

# PARENTAL AND PEER GROUP INFLUENCE AS CORRELATES OF CAREER CHOICE IN HUMANITIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study was designed to investigate if parents and peer groups of school students have any influence in the choice of a career among secondary school students. The relationship between the two primary factors (parental and peer group influence) and career choice was determined using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. One research question and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Three research instruments were used. They are: the students occupational clusters preference scale (OCPS), peer pressure assessment scale (PPAS) and the parental influence assessment inventory (PIA). The population of the study comprises students in senior secondary school two (SS2). Result showed that there was no significant relationship between parental and peer group influence on career choice in humanities among secondary school students. It is recommended that counselors should work directly with parents and peers, especially as regards career development with a view to enhancing the positive aspects; this may eventually improve the career development prospects of our future workers.*

*Key words: career, vocational choice, peer group, adolescents, parental influence.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent times, there has been growing interest in the interrelationships between career choice, peer group and parental influence. More importantly the focus has been on the factors that tend to move an individual towards a career. The achievement of children as they grow up has always been a matter of intense interest to parents. The young adolescent in school is expected to set high aspirations for him or herself and to work towards the achievement of those goals. Moreover, children are made to become aware of the prestige that goes along with successful career choice.

Education, economic incentives, peer group influence and parental influence are sometimes used as pressures to induce the young adolescent into predetermined careers, regardless of the potentials, actual needs and ego of the child. The glamour associated with some careers often turn out to be an illusion. Empirical findings have confirmed to a greater extent, the impact of the family in which a person lives and the family goals and objectives on his/her choice of career. Trost and Levin (2000) opined that the family influences the behaviour or character of a child. Tella (2003) also found that parents play an invaluable role in laying the foundation of their children's career.

In the same light Wikelund (2006), pointed out that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial are the achievement effects. Thus it is assumed that when parents monitor homework, encourage participation in extra curricula activities, are active in parent's teachers' associations and help children develop plans for their future, such children are likely to respond positively in academic activities. Alike and Egbochuku (2009) found that parental influence exerts a lot of influence on the educational attainment of the adolescent especially the socio-economic status of parents. The authors further reported

that when the girl child drops out of school the possibility of re-entry into school is enhanced if the adolescent girl comes from the high socio-economic status family. Ryan (2005) reported that academic performance is positively correlated to having parents who enforce rules at home.

On the other hand, Oyeboade (1980) noted that irrespective of parental educational level and support, children choose jobs that are highly rated in the society. Eckerman and Didow (1988) observed that cooperative interactions between peers begin in toddler hood and that the most frequent were acts that imitated the actions of the peer models, which continues all through childhood and adolescence. Wentzel (1991) observed that associating with friends that serve as academic and social resources could have a direct and positive influence on achievement outcomes at school. According to him, peers may have a less influential role than parents in influencing adolescents' career choice.

The young adolescent who enters school is encouraged to set high aspirations for him or herself and to work to achieve these aspirations. Peer group and parental influence are sources of pressures which induce the young adolescent into pre-determined occupations, sometimes with little or no considerations on the potentials, actual needs and ego of the child. Career choices are decisions that should be carefully made because it affects the entire life of the individual; hence it is necessary that a study such as this should be carried out in order to study the relationship between peer group, parent influence and career choice in humanities among secondary school students in Edo State.

While it is argued that parents do influence their children's lives, it is likely that the farther youngsters are removed from parental proximity, the less likely it is that they will be moulded by the benevolent influence of father or mother. And so, by default, when there is an expanded distance between parents and children,

the latter are more likely to be shaped by the impact of their peers. If the young ones must be guided towards a better occupation in this regard, it is then timely to investigate, the relationship between peer group and parental influence on career choice in humanities among secondary school students in Edo State. The question then is: to what extent do parents and peers influence career choice in humanities among secondary school students? Based on this, the study was guided by the research question: Is there any significant relationship between peer group, parental influence and career choice in humanities among secondary school adolescents? The tentative answer to the above research question is:

