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EXPLORATORY EFFECTS OF VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING STRATEGY AND GENDER ON CAREER AWARENESS OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study focused on exploratory effects of vocational counselling strategy and gender on career awareness of in-school adolescents in Gombe State, Nigeria. Pretest-posttest, control group quasi-experimental design with a 2x2 factorial matrix was used in the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in sampling 115 participants from 3 local government areas (12 schools) in the state. The respondents were measured with validated scale of 0.85 reliability coefficient and the data obtained was analyzed using T-test statistical analysis. Two (2) research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that there was significant difference in the career awareness of in-school adolescents exposed to vocational counselling strategy and those in the control group and there was significant difference in the career awareness of male and female in-school adolescents. In view of these findings, the study recommended that educational stakeholders should intensify their effort to organize seminars/conferences on the implications of vocational counselling strategy as effective interventions towards enhancing career awareness and that teachers should emphasis during

their lesson, the career implications of subjects so that student will see how individual subjects relate to existing careers thus increasing their knowledge of occupations.

Keywords

Vocational Counselling Strategy, Genders, Career Awareness and In-school Adolescents

1. Introduction

Career awareness is important aspects of education since it help the learners to focus on what he/she would like to do in future. Career aspirations are in most cases confusing to students due to the many subjects offered in school, parental pressure, and lack of good career advising and guidance. This process is critical especially when an individual is choosing subjects in school or majors in college. Whereas some careers will require certain subjects and majors, most of them do not need such specializations and this information is critical to the students. Furthermore, with increasing competition in the job market, it is critical for students to know what else, besides the subject counts. Such other requirements may include additional skills and experiences, internships, and co-curricular activities which provide experiences and competences.

Career development process involves gathering information about the current trends in the job market. Availability of opportunities in society is one important consideration in career choice, thus information about the job market helps one to select appropriate subjects, majors, and courses, as well as co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. School counselling departments should help students access this information from books, bulletins, web sites, journals, and the mass media (Owoyele and Muraina, 2015). Besides coursework, employers are looking for versatile individuals who can fit in many set ups, work in various environments, deal with diverse cultures and backgrounds, and be creative. Thus counsellors should encourage development of these attributes through engagement in co-curricular activities (Sadker and Sadker, 2000).

Career awareness is very important to every nation especially a developing nation like Nigeria (Omeje, 2007). He added that people need to have the knowledge and information on national manpower resources, requirements, analysis, trends in employment and unemployment. The choice of a vocation therefore is one of the most important decisions one makes in life. The issue of career awareness has attracted the interest of many individuals and government. Career

awareness or choice is a developmental process and spans almost through person's life time (Ohiwerei and Nwosu, 2009). The choice determines satisfaction one expects to get from his work and the opportunities he has for promotion and advancement. Kemjika (1995) observed that most students have insufficient information about different jobs, courses of study and other activities. Without detailed and adequate information about occupations, students many jump blindly into jobs to become frustrated and unhappy later in life and perhaps at such times when a retreat would no longer be easy or possible (Omeje, 2007). This study therefore examined the exploratory effects of vocational counselling strategy and gender on career awareness of in-school adolescents in Gombe State, Nigeria.

Vocational counselling strategy is one of the counselling interventions that involve helping in-school adolescents to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter it, and progress in it. Thus vocational counselling strategy is not one step activity but a process that runs through the entire process of learning. Frank Parsons is seen as the founder and father of modern vocational guidance and his work had a lasting influence to date. In the period between 1908 and 1909, Parsons established the Vocational Bureau at Boston in the U.S.A, which was attached to the Civil Service House in Boston, later to become part of Harvard University. It is in fact a life-long process beginning from birth to death, having various stages and milestones through life. Vocational counselling strategy is a phase of education, which enables individuals to comprehend the world of work, essential human needs, the dignity of labour, and the value of work (Makinde, 1984).

