

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Parental Influence on the Selection of Subjects for Career Choice among Senior Secondary School Students in Damaturu Metropolis, Yobe State, Nigeria

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## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is present in conducting the reporting of this study

## ABSTRACT

This study examined parental influence on the selection of subjects for career choice among senior secondary school students in Damaturu metropolis, Yobe State, Nigeria. The study had two objectives with one being a research question and another being a hypothesis. The study had survey research design and the population of the study consisted of one thousand (1,000) students. Simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) students to form the sample size. The purpose of data collection was to analyse mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and to reveal the extent of parental influence on selection of subject for career choice among senior secondary school students in Damaturu metropolis. It was found that parental influence was high, and the finding of the research hypothesis revealed that there was a significant relationship between parental influence and students selection of subjects ( $r=0.748$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that professional counsellors should be trained and re-trained to fully understand the factors that influence the selection of subjects among students and orientation programmes should be organized to help students select a career and be prepared for it. Also, principals and teachers should cooperate with the school counsellors by referring students to counsellors as quickly as possible instead of choosing them a career that does not best suit with them or force them to perform better.

**Keywords:** Parental Influence, Career Choice and Subject Selection

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## Introduction

Students are considered as central figures in any educational system. They play a key role as builders of a nation. The selection of subjects at secondary school level plays a vital role throughout students' academic life. Selection of profession depends upon the selection of subjects and the subjects should be selected wisely. An appropriate decision is expected to be helpful for students in achieving their goals. The students are encouraged to opt for different subjects from different fields to get higher education, learn technical skills and have better career lives. In this era of globalization and technological revolution, education has become one of the major catalysts of socioeconomic change around the globe. Education is an integral part in the diverse needs of individuals and societies around the world. At the present time, the human capital is the main value of every society and the main factor of economic growth (Burashev & Biksitova, 2013).

Career is a process that occurs over the life span, and, a right choice of career by a young person tends to result in a happy, progressive, and fulfilled life. Conversely, a wrong choice of career may destroy the future progress of an individual; and thus, may lead to unforgettable frustrations and woes. The need to make a good choice of career becomes paramount if one is to find happiness and harmony in life. The integration of the individual into the society as an effective citizen and to have equal education opportunities, it is important that all the citizens to consider their career paths at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Several factors however influence individual decision and choices.

Muraguri (2011) state that an individual's choice of career is likely to be influenced by several factors including personal and cultural values, and family background. Some also make career decisions by taking the path with the least resistance for example, by following a career path advocated by their parents or by following the footsteps of an elder sibling (Aguiar et al., ascited in Muraguri, 2011). According to Oyamo and Amoth (2008) who carried out studies in Kenya found out that rural students tended to get help from parents more than urban students and that parents play more role in the career

choice of students than their teachers. Generally, the choice of career is influenced by parents; however, variations occur from one population to the other. Research and better understanding of the numerous factors that affect career preference include parental support.

Wankar (1999) observed that the development of any nation depends on the availability, quality and quantity of its labor force. Nigeria is blessed with vast reserve of human and natural resources. In order to avoid waste, different ways of developing and maximizing its human resource must be developed. Young people often drift into quite unsuitable choice of course to study through chance, ignorance, lack of experience, or wrong advice from their parents. This study considers these misfits which do not ensure optimum utilization and commitment of the individuals involved. Furthermore, it is a condition in which young people suddenly learn their fathers' profession. Therefore, if the father is a blacksmith, what this means is that abilities, interest and occupational needs of precolonial society and other variable factors are not considered before the choice of occupation by children. It has also been observed that in a simple society, choice of career of subjects relating to such career does not require specialized assistance. In such situations, parents could be a big influence in some societies. Olayinka (2010) views that a right choice of a career by youth tends to result in a happy, progressive and fulfilled life while wrong choice may hinder the progress of an individual. Odoemelam (2017) also points out that institutions do not properly prepare students to face the world of work.

Salami (2006) found that many young people made wrong career choice due to ignorance, lack of experience and advice from parents. One of the most important decisions students make about themselves on proceeding to tertiary institutions after the completion of senior secondary school education is to decide the choice of courses which lead to their career choice. Subject selection, therefore, is an integral part of education system beyond postsecondary. Meanwhile, nation building, growth and development transfer from older generation to younger generation involve the youth. Parental influence on choice of career creates problems to the individual concerned, government, employers of labor and the development of the country in general. A lot of parents have influenced the selection of subject of their

children. Some parents feel that some subjects are more important than the others, which is why in higher institutions some courses are seen as professional courses (medical sciences, law and engineering). Most parents are ill-informed about the opportunities open to their children. Thus, these have made a lot of students to fall victims of wrong selection of subject by their parents.

