologists who as part of their dues offer career guidance to students. The significance of career decision can be understood by the influence career have on an individual's income, standard of living, status in society, social contacts, as well as emotional health and feelings of self-worth. Career once chosen will probably affect an individual throughout life. Therefore, making suitable career decisions implies less wastage of resources in education and training, that is, preventing one from one occupation to another. Students in the secondary school level lack adequate information on career development; as a result, their choices are embedded in their perception of the ideal job and the subject requirements. Details on the hazards and training are at most times not exposed to students. Likewise, students' personality traits, how they relate to others and their choices are mostly not considered by parents, teachers and individual self; leading to wrong career decision making and regrets. Thus, this study intends to determine the influence of personality traits on career decision of secondary school students in Yakurr Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

### **4. Literature Review**

Literature review was carried out based on the variable under study, in its position and empirical views of related works.

#### **a. Students' attitude and career decision**

Attitudes are tendency to respond positively or negatively or with anxiety or excitement, towards a certain idea, object, person or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action and responses to challenges, motivations and rewards. Decision making on career is an essential step to career choice of student which is linked to an individual's attitude.

According to Wendlandt and Rocholen (2008), the tasks of this age group have grown more complicated as the choice of a career presents unique and unforeseen challenges. Perhaps due to these challenges, many college graduates feel unprepared for the new circumstances of the workforce. This decision on choice of career is accompanied by a number of activities, such as formal internships, jobs and

volunteering may affect their post-college decisions. The mentoring and counselling they receive as well as skill building they undergo during college, could also affect their career decision making for the future. To determine the influence of these activities which constitutes the students' attitude and career decision, researchers have investigated a number of other factors including personal demographic information (Luzzo & McWhirter, 2001). Family background (Harley, 2009; Greenbank, 2009), religiosity (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010), perception of social stigmas (Ludwikowski, Vogel & Armstrong, 2009) and students' attitude toward career decision (Keiner, 2006).

However, attitudes are attributed to working class and first generation college students, and it is often assumed that these attitude influence students' post-college decision making process. Hartley (2009) investigated on whether these assumptions are true first generation college students in particular, the researcher found that negative career thought, certain vocational interest and career indecision considered to be part of first generation college students' identity actually do not differ from that of their college students. The views of Greenbank (2009) in his study disproved assumptions made about working class students. These students are said to have a pessimistic view on life, low aspirations and future goals, as well as a preference for informal information sources rather than formal. Through in-depth interviews, researchers found that the majority of these qualities are not characteristics of working class students. Hence, working class students do have a preference for informal information sources which may be an indication of reluctance to seek help from career counselors.

Furthermore, Nyamwange (2016) in her study examine the influence of attitude on career choice decision among first year university student in public and private universities in Kisii County, Kenya, to address the objective, the researcher utilized two hundred and ninety-six (296) first year students selected from six universities. The respondents were selected using purposive as well as systematic sampling approaches within the descriptive survey design. They responded to a specially designed questionnaire and the data collected were analyzed descriptively using the statistically package for social science as the main tool of analysis. The result revealed that 272 (91.9%) of all respondents indicated that having prior knowledge of what a career entails is important to developing interest in a career. It prepares an individual to job requirements, expectations, job personalities and potential earnings or gains. Hence, the decision would be make based on the awareness, interest, ability and skill acquire. In addition, prior knowledge acts as a lens through which on view and absorb new information. It is compare to knowing where one wants to go before the start of a journey. The individual attitude is motivated which lead to accomplishing goals and objectives and exploring one's interest.

b. Perception and career decision

In the workforce today, it is becoming more difficult for college graduate to get jobs in their field of specialization. They get discourage and disappointed when entering the world of works where they cannot find a job related to their major area. Sometimes the economy limits the number of jobs to be available for recent college students (Nabi, 2003), students may have to wait long period of time for a job in their chosen career, resulting in settling down for jobs that are lower paying and out of their interest. Employers according to Lee (2008) are becoming more selective in their search for new employees, often acquiring more years of experience as a criterion.

Luzzo and McWhirter (2001) identified students' perceived barriers as another reason why students may experience difficulties in the transition to adulthood. The study found that women and ethnic minorities perceived more career related barriers than their male and European American counterparts. Ethnic minorities also perceived that they have less self-efficacy to cope with career related barriers. Thus, there is discrepancy in the literature as to the relative importance of personality identity characteristics in the career search process which invariably of influence decision.

