

**ADOLESCENT SELF-CONCEPT AND THEIR CAREER CHOICE
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IKOM LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

**Iferi, Iferi; Agene, Pius Ebuara
Odidi, Philip Adigbo & Effiom, Bassey Ekeng (Ph. D.)**

*Department of Guidance and Counselling
University of Calabar, Calabar
University of Cross River State, Calabar*



Abstract

This study adopted ex-post facto research design to assess the influence of adolescent self-concept on their career choice in secondary schools in ikom local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The selection was carried out using simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire titled “Self-concept and Career Choice Questionnaire (SCCCQ)” was used for data collection. . The instrument was subjected to face validity by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha and the reliability coefficients ranged from 0.74 and 0.76. Chi-square was adopted to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that moral self-concept and academic self-concept has significant with the career choice of students. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that, Evaluators should have an in-depth knowledge of the association between student’s self-concept and their career choice.

Keywords: *Adolescent, self-concept, career, choice, school*



Introduction

Self-concept is generally thought as our individual perceptions of our behaviour, abilities and unique characteristics, it is an understanding we have of ourselves that is based on our personal experiences, body image, thoughts and how we label ourselves in various situations. As people grow older, self-perception becomes more much more detailed and organized as they form a better idea of who they are and what is important to them (Booth & Gerard, 2018).

Self-concept is an overarching idea one holds about oneself in regards to various aspects such as behavior, abilities, emotion and attributes, which is shaped by one’s experience and interpretation of one’s external milieu. Self-concept comprises many interrelated sub-domains and is domain-specific and multidimensional. A positive self-concept facilitates success in school work, in social-emotional situations, and in everyday life. Hence one’s positive self-beliefs are essential for a range of desirable outcomes (Choy and Yeung (2022).

According to Undie and Ameh (2018), Life for many young people is characterized by shocking family incomes and growing options with regard to careers, beliefs, and lifestyle choices. The present age is the age of competition and achievements; therefore, education has a tremendous role to play in motivating the students to achieve higher and to have the realistic career choices in all their doings especially at secondary stage of education. The students must realize their capacities and have self-introspection in various matters. It is

therefore imperative that the adolescent child at secondary level of education has developed a self-concept whereby they perform all activities in accordance to this knowledge of self. It is obvious that an individual knowing his or herself develops a sort of self-concept whereby they develop realistic approaches to achieve higher and to excel in his or her endeavours. The present system of education lays much emphasis upon all round personality development of every individual. Therefore, considering this aim of education at the secondary stage of education is to be laid on nourishing and developing the self-concept among the school students.

Among various factors revealed in the literature, self-concept has been identified as a crucial one that plays a vital role for an individual's choice and success in life. As Choy and Yeung (2022) have highlighted, self-concept is "a hot variable that makes good things happen, facilitating the realization of full human potential in a range of settings". Hence in interventions for academic success, researchers have emphasized the importance of a dual approach to promoting both academic performance and academic self-concept in the specific subject domain and contextual setting.

A career is an indispensable factor in the life of an individual. This is in the sense that the type of career which an individual goes into determines the way of life and how life is spent. Infact, the world over today, fashioning a work identity translates into fashioning an identity. In all cultures, personalities are identified by what they do. For the young, this question is critical in determining the outcomes of their lives (Paul et. al, 2019; Opara et al., 2020; Ihekoronye et al., 2020).

Career choices represent a learner's orientation towards occupational goals and as Domenico and Jones (2017) report can be influenced by gender, socio economic status and family support. During adolescence, aspirations are especially important because they allow teenagers to evaluate the degree to which various choices help or hinder their chances of attaining desired goals. In adolescence, career preparation is an important precursor for successful career development across the life span and is closely related to adolescence adjustment and well-being. During adolescence, developing a vocational identity is a central developmental task. According to Silvia (2019), choices refer to an individual's expressed career related goals or intentions and include motivational components which are not present in mere interests. The career choices of adolescents have been viewed as significant determinants of both short term educational and long-term career achievements. They have also been regarded as important career motivational variables which are predictive of latter career attainment levels.