Vocational counselling strategy is a component of counselling therapies that contain vital activity in educational system. It is consumed by learners and helps them set proper educational and developmental goals as well as pursuance of the right type of education (Makinde, 1984). Vocational counselling strategy lays emphasis on participation in occupations of economic and social values (Patton and McMahon, 1999). It assists the consumers, (particularly students) in exploring available training and occupations, as well as to gain insight into the world of work and acquire the value and dignity of work (Makinde, 1984). Vocational counselling strategy focuses on career education, career awareness, career planning, and placement. Thus, Vocational counselling strategy is a precursor to vocational counselling and the two go hand in hand in preparing the youth for future occupational activities. The greatest challenge for schools today is to create a clear connectivity between schooling and career, and to make learners understand this

link which can easily be achieved through vocational counselling strategy (Patton and McMahon, 1999).

The moderating variable in this study is gender which is either being male of female. Researchers have however, noted that gender differences are not biological, but rather are due to socialisation and discrimination (Watkins, Kaplan, Brief, Shull, Dietz, Mansfield and Cohen, 2006). Traditional beliefs once entrenched in an individual's belief system will shape his/her way of looking at the world, the career opportunities available, as well as personal vocational aspirations, drives and efforts. Career interests and awareness have sex differences but these differences may be more due to socialisation rather than biological influences. However, there is evidence to the effect that levels of sex based hormones such as testosterone as well as personality types such as neuroticism may be responsible for differences in career interests (Feldman, 2000). Researchers agree that the interaction of genetic predispositions and the environment produces the overall effect. Based on the RIASEC model, most women tend to be social and artistic, unlike men who tend to be investigative (Weis, Firker and Hennig, 2007).

Men and women tend to be geared towards very different occupations, and there exists a lot of segregation in the workforce. There is also an indication that men and women value different aspects of work and therefore, make different career choices, as a result of formed occupational preferences (Feldman, 2000). An occupational personality is not an inherent characteristic, but rather a product of the interaction between the environment and other individual characteristics. Parental influences, family, education, and social experiences may contribute to divergent occupational personalities between men and women (Rosenbloom, Ash, Dupont and Coder, 2007). There are observable gender differences in the way adolescents perceive their academic and social self-efficacy beliefs. Female adolescents have a higher sense of efficacy and are more resistant to peer pressure than males, and this leads to higher career awareness among girls. The higher sense of self-efficacy beliefs also leads to more control in females and this contributes to inhibit depression among girls (Vecchio, Gerbino, Pastorelli, Bove and Caprara, 2007).

Over the past twenty-five years a lot of research efforts have been made in the area of career awareness to understand the problem of career conflict (Cohen, Chartrand and Jowdy, 2005; Owoyele and Muraina, 2015). Some research efforts have focused on identifying some correlates of career awareness especially on ego identity (Adeyemo, 1998). Majority of the

available studies did not address career awareness despite the enormity of the problem among adolescents. Presently a survey of literature indicates that there have been widespread studies in the area of guidance and counselling but there are still gaps specifically in exploratory effects of vocational counselling strategy and gender on career awareness of in-school adolescents in Gombe State, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

One of the principle aims of education is to provide manpower for the economic sector of the country. In this light, among its objectives, education is seen as a powerful tool and indeed a precursor to career entry. In order for the country to maximise its production potential, the workforce must be made up of appropriate individuals working in appropriate occupational fields. Appropriateness here goes beyond training to include mental and psychological dispositions, interest, attitude, and ability to adjust to the challenges of the occupation. Lack of proper career education and career guidance in Nigerian schools, may have led to inappropriate career choices among students. This may eventually have led to misfits in the labour force due to lack of a proper match between the person and his/her career. The current mass unemployment in Nigeria is threatening the career awareness of school leavers. In-school adolescents are expected to choose their careers in the senior secondary school. More often than not students rush to parents for guidance as to which subject and career to choose.

