

**SOCIAL FACTORS AND STUDENTS' VOCATIONAL CHOICE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

**BY**

---

**DR.NNODI, NNENNA FLORENCE  
P.HD (GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING)  
NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA,  
UYO /CENTRE**

**&**

**DR. AKPAN OKON JACKSON  
P.HD (GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING)  
PRINCIPAL LECTURER  
AKWA IBOM STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,  
AFAHA NSIT**

---

**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated social factors and vocational choice of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Three research Questions and three Hypotheses were formulated. A survey method was used for this study. The population of this study comprised all the 2903 senior secondary two students for 2017/2018 school session, from 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area. The sample size of 290 senior secondary two students was obtained from 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area. This was obtained through simple random sampling technique. The researcher-developed instrument titled "Social factors of Students and Vocational choice Questionnaire" (SCSVAQ) with a total of 33 items was used for data generation. The face validation of the instrument was done by two experts. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the researcher administered the questionnaire to 30 SS2 students that were not part of the study, but possess the same attributes of the study group. The overall reliability coefficient of .83 was realised. These coefficients were reasonable estimates of internal consistency of the instrument. Data collected for this study were organized and analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for testing the hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level. There was a significant relationship between prevailing vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice. Peer pressure has a significant relationship to secondary school students' vocational choice. Admited Vocation has a significant relationship to students' vocational choice. Based on the findings that vocational choice of secondary school students are mostly influenced by the social factors, this study recommends: School counsellor should use their wealth of knowledge to counsel the students to ensure that social factors such as prevailing vocation, peer pressure and admired vocation do not influence students' vocational choice.*

**KEYWORDS: Secondary School Students, Prevailing Vocation, Peer Group, Admired Vocation and Uyo Local Government Area.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Vocational choice is one of the most important decisions in the life of an individual. It has far-reaching implications on the individual's future in terms of lifestyle, status, income, security and job satisfaction. Although personal philosophy, achievement and self-image are important factors in vocational decision, the external environment is also very influential in characterising career choice. The values that an individual holds, the successes and failures he experiences, the social class in which he has developed, and his interest, strengths and capacities are only some of the factors which would affect his preference of a career. Thus, vocational choice is not merely a decision of a moment but a complex and difficult process spanning years, if not a lifetime. An individual's need and social factor are some of the determining factors in vocational choice. Other factors include important people around him, parents and peer group.

Senior secondary is the class in which student are vested with the responsibility to provide suitable setting for each goal to be achieved such as career choice. However, very often, students leave school ill equipped for the demands which life will place upon them. Consequently, year after year, thousands of students are desperately changing institutions, courses and vocations in search of their desired and expected vocations. Others are roaming the streets holding certificates they cannot defend occupationally. Conversely, a right choice of vocation determines the satisfaction one derives in one's life and the opportunities one has for promotion and advancement in one's work.

Denga (2001) opined that students' age-mates and older or younger friends exert a positive as well as negative influence on them. The peer pressure has its own code of ethics, rules and traditions to which members must conform. For instance, they need acceptance by their age-mates, they need to feel important and have their achievement admired by other peers, they imitate others in the group such as to be generally accepted socially. Some of them tend to make choice of their career because their friends excelled in the trade or take advice of other peers in choosing career or occupation. They may have been peers at childhood, at school age or even at adult life. Individuals try to learn the behaviours of their friends. This explained the proverb: "birds of the same feathers flock together". If an individual is with good or bad friends, he or she will eventually form their characters (Natalie, 2006). Student's age-mates and older or younger friends exert a positive as well as negative influence on them. The peer pressure has its own code of ethics, rules and traditions to which members must conform. Peer pressure is a unit of social life during childhood, adolescent and, to some extent, during adulthood, though it has the greatest influence on behaviour during adolescence. It is a small group of individuals of almost of the same age group who came from roughly the same socio-economic background, attend the same school and share common ideas, most of these groups are informal and multifunctional. Peer pressure plays important roles in the psychological and social development of most students. Most students feel more comfortable in their peer pressure relationship than at home. They rate the opinion of their peers higher than that of their parents and school authorities.