According to Gotfredson (2015), by the age of 13 to 14, adolescents have developed two cognitive competencies related to career development, that is, self-concept and perception about occupations. During adolescence, students have achieved an adult level understanding of the sex type and prestige level of common occupations. Adolescents start to eliminate occupational choices based on sex types and prestige levels. For example, female students might avoid choosing occupations that are perceived as too masculine such as mining and might consider eliminating choices that are received as having low social prestige status such as a career as a house maid. Research shows that girls tend to aspire to a narrower range of occupations than boys because they believe many jobs are unsuitable for them whereas boys have a greater occupational understanding, focus, and see more occupational opportunities than girls.

Supporting student's self-concept has may have particular importance in career choice because the beliefs and feelings that students have are key components in making suitable career choices, in other words the researcher believes that the way a student perceives themselves can could affect their choice of career. It is on this note that the researchers intends to carry out the study the influence of Adolescent s self-concept on the career choice

of students in secondary schools in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

It is a common observation by every Nigerian that unemployment among Nigeria school leavers has been rampant, and some of those who are employed seem not to be satisfied with their job. Some of these challenges are traceable to wrong or poor career choices. Sometimes, youths get cheated after semi-slave labour arrangement of serving masters or mistresses who are expected later on to settle them. Often, some youths choose wrong occupation through the influence of their peer groups while some are influenced or misguided by their subject teachers.

Quite often, youths take to arduous street trading along traffic jam and later on fall prey to drug addiction and membership of highway robbery syndicate or at most, they join a city youth gang popularly branded “area boys and girls” who are available for violence. At the present time, most youths take to driving of tricycle (Keke Napep) on hire purchase or on making returns to the owners.

Much has been done by the government to encourage students in many secondary schools on the choice of career by the employment of counsellors in many schools, organising seminars and conferences on how to promote students' career choice. However, this effort has not been really productive as there still lingers poor career choices among secondary school students. The researcher is therefore poised to ask: could adolescent self-concept such as Moral self-concept, academic self-concept, and social self-concept be responsible for appropriate or good career choices among senior secondary school students? It is against this background and the fact that no work known to the researcher in the study area has undertaken a systematic study of these key variables that this study is undertaken. It is in line with filling this information gap that the researcher isolated the variables in this study for close study. This study therefore is aimed at finding the association between self-concept and career choice among secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Is there any significant influence of Moral self-concept on career choice of students?
- Is there any influence of Academic self-concept on career choice of students?

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis have been formulated in line with the stated research questions:

Ho1: Moral self-concept is not a significant predictor of career choice students.

Ho2: Academic self-concept does not significantly influence career choice of students.

Methodology

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. It examined the association between self-concept and career choice among secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of the study is made up of students in Junior secondary school three (JSS3) being 1,294 students in the 19 public secondary schools in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State. Simple random sampling technique was used for this study. A sample size of 200 students randomly drawn from four secondary schools selected for the study. A questionnaire titled “Self-concept and Career Choice Questionnaire (SCCCQ)” was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three

experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar. Cronbach Alpha Reliability technique was used for estimating the degree of consistency of the sub scales and the coefficients ranging from 0.74 and 0.76 were obtained; the instrument was adjudged as reliable. The instrument was divided into three sections, Sections A, B and Section C. Section A was designed with items to elicit information on the demographics of the respondents which include gender, name of school, and parental marital status. Section B was designed to elicit information on the independent variable. The independent variable is made up of three sub-variables each of which five (5) items were used in measuring; this implies fifteen (15) items in this section. Section C contained items for the dependent variable which was made up of 6 items. The items in Section B of the instrument were structured using modified Likert scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD), while respondents were required to tick the choice of Career in section C. Data collected were analyzed using Chi-square.

Presentation of results

Ho1: Moral self-concept has no significant association with the career choice of secondary school students in Ikom L.G.A of Cross River State.

The independent variable in the hypothesis is moral self-concept while the dependent variable is career choice, both measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, the researcher first determined the strength of the relationship between the variables of the study.