However, choosing the right subject combination leading to the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future. The consequences of unrealistic vocational choice and career awareness have been failure of students to enter appropriate higher institutions to pursue courses of their choice, frustration, having to drop out of school, inability to get employed because of lack of relevant job requirements and qualifications and poor vocational adjustment on employment. As such, this study focused on the exploratory effects of vocational counselling strategy and gender on career awareness of in-school adolescents in Gombe State, Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the exploratory effects of vocational counselling strategy and gender on career awareness of in-school adolescents in Gombe State, Nigeria. Specifically other objectives include to;

1. Find out the difference in the career awareness of in-school adolescents exposed to vocational counselling strategy and those exposed to conventional lecture method
2. Investigate the difference in the career awareness of male and female in-school adolescents

1.3 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO_1: There is no significant difference between the career awareness of in-school adolescents exposed to vocational counselling strategy and those exposed to conventional lecture method.

HO_2: There is no significant difference between the career awareness of male and female in-school adolescents.

2. Methodology

The study adopted the pretest-posttest, control group quasi-experimental design with a 2X3 factorial matrix. In essence, the row consists of vocational counselling strategy and the control. The row was crossed with gender varied at three levels (Male and Female). The population for the study comprised 21,360 public in-school adolescents in 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Gombe State, Nigeria (TESCOM, 2017).

Multi-stage sampling technique was used for the study. The first stage involved the use of simple random sampling technique to select 3 LGAs. The second stage witnessed the selection of 4 public secondary schools from each sampled LGAs. Ten in-school adolescents were sampled in each school through balloting and this cut across male and female. On the whole, 120 in-school adolescents were drawn for the study. However, the whole population was grouped into two, one group formed vocational counselling strategy class and the remaining one served as control group.

Two instruments were used for the study.

Career Awareness Scale: Career awareness scale developed by Ogola (2002) was used to measure the career awareness of participants. The scale consists of twenty (20) items aimed at unveiling the respondents' level of career awareness. The items were built on a 4 point scales which are: 1 (strongly agreed), 2 (agreed), 3 (disagreed) to 4 (strongly disagreed). To establish the reliability of the scale, the internal consistency was computed and Cronbach's alpha of .85 was obtained.

2.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria were used in selecting the participants for the study:

i. Participants should be bonafide students of secondary schools in Gombe State

ii. Participants with consent form from the school selected

iii. Participants willing to participate in the treatment programme.

iv. Participants should be within 11-21 years of age

The study was carried out in four phases: pre-sessional activities, pre-test, treatment and post-test. At the pre-session, activities included the screening, recruitment and assignment of participants to the experimental and control group. Advertisement was made to request for participants in the school. A preliminary meeting was organised to familiarise with the interested participants and to solicit their willingness to participate in the study. At the pre-test stage, career awareness scale was administered to the participants. Participants in the experimental group only were exposed to 7 sessions of treatment. Each session spanned for an average of 60 minutes. Though the control group was not treated, they were exposed to a lecture titled *"Family Planning System".* The post-test was administered following the conclusion of the programme.

T-test statistical analysis was employed to analyse the data in this study. T-test was used to establish any significant difference in the career awareness of participant in treatment group and control as well as male and female.

3. Results

The study examined the exploratory effects of vocational counselling strategy and gender on career awareness of in-school adolescents in Gombe State, Nigeria. Two (2) null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented in tabular form:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the career awareness of in-school adolescents exposed to vocational counselling strategy and those in the control group

Table 1: *T-test of Students Exposed to Vocational counselling strategy and those exposed to Conventional Lecture Method*

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	DF	t	p	Remark
Vocational Counselling Strategy	55	71.51	18.43	5.86	113	61.34*	0.00	* S

Lecture Method	60	36.62	11.36	3.51				

** Significant at p<0.05*

The result in table 1 showed that there was significant difference between the career awareness of in-school adolescents exposed to vocational counselling strategy and those in the control group (t= 61.34; p<0.05). The mean value of the table further revealed that the students in vocational counselling strategy had higher career awareness than their counterpart in the control group. This further meant that the treatment had significant influence on career awareness of in-school adolescents.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the career awareness of male and female in-school adolescents

Table 2: *Summary of t-test of students with male and female gender*

Groups	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Std. Error**	**DF**	**t**	**p**	**Remark**
Male	52	53.72	8.81	4.31	113	1.34*	0.42	* NS
Female	63	54.02	9.01	3.94				

** Significant at p<0.05*

Table 2 showed that there was no significant difference between the career awareness of male and female in-school adolescents (t= 1.34; p>0.05). The mean value of the table further revealed that female students had slightly higher career awareness than their counterpart with male student but the difference is not statistically significant. This further meant that gender had no significant influence on career awareness of in-school adolescents.