Okoro (2011) stated that the tendency for children to lean on their peer pressure increases gradually as they approach adolescence. As stated by the author, as children grow up, they come to realise that social acceptance depends on having interest in common with other members of the peer pressures. Thus, they become highly influenced by the attitudes of their peer pressure members. Hurlock (1987) observed that underachievement is common among school children when peer attitude towards some aspects of education are negative. The author maintained that many school underachievers are the product of the influence of their peers. The implication here is that if highly valued vocations are preferred or valued by the members of a particular peer

pressure, children who crave for acceptance into that group will strive to aspire to that profession.

In a study by Natalie (2006), young adults through interaction with the context of family, school and community learn about and explore careers, which ultimately lead to their career choice. One consistent finding in research suggests that students' aspirations are influenced by their peers (Taylor, Haris, and Taylor, 2004). Adolescent's vocational interests are often influenced by peer pressure relationships. Onyejiaku (1991) posited that generally, the values of the dominant peer pressure in a school tend to influence the values of other groups. As observed by Manaster (1997) "if the dominant values are upper middle class, even the working-class students in the school will be affected in choice of occupation by the value climate. And this operates in reverse fashion if the dominant group is a working class group". It is obvious that very often the association of students from poor families with those from rich families enhances the vocational choice of the former. Thus, students from rich families aspire to prestigious occupations and influence their mates from poor families to aspire to similar vocations.

Mbak (2015) opined that most students' choice their vocation based on the prevailing vocation. Prevailing vocation such as civil service jobs exert a positive as well as negative influences on the students' vocational choice, especially in the study area. For instance, students choose any course in the higher institutions so as to work in the civil service since their abilities and interest are often ignored in the civil service.

Equally, admired vocations also tend to influence students' choice of vocation. For instance, admired vocations such as medicine, law, engineering or pharmacy are pursued by nearly three quarter of the students. Most students go as far as cheating in examinations just to ensure that they have the required papers and cut-off scores to study the course (Mbak, 2015).

The inability of students to make appropriate vocational choice due to lack of proper guidance causes them common problems such as career dissatisfaction, poor performance in one's career as well as incessant change of career. Akwaji (2004) emphasised that decision making concerning appropriate occupations and careers are the most critical problems faced by Nigerian secondary school students. Often, students are found seeking their parents and peers guidance before choosing any career, which most times resulted in regrets. Benson (2010) opined that student sometimes make the mistake of selecting their life career based on their personal needs and interest without considering their academic ability. This situation according to Benson often brings sorrow and dissatisfaction at the latter years. Hence, the importance of vocational education has been emphasised in the 9-3-4 system of education.

The researcher in this study investigated the present state of social factors and vocational choice of secondary schools students in Uyo Local Government Area in order to suggest remedies that can help to address the problem. The researcher also investigated the relationship between social factors such as school location, peer group, parents' educational state is and vocational choice of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area . Students' vocational choice were also examined based on gender and parents' educational status.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The senior secondary schools students in Uyo Local Government Area are mostly affected by this problem of wrong choice of vocation. This is often reflected in their poor academic achievement, change of course, and drop-outs in tertiary institutions. The researcher observed that whenever students' social factors school location, parents' education and peers are ignored in the causes of making choices, such students are bound to have conflicting ideas,

values, and beliefs about themselves and their choices. It is therefore expected that students should try to match their social factors with those required by occupations through the guidance and counselling services offered to them when making career choices or decisions.

It is common knowledge that many students make serious mistakes in their vocational choice. For instance, some students choose their vocations because of high earnings, sometimes peer pressure influence or the social status attached to such vocations. This in turn can lead to poor job satisfaction, which can make the individual unhappy throughout his working life, except where he decides to change to a right vocation. Many students fail to correlate their natural and social factors with their desired vocational choice.

Apart from poor job satisfaction, wrong choice of vocation can spoil employer-employee relationship since the expectation of the employer cannot be achieved. In the case of a professional job such as medicine, the individual may cause problem to the profession. His output may not meet the expectation of the employer and the larger society. The individual may stand the chance of losing his job.

This study therefore sought to find out the relationship between social factors such as prevailing vocation, peer group and admired vocation and vocational choice of secondary schools students in Uyo Local Government Area.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between social factors and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the relationship between prevailing vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.
2. examine the relationship between peer group and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.
3. determine the relationship between admired vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.

