

Factors that Influence Vocational Choice among Technical College Students in North East of Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was to find factors that influence vocational choice among Technical College students in North East Nigeria. The study was guided by five research questions. Population for the study consisted of 5,003 NTC III Technical College students. Using a proportionate random sampling technique, a sample of 492 students was used for the study. The instrument used for collecting data is a structured questionnaire titled Factors Influencing Technical College Students' Vocational Choice Questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data collected and answer the research questions. The findings of the study were: Technical College students agree that environmental factors and parents/guardians related factors influenced their vocational choice in Technical College, while Students personality related factors; peer group related factors and career guidance officer do not influence their vocational choice in Technical Colleges. Based on these findings the following recommendations were made: Students should not be forced by parents or guardians to choose any career, but rather be guided according to their ability; Students should be encouraged to liaise and interact among themselves and with their teachers based on their individual personality difference and the suitable career opportunities that suit their abilities and interest when choosing a vocation.

Key Words: *Influence, Vocational Choice and Technical College.*

Introduction

Technical Colleges, sometimes called trade centers, admit students from junior secondary school and provide them with full vocational courses of three years duration. They are regarded as principal vocational institutions in Nigeria (Okoro, 1999). They give full vocational training intended to prepare students for entry into various occupations. On completion of the course of training students may obtain work in industries or establish business on their own or proceed to higher technical institution for further training (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). According to Alutu cited in Ohiwerei and Nwosu (2009), vocational development and choice should be initiated in the child as early as the nursery school years, through the primary, secondary school/technical college and to the tertiary school levels. Vocational choice is the choice of an intended profession or occupation leading to employment through which one earns a living, especially one for which the person has a period of training in an institution or through apprenticeship.

The choice of a vocation is one of the most important decisions one make in life. It determines to a large extent a person's social status, income, life style, class of friends, mental

and physical state, and it is also influenced by the type of work the person intended to do. In other words, students' vocational choice plays important roles in their entire life. Vocational choice decision making is not an easy task yet at one time or the other, individuals are faced with the task of making this choice. The choice point is undoubtedly the most critical stage; this is because making a wrong vocational decision can mar one's happiness in life, as it results to vocational maladjustment. It has been recognized recently, that for a person to make realistic decision about his/her choice of vocation, his/her level of self-efficacy should indeed be very influential (Ohiwerei & Nwosu, 2009).

There has been a divergent idea on students' vocational choice by different scholars, while some schools believe that it should be based on ones' judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain the designed type of training (Bandura, 1986), others, like Igbinedion (2011) believe that vocational choice should be based on psychological, sociological, economic, situational, political and religious factors. A trait-factor theorist of note in vocational choice is Holland (1971), who provided a highly rational explanation of the relationship between personality traits and career development. Unlike most other theorists, who emphasized the matching of individuals' abilities in particular jobs, his theory model centers on how individual student with given personality characteristics are likely to react in work environments that corresponds with their characteristics.

Holland's major view point is that a person's choice of vocation is an expression of his personality, and that interest inventories are expression of personality and their preferred work type and environment. According to the theory, people search for work environment that will allow them exercise their skills and abilities, interest, attitudes and values. This theory is examined because it relates to the vocational aspiration of technical college students, especially in this instance. In view of the foregoing, the need to equip our students with appropriate vocational decision making skills becomes highly imperative.

Okon (2001) stated that vocational development of youths and the preparation and guidance they receive for the world of work should be of concern to all educators. We are convinced that a better job of vocational guidance in our schools will help to solve some of the problems of alienation and relevance which face the Technical College students today. In view of the aforementioned this study will look at students internal and external factors which influence their vocational choice. These internal factors are students' individual difference, their personal characteristics which determine their choice of vocation. These include: intellectual ability, aptitudes, interest, value system, motivation, self-esteem, sex and attitude towards various occupations, mental and emotional disposition. The external factors are such as: teacher influence, parental pressure, economic and political condition of the country, peer group, vocational choice counselor and etcetera.

Interest is a significant factor in students' vocational choice. Owie (2003) advanced a position that, the most important reason why a person chooses a particular career is that the person has intrinsic interest in the field. While this may be highly influenced by prior academic achievement, it is however, expected that intrinsic interest and or motivation remains a primary factor, if the individual is going to be effectively satisfied and excel in the career. The role of sex cannot be under estimated in vocational choice of technical college students. In most parts of the world, the cultural role expectations of men and women in terms of occupation are known to be clearly defined. Some studies have shown significant relationship between gender and occupational aspirations, preference and choice. Egun and Tibi (2010) and Abdulahi, Kalejaiye, Garba and Balogun (2007) stated that there is gender discrimination and stereotyping of school

subjects choice among students. In Nigerian society in particular, young boys and girls undergo different socialization process and experience, and they tend to learn different gender roles and behavior patterns to develop different interest in future occupation (Shumba & Naong, 2012 & Matope & Makotose, 2007). Similarly previous studies found that students' problems in vocation decision making is associated with their different emotional and personality factors (Zhou & Xu, 2013). Zhou and Xu found that career decision making in china among young people was highly related to their emotion well-being as well as to their life satisfaction and hope.

