

Influence of Parents and Peers on Career Decision-Making Among Secondary School Students: Counselling Implication for Sustainable Global Balance

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Abstract

This study investigated parents, peers and career decision making among secondary school students. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of all secondary school students in Ondo metropolis. Random sampling technique was used to select forty (40) senior class students from five secondary schools, making total of two hundred (200) students. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument to collect data for the study. Data collected were analysed using mean and rank order. The results showed that parents and peers have influence on career decision making of secondary school students. It was therefore recommended that Parents Teachers Association (PTA) forum should be used as a medium of enlightening parents on desisting from forcing any career on their children or wards. Students should be counselled on not following their peers blindly in choosing their career. Government should ensure that all schools (both private and public) have Guidance Counsellor who will guide the students in choosing career that matches their ability, personality and interest. School counsellors should do their best in giving appropriate career counselling to students. School management should collaborate with Guidance Counsellor to organise career day annually for students. Lastly, no school subject should be relegated to the background so that each student will have the opportunity to choose subjects related to their course or career of interest and potential.

1. Introduction

Career refers to a person's total life pattern. It is lifelong and also developmental in nature because it includes all educational preparations for the entire life span. Shertzer and Stone (1981) defined career as a sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout his pre-occupational, occupational and post-occupational life, including work related roles such as those of a student, employee, and pensioner, together with complementary vocational, familial, and civic roles. An individual builds career for himself or herself over a long period of time; the long time includes what happens during school years in preparation for a career, the retirement plan, as well as adjustment during retirement.

Career decision making is a life-long process which is all about exploring and experiencing the world of work and understanding one's ability, interest, skills and values and combining these to create a meaningful framework for life. Learning the decision making skills may increase the probability that a person can achieve what he wants in life (Adeleye, Asuai & Iwuagwu, 2018).

Adeleye, Asuai and Iwuagwu (2018) asserted that career counselling may decrease hopelessness, increase internalised locus of control, improve self esteem, career self-efficacy, self knowledge, career interest, autonomy, and interpersonal skills. It may also empower and renew interest in school and other educational pursuits, including improvement in academic retention. It promotes future employment, which is a key factor in preventing recidivism and may increase the adolescent's belief about their ability to successfully choose a career congruent with their interest and abilities. Career counselling, while using approaches common to other counselling specialities, also employs a number of strategies to help the clients, that are often not used in other counselling setting. These strategies include assessment of personality, intensive information giving, placement service, counselling service and consultation with parents (Sambo, 2009).

According to Agubosi, Abiola and Shuaib (2018), students career choice is influenced by a lot of factors such as family background/parental influence, career guidance programme, the media, the peer, intellectual ability, prestige, environment to mention a few. The problem of career choice has implication for national development. The quality of the workers as well as their degree of job satisfaction contribute directly or

indirectly to the economic stability and smooth running of the affairs of the nation. Lack of job satisfaction could lead to frustration with its accompanying decline in productivity and civil interest.

Ogut, Odera and Maragia (2017) examined the influence of peers on students' career decision-making. They found that peer influence had a positive relationship with career decision-making. Naz, Saheed, Khan, Khan, Sheikh and Khan (2014) explored the nature, level and extent of peer and friends influence in career decision-making process of an individual. The study found that although family primarily geared and transformed the behaviour of children in multiple ways, peer influence was an asset for developing career opportunities and decision-making among youths. In their study, Owusu, Owusu, Fiorgbor and Atakora (2021) found that peers determine to a large extent the decisions that students make concerning the career they may want to pursue. Students value the views and opinions of their friends and as such develop interest in specific careers because of the views of their friends.

Parental influence is a strong factor in career choice of students. It refers to the extent to which parents are involved in the career plans of children (Salami, 2006). Parents induce the young adolescents in schools into predetermined careers, regardless of the potential, actual needs and ego of the child. Tella (2003) and Trost and Lewis (2006) opined that parents play invaluable role in laying foundations of the students behaviour and choice of career. They offer support for certain occupational choices which tend to follow their own (Small & Maclean, 2002). Parental influence goes to the extent of giving encouragement, approval, responsiveness, moral and financial support to their children who accepted the career of their choice. Some parents have already established careers pre-conceived for their children. Parental influence in the choice of career might not recognise the factors that should be considered in making a choice of career such as child's personality, ability, aptitude, intelligence, interest, egos among others.

In the same vein, Borchert (2002) observed that several factors influence career choices of high school students and identifying these factors would give parents, educators, and industry an idea as to where students place most of their trust in the career selection process. These factors include the students' immediate environment, mostly peer groups, opportunities available to the student and finally his/her personality. He further observed that all students carry the unique history of their past and this determines how they view the world. This history is created in part by the student's environment, personality and opportunity and it determines how students make career choice.