### **Research Questions**

In order to give direction to this study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What is the relationship between prevailing vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area?
2. What is the relationship between peer group and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area?
3. What is the relationship between admired vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area?

### **Null Hypotheses**

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

1. There is no significant relationship between prevailing vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant relationship between peer group and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.

3. There is no significant relationship between admired vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.

### **Design of the Study**

A descriptive survey method was used for this study. In this design, the research data were collected from a sample drawn from a predetermined population, which in this case are the senior secondary two students in Uyo Local Government Area. This enabled the researcher to gather data from the samples using questionnaire.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprised all the 2903 senior secondary two students for 2017/2018 school session, from 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area. This information was obtained from the Planning Research and Statistics Directorate, Uyo Local Government Area Secondary Education Board, Uyo. Senior secondary two students were used for the study because it was presumed that students would have chosen various vocations at the end of secondary education.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample size of 290 senior secondary two students was obtained from 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area. This was obtained through stratified random sampling technique. The sample size was statistically determined using 10%.

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher-developed instrument titled "Social factors of Students and Vocational choice Questionnaire" (SCSVAQ) with a total of 33 items was used for data generation. Section A contained the respondents' bio-data such as gender and age.

Section B consisted of 19 items on social factors, such as prevailing vocation, peer group and admired vocation. Section C contained 15 Vocational Choice Inventory, which measured the vocational choice of the students using the following keys:

- SA - Strongly Agree
- A - Agree
- D - Disagree
- SD - Strongly Disagree

### **Validation of the Instrument**

The face and content validation of the instrument were done by two experts. The experts were presented with the topic of the thesis, purpose, research questions, hypotheses and the questionnaire for scrutiny. These experts checked the items of the questionnaire and made necessary corrections before the questionnaire is administered to the respondents. Their comments and corrections were incorporated into the final copy of the questionnaire.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the researcher administered the questionnaire to 30 SS2 students that were not part of the study, but possess the same attributes of the study group. The researcher employed the Cronbach Alpha to analyse the data generated

from the administered questionnaire. The overall reliability coefficient of .83 was realised. These coefficients were reasonable estimates of internal consistency of the instrument. Therefore, the instruments were considered good enough to reliably assess the respondents on the variables under investigation.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected for this study, organized and analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation for testing the hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level. On testing the hypotheses, the calculated r-value were be compared with the critical r-value and where the former was greater than the latter the null hypothesis was rejected.

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the analysis of data generated through the questionnaire, interpretation and discussion of findings.

### **Data Analysis**

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between prevailing vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Prevailing Vocation and Vocational choice**

		Prevailing Vocation	Vocational Choice
Prevailing Vocation	Pearson Correlation	1	.67**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	290	290
Vocational Choice	Pearson Correlation	.67**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	290	290

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The summary of data analysis in Table 1 presented the observed r- value as .67. This value was compared with its significant value of .124 at 0.05 alpha level and 288 degree of freedom. Since the significant value of .124 is less than the alpha level of .05, null hypothesis is rejected. This showed there is a significant relationship between prevailing vocation vocational choice among students.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between peer group and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Peer Pressure and Vocational choice**

		Peer Pressure	Vocational Choice
Peer Pressure	Pearson Correlation	1	.71**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	290	290
Vocational Choice	Pearson Correlation	.71**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	290	290

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The summary of data analysis in Table 2 presented the observed r- value as .71. This value was compared with its critical value of .124 at 0.05 alpha level and 288 degree of freedom. Since the critical value of .124 is less than the alpha level of .05, null hypothesis is rejected. This showed there is a significant relationship between peer pressure and vocational choice.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between admired vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice in Uyo Local Government Area.

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Admired Vocation and Vocational choice**

		Admired Vocation	Vocational Choice
Admired Vocation	Pearson Correlation	1	.83**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	290	290
Vocational Choice	Pearson Correlation	.83**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	290	290

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data entries in Table 3 indicated a calculated r-value of 0.83, which is found to be greater than the critical r-value of .124 when compared at 0.05 alpha level and 288 degree of freedom. Since the calculated r-value of .83 is greater than the critical value of .124, the null hypothesis is rejected. This showed there is a significant relationship between admired vocation and vocational choice.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings on hypothesis one revealed that prevailing vocation has a significant relationship with secondary school students' vocational choice.

