



## INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL FACTORS ON CHILDREN'S GENDER IN CAREER CHOICE

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated influence of parental factors on their children's gender in career choice. The study was conducted in the North-East Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study which used a survey design. A sample of 100 UTME candidates, comprising 50 males and females each, was selected randomly. The instrument of the study was developed by the researchers and validated by experts. A reliability index of 0.81 was determined through Cronbach alpha statistics. Data analysis was conducted using means and standard deviations at 2.50 cut off mark, while t-test was used to test a null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study revealed that both male and female gender disagree parental factors influenced career choice in all cases, in the North-East Senatorial District of Benue State. Based on the results of the study, it was recommended that parents should not force their children to choose careers which they do not have passion, interest or ability for.*

**Key words:** parental factors, career, choice, children's gender.

## Introduction

Career choice is a serious decision which concerns parents and their children. This is because if wrongly chosen, it is likely to have negative impact on the parents and their children in future. Consequently, many parents do not allow their children alone to choose any career without their involvement, especially those careers that are considered less paid. However, parental intervention often leads to conflict between parents and their children (Sheikh, 2022). A career choice, according to Shazia and Muhammed (2019), is the combination of roles played in a sequence by a person during a lifetime. It is an individual's drive through education, work and other features of life. It is also the progress and actions taken by a person throughout lifetime especially those related to that person's occupation to achieve top management appointments.

Since career choice affects persons throughout their lifetime, parents are involved from the beginning in support by influencing their children's choice of careers (Garcia, Restubag, Toledano, Tolentino, & Rafferty, 2022; Sawitiri, Creed & Zimmer-Gemback, 2014). For example, during early child age, parents serve as the important motivation factor in their children's lives and this includes career choice (Cridge & Cridge, 2015). Similarly, Anovunga (2023) asserted that parents in one way or the other, do influence their children in choosing careers. Also Brownson (2014) revealed that parents often have influence on the career choice of their children. In addition, Torries (2020) stated that parental attitudes toward children who are in elementally and high school have impact on their desire to earn a degree and the kind of degree to pursue. Confirming parental influence on their children's career choice, Olaosebikan and Olusakin's (2014) study reported that 48.36 percent of the respondents interviewed agreed to parents influencing their career choice. On average, 21.5 percent of the respondents agreed that their parents' line of business influenced their career choice, while 78.5 percent disagreed. The report of the study added that on the whole, 30 percent of the respondents agreed that they chose the family career because they need to sustain the family

business. Besides, Shilpi and Milton (2023) corroborated that parents are involved in education of their children, and this influences their career choice.

Also, research indicates that children and adolescents are likely to perform well in school and graduate when their parents are involved in their schooling (Shiraj & Mayo, 2014; Zaff, Danlan, Gunning, Anderson, McDumont & Sedaca, 2017). Besides, parental advice is sought frequently and is useful when making job, career and course decision compared to advice from teachers and friends (Cridge & Cridge, 2015; Nugent, Baker, Welch, Grandgenett, Wu & Nelson, 2015; Shahin, Gulacar & Stuessy, 2015; White & Harison, 2012). However, it should be noted that parents who are successful in influencing their children's career choices are those who have sufficient information, share that information with their children and help their children to grow up into individuals who are popular thus forcing them to study in a field neither of their children's choice, nor interest. But this in turn decreases their thinking ability and motivation to study (Yahya & Ismail, 2011). In Nigeria, Olateju and Akowonjo (2018) explore how parents in Nigeria influence their children's courses of study at tertiary level of education. Analysing a data set of 73 respondents comprising students and professionals, they found that parents play an important role in the courses of study, and that socio-economic considerations mediate this influence. The study however found that choice of academic course does not necessary align with career trajectory due to factors such as insufficient supply of tertiary education level places and high level of unemployment.

Parental influence on their children's career choice is due to many factors. Many studies have investigated how family characteristics including socio-economic background influence the choice of career (Pepple, 2014; Ehigbor, 2016; Egbo, 2017). Thus, analysing these studies, the key predictors of student's career choice include family characteristics such as parental motivation and education level, socio economic status, and occupational background. Also, Ukaegbu (2014) found that parental level of education influences students' career choice. Additionally, when

students feel supported and loved by their parents, they have more confidence in their own ability to find career information and choose a career that would be interesting for them (Egbo, 2017). Besides, being active participants in career choice decision making, families in Nigeria have also been found to provide other forms of support in the form of financial investment in academic development (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017).

Factors mediating family influence in career choice include prospects of career success which is related to projected income from the career, socio-cultural issues including gendered prospects and notions of continuing family tradition (Olateju & Akowonjo, 2018). According to Kazi and Akhlaq (2017), a young adult raised in an environment where they receive parental support and live harmoniously are likely to be influenced by parental occupation than those raised in atmosphere of conflict. Effrom and Petters (2019) stated that determinants of parental influence on career choice include parental educational background, cultural norms, and values, parental occupation, parental expectations, and socio-economic status of parents.