Nawabi, Javed, Shujaulla and Ulfat (2019) concluded from the literature search that parents had a strong influence over the career choices their make, which can be both intentionally and inadvertently. Their influence can either inspire children to explore a diverse set of potential occupations or to stick to a path they think their parents will approve. The study of Owusu et. al., (2021) revealed that parents had interest in the careers of their children and that their children do not take career decisions without their approval. This study aims at investigating the extent of parents and peers influence on career decision making of secondary school students, so as to come up with counselling implications for sustainable global balance.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to:

- a. Investigate the extent of parents influence on career decision making of secondary school students.
- b. Find out the extent of peers influence on career decision making of secondary school students.

1.2. Research Questions

- a. What is the extent of parents influence on career decision making of secondary school students?
- b. What is the extent of peers influence on career decision making of secondary school students?

2. Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population comprised all secondary school students in Ondo metropolis. The sample consisted of two hundred (200) senior class students randomly selected from five (5) schools with forty (40) students from each school. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A & B). Section A was on personal data of the respondents while Section B consisted of items on parents and peers influence on students career decision making with four Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Data collected were analysed using mean and ranking.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Research Question One: What Is the Extent of Parents' Influence on Career Decision-Making of Secondary School Students?

To answer this question, the responses of the sample selected from the study were analysed using mean and rank order as presented in Table 1. Table 1 shows the mean scores and ranking of parents influence on career decision making of secondary school students. Item 9 which states that "my parents are ready to provide resources for my career development" with a mean score of 3.65 ranked 1st, item 10 with a mean score of 3.55 ranked 2nd, item 2 with a mean score of 3.05 ranked 3rd, item 1 ranked 4th, item 5 ranked 5th, item 3 ranked 6th, item 7 ranked 7th, item 6 ranked 8th, item 4 ranked 9th while item 8 which states that "I will consider working after secondary school to support my family rather than make a career choice" with a mean score of 2.24 ranked 10th and last. This implies that parents have influence on career decision making of secondary school students.

Table 1. Mean and Rank Order Table of Parents' Influence on Career Decision-Making of Secondary School Students

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Rank
1	My parents choose my secondary school subjects for me.	2.96	4 th
2	My career choice has been influenced by by the occupation of my parents.	3.05	3 rd
3	I have access to employment in a family business.	2.52	6 th
4	I would not like to take after my father's/mother's occupation, instead I will go for a better one.	2.34	9 th
5	I would like to take after my father's/mother's occupation because I admire it.	2.55	5 th
6	My parents are interested in whatever career I am considering for my future	2.43	8 th
7	I will have to work for the money needed to attend any training after secondary school	2.51	7 th
8	I will consider working after secondary school to support my family rather than make a career choice.	2.24	10 th
9	My parents are ready to provide resources for my career development.	3.65	1 st
10	My parents are able to finance my vocational aspirations whichever career I choose.	3.55	2 nd

3.1.2. Research Question Two: What Is the Extent of Peers' Influence on Career Decision-Making of Secondary School Students?

To answer this question, the responses of the sample selected fro the study were analysed using mean and rank order as presented in Table 2. Table 2 reveals the mean scores and ranking of peers influence on career decision making of secondary school students. Item 16 which states that "my peers always convince me to make the same career choice together with them" with a mean score of 3.85 ranked 1st, item 15 with a mean score of 3.82 ranked 2nd, item 11 with a mean score of 3.75 ranked 3rd, item 19 with a mean score of 3.72 ranked 4th, item 12 with a mean score of 3.64 ranked 5th, item 17 ranked 6th, item 18 ranked 7th, item 20 ranked 8th, item 14 ranked 9th while item 13 which states that "My peer have encouraged me to be involved in extra-curricular activities" with a mean score of 2.72 ranked 10th and the last. This implies that peers have influence on career decision making of secondary school students.

Table 2. Mean and Rank Order Table of Peers' Influence on Career Decision-Making of Secondary School Students

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Rank
11	My peers want me to choose the same career with them	3.75	3 rd
12	I developed an early understanding and desire of my career choice through observation of my peers	3.64	5 th
13	My peers have encouraged me to be involved in extracurricular activities	2.72	10 th
14	My peers have given me written material about specific careers that was given to them by their parents	2.81	9 th
15	I believe making the same career choice with my peers from high socio economic background will help me make a successful career choice	3.82	2 nd
16	My peers always convince me to make the same career choice together with them	3.85	1 st
17	My peers always warn me never to choose certain career and that is why I am careful not to pick the one they would not like	2.91	6 th
18	I will like to choose the same career with my peers	2.90	7 th
19	I admire my peers choice of career	3.72	4 th
20	I always gist with my peers about choosing a career.	2.89	8 th

3.2. Discussion

The results of this study revealed that parents have influence on career decision making of secondary school students. This is corroborated by Agubosi, Abiola and Shuaib (2018) who stated that students career choice is influenced by a lot of factors such as family background/parental influence, career guidance programme, the media, the peer, to mention a few. In the same vein, Trost and Lewis (2006) opined that parents play invaluable role in laying foundations of the students behaviour and choice of career. Although school, peers and the student's community all have an impact on the young adult's self identity and career choice, the parental expectations and perceptions have been found to play a key role in shaping their career choices (Kniveton, 2004). Owusu et. al. (2021) revealed that parents have interest in the careers of their children and that children do not take career decisions without their approval.