Students' external factors such as parental pressure have been found by researchers to have influenced students' vocational choice; Okeke (1996) studied the relationship between parental occupation and their children occupational preferences and found that 60 per cent of the children were willing to take after their fathers' occupation. It is not a bad thing for a child to copy after their parents' occupations, but care must be taken in other not to enforce such occupations on the children against their interest and capabilities. Igbinedion (2011) posited that parents' influence is much more intricate and more pervasive than normally portrayed. He went forward to explain that students are often not aware of the dangers in these influences and may accept the choice of their parents. A conflict therefore may occur, when the child submits to his parents' choice, while at the same time deeply resenting his submissions as he becomes aware of his mistakes and finds his area of interest and capabilities.

Environment is yet another factor that influences the students' vocational choice. This is directly linked with the child's parental background as well as home environment and location. Students' perception of their environment will determine how they will make their vocational choice. For instance, students who lived on an island may choose vocation dealing with the water (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). Students peer groups also play a major role on their vocational choice (Bojuwoye & Mbanjwa, 2006). According to Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa, peer group is one of the most influential factors in the life of adolescence. It has a very strong persuasive spirit and making those involved turn from one way to another. They said, educationally this factor has influenced some people to make decisions that have affected their lives today.

Career guidance counselor is yet another important factor in students' vocational choice. The career guidance counselor provide the students with vocational information that may be related to their subjects and interest, so that they can make appropriate choice based on their capabilities to cope with the nature and demand of the vocation. Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006) found that lack of career information and unsatisfactory counseling impacted negatively on students' choice of career. In another study by Maree and Beek (2004), some schools with career counseling programs were under-utilizing the services of the counselors, they went further to expatiate that many learners passed through their studies without receiving career counseling in any form, and consequently were denied the opportunity to apply for acceptance into sought-after field of study.

The problem of vocational or career choice among technical college students has generated a lot of questions and answers among scholars. The problem has been a delicate issue that has to be approached with caution. There is no clear process that technical college students have used to make vocational choice. Technical college students should have all the appropriate opportunities to explore in other to make a logical educational plan when choosing a vocation.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the factors influencing students' vocational choice in North East Nigeria Technical Colleges. Specifically the study was to:

1. Determine the influence of environment on technical college students' vocational choice in North East Nigeria
2. Determine the influence of parents or guardians on technical college students' vocational choice in North East Nigeria
3. Determine the influence of students personality on vocational choice among technical college students in North East Nigeria
4. Determine the influence of peer group on vocational choice of technical college students in North East Nigeria
5. Determine the influence of career guidance personnel on vocational choice among technical college students in North East Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of environment on technical college students' vocational choice in North East Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of parents or guardians on students' vocational choice in technical colleges in North East Nigeria?
3. What is the influence of students' personality on their vocational choice in technical colleges in North East Nigeria?
4. What is the influence of students' peer group on their vocational choice in technical colleges in North East Nigeria?
5. What is the influence of career guidance personnel on students' vocational choice in technical colleges in North East Nigeria?

Methodology

The research design employed for the study was descriptive survey. This design was chosen because the researcher was interested in observing the sampled subjects in their natural state and environment without any attempt to modify, manipulate or control them (Asika, 1991). The study was carried out in North East Nigeria, consisting of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States. The six North East States of Nigeria have 31 states Government Science and Technical Colleges (GSTC). Three of these technical colleges are Government Girls Science and Technical College. Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States have three, four, two, seven, seven and eight GSTC respectively (see appendix I & II).

Population of the study consisted of 5003 National Technical Certificate (NTC) III Technical College students 2014/2015 academic session (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States Post Primary Schools Management Boards). The sample selected from the 34 States Technical Colleges was proportional to the number of NTC III students in each of the six states Technical Colleges. 10 per cent of the total students were randomly selected from each Technical College. According to Asika (1991) and Toluhi (2001), a total of 10-30 per cent of a population, depending on the population size is sufficient for a study. Thus the sample for this study was made up of 492 NTC III Technical College students from the six states Technical Colleges