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant relationship between peer group, parental influence and career choice in humanities among secondary school adolescents?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey method was adopted for this study. The data were analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation and regression. Peer group and parental influence formed the independent variables while career choice was the dependent variable. A random sample of hundred secondary school two (SS 2) students was selected in Oredo and Egor local government areas of Edo State. It investigated the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. The instruments used for this study were the students occupational clusters preferences scale (OCPS), peer pressure assessment scale (PPAS) and the parental influence assessment inventory (PIAI). The occupational clusters preference scale was designed by Obiunu (2003). The respondents were expected to respond to the items on the three instruments on a modified 4-point Likert scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients relevant to the variables of study. The table shows that there is no significant relationship between peer group, parental influence and career choice in humanities among secondary school adolescents. The following correlation coefficients were obtained: peer group and career choice  $r = -0.090$ , parental influence and career choice  $r = -0.037$ .

**Table 1:** Inter-correlation matrix among peer group, parental influence and career choice.

	Peer group	Parental influence
Career choice	-0.090	-0.037
Sig. (2 - tailed)	0.371	0.714
N	100	100

Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Table 2.** Regression analysis of peer group and parental influence as predictors of career choice in humanities.

	df	SS	ms	F
Regression	2	3.698	1.849	.453
Residual	97	395.542	4.078	

### Parameter Estimate

Variables	B	SE	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> (adj)
Constant	10.543	3.660	.009	0.011
Peer group	-5.911	.067		
Parental influence	-2.880	.089		

Not sig. at  $P > .05$

The table 2 shows that there is no significant effect due to the regression of career choice on peer group and parental influence,

with  $F = 0.453$ . The prediction equation of career choice on peer group and parental influence is presented as:

$\text{ycareer choice} = 10.543 - 5.911 \text{ peer group} - 2.880 \text{ parental influence}$ , with an adjusted  $R^2 = 0.011$ . The low value of  $R^2$  indicates that the probability of predicting career choice of adolescents using information based on peer group and parental influence is extremely low. However, parental influence appears to have a higher influence than peer group influence on the choice of career by adolescents in the study group.

The hypothesis which states that peer group and parental influence will not significantly predict career choice in humanities among secondary school adolescents is therefore accepted. Results showed that there was no significant relationship between peer group influences on career choice in humanities among secondary school adolescents. While the findings of this study is not consistent with some of the previous studies examined, for example Wentzel (1991) observed that having friends who serve as academic and social resources can have a direct and positive influence on achievement outcomes in school and career plans for the future.

However, the findings of the study gave credence to the assertion of Rowe, Woulbrow and Gulley, (1994) who found that peer pressure may not be a significant factor in career choice of students. This assertion is consistent with the findings of this study which showed that there is no significant relationship between peer group and career choice of students in humanities. The nature of the sample which comprises of day secondary school and the fact that, the students interact for a few hours daily may have accounted for the result so obtained. Moreover, the fact that children are becoming more independent minded today could be responsible for the result.

The study also showed that there was no significant relationship between parental influence and career choice in

humanities among secondary school adolescents. This finding is consistent with the findings of Oyeboode (1980) which showed that irrespective of parental influence children choose jobs that are highly rated in the society. This could be as a result of globalization and the fact that children are now properly exposed to information technology, where on their own they can explore the internet to find out more about the world of work. Moreover it has been observed that children are now more assertive and independent minded. The reasons given above may account for the findings.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion drawn from this study is that peer group and parental influence may not significantly influence career choice of students in humanities. It is recommended that counselors working directly with parents and peers especially as it affects career development should endeavour to lay more emphasis on the positive aspects of peer group and parental influence, while playing down on the negative aspect. This eventually may improve the career development prospects of our future workers.

Vocational guidance and counseling services should be rendered in schools, with a major objective of identifying and harnessing the potentials of the young adolescents. Counselors should work directly with parents with the view of helping them to improve their effectiveness in guiding their children especially as regards showing faith in their children's abilities.

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