Table 1: Table showing the association between moral self-concept and career choice
Cross tabulation

Variable	Career choice			Total		
	Science	non-science	Commercial			
Moral self- concept	high	Observed	41	69	15	125
		Expected count	30.6	53.1	41.3	125.0
	Low	Observed	8	16	51	75
		Expected count	18.4	31.9	24.8	75.0
Total	Observed	49	85	66	200	
	Expected count	49.0	85.0	66	200.0	
		Value	df	Asymptotic sig. (2-sided)		
Chi-square		66.568	2	.000		
Nominal by Nominal (Cramer's)		.577		.000		

The observed frequencies revealed that among those who choose science career path, 41 had high moral self-concept, while 8 had low moral self-concept, also, under the students that choose non-science career, 69 had high moral self-concept, while 16 had low moral self-concept. Also for those that choose commercial as their career path 15 had high moral self-concept while 51 had low moral self-concept. Under the assumption that there was no association between moral self-concept and career choice, the expected frequencies were calculated to be 125 high moral self-concept and 75 with low moral self-concept.

The analysis resulted in a Chi-square statistic (χ^2) of 66.568, with 2 degree of freedom. The associated p-value was 0.000, below the alpha level of 0.05, suggesting a statistically significant association between moral self-concept and career choice. Additionally, an effect size was calculated using Cramer's V, while this effect size is statistically significant, it is high in magnitude.

Ho2: There is no significant association between academic self-concept and career choice of secondary school students in Ikom L.G.A of Cross River State.

The independent variable in the hypothesis is academic self-concept while the dependent variable is career choice, both measured continuously. To evaluate the association of student's academic self-concept categorized into two levels (high and low) on student's career choice, a chi-square Test of Independence was executed.

Table 2:

Table showing the association between academic self-concept and career choice
Cross tabulation

Variable	Career choice			Total		
	Science	non-science	Commercial			
Academic self-concept	High	Count	41	84	16	141
		Expected count	34.5	59.9	46.5	141.0
	Low	Count	8	1	50	59
		Expected count	14.5	25.1	19.5	59.0
Total	Count	49	85	66	200	
	Expected count	49.0	85.0	66	200.0	

	Value	df	Asymptotic sig. (2-sided)
Chi-square	104.780	2	.000
Nominal by Nominal (Cramer's)	.724		.000

The analysis resulted in a Chi-square statistic (χ^2) of 104.78, with 2 degree of freedom. The associated p-value was .000, below the alpha level of 0.05, suggesting a statistically significant association between academic self-concept and career choice. Additionally, an effect size was calculated using Cramer's V, which was found to be 0.724. While this effect size is statistically significant, it is high in magnitude.

Discussion of findings

This section is devoted to the discussion of findings of the results gotten from each of the hypothesis.

In hypothesis 1, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore, signifies that moral self-concept has a significant association with the career choice of students. This study agrees with the findings of Sujata and Srishti, (2021) on moral self-concept and level of educational aspiration among adolescents. The major finding of the study was that the moral self-concept of adolescents had an effect on their level of educational aspiration. This corroborates with the finding in a study carried out Osipow (2014) who emphasized that a

sound moral self-concept helps a child become stronger in his vocational concerns and these concerns lead to modified and proper evaluated decisions which later crystallize and progress to a mature stage of elaboration and embellishment of career behaviour.

In hypothesis 2, the null hypothesis was also rejected, the result therefore signifies that academic self-concept does have significantly associate with career choice of students. The study agrees with the findings of Jingoo, Tuula and Anssi (2019) who conducted a study to examine the role of academic self-concept in predicting science aspiration between ages 13 and 16 at lower secondary schools, considering gender differences. According to the results, students' self-concept was high and stable, while interest was low but increased significantly during the lower secondary school phases. The study also aligns with the findings of Eremie and Ikpah (2017) who showed that academic self-concept has significant relationship with students' occupational aspiration. They recommended that students should develop outstanding academic self-concept to guarantee congruent occupational aspiration.

Conclusion

Conclusion Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there is an association between self-concept and career choice of secondary school students in Ikom local government area of Cross River State, Nigeria. This is to say that an improved self-concept can significantly improve performance in their chosen career. This can be done by not just improving the moral aspect of self-concept alone but also by effectively improving the academic aspect of self-concept, in order to improve students' motivation towards a particular career choice.

Recommendations

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

- i. Evaluators should have an in-depth knowledge of the association between student's self-concept and their career choice.
- ii. Teachers should also look critically into the academic aspect of improving students self-concept, because an improved academic self-concept will lead to a greater and better career choice.

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