



THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ACADEMIC INFORMATION AND GENDER ON THE STUDENTS' CHOICE OF UNIVERSITY: A STUDY OF UNN UNDERGRADUATES.

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Abstract

This study investigated the psychological impact of academic information and gender on the students' choice of university, among 100 levels undergraduate students of UNN, the participants were 200 students drawn from two schools, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). Questionnaires were used to collect the responses for the study which was developed by researcher and validated by some experts in the UNN Department of Psychology. Two null hypotheses were postulated. The first stated that there would be no statistically significant difference of academic information on the choice of university. The second stated that there would be no statistically significant gender difference on the choice of university. The Chi-square (X^2) analysis of data on data on the first hypothesis showed $X^2 = (1, 20.78) p < 0.05$ and the second analysis produced $X^2 (1, 0.02) p > 0.05$. The findings indicated (1) statistically significant impact of academic information on choice of university. (2) No statistically significant effect of gender on choice of university. The results were discussed. The implication of this study show that students requires information about educational and occupational training inside and outside school; to eradicate stereotypes in choice of university and help youths to be very informed before choosing a particular university. The study concludes that, choice of university involves a person's total life. An adequate understanding of how an individual selects a particular occupation among several alternatives is a basic step towards arresting future career maladjustment and its associated problems. More so, it will facilitate efficient use of human resources for good functioning of the economy.

Keywords:

Psychological impact, academic information, gender, students' choice and university.

Introduction

This study provides an insight on the effect of academic information and gender on the choice of university. Some people sometimes stumble into a vocation/career only to complain when they cannot cope with the demands of such career. Some base their career choice mainly on their parents demands; others on self concept while good proportion of students choose their career/university based on factors such as prestige, ego or fringe benefits without considering other factors behind. All these happen because that individual does not have sufficient information, guidance or one who will direct him or her to such career choice.

Proper academic information or awareness should be created or given to any student who wants to go into chosen university by various professionals who are experts in such area or field of study. Other information can also be gotten from the school bulletin which display vital information on prevocational institutions such as entry requirements for higher institution, career conferences, counsellors, public relations office, admissions office and students affairs department, audio-visuals aids, peer group mates, newspaper, teacher, parents guardian, radio talk, symposium. This academic information should be organized systematically so that those who want to make choice and decision before entering into such university. This will help them escape from problems like frustration, confusion and unemployment in life, if the person takes a right career path.

Requirements for a particular choice of university are made available to students via the provision of academic information. Such information will go a long way to equip the student to student to know whether he or she is fit or not. This will in turn, make the student to adjust, understand himself better, and also acquire the abilities to handle problems of human relationships.

Furthermore, academic information should be also be made available in secondary schools by a guidance counsellor who help the child to choose a particular subject whether SCIENCE or ART subjects so that as he or she is about entering into the university based on requirement of such university will be able to suit in where he or she is best fitted. A sufficient academic information will also determine ones occupation in life and one who was sufficiently fed with academic information ones occupation in life and one who was sufficiently fed with academic information before making the choice of career will also aspire for more occupational information when he or she graduates.

Ezeji (2001) pointed that occupational information is important in that the school staff or counsellors are enabled to interpret and use information concerning the characteristics, needs and opportunities available to student. This will in turn, make him to choose a better career of his or career of his or her choice.

Career is therefore, the totality of work one does in one's life continuously from cradle to grave and from one educational level to another. Development is a continuous process in which growth is taking place, attitudes are being developed and aspirations are being solidified. Information provided at an appropriate time is useful to each student or client as it contributes to this development. As self-understanding increases and a person is able to think with greater depth, by virtue of his increasing maturity and greater knowledge, he/she is better, able to discriminate, make choices and formulate plans which will help him/her to keep what is expected of him in a particular vocation. Broadly, concerned occupation/academic information is that assistance given to individual to help him or her be purposeful in his or her behaviour.

Nwokolo (1980) also pointed out that academic information is very important because it helps the individual to find out about the general and specific abilities and skills as well as

qualification required for a particular university. This will help such individual to gain knowledge of facilities used in his/her chosen field and this reduces the problems encountered by such students in his or her chosen field of study.

The erroneous ideas help by people about some choice of university are corrected when academic information is provided. For example, many people who are talented in one of the several field of study like law, psychology, medicine, etc., have often been found to reject them because of the misconceptions some people may have about the choice of university. If academic information is provided people will be assisted to know the true position of whatever information they have about the choice of different university course. And also makes them to stable and not to jump from one university to another or from one course to the other. Academic information is also necessary since it helps individuals to make decisions and choices involved in planning a future and building a career.

Academic information when provided will assist individuals' students to acquire a technique of analysis of such information before making a final decision or choice. If left unguided, individuals will be prone to choose a particular university that attracts his or fancy. Again, proper academic information helps individual students to escape from the problem of changing from one university to another in the course of searching for a particular university he/she likes.

Connor, Burton, Pearson, Pollard, & Regan, (1999) pointed that by providing better interactive information to students will help them to maximize the use of new technologies and decision making tools which will help focus and personalize information, and also bridge between information users and providers.