### **Statement of Problem**

Nigeria has been rapidly developing at educational technology which has been making the society more complex than ever. The number of subject specializations has increased in number and also, there are many career options within one occupation. It has been observed that many students have indicated their interest in studying prestigious courses such as medicine, engineering, law and pharmacy, without a single thought of the implication of the subject's content, without career decision making skills and incongruent personality types (Lounsbury & Gilbson, 2004). Consequently, parental influence has been considered to influence student's selection of subjects for their career choices. However, the research findings with regards to factors responsible for student's selection of subjects among senior secondary schools in Damaturu metropolis have problems in the selection of subjects in line with their future career choices. As a result of these, many students do not actualize their career wishes because they are either given, asked or misguided to study courses that are not relevant to their wishes. In some cases, parents tend to impose their interests and wishes on their children. For example, a student may not be good in science, but the parent wants him/her to study medicine because of the prestige attached to it. Choice of career is often considered a major turning point in young adults' life, and this decision has the potential to open the doors of success or close them (Jungen, 2008). Students report that parents have the greatest influence on the career they choose (Kniveton, 2004). It is, therefore, important to explore parents' influence on students' selection of subject for career choice. It's upon this basis that this study aims to explore the extent to which parental factors influence the selection of subjects for career choice among senior secondary students in Damaturu metropolis Yobe state Nigeria.

## Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were formed to guide the study:

1. To examine the extent of parental influence on the selection of subject for career choice among senior secondary school students in Damaturu metropolis.
2. To examine the relationship between parental influence and the selection of subject among senior secondary school students in Damaturu metropolis.

## Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the conduct of the study:

**Research Question 1:** What is the extent of parental influence on the selection of subjects for career choice among senior secondary school students in the Damaturu Metropolis?

## Research Hypothesis

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between parental influence and selection of subject among senior secondary school students in Damaturu metropolis.

## Literature Review

Parents are one of the most influential determinant of career plans, aspirations and occupational expectations of their children. Anthonia (2017) discovered that there were many areas of influence of parents on career choice of secondary school students in Enugu south local government area of Enugu state. One of these areas is that most of the wealthy parents always insist that their children must be enrolled in the high rated careers such as: medicine, law, engineering etc. without knowing if the child's intellectual abilities are in congruent with such jobs. Owuamunum (2003) states that there are often conflicts between Nigerian students, their parents and the society concerning the kind of occupation for which the young should be trained for.

Mbahi (2014) states that despite their wish of independent choices, students still need parents' help to clarify the confusion of their career or subject choices. According to Owoyele and Toyobo (2008,

as cited in Lilian, 2017), many parents have the habit of determining virtually all academic decisions for their children. They choose which school to attend, which the books to read and even which the subjects to study at school. Parental education and socio-economic status seem to have an impact on students' academic performance and subject selection (Davis, 2009, ascited in Lilian, 2017).

According to Williams (2016), a parent's occupation influences children's career choices both intentionally and inadvertently. By the time children move into adolescence, they begin to seriously consider their future, often looking up to their parents either as role models or for career their advice. Williams noted that it is not a surprise that many people who are the third or fourth generation of their families who has the same profession. They have an insider's glimpse into their parents' occupations, which makes it easier for them to break into the industry. If their parents' jobs give them satisfaction or provide a comfortable lifestyle, children see the perks early on, and may favour these careers over the others. In contrast, if parents complain about their jobs or struggle to support the family on the income their jobs provide, children are more likely to seek more fulfilling or higher-paid roles.

In a similar vein, some studies suggest that children are influenced regarding their career choices by socio-demographic factors and these factors include family, school and peers (Kniveton, 2004). In his study, Salami (2006) found family involvement as the most significant predictor of career choice in gender-dominated occupations. Parents have a big influence on student's career and subject choice. Okojide et al. (2018) noted that parents/guardians have influence on their children's/wards' choice of career. They further said parents/guardians should be adequately informed the extent they should be involved in the career choices of their wards.

In a related investigation, Saleh and Bah. (2020) revealed that parents have significant effect on students' choice of career and selection of subjects. Malgwi et al. (2005) found out that parents are more likely to influence students' decisions than counselors or teachers. Students are likely to enroll in more classes if they talk to their parents first, which implies that parents do influence their child's decisions (Tenenbaum, 2008). Parents look forward to their children having new teachers and classes with the end



result of them getting good grades (Smith et al., 2006). Therefore, parents encourage their children to take a variety of classes where they think they can excel. Tenenbaum (2008) further argued that fathers are more likely to discourage their children from taking certain difficult classes, especially with daughters. Teachers in the schools are supposed to provide assistance and guidance to their students on the subject, but research indicates that teachers are not as influential as family or peers in a student's choice of courses (Malgwi et al., 2005).