The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire, developed by the researcher according to the specific purposes and research questions that guided the study. The questionnaire is titled Factors Influencing Technical College Students Vocational Choice Questionnaire (FITCSVCQ). The instrument was made up of 25 items, its scoring scale was

meant to elicit the respondents' level of agreement on how the listed items in the instrument influenced them in their choice of vocation in technical college. The scale of the instrument has five points ranging from (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, undecided = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1). Face validity was established for the instrument, by five experts from Technology Education Department, Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola Adamawa State. Their comments and suggestions were considered for improving the quality of the instrument. A pilot study of the instrument was carried out using 30 NTC III students from three Government Science and Technical Colleges in Kano State to determine the reliability of the instrument. Split-half was used, and a reliability coefficient of the whole instrument yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.73. A total of 492 copies of the questionnaire were distributed filled and returned. The information collected by the researcher was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was interpreted based on the scaling points of the theory of true limits of real number. This means that all factors with mean scores equal to or greater than 3.50 were considered to have influenced students' choice of trade. While factors with mean scores below 3.50 were considered to have no influence

Results

Table 1: Mean of Responses of Technical College Students on Influence of Home Environment on their Vocational Choice

N = 492

S/N	Students' Home Environment factors	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The area where my home is located is responsible for my vocational choice	3.30	1.10	Not Influential
2	The religion and belief of people around my community influenced my vocational choice	3.50	0.32	Influential
3	The nature of the business and services needed in my community influenced my vocational choice	4.00	0.35	Influential
4	The location of my school from my home is responsible for my vocational choice	3.70	0.32	Influential
5	Living in a low or high socio-economic environment influenced my vocational choice	3.10	0.32	Not Influential
	Grand Mean	3.52	0.48	Influential

The response of NTC III students on Table one shows that environmental factor influenced their choice of vocation. Though item numbers 1 and 5 have mean of less than 3.50, the grand mean and standard deviation shows that the factor influenced students choice of vocation

Table 2: Mean of Responses of Technical College Students on Influence of their Parents or Guardians on their Vocational Choice

N = 492

S/N	Parents or Guardians Related Factors	Mean	SD	Remark
1	My parents/guardians advice had great influence on my vocational choice	4.40	0.15	Influential

2	My parents/guardians occupation had great influence on my vocational choice	4.40	0.15	Influential
3	My parents/guardians educational background influenced my vocational choice	4.20	0.24	Influential
4	My vocational choice was based on my hope of employment in the family business	3.40	0.38	Not Influential
5	My parents/guardians chose my technical college subjects and trade for me	3.80	0.51	Influential
	Grand Mean	4.04	0.28	Influential

Students' responses on one of the parents' or guardians' related factors that may influence their choice of vocation, i.e. factor number 4, is below 3.50, while the rest of the factors have mean above 3.50. The grand mean and standard deviation of 4.04 and 0.28 revealed that students' parents'/guardians' related factors influenced their choice of vocation in technical college.

Table 3: Mean Responses of Technical College Students on the influence of their Personality Factors (Disposition) on their Choice of Vocation

N = 492

S/N	Students' Personality Factors (Disposition)	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I made my vocational choice based on my intellectual capability	3.50	0.35	Influential
2	I made my vocational choice because I had no career plan	2.30	0.25	Not Influential
3	I made my vocational choice based on my motivation to the subject requirements in the field	2.70	0.40	Not Influential
4	I chose my technical college subjects based on my interest in them	2.50	0.41	Not Influential
5	My previous academic achievement influenced my vocational choice	2.50	0.41	Not Influential
	Grand Mean	2.70	0.36	Not Influential

Table 3 shows students' responses on the influence of their disposition (personality factor) on their vocational choice. The results revealed the , out of the personality related factors only one, i.e. number 1 has mean up to 3.50, while 2 – 5 have mean below 3.50. The grand mean for this factor is 2.70.

Table 4: Mean Responses of Technical College Students on the Influence of Peer Groups on their Vocational Choice

N = 492

S/N	Peer Group Related factors	Mean	SD	Remark
1	My vocational choice was influenced by my friends	4.10	0.17	Influential

2	Deviant behavior of technical college students in vocational choice are influenced by peer groups	3.10	0.26	Not Influential
3	Moving with students of tertiary institutions influenced my vocational choice	3.40	0.21	Not Influential
4	Because of my friends criticism of my choice of vocation, I had to change my mind about the vocation	3.30	0.25	Not Influential
5	The expectations of my friends about me influenced my choice of vocation	3.10	0.26	Not Influential
	Grand Mean	3.40	0.23	Not Influential

Table 4 shows technical college students' responses on the influence of their peer groups on their vocational choice. The results revealed the , out of the five peer group related factors only one, i.e. number 1 has mean up to 3.50, while 2 – 5 have mean below 3.50. The grand mean and standard deviation for this factor is 3.40 and 0.23 respectively.

