

# Influence of parents educational background on career choice of teenagers among senior secondary school students in Owerri

Miracle Ifeoma Mbagwu, Okechukwu Odinaka Ajaegbu

## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The study investigated influence of parents educational background on career choice of teenagers among senior secondary school students in Owerri, Imo State. **Methods:** Using survey design, 400 teenagers were administered with structured questionnaire in four sampled schools in Owerri. They comprised of 200 males and 200 females whose ages ranged from 13 to 19 years with a mean age of 16.24. The data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. **Results:** The result revealed that teenagers whose parents are from high educational background are more consistent and do not have much difficulties in making career choice when compared with those whose parents have low educational background. Also, majority of teenagers whose parents had high educational background made more of professional career choices while majority of teenagers whose parents had low educational background made more of business career choices. **Conclusion:** Since this study has clearly shown that parents' educational background to a great extent influences career decision of teenagers, the study recommends that further studies should be conducted to establish the

**implication of parents influence on teenagers' future career choices and the society at large.**

**Keywords:** Career choices, Owerri, Parents educational background, Teenagers

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## INTRODUCTION

Career selection is one of many important choices students make in determining future plans. This decision will impact them throughout their lives. Basavage in her thesis asked, 'what is it that influences children one way or another in career choice?' [1]. The ideas of what motivates a child into a certain vocation and repels him/her from others are not new. According to Friesen this issue has become a growing interest to educators, counselors, ministers and social scientists [2]. These factors that influence youngsters vocational choices include: socio-economic status of the family, educational level of the parents, educational attainment of the youngster, high poverty, employability of the vocation, location of choice maker (environment), age of the choice maker, sex (gender), religious affiliation and other social factors [3–6].

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For the purpose of this study, effort will be channeled towards analyzing the influence of parents' educational background on career choice among teenagers in Owerri, Imo State. Parents' educational background may influence students' views on whether or not to continue their education and the direction of their career choice [3]. Parents may demand their children assume their profession, a family business, or go for a particular vocation based on what they think the family needs. Ugwu [6] observed that parental influences make major impact during adolescence. The level of impact made by these parents depends so much on their level of education. Of all the factors that influence career choice processes, family members particularly parents, tend to be the most influential determinant of career plans, occupational aspirations and expectations. Even if schools have the resources with which to meet young people's career guidance needs, neither teachers nor counselors can replace the influence parents have on their sons and daughters career plans [6].

In a study conducted by Nwoke [7], on impact of parents' educational background, age, gender on the vocational choice among Nigerian adolescents from 8 secondary schools in Abuja municipal, it was observed that parents' educational background seems to influence and propel the type of courses children study in the tertiary institutions and their subsequent vocational choice. In his study, Hewitt [8] revealed that factors that influence career choice of secondary school students can either be intrinsic or extrinsic or both. According to him, parental background in terms of education was discovered as one of the external factors that influence students' career choices. 56% of 2,015 interviewee reported that their career choice was influenced by their parents.

In his study on relationship between parental occupations and their children's occupational preference, Okeke [9] revealed that parents' vocation influences career choice of their children. Using 200 teenagers from Federal Government College, Umuahia, Abia State, he found that 60% of the children were willing to take after their father's occupation while 23% were willing to follow their mother's occupation. Together, 76% of the sample size choice of career was influenced by their parents' vocation.

In a survey conducted by Naeem, Jangraiz, Muhammed and Sajjad, [10] on "determinants of parents' choice in selection of private schools for their children in District Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkwa province", using a total sample of 200 parents drawn purposively from 40 secondary schools of Peshawar District of Khyber Pakhtunkwa province during September–October 2009, it was discovered that 94% of educated parents chose the best regarded private school for their children. Their reasons were obvious; the school has progressive style of education that will make their children more serious in the pursuit of the parents intending career choices.

However, the above is not in consonant with a correlational study conducted by Ejike [11] on parents'

occupational status and the status of jobs chosen by students in Okigwe Imo State. The study revealed that with the exception of girls, the family background in terms of occupational status of parents did not correlate with the status of jobs chosen by students. While those whose fathers were in high status jobs chose jobs that carried similar status, the students whose fathers were in low status jobs, abandoned them in preference of high status jobs. This consequently implies that educational background of parents cannot only influence their children's career choice.