Hashim and Ambong cited in Nqobile (2017) viewed that parents and peers may help students in subject decision processes. According to the findings of a study by Esters and Bowen (2005), parents or guardians and friends were the individuals, who were the most influential people in students' choice of career. It is more likely that a student follows his or her parents' career path because as a learner he/she is expected to be more knowledgeable about that career from the parents' knowledge and experiences. Jungen (2008) noted in her research paper that choosing a career is often considered a major turning point in a young adult's life. This decision alone has the potential of either opening the door of success or closing the door of opportunities. While it is often perceived to be an individual choice, research suggests that a variety of influences, such as family, school, community, social and economic factors, are likely to manipulate one's ultimate career decision.

Other studies have revealed that parenting does not occur in a unidirectional manner, but rather, parenting occurs as a part of a larger system of daily life (Bryant et al., 2006). Additionally, even though parents have been typically thought of as positive influences on their children's career decision-making, it is also possible that parents may be negatively affecting their children's vocational development as well (Clutter, 2010). Alike (2010) conducted a study to investigate if parents and peer groups of school students have any influence in the career choice among secondary school students. The relation between the two primary factors (parental and peer group influence) and the career choice was determined by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. One research question and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Three research instruments (Occupational Clusters Preference Scale (OCPS), Peer

Pressure Assessment Scale (PPAS) and the Parental Influence Assessment Inventory (PIA)) were used.

The population of the study comprised of students in senior secondary school. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between parental and peer group influence on career choice among secondary school students.

## Methodology

### Research Design

The research design of this study was survey research design, which was considered appropriate by the researchers. Survey research is concerned with the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes and ongoing processes. According to Osula (2005), survey research design studies both large and small populations. The survey involves a detailed and critical examination of the effects of parental influence on the selection of subjects for career choice among Senior Secondary School students to find out if there such a relation exists. In this case, the survey research was appropriate, as it allows the collection of data from the population for intensive study and analysis through the use of questionnaire to find out the effects of parental influence students' selection of subjects for their career choices.

### Population/Sample of the Study

The population of this study consists of all SSIII students in Senior Secondary Schools in Damaturu Yobe State with the total population of one thousand (1,000) students.

**Table 1**

*Population of the Study*

S/N	Schools	Population
1	Government Girls Unity College Damaturu	224
2	Yobe Islamic Centre Damaturu	303
3	Government Secondary School Damaturu	226
4	Government Day Secondary School Damaturu	247
<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,000</b>

The sample size of the study was 100 students, of which both males and females were selected. The schools were divided in to four and 25 students were selected using simple random sampling



technique. For the purpose of this study, the method adopted by Nwana (2005) was used in the selection of the sample size by using 10%.

**Table 2**

*Sample Size of the Study*

S/N	Schools	Sample Size	
		Male	Female
1	Government Girls Unity College Damaturu	-	25
2	Yobe Islamic Centre Damaturu	-	25
3	Government Secondary School Damaturu	25	-
4	Government Day Secondary School Damaturu	25	-
<b>5</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>

**Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire titled “Students’ Selection of Subjects Questionnaire (SSSQ)”. The instrument has two sections as A and B. The Section A consists of the demographic data of the respondents while section B consists of parent’s highest level of education, parents’ occupation, and parental socioeconomic background. It also consists of statements to which the respondents are expected to react using a five-point Likert scale as follows: *SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, UD: Undecided, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree*. To ensure that the instrument meets the expected standard of validity, consultations were made with lecturers in Education Department in Yobe State University, Damaturu. Experts examined the test items for its appropriateness, clarity of the statements whether or not the test items were well structured, and suggestions and criticisms were made to improve the quality of the items. A pilot testing of the instrument was conducted at Government Girls Secondary School Buni Yadi, Yobe State, which was not a part of the study area. The choice of the area for pilot study was based on the similarity of the characteristics with the study population. In line with this, a total number of 30 respondents were randomly selected and used for the pilot testing. The respondents were given the questionnaire to complete. The pilot testing was conducted to test the appropriateness and clarity of the instrument. In order to determine the internal consistency of the instrument for data collection, the Cronbach’s alpha method was adopted. The method is a more generalized method of estimating internal

consistency. The alpha coefficient for the instrument used in the study was found to be 0.78, and according to Olayiwole (2010) a reliability estimate of 0.60 and above is considered high and, therefore, the instrument was considered reliable for the study.

### Procedure for Data Collection

The data collection procedure consisted of face-to-face delivery method. The researchers gave the respondents enough time to complete the instrument and then collected the papers back. This procedure helped ensure a high return of the survey. Time for collecting the data was two weeks and research assistants were used in each the schools on different dates.

### Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentages were employed to analyze the demographical data of the respondents. The research question was answered using means and rank order analyses while the hypothesis was tested using t-test for independent sample at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

## Results

### Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

**Table 3**

*Distribution of Respondents based on Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	50	50.0	50
Female	50	50.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field survey (2019)

Table 3 shows that 50 of the respondents representing 50% are male students and the remaining 50 of the respondents representing 50.0% are female students. This shows that there is gender balance between male and female students.