4. Discussion

The result in the Table 1 showed that there was significant difference between career awareness of in-school adolescents exposed to vocational counselling strategy and those in the control group. The mean value of the table further revealed that the students in vocational counselling strategy had higher career awareness than their counterpart in the control group. This further meant that the treatment has significant influence on career awareness of in-school adolescents. In line with this finding, vocational counselling strategy is found as a phase of education, which enables individuals to comprehend the world of work, essential human needs, the dignity of labour, and the value of work (Makinde, 1984). Vocational counselling strategy is

a component of counselling therapies that consumed by learners and helps them set proper educational and developmental goals as well as pursuance of the right type of education (Makinde, 1984). Vocational counselling strategy lays emphasis on participation in occupations of economic and social values (Patton and McMahon, 1999). It assists the consumers, (particularly students) in exploring available training and occupations, as well as to gain insight into the world of work and acquire the value and dignity of work (Makinde, 1984). Thus, Vocational counselling strategy is a precursor to vocational counselling and the two go hand in hand in preparing the youth for future occupational activities. The greatest challenge for schools today is to create a clear connectivity between schooling and career, and to make learners understand this link which can easily be achieved through vocational counselling strategy (Patton and McMahon, 1999).

The result of Table 2 revealed that there was no significant difference between the career awareness of in-school adolescents with high gender and those with low gender. The mean value of the table further revealed that female students had slightly higher career awareness than their counterpart with male student but the difference is not statistically significant. This further meant that gender had no significant influence on career awareness of in-school adolescents. This is consistent with the study of Watkins et al (2006) who found that gender differences are not biological, but rather are due to socialisation and discrimination. However, there is evidence to the effect that levels of sex based hormones such as testosterone as well as personality types such as neuroticism may be responsible for differences in career interests (Feldman, 2000). Researchers agree that the interaction of genetic predispositions and the environment produces the overall effect. Based on the RIASEC model, most women tend to be social and artistic, unlike men who tend to be investigative (Weis, Firker and Hennig, 2007). Men and women tend to be geared towards very different occupations, and there exists a lot of segregation in the workforce. There is also an indication that men and women value different aspects of work and therefore, make different career choices, as a result of formed occupational preferences (Feldman, 2000).

4.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations were made:

Educational stakeholders should intensify their effort to organize seminars/conferences on the implications of vocational counselling strategy as effective interventions towards enhancing career awareness among in-school adolescents.

Education planners should introduce vocational education in secondary schools. This is worthwhile because vocational education extends the academic world to the world of work.

Teachers should emphasis during their lesson, the career implications of subjects so that student will see how individual subjects relate to existing careers thus increasing their knowledge of occupations.

Teachers and other stakeholders in the school system are to be trained on how to handle the case of students without gender bias. This will serve as collaborative efforts to assist the students in overcoming the challenges of low career awareness irrespective of gender make-up of in-school adolescents.

The students in the school should be encouraged and trained on the effective usage of these interventions (vocational counselling strategy). This will make the students to adopt effective attitude towards enhancing their career awareness.

4.2 Conclusion

Career awareness is a core developmental challenge for adolescents and emerging adults. Establishing a strong sense of identity provides individuals with a sense of continuity and sameness, and plays favourably into psychosocial functioning. The study was restricted to the use of vocational counselling strategy and gender on career awareness whereas further study can concentrate in the use of another counseling or therapeutic intervention. Also, instead of using career awareness as the criterion variable further study can focus on other career issues such as career conflict among others. Base on the findings of this study, persistent low career awareness of Nigerian in-school adolescents need not to continue indefinitely. There is hope that with the improvement of gender and vocational counselling strategy skill, the situation can be changed for the better. The issue of career awareness has attracted the interest of many individuals and government. Career development or choice is a developmental process and spans almost through person's life time. The choice determines satisfaction one expects to get from his work and the opportunities he has for promotion and advancement.

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