## Theoretical Review

Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones' [12], and Krumboltz, and Nichols' [13] Social Learning theory of career choice provides explanation on how parents educational background influences their children's career choice. The theory explains that people's career choices are impacted by their social learning, including their experiences with people, events and institution. Krumboltz et al., [12] proposes four factors influencing career choices which include: Learning Experiences, Environmental Factors, Genetic Factors, and Individual Skills of Approaching Task.

For the purpose of this study, learning experiences as a factor is examined. According to Krumboltz et al. [12], learning experiences play a large role in what career an individual picks. Learning experiences can be gotten from the family, school, peer group and any event that may have impact in an individual's upbringing. Particularly, learning experiences in the family could come from either the parents, siblings or significant others in the home. Depending on the type of learning acquired from these groups, (especially parents), an individual's career choice may be influenced. Obike [14] supported learning experiences as one of the factors that can influence the teenagers' career choices with the observation that the school curriculum is determined by the aspiration of the society and the exposure (learning) an individual has in the family, school, church, and peer group goes a long way to determine his/her career choice. Applying this social learning theory of career choice to the happenings in the world of work today, the researchers carefully observed that the type of learning experiences teenagers acquire from their parents is mostly rooted in the educational background of those parents. Some parents who have low educational background may have talked their children into following their family business or talk them out of that since they may want a situation whereby their children make it into what they could not make. Whereas, some other parents with high educational background may demand that their children follow their own profession or go into another profession based on what they think will boast the family ego in future. It follows that teenagers who are into one vocation or the other may have entered as a result of learning experiences gotten from parents of different educational background. Some entered with

the influence of their parents' social class which has its root on educational background, socio-economic status, religious and political affiliations.

## Hypothesis

There is a statistically significant relationship between parent's educational background and choice of career among secondary school teenagers.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Owerri city which is capital of Imo State, Nigeria. Owerri is a city in South-Eastern Nigeria with a population of about 231,789 and approximately 40 square miles (100 km<sup>2</sup>) in area. It is located in the latitude of 5°29'1.1" (5.4836°) north and longitude of 7°1'59.7" (7.0333°) east. Owerri is made up of mainly literate population who are mostly civil servants, students and traders.

Survey research design was adopted while questionnaire was data collection tool for the study. The population of this study includes all senior secondary school students in government owned schools along Port Harcourt Road, Douglas, Wetheral and Okigwe Road in Owerri city. The schools include: Holy Ghost College Secondary School, Owerri Girls Secondary School, Emmanuel College, Ikenegbu Girls Secondary School, Owerri City School, Government College and Federal Government Girls College. The sample for this study consisted of four hundred (400) secondary school students, two hundred (200) males and two hundred (200) females.

A multi-stage sampling method was adopted for this study. Firstly, Simple random sampling method was used to select three schools (Owerri Girls Secondary School, Owerri City School, and Government College). The seven schools involved were written in pieces of papers which were folded, and then the researchers picked three randomly for the study. Secondly, purposive sampling method was used to select senior secondary school students within the ages of 13–19 years. After obtaining permission from the principals of the schools, the researchers approached the students for selection. The students whose ages ranged from 13 to 19 years were separated from others, and were involved in the study. In the view of the researchers, this is a group that can best provide answers for the research objective because it is mainly in this period of life that career decisions are made. Finally, four hundred structured questionnaires were administered to the actual participants using simply random sampling technique. The questionnaire was entitled "Teenagers' Career Choice Scale (TCCS). In order to adopt the instrument for use in the study, a pilot study was carried out with an initial questionnaire of 25-items. The pilot study was conducted using 60 male and female students of comprehensive secondary school, Akwakuma, Owerri, Imo state. Students in senior secondary school