In a study of business school students' career perceptions and choice decision by Hyuryoo (2012) at the David F. Miller Centre for Retailing Education and Research, University of Florida (UF). A total of 162 business students participated in the study, most of the participants were juniors (41.9%) and seniors (51.0%). The study was aimed expectations, at understanding the students' career expectations, their perceptions of retailing careers and the factors that determine their career choice. E-mail invitations soliciting participation in the career choice study were sent out to all business school students at the university. As an incentive, \$25 was provided to 20 participants who best answered an estimated score for a Gator football game. A total of 186 business students responded to the email invitation and 162 students completed the internet survey. As expected, students who participated in the study were mostly juniors and seniors, who might have seriously thought about their career upon graduation. Freshmen and sophomores consist of only 7.1% of the sample. The findings of this study indicated that, UF students have a more positive attitude toward retail career than student perception in previous studies; retailers need to keep working on disproving negative retail career images such as dull, boring and mundane. It further showed that in general, degree related curriculum materials, work experience and exposures to firms on campus were the three most influential sources affecting students' career decision. However, the sources that positively affected interest in pursuing retail careers were: exposures to firms on campus through information sessions and guest speakers, former or current employer and personal experience as a

customer in the order of importance. Friends working in the field negatively influenced interest in retail careers. It therefore concluded that the young generation cares about their career advancement the most. The opportunity for advancement was the most important career expectation, followed by work environment and challenging work. Communicating opportunities for promotion, future career progression and future earnings potential were crucial for attracting talented future workers.

Finally, attitude and perception (personality traits) enumerated in this study have been found to be of great influence on students' career decision on previous studies reviewed. The researchers are therefore face with the responsibility of investigating on whether or not the same findings could be obtained in the area of study.

## **5. Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of personality traits on career decisions among secondary school students in Yakurr local government area of cross River State, Nigeria.

Specifically, it seeks to determine the influence of:

1. Students' attitude on their career decision.
2. Perception of students on their career decision.

## **6. Research Questions**

The following research questions were postulated to guide the study.

1. Is there any significant influence of students' attitude on career decision among secondary school students?
2. Does students' perception significantly influence their career decision?

## **7. Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study

1. Students' attitude does not significantly influence career decision among secondary school students.
2. There exists no significant influence of students' perception on career decision among secondary school students.

## 8. Methodology

The area of the study was Yakurr local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The area is made up of eight (8) communities, namely: Ugep, Idomi, Mkpani, Ekori, Nko, Assiga, Inyima and Agoi (Ekpo/Ibami/Ekom), with Ugep as headquarters. The targeted population of the study comprises 16 public secondary schools in Yakurr Local Government Area. The total enrollment in these schools as at 2015/2016 school session was 8,716 students of which 4,624 were of the junior section, and 4,092 senior secondary school respectively (SS 1 - 1,604, SS 2 - 1,385 and SS 3 - 1,103). The study was delimited to only senior secondary class two (SS 2) to represent the accessible population of the study. The research design adopted for the study was survey design. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 schools for the study. Using 14.5 percent of the entire senior secondary class two (SS 2) students of the public schools in the area, a total of 200 out of 1,385 SS2 students was selected from the 10 sampled schools for the study; with an average age of 17 years and of both sexes.

The instrument used for the study was the questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. This was made up of two sections, section A sort information on respondent's personal data and section B was based on a 20-item 4 point likert scale questionnaire consisting of two parts. Part 1 deals with students' opinion on personality traits (attitude and perception). Part 2 deals with responses on career decisions among students.

The appropriateness of the content of the instrument was validated through content and construct validity by expert in measurement, evaluation, and psychology, who scrutinized the items and variables under study and corrections were effected before administration of the instrument. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the test re-test reliability method was applied. Data generated was used to compute the reliability coefficient, which ranged between 0.60 to 0.87, indicating that the instrument was reliable to measure the variables under study.

The administration of the instrument was carried out with the help of research assistance in the selected schools and a 100% collection of the questionnaire was retrieve with careful monitoring and properly completed.