**Table 4**

*Distribution of Respondent' Age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
16-19 Years	20	20%	20.0
20-above Years	78	78%	78.0
Others	2	2%	2.0
Total	100	100%	100.0

Source: Field survey (2019).



Table 4 shows that 20% of the respondents were between 16-19 years, 78% were between 20-above years and 2% belong to other age group which was not specified in the questionnaire. This shows that majority of the respondents were (78%) between the ages of 16-19 years and in their adolescence.

### Answer to Research Question

**Table 5**

*Mean and Standard Deviation of the Parental Influence*

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Parents have influence on student's selection of subjects.	3.8800	.70036	Agreed
2	Parents influence student's decisions than guidance counsellors.	3.8000	.61955	Agreed
3	Parent's socio-economic status influence student's selection of subjects.	3.8100	1.05117	Agreed
4	Parents have a greater influence than teachers on student's selection of subjects.	3.5600	.90252	Agreed
5	Parent's educational background influence student's selection of subjects.	3.7400	1.71517	Agreed

Cluster Mean: 3.75

Table 5 shows the mean of responses of the influence of parents on the selection of subjects among senior secondary school students. The cluster mean response was 3.75. Thus, the researchers concluded that parents have influence on the selection of subjects for a career choice among senior secondary school students in Damaturu, Yobe State.

### Testing Research Hypothesis

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between parental influence and student's selection of subjects.

**Table 6**

*Correlational Analysis of Parental influence and Students' Selection of Subjects*

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	r	p-value
Parental Influence	100	21.04	9.39	98	0.748	.000
Students Selection of Subject	100	32.13	13.17			

\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 6 presents the coefficient of correlational analysis between parental influence and students' selection of subjects. The result showed that there was significant relationship between parental influence

and students' selection of subjects ( $r= 0.748$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The coefficient of correlation is 0.748 with degree of freedom 98 at the level of significance of 0.05. This indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between the two variables (parental influence and selection of subject). Hence, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between parental influence and students' selection of subjects is rejected and therefore, the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

## Discussion

Research question 1 showed the extent of parental influence on the selection of subject among senior secondary school students in Damaturu metropolis and hypothesis 1 showed that there is a parental influence on the selection of subjects of career choice among senior secondary school students. This, therefore, supports the findings of Williams (2016) that parents' occupation influences children's career choices both intentionally and inadvertently. By the time children move into adolescence, they begin to seriously consider their futures, often looking up to their parents either as role models or for career advice. Williams noted that it's not a surprise that many people who are in the third or fourth generations of their families who work in the same profession. They have an insider's glimpse into their parents' occupations, making it easier for them to break in to the industry. If their parents' jobs give them great satisfaction or provide a comfortable lifestyle, children see the perks early on, and may favour these careers over the others. In contrast, if parents complain about their jobs or struggle to support the family with the income their jobs provide, children are more likely to seek more fulfilling or higher-paid roles. The finding further agrees with the earlier submission of Salami (2006) who found out that family involvement as the most significant predictor of career choice in gender-dominated occupations. Okojide et al. (2018) found out that parents have a big influence on students' career and subject choices. Furthermore, Saleh and Bah (202) noted that parents/guardians have influence on their children's/wards' academic performances. They further said parents/guardians should be adequately informed on the extent they should be involved in the career choices of their wards.

In a related study, Saleh and Bah (2020) revealed that parents have significant effect on students'

choice of career and selection of subjects. Malgwi et al. (2005) found out that parents are more likely to influence students' decisions than counselors or teachers. Students are likely to enroll in more classes if they talk with their parents first, which implies that parents do have an effect on their child's decisions (Tenenbaum, 2008). Parents look forward to their children having new teachers and classes with the end result of them getting good grades (Smith et al., 2006). Therefore, parents will encourage their children to take a variety of classes where they think they can excel. Tenenbaum further argued that fathers are more likely to discourage their children from taking certain difficult classes, especially with daughters. Teachers in the schools are supposed to provide assistance and guidance to their students on the subject, but research indicates that teachers are not as influential as family or peers in a student's choice of courses (Malgwi et al., 2005).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings, there was a positive and significant relationship between parental influence and students' selection of subjects. The study confirmed the researchers' expectations that parental influence effect the selection of subjects for career choice of senior secondary students. Therefore, based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Professional counsellors should be trained to fully understand the factors that influence the selection of subjects among students.
- ii. Orientation programmes should be organized to help students select a career, be prepared for it and develop.
- iii. Principals and teachers should cooperate with the school counsellors by referring students to counsellors as quickly as possible instead of choosing them a career that does not best suit them or force them to perform better.

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