The study also showed that peers have influence on career decision making of secondary school students. This is in line with Borchert (2002) who identified the students' immediate environment, mostly peer groups as one of the factors that influence career choice of high school students. This is also supported by Agubosi, Abiola and Shuaib (2018) who mentioned peer as one of the factors that influence career choice among students. Ogotu et. al. (2017) found that peers influenced career decision making among secondary school students and that they valued the opinions of their peers and as such took career decision that reflected the views of their peers. In a study by Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015), peer relationships were revealed to be significant in helping students choose careers. Owusu et. al. (2021) equally found that peers had a great influence on career aspirations of students and desire for peer approval and liking makes them want to be involved in whatever their peers were involved in. Naz et. al. (2014) stated that even though families had an influence on career choices, the influence of peers cannot be discounted.

3.3. Counselling Implication for Sustainable Global Balance

Global sustainability refers to the responsible management of resources and the environment to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses a holistic approach that integrates environmental health, economic viability and social equity. The key aspects include environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Economic sustainability emphasises promoting economic growth and development that is inclusive and equitable, ensuring that all individuals have access to resources and opportunities while social sustainability is premised on fostering social equity, community well being, and cultural diversity, ensuring that all people can lead fulfilling lives with dignity and respect.

In the same vein, global balance refers to a state of equilibrium or harmony on a global scale. Sustainable global balance describes the idea of balancing economic, social and environmental systems for a sustainable future. When this is related to personal well-being, it refers to a state of harmony between physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Global sustainability emphasises the need for collective action at local, national and global levels to ensure environmental, economic and social sustainability. Making effort to achieve this among the young ones who are expected to be in the most productive group in the society, career decision making takes a pivotal role. Wrong decision made at this stage may have life time effect on them, their families and the society at large. Choosing a course or career that does not match an individual's ability, personality or interest may result in poor performance in school and sometimes expulsion. Such students may become unproductive and nuisance to the society. They may not be able to perform up to their full capacity, hence, jeopardising the quality manpower needed for the nation's economic growth.

Career counselling helps in addressing this issue. Students are exposed to accurate understanding of their individual traits (aptitudes, interests, personal abilities). This includes a knowledge of job and the labour market, rational and objective judgements about the relationship between their individual traits, and the labour market which operates under the premise that it is possible to measure both individual talents and attributes required in particular jobs. It is assumed that people may be matched to an occupation that fits their potentials. When individuals are in jobs best suited to their abilities, they perform at their best and their productivity is highest.

Mazumber and Begum (2025) asserted that students frequently felt pressured to pursue careers in highly popular professions like medicine, law or business, regardless of personal interest. Those who got excessive parental pressure express feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration, particularly when their career interest clashed with parental expectations. In order to delimit the negative effects of parental pressure, many schools have incorporated counselling programmes that aim to provide students with the autonomy to make career choices. Career counselling can help students to develop self awareness to develop self-awareness regarding their interest, values and abilities, allowing them to make well informed choices free from undue influence from their parents (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Also, workshops aiming at improving communication between students and parents are proven effective in conflict reduction and empowering parents to recognise and

understand the importance of supporting their children's autonomy in career decision-making. Owusu et. al. (2021) equally emphasised empowering students to be able to take their own career decisions and not following their peers out of naivety.

Based on this fact, parents and peers are not to be considered as the most important factors for career decision making among students. This is the essence of career guidance, which is a programme introduced in schools so that students will not make wrong choice of career.

4. Conclusion

This study found that parents and peers have influence on career decision making of secondary school students. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Parents/Teachers Association (PTA) forum should be used as a medium of enlightening parents on desisting from forcing any career on their children or wards.
- b. Students should be counselled on not following their peers blindly in choosing their career.
- c. Government should ensure that all schools (both private and public) have Guidance Counsellor who will guide the students in choosing career that matches their ability, personality and interest.
- d. School counsellors should do their best in giving appropriate career counselling to students.
- e. School management should collaborate with Guidance Counsellor to organise Career Day annually for students.
- f. No school subject should be relegated to the background so that each student will have the opportunity to choose subjects related to their course or career of interest and potential.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/ or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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