whose ages ranged from 13–19 years were used. The data obtained using the initial 25 items were used to estimate reliability and validity. According to Aron and Aron [15], factor loadings can be thought of as the correlation of the variable with the factor, and a variable is considered to contribute meaningfully to a factor only if it has at least about  $\pm 0.3$  loading. Based on this fact, when item analysis was done, 11 items out of 25 items which did not load up to  $\pm 0.3$ , were deleted because they showed a very low correlation. Using the remaining 14 items for reliability statistics, a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.894 was obtained using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 15.0. In estimating face and content validity, the instrument was given to seven experts (five and two professionals in Psychology and Education respectively). Seventy-one percent (71%) of the experts ascertained its validity. In addition, domain of validity or intrinsic validity which is obtained by calculating the square root of its reliability [16] was employed and a validity coefficient of 0.946 obtained. Furthermore, the instrument was divided into two sections – A and B. Section A, provided the biographic data of the participants as well as measured the independent variable- Parents' Educational Background (high and low). Parents who obtained "No formal education, FSLC, SSCE, and OND" were regarded as those with low educational background, while parents who obtained "HND, BSc, MSc, and PhD" were regarded as those with high educational background. Section B was a nominal scale of "Yes" or "No" 14-item questions, which measured the teenagers' career choice (Professional and Business careers). "Yes" represented a professional career preference and was scored 2, while "No" represented a business career preference and was scored 1. Being a 14-item questionnaire, the career choice scores ranged from 14 to 28, with a mean score of 21.88 approximately 22. Respondents who obtained scores from 21 and above were considered as having higher reports indicating a higher choice of professional careers while those who scored below 21 were considered as having lower reports which indicated a higher choice of business careers. Both descriptive and inferential (chi-square) statistical methods were used to analyze data collected. The analysis was done using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Ethical principles of informed and voluntary consents, confidentiality, non-injury and beneficence were fully observed throughout the data collection process. Written permission was obtained from the principals of the schools. Furthermore, individual consents were given by the students before administering the questionnaire.

## RESULTS

The study considered variables such as respondents' age, gender, education and parents' educational level.

From Table 1, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents representing 69.2% are between 16–19

years while minority (30.8%) are between 13–15 years. In terms of gender, there were equal distribution among male (50%) and female (50%). Furthermore, over 85% of the participants representing majority of the respondents indicated that their educational level is SS2 or SS3 while minority representing 14.3% noted that their highest educational level is SS1. Finally, over 53% of the respondents revealed that the highest educational level of their parents is BSc/HND, MSc or PhD, while about 47% of the respondents noted that their parents do not have any formal education or have FSLC, SSCE, or OND.

Table 2 gives mean and standard deviation differences between different levels of parents' educational background on career choice. Teenagers whose parents had high educational level were 219 in number with a mean of 23.0 and standard deviation of 3.75 while teenagers whose parents had low educational background were 181, with a mean of 19.95 and standard deviation of 4.63. The table also clearly shows low variation (Standard deviation 3.75) in career choice decision making for teenagers whose parents have high educational background than teenagers whose parents have low educational background. The relative low variation of career decision making for teenagers whose parents have high educational background indicates that they do not have much difficulty in making career choice when compared with teenagers whose parents have low educational background.

To test the hypothesis for this study which states that 'there is a statistically significant relationship between parent's educational background and choice of career among secondary school teenagers', chi-square test was conducted.

From Table 3, 56 teenagers representing minority of the respondents whose parents had high educational background scored 14–20 while 163 teenagers representing majority of the respondents scored 21–28 with a degree of freedom of 14 at a significant level of 0.000. Furthermore, 96 teenagers representing majority of the respondents whose parents had low educational background scored 14–20 while 85 teenagers representing minority of the respondents scored 21–28 with a degree of freedom of 14 at a significant level of 0.000.

Since there is a significant relationship in the chi-square scores obtained from the teenagers whose parents are of various educational background (high  $\chi^2 = 213.808$  and low  $\chi^2 = 107.481$ ) at 0.000 level of significance, the hypothesis which states that 'there is a statistically significant relationship between parent's educational background and choice of career among secondary school teenagers' is accepted.