Apart from parental influence, other factors also exert some influence on children's career choice. For example, stereotypes are a big factor in forced careers (Sheikh, 2022). Sheikh explained that Asian cultures are stereotyped and parents often forced their children to read medicine or law to become doctors and lawyers. Similarly, Borchert (2012) stated that several factors influenced the career choice of high school students. The factors include the students' immediate environment, opportunities available to the students and their personality. Relatedly, Amoor and Aliyu (2014) said that selected factors such as value, attitudes and practices play a significant role in the choice of a professional course of study, with students more likely to opt for courses which society places a premium on.

Nevertheless, within the context of a country like Nigeria, with high demand for tertiary education places but short supply of some, notions of career choice must be interrogated (Amoor & Aliyu, 2014). According to Amoor and Aliyu (2014), in 2017, approximately 1.7 million

candidates wrote the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) which is required for admission into universities, monotechnics, polytechnics, and colleges of education, whereas the intake capacity of these institutions was just over 600, 000. They further stated that only one-third of the candidates who sat for this examination could be admitted into any of these institutions. Amoor and Aliyu added that there are therefore severe entry barriers for those seeking to transit from secondary to tertiary education, resulting in many candidates opting for any course of study they are admitted for, regardless of parental guidance or professional preferences. Corroborating, Ajibola, Emaghe, Oluwumi and Oni (2017) who investigated students' choice of programme at Covenant University in Nigeria found that 33.8 percent of the students were studying courses the university assigned to them as against course of their choice.

It should be noted however that parental influence on their children's career choice can have negative impact as well. Sheikh (2022) said that parental influence on their children's career choice often sparks big conflict among families in America. According to him, a study by joblist.com records that 48 percent of people felt their parents have influenced their career path, and 40 percent have felt pressured to follow their parents' advice. However, Sheikh said that when someone is in a career they feel no passion for, it can negatively affect their performance and mental health, and that doing work one does not love can lead to burn out and an unsuccessful turn out in the industry. Furthermore, Sheikh added that societal and parental pressures can lead to an increase in stress and anxiety for wanting to choose the job children truly do not want to do, which increases the risk of depression.

Additionally, Ayeni (2023) reported that many parents in Nigeria prefer their children to study courses like medicine, nursing and engineering against their passion and choice, and this frustrates them. For example, Ayeni demonstrated how Izuchuku wanted to study arts due to his love for acting and modelling but his father, an engineer mounted pressure on him to study engineering. Regrettably, his son could not become an engineer because he did not meet up

with cut off mark for engineering course. Ayeni further reported how Pelumi Adelere was pressured by his mother, a nurse to study medicine at the university. Despite his best efforts, he did not meet up with the required cut off mark. Following this trend, a school counsellor warned parents that the practice of imposing courses on children would not pay off (Ayeni, 2023). According to the counsellor, when children are given the opportunity to choose their preferred courses, they will develop tools necessary to face and conquer future challenges. Thus, parents should not impose courses on their children because it makes children to blame them for every failure they encounter in life.

### Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Hollandis' Theory of Career Choice. The theory states that:

- In our culture, most people belong to one of the six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.
- People of the same personality type working together create a work environment that fits their type. For example, when Artistic persons are together on a job, they create a work environment that rewards creative thinking.
- There are six basic types of environments: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional. Work here includes doing things to achieve a purpose, like paid and unpaid job, volunteering, sports or hobbies.
- People search for environments where they can use their skills and abilities and express their values, and attitudes. For example, Investigative types search for Investigative environments; Artistic types look for Artistic environments and so forth.
- People who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied. For example, Artistic people are more likely to be successful and satisfied if they choose a job that has an Artistic environment, like choosing to be dance teacher in a dancing school, an environment dominated by Artistic people where creative abilities and expression

are highly valued.

- How you act and feel at work depends to a large extent on your work place environment. If you are working with people who have a personality type like yours, you will be able to do many of the things they can do, and you will be most comfortable with them.

The theory is related to the topic in the sense that it helps to throw more light on how different people choose their career. This is because people are talented in different ways. In most cases, people choose careers based on their talents or abilities. For instance, someone who is talented in arts but not in sciences, cannot opt for careers in sciences and vice versa.

### Statement of the Problem

Career choice is a difficult decision to make which worries parents and their children worldwide. This is because if wrongly chosen, it is likely to have negative impact on their children in future. Consequently, many parents do not allow their children alone to choose any career without their interference, especially those careers that are considered less paid. However, studies by Sheikh (2022) and Ayeni (2023) have shown that parental interference in many cases leads to conflict between parents and their children. Besides, many studies have shown how parental characteristics such as education, occupation, business and other factors influence children career choice. However, from the literature reviewed, it is discovered that no study has been conducted in the North-East Senatorial District of Benue State to ascertain which gender is more influenced by parental characteristics or factors in their children's career choice. Therefore, this study is designed to answer the question: which gender is more influenced by the parental factors in their children's career choice in the North-East Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria?

### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate parental influence on children's gender in career choice in the North-East Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Determine the influence of parental factors on their children's male gender in career choice.
- Ascertain the influence of parental factors on their children's female gender in career choice.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What influence do parental factors have on their children's male gender in career choice?
2. What influence do parental factors have on their children's female gender in career choice?

### Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study:

1. The influence of parental factors on their children's male and female gender in career choice do not differ significantly.

### Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate for the study because according to Hale (2011), the design could be used where the entire population cannot be studied and a sample is required. It could also be used where the instrument for collecting data is a structured questionnaire or interview schedule. The study was conducted in the North-East Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 1015 candidates of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) 2024/2025.

The candidates were identified at Computer Based Test (CBT) Centre, Adikpo. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a

total sample of 100, comprising 50 female and 50 male candidates. The researchers developed an instrument titled, Parental Factors' Influence on Children's Career (PFICC). The instrument is a structured questionnaire which is divided into two parts: A and B. part A contains biodata of the respondents while Part B was designed to elicit information from the respondents about parental factors' influence on children's career choice, and it has 18 items. The instrument is based on four-points Likert Scale format: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The instrument was validated by two professionals, one in Sociology of Education and another in Measurement and Evaluation, from the Department of Educational Foundations, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The draft of the instrument was given to the validators to assess both contents and face-validity of the instrument. Based on their suggestions and amendments, the final version of the instrument was produced. The reliability of the instrument was determined by conducting a pilot test on 25 candidates who belonged to the population but did not form part of the sample. Adopting a Cronbach alpha statistic, the reliability index of 0.81 was obtained.

The researchers administered 100 copies of the instrument by themselves and collected all of them on the spot after proper completion. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. Mean and Standard deviation were used for answering research questions. The cut off mark for taking decision is 2.50 for research questions while t-test was used to test null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

The results of the data analysis are presented in tables as follows:

### Research Question One

What influence do parental factors have on their children's male gender in career choice?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Influence of Parental Factors of male gender on career Choice

Item	Parental Factors	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Parental education influenced my career choice	50	2.26	1.242	Disagree
2	Parental counselling influenced my career choice	50	2.54	1.092	Agree
3	Parental encouragement influenced my career choice	50	2.54	1.129	Agree
4	Parental motivation influenced my career choice	50	2.76	1.098	Agree
5	Parental love influenced my career choice	50	2.82	1.137	Agree
6	Parental decision influenced my career choice	50	2.06	1.096	Disagree
7	Parental financial support influenced my career choice	50	3.04	1.087	Agree
8	Parental discussion about types of jobs influenced my career choice	50	2.58	1.090	Agree
9	Parental advice influenced my career choice	50	2.68	0.957	Agree
10	Parental suggestions of many careers influenced my career choice	50	2.62	1.141	Agree
11	Parental occupation influenced my career choice	50	1.90	1.035	Disagree
12	Parental status in the society influenced my career choice	50	2.34	1.154	Disagree
13	Parental poverty influenced my career choice	50	1.92	1.175	Disagree
14	Parental place of work influenced my career choice	50	2.20	1.010	Disagree
15	Parental good relationship with me influenced career choice	50	2.80	1.107	Agree
16	Parental moral choice influenced my career choice	50	2.86	1.088	Agree
17	Parental life style influenced career choice	50	2.38	1.123	Disagree
18	Parental attitudes towards me influenced my career choice	50	2.44	1.128	Disagree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>			<b>2.49</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

Table 1 shows that the cluster mean is 2.49 which is below 2.50 cut off mark, this means the

respondents disagreed that parental factors have influence on the male gender in career choice

### Research Question Two

What influence do parental factors have on their children's female gender in career choice?

Item	Parental Factors	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Parental education influenced my career choice)	50	2.46	1.164	Disagree
2	Parental counselling influenced my career choice	50	2.42	1.180	Disagree
3	Parental encouragement influenced my career choice	50	2.90	1.015	Agree
4	Parental motivation influenced my career choice	50	2.50	1.129	Agree
5	Parental love influenced my career choice	50	2.66	0.982	Agree
6	Parental decision influenced my career choice	50	2.44	1.053	Disagree
7	Parental financial support influenced my career choice	50	2.88	1.062	Agree
8	Parental discussion about types of jobs influenced my career choice	50	2.44	1.072	Disagree
9	Parental advice influenced my career choice	50	2.58	1.032	Agree
10	Parental suggestions influenced my career choice	50	2.34	1.136	Disagree
11	Parental occupation influenced my career choice	50	2.34	.939	Disagree
12	Parental status in the society influenced my career choice	50	2.22	1.183	Disagree
13	Parental poverty influenced my career choice	50	2.18	1.155	Disagree
14	Parental place of work influenced my career choice	50	2.32	1.077	Disagree
15	Parental good relationship with me influenced my career choice	50	2.58	1.052	Agree
16	Parental moral support influenced my career choice	50	2.72	1.089	Agree
17	Parental life style influenced my career choice	50	2.36	1.025	Disagree
18	Parental attitudes towards me influenced my career choice	50	2.46	1.147	Disagree
<b>Cluster Mean</b>			<b>2.49</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Influence of Parental Factors on female gender career Choice