This finding is in support of the findings of Mbak (2015) maintained that prevailing vocation is significantly related to students' choice of career. The author further stated that students are exposed to various prevailing vocations such as the civil service jobs and these influence their career choice.

The findings on hypothesis 2 as presented on Table 2 revealed a significant relationship between peer pressure and secondary school students' vocational choice. The result was significant since the obtained calculated r-value was found to be greater than the critical r-value. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. The significance of the result means that peer pressure influence has a significant relationship to secondary school students' vocational choice.

This finding is supported by the finding of Arudo (2008) who concludes that students have great confidence in the opinion of their peer pressure on vocational choice. Denga (2001) equally opined that students' age-mates and older or younger friends exert a positive as well as negative influence on them, especially in vocational choice. The peer pressure has its own code of ethics, rules and traditions to which members much conform. For instance, the students need acceptance by their age-mates, they need to feel important and have their achievement admired by other peers, and they imitate others in the group such as to be generally accepted socially. Some of the students tend to make choice of their career because their friends have done so or take advice of other peers in vocational choice. The respondents equally agree that they like to select those vocations that are generally acceptable by their friends. Majority of the respondents agree that they would go to the same university and study the same course with their friends. It is therefore not out of place to say that peer pressure influence is a strong determinant of secondary school students' vocational choice.

Findings on hypothesis 3 also revealed a significant relationship between admired vocations and students' vocational choice in the study area. This finding is in line with the finding of Mbak (2015) who opined that admired vocations also tend to influence students' choice of vocation. Mbak commented that admired vocations such as medicine, law, engineering or pharmacy are pursued by nearly three quarter of the students. Most students go as far as cheating in examinations just to ensure that they have the required papers and cut-off scores to study the course (Mbak, 2015).

### **Conclusions**

Considering the results and findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Social factors of secondary school students have significant relationship to their vocational choice. There was a significant relationship between prevailing vocation and secondary school students' vocational choice. Peer pressure has a significant relationship to secondary school students' vocational choice. Admired vocation has a significant relationship to secondary school students' vocational choice.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings that vocational choice of secondary school students are mostly influenced by the social variables, this study recommends:



1. School counsellor should use their wealth of knowledge to counsel the students to ensure that school location does not influence students' vocational choice.
2. Government through the Ministry of Education and school counsellors should work towards the development and implementation of programmes for vocational choice in secondary schools that could help students acquire sound vocational development and advancement.
3. Students should not follow their peers and should be guided by their ability, interest and aptitude

**REFERENCES**

- Akwaji, I. A. (2004). Self Concept, and Adolescents Occupational Choice. An Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, University of Calabar, Calabar.
- Arudo, Y. S. (2008). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Benson, O. D. (1999). A study of relationship between attitudes and achievement in mathematics among form-4 students in Ukwala Division of Siaya District, Kenya. Unpublished M.ED Thesis. Kenyatta University.
- Denga, D. I. (2001). *Guidance and Counselling in Schools and Non-School Setting*. Port Harcourt: Double Diamond Publishers.
- Hurlock, E. E. (1987). *Child Development* (6th ed.). Auckland: McGraw-Hill International Books Co.
- Manaster, G. J. (1997). *Adolescent and the Life Tasks*: Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc.
- Mbak, I. (2015). Societal Influence and Career Choice and Students' in Nsit Ubium Local Government Area. Unpublished Seminar Paper, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.
- Natalie, M. F. (2006). Factors Influencing Career Choice of Adolescents and Young Adults in Rural Penn Sylvania. *Journal of Extension*, 44(3): 34-56.
- Okoro, C. C. (2011). *Basic Concepts in Educational Psychology*. Uyo: Blesseth Publishers.
- Onyejiaku, F. O. (1991). *Careers Guidance and Counselling Service in Schools*. Calabar: Wusen Press Ltd.
- Taylor, F., Haris, G. & Taylor, D. (2004) Factors affecting mathematics performance among secondary school students in Nairobi Province, Kenya. Unpublished MED Thesis, Kenyatta University.