The above indicates that parents educational background significantly influence teenagers career choices. From Table 3, participants who obtained scores from 21 and above are considered to have made choice of professional careers while those who obtained any score below 21 made career choice of business, farming, artisan or any other related career. The data shows that over

74% of teenagers whose parents had high educational background made professional career choices while only 46% of teenagers whose parents had low educational background made professional career choice. On the other hand, 26% of teenagers whose parents had high educational background made business career choices while 54% of teenagers whose parents had low educational background made business career choices.

This clearly reveals that teenagers of parents with high educational background are most likely to choose professional career than teenagers whose parents had low educational background.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age		
13–15 years	123	30.8
16–19 years	277	69.2
Total	400	100
Gender		
Male	200	50
Female	200	50
Total	400	100
Educational level		
SS1	57	14.3
SS2	169	42.2
SS3	174	43.5
Total	400	100
Parents educational level		
No formal	16	4
FSLC	68	17
SSCE	73	18.3
OND	29	7.2
BSc/HND	137	34.3
MSc	52	13
PhD	25	6.2
Total	400	100

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the influence of parent's educational background on career choice of teenagers

Parents level of education	N	Mean	SD
High	219	23.02	3.75
Low	181	19.95	4.63

Table 3: Influence of parent’s educational background on the teenager’s career choice

Parents education	Career choice	Observed frequency	$\chi^2$	Df.	Sig.
High	14–20	56	213.808	14	0.000
	21–28	163			
Low	14–20	96	170.481	14	0.000
	21–28	85			

## DISCUSSION

The study found variation in career decision making of teenagers whose parents have high educational background and those with low educational background. While standard deviation of children whose parents have high educational background is 3.75, (Table 2) those whose parents have low educational background is 4.36 (Table 2). The data shows that in career decision making, standard deviation of teenagers whose parents have high educational background is lower than those whose parents have low educational background. Suggesting that teenagers whose parents have high educational background are more consistent and do not have much difficulty in making career choice when compared with those whose parents have low educational background. This could be as a result of the influence of their parents at a tender age. This influence is usually based on three factors: the assumption that high education is associated with success in life, the advice of their parents, and the teenagers perceived success of their parents in their chosen career. While teenagers of parents with high educational background have already made career decision early in life, teenagers whose parents have low educational background are left to make decision on whether to join their parent’s career or aspire higher. This decision is usually moderated by available resources such as finance, information, family social status, etc.

The study has clearly shown that educational background of parents influence career choice of their children. Parents with high educational background tend to influence their children to choose professional careers than parents with low educational background. The finding of this research is in line with literature; Nwoke [3], Hewitt [8]; Naeem et al. [10], Sanjay et al. [17], Osakinle and Adegrooye [5], Bast and Walberg [18], Taylor et al. [19], Okeke [9] and Ochiagha [20] observed in their studies that educational background of parents tend to influence teenagers career choices. Furthermore, the findings of this research is in line with social learning theory of career decision making which explains that peoples career choices are impacted by their social learning, including their experiences with other people, events and institutions. Teenagers of highly educated parents may choose professional careers based on the parents advice and their perception of how successful their parents are.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has not only shown that parents educational background influences teenagers career choice, it has also revealed that teenagers whose parents are from high educational background are more consistent and do not have much difficulties in making career choice when compared with those whose parents have low educational background. Since this study has clearly shown that parents’ educational background to a great extent influences career decision of teenagers, what needs to be established now is the implication of this influence on the future of the teenagers and the society. Therefore, this study recommends that further studies should be conducted to establish the implication of parents influence on teenager’s future career choices and the society at large.

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### Author Contributions

Miracle Ifeoma Mbagwu – Substantial contributions to conception and design, Acquisition of data, Analysis and interpretation of data, Drafting the article, Revising it critically for important intellectual content, Final approval of the version to be published  
Okechukwu Odinaka Ajaegbu – Analysis and interpretation of data, Revising it critically for important intellectual content, Final approval of the version to be published

### Guarantor

The corresponding author is the guarantor of submission.

### Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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