## 9. Results

The result of the study was based on the hypotheses tested at .05 level of significant. Hypothesis 1: Students' attitude does not significantly influence career decision among secondary school students. The independent variable is students' attitude, while the



dependent variable is career decision. The hypothesis was tested using the independent t-test analysis. The results of the analysis are presented in table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Independent t-test analysis of students' attitude and career decision among secondary school students

| Variables          | N   | X     | SD   | Df  | t-value |
|--------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|---------|
| Students' attitude | 200 | 20.62 | 3.16 | 198 | 8.70    |
| Career decision    | 200 | 17.33 | 2.06 |     |         |

\* P < 0.05 level; df = 198; critical t-value = 1.978

The result in Table 1 above shows that the calculated t-value of 8.70 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.978 tested at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom. The result therefore shows that all null hypothesis is rejected, which means students' attitude has a significant influence on career decision among secondary school students. Hypothesis 2: There exists no significant influence of students' perception on career decision among secondary school students. The independent variable was students' perception and decision was the dependent variable. The hypothesis was tested using the independent t-test analysis and the results of the analysis are presented in table 2 below.

**Table 2:** Independent t-test analysis of students' perception and career decision among secondary school students

| Variables          | N   | X     | SD   | Df  | t-value |
|--------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|---------|
| Students' attitude | 200 | 20.47 | 3.02 | 198 | 8.57    |
| Career decision    | 200 | 17.33 | 2.06 |     |         |

\* P < 0.05 level; df = 198; critical t-value = 1.978

The result as shown in Table 2 above revealed that the calculated t-value of 8.57 which is higher than the critical t-value of 1.978 tested at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate retained; which means that, there is a significant influence of students' perception on career decision among secondary school students.

## 10. Discussion and Conclusion

The discussion of the findings of this study was based on the result of analysis of data from the researched conducted under the following:

a. Students' attitude and career decision among secondary school students

Result of analysis of data in respect to the influence of students' attitude on career decision among secondary school students revealed that, students' attitude significantly influences career decision among student. The finding is in line with the finding of Nyamwange (2016) in her study to examine the influence of attitude on career choice decisions among first year university students in public and private universities in Kisii County, Kenya. She observed that 272 (91.9%) of all respondents indicated that having prior knowledge of what a career entails is important to developing positive attitude and interest in a career.

The findings was also in line with the views of Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008), they observed and reported that, the task this age group have grown more complicated as the choice of a career presents unique and unforeseen challenges. Perhaps due to these challenges many college graduates feel unprepared for the new circumstances of the workforce.

On students' perception and career decision; the results of the hypotheses indicated that students' perception has a significant influence on career decisions among secondary school students, which is in agreement with the findings of Hyunjoo (2012) who in his study of business school students' career perception and choice decision, revealed that; a total of 162 business students participated in the study most of the participants were juniors (41.9%) and seniors (51.0%). The study was aimed specifically at understanding the students' career expectations, their perceptions of retailing careers and the factors that determine their career choice. The findings of this study indicated that while it appears that UF students have a more positive attitude toward retail career than students' perceptions in previous studies, retailers need to keep working on disproving negative retail career images such as dull, boring and mundane. In general, it further shows that, degree related curriculum materials, work experience and exposures to firms on campus were the three most influential sources affecting students' career choice. However, the source that positively affected interest in pursuing retail careers were; exposures to firms on campus through information sessions and guest speakers, former or current employer and personal experience as a customer in the order of importance.

## 11. Recommendations

Based on the findings and results, the following counselling recommendations were made:

1. The professional career counsellor should guide, direct, assist and update student parents and teachers on job families, basic subjects combination and related careers. This will enable students to know the basic subjects they are required to master and pass at credit level before entering into higher institutions.
2. Counselors should also be posted to all secondary schools in the area of study. This will enable the students, parents and teachers to be aware of career counselling and information about the workforce.
3. Counselors and all in the teaching and learning should strive to pay more attention to the personality traits displayed by students; attitude and perception on career decision through their actions and desires as well as providing them learning experiences that would lead to encourage the development of a positive attitude and approach towards their career aspirations.
4. Adequate information should be collected on career issues and vocations. This information on career must in subsequent times be reviewed to indicate current conditions and requirements for various careers and specializations.
5. Since personality traits such as attitude and perception influence career decision, the counsellor and school management should create good student-counsellor-teachers relationship. This would help the students to assess self and based on his or her abilities, interests, skills and attitude towards his or her career and make appropriate career decision when necessary and that would stand the test of time.

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