Table 2 shows that the cluster mean is 2.49 which is below 2.50 cut off mark. This means the respondents disagreed that parental factors have influence on the female gender in career choice

### Hypothesis

The influence of parental factors on male and female gender in career choice do not differ significantly.

**Table 3:** Independent Samples t-test of the difference between Influence of Parental Factors on Male and Female Children's Career Choice

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig.	Remark
Males	50	44.74	18.910	98	-0.016	0.987	Not Significant
Females	50	44.80	18.758				

Table 3 shows that  $t=-0.016$ ,  $df=98$  and  $p=0.987 > 0.05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that the influence of parental factors on their male and female children's career choice do not differ significantly.

**Discussion**

From the study, two research questions showed that the respondents disagree that parental factors influence children's career choice. These findings are contrary to the previous findings of other studies such as Garcia et.al (2022) and Sawitiri et.al (2014) who found that parents are involved from the beginning in support by influencing their Children's choice of career. According to Cridge and Cridge (2015), during early child age, parents serve as the important motivation factor in their Children's lives, and this includes career decision. Also, Anovunga (2023) found that parents are in one way or the other, do influence their children in choosing career. Corroborating, Brownson (2014) also found that parents often have Influence on the career choice of their children.

Nevertheless, details analysis of the results, item by item revealed that in some cases, female and male gender agree that parental factors Influence career choice of their children. Specifically, parental education (item1), parental counselling (item 2), parental encouragement (item3), parental motivation (item4), parental love (item 5), parental financial support (item 7), parental discussion about types of jobs (item8), parental advice (item9), and parental suggestions of many careers (item 10). These findings are in line with Ukeagbu (2014), Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) who said that parental motivation and financial support influence children's Choice of

career.

It should be noted however that parental factors have some limitations because other factors also operate and have influence on children's career choice. According to Sheikh (2022), stereotypes are a big factor in forced careers. Sheikh explained that Asian cultures are stereotyped, and parents often force their children to study medicine or law to become doctors and lawyers. Similarly, Ayeni (2023) reported that parents in Nigeria force their children to study courses like medicine, law, nursing and engineering against their children's passion, interest and choice, and this frustrates them. Besides, Borchert (2012) stated that several factors Influenced the career choice of high school students' immediate environment, opportunities available to the students, and their personality. Relatedly, Amoor and Aliyu (2014) said that selected factors such as value, attitudes and practice play a significant role in the choice of a professional courses which society places high premium on.

In addition, availability of places in the tertiary institutions is another important factor. According to Amoor and Aliyu (2014), within the context of a country like Nigeria, with high demand for tertiary education places, but short supply of some, notions of career choice must be interrogated. According to them, in 2017, approximately 1.7 million candidates wrote the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), which is required for admission into universities, monotechnics, polytechnics, and colleges of education whereas the intake capacity of these institutions was just over 600,000. Regrettably, according to Amoor and Aliyu, only



one-third of the candidates who sat for the examinations could be admitted into any of these institutions. They therefore concluded that there are severe entry barriers for those seeking to transit from secondary to tertiary education, resulting in many candidates opting for any course of study they are admitted for, regardless of parental guidance or professional preferences. Corroborating Ajibola et.al (2017) who investigated students' choice of programme at the Covenant University in Nigeria, found that 33.8 percent of the students were studying courses the University assigned to them as against courses of their choice.

### Conclusion

The study investigated influence of the parental factors on their children's gender in career choice and found that in some cases parental factors do not have influence on children's career choice. Consequently, it is concluded that children's career choice should not be based on parental factors only but other factors should also be considered. Specifically, children's passion, interest, ability and choice.

### Recommendations

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

1. Parents should not force their children to choose any career they do not have passion, ability and interest for.
2. Tertiary institutions should not assign courses to students which they do not apply for, and do not have passion or interest.
3. Tertiary institutions offering professional courses should be expanded to admit students who are qualified, and are seeking admission into those courses.
4. Schools should employ counsellors to advice students to choose courses which they have passion, interest and ability.
5. Students should seek the advice of the counsellors when they do not know what course to choose for their future careers.

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