Table 5: Mean responses of Technical College Students on the Influence of Career Guidance Officer on their Vocational Choice

N = 492

S/N	Career Guidance Officer Related factors	Mean	SD	Remark
1	My school has a career guidance unit	1.80	0.31	Not Influential
2	My school career guidance counselor had a great influence my vocational choice	1.70	0.28	Not Influential
3	My school often organize career guidance took to help students in their vocational choice	1.50	0.16	Not Influential
4	Information from a career guidance officer would have helped me in my vocational choice	1.80	0.31	Not Influential
5	Career guidance personnel counseling is not necessary for my choice of vocation	1.50	0.21	Not Influential
	Grand Mean	1.66	0.25	Not Influential

Students' responses on the influence of career guidance officer as a factor that influences their choice of vocation revealed that all the five factors have mean less than 3.50. The grand mean is 1.66 is also less than 3.50.

Findings

The results of the study revealed the following:

1. Technical College students agreed that, of the five environmental factors 3 influenced

- their choice of vocation (these are: religion belief of the people around them, nature of the business and services needed in their community and the location of their schools).
2. Technical college students agreed that all the five parents/guardians related factors influenced their vocational choice except one (which is choice of school subjects based on hope of getting employment in family business).
 3. Four out of the five selected students' personality related factors was not agreed upon by students to have influenced their vocational choice. Thus this factor does not influence their career decision since its grand mean is below 3.50.
 4. Four of the five selected peer groups related factors do not influence their vocational choice since they all have mean and grand below 3.50.
 5. All of the five career guidance officer related factors were rejected by Technical College Students as factors which had influenced their choice of vocation

Discussion

The discussion of findings of the study was done in line with the research questions. When the factors perceived to have influenced students' choice of vocation were rated by Technical College Students, it was found that parents/guardian was ranked as the most influential factor with mean and standard deviation of 4.04 and 0.28, followed by environmental factor with mean and standard deviation of 3.52 and 0.48 respectively. This finding is in consonant with the finding of Olamide and Olawaiye (2013), who found that students' perception of their environment determines how they will make their vocational choice. The result of this study also agrees with Igbinedion (2011), who found that parents/guardians related factors influences students' choice of career positively with mean rating of 7.05 and standard deviation 2.71.

The result on environmental factors for this study is in contrast to the findings of Olamide and Olawaiye on same factor, who found that students' in their responses as regards to its influence on their vocational career agreed that it affected them negatively. Peer group. Student' personality factors and career guidance officer are the next factors ranked respectively by Technical College Students in the order of its influence on their vocational choice. From the study, none of these three factors have influenced the choice of students' vocation positively. The findings on peer group and students' personality from this study are in contrast with Igbinedion's finding on same factors, who found that peer group and students' personality was ranked as the most influential factors in students' choice of vocation with mean percentages of 66% and 57% respectively. The finding on career guidance officer as a factor influencing students' choice of vocation is in contrast with the work of Shumba and Naong (2012), which was a study on factors influencing students' career choice and aspiration in South Africa. Their study found that career counseling at schools made a significant impact on the students' future career choice.

Conclusion

There were variations among Technical college students on their perception of the perceived factors that influenced their vocational choice. Environment and parents/guardians are the most influential among the five factors that was suggested for this study. Peer group, students' personality and career guidance counselor seemed to have played little or no effect in the students' choice of vocation in technical college.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. For students to make the right vocational choice, parents should not force their children into career, but rather guide them according to their abilities.
2. Technical College students should be encouraged to liaise and interact among themselves and with their teachers on their dispositions and the suitable career opportunities that suit their abilities and interest, when choosing a vocation
3. Technical Colleges need to provide career guidance counselor for students during their course of study especially before the point of the students choice of subject combination

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: NTC III in All the Trades in Technical Colleges in North East Nigeria

S/N	State	Number of Tech. Coll.	Number NTC III Students	Sample/State (10%/Population)	Study Sample	Sample/School
1	Adamawa	3	771	77.1	78	26
2	Bauchi	7	840	84	84	12
3	Borno	2	350	35	34	17
4	Gombe	7	1200	120	119	17
5	Taraba	7	1100	110	105	15
6	Yobe	8	742	74.2	72	9
Total		34	5003	500.3	492	

Source: Post Primary Schools Management Board of the Six States in North East Nigeria

Appendix II: State Technical Colleges in North East Nigeria

S/N	State	School	Location
1	Adamawa	GSTC GSTC GSTC	Mubi Numan Yola
2	Bauchi	GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC	Gumau Garin-Alkaleri Bauchi Tafawa-Belewa Kafin-Madaki Jamare Gamawa
3	Borno	GSTC GGSTC	Bama Dambuwa
4	Gombe	GSTC GSTC GGSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC	Gombe Kumo Amada Bajoga Tula Kwame Deba
5	Taraba	GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC	Gembu Bali Takum Wukari Jalingo Zing Lau

6	Yobe	GGSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC GSTC	Patiskum Dapehi Damagum Gujuba Gaidam Nguru Gashuua Patiskum
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Source: Post Primary Schools Management Boards of the Six States in North East Nigeria