However, the dissemination of information by itself, rarely aids the individual to internalize and make use of it. Facts alone are insufficient individuals need help in utilizing facts in order

to clarify their attitudes and to motivate their behaviour. In other words, knowledge of a career can be effectively applied only when the individuals knows something about themselves. Any career programme, that fails to provide clients or students with accurate up-to-date information as well as offering opportunities to; learn more about environment and themselves does disservice to them.

The goal of academic information is not to force students to choose an occupation as soon as they aware of it, but to help them recognize their career options, understands the personal for those options, maximize their opportunities to achieve favoured options and make career decisions closely when they must be made. The requirements and the demand for the choice of university should be made early so that an individual may plan his career accordingly.

In summary, before an individual chooses a particular university, he/she will consider such things like:

- 1) Whether the school is in vogue or not.
- 2) Whether they have necessary equipment or materials for teaching.
- 3) Whether they have enough accommodation/hostels for students.
- 4) Whether they have skilled teachers in such university.
- 5) The prices/cost of learning in the school.
- 6) The distance of the school, whether it is far or near.
- 7) The standard of learning whether it is high or low.
- 8) The location of the school.

From the foregoing, these pieces of information should be made available by the information unit, guidance and counsellor, television and radio stations etc and taken into cognizance by students aspiring to further their education after secondary school education.

Methods

Study design

This was a survey design (cross-sectional) study of the role of academic information and gender on the student's choice of university two higher institutions in the Enugu State: University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu State University of Science and Technology.

Study setting

The study was done in two higher institutions in the Enugu State: University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu State University of Science and Technology.

Study population and sampling strategy

The researcher selected a total number of two hundred (200) participants (male 99 and female 101). The participants from the various schools consisted of only first year students (100 levels). Two Universities were used for the study and they include, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). In UNN, out of nine (9) faculties the researcher through Simple Random Selection (balloting) selected one faculty which was Social Sciences. Coming to Social Sciences, the researcher wrote out the departments in the Faculty of the Social Sciences alphabetically and selected the first even numbered departments which were Economics and Philosophy. 100 participants were used in UNN.

In ESUT, 100 participants were also used. In selecting the 100 participants, the seven faculties in the school were written out and through Simple Random Selection (balloting), one faculty which was faculty of management was selected. In the management faculty, the researcher selected Accountancy and Business Administration which was the first two departments on the faculty list.

In choosing the participants that represented each school, the first appeared 50 names that were on the admission list in the departments were selected.

Therefore, in each department (4 departments) that were drawn for the study, the researcher selected 50 participants from each department making it 200 participants.

Instrument:

The researcher developed the instrument used for the collection of data, it comprises two sections A and B. Section A comprised of personal data while section B which contains 18 items measures students' career choice. It has (5) five point scoring pattern scale which is in the Likert format ranging from strongly agreed to strongly disagree. However, in order to convert interval variable to nominal variables, the two extreme responses were collapsed. Disagree (1) and Agree (2), Dunn (2001). It was validated by three judges/experts in the department of psychology, one Industrial Psychologist, one Clinical Psychologists, and one Experimental Psychologist. A pilot study conducted with 30 participants from Electronic Engineering Department in ESUT and a split half method was used for the analysis coefficient reliability of 0.88 and corrected with Spearman Brown Prophecy formula for the full test of reliability of 0.94.

Statistical Methods

Chi-square contingency tables were used to test significance in the two postulated hypotheses. The chi-square was used because the data was converted from interval to nominal scale, Dunn (2001).

Results

Table 1: Chi-square 2 x 2 Contingency Summary Table showing the Test of the Effect of Academic Information on Choice of University.

| Utilization of Information | UNN | ESUT | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|-----|------|-------|
| utilized | 60 | 28 | 88 |
| | 44 | 44 | |
| Non-utilized | 40 | 72 | 112 |
| | 56 | 56 | |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 200 |

N=200, $X^2=20.78$, Critical Value=3.84, df= 1, $p < 0.05$

The result indicates statistically significant effect of academic information on choice of University. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected.

Table 2: Chi-square 2x2 Contingency Summary Table Showing the Effect of Gender on Choice of University.

| Gender | UNN | ESUT | TOTAL |
|--------|------|------|-------|
| Male | 50 | 49 | 99 |
| | 49.5 | 49.5 | |
| Female | 50 | 51 | 101 |
| | 50.5 | 50.5 | |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 200 |

N=200, $X^2=0.02$, Critical Value= 3.84, df= 1, $p > .05$

The result indicates no statistically significant effect of Gender on Choice of University. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted.

Discussion

The two hypothesis were no statically significant difference of academic information on the choice of university was rejected at $X^2=20.78$, df=1, $p > .05$. Then the second, there will be no statistically significant difference of gender on the choice of university was accepted at $X^2=0.02$, DF=1, $p > .05$.

The result of the first hypothesis that showed that academic information has an effect on the choice of university is in consonant with certain works like Berzonsky (1989), Smith and Erickson (1980), Schertizer and Shelly (1981), Okpara (1984) etc. in his findings Berzonsky (1989) found out that individuals who adopts information style tends to use a rational problem solving strategy to seek information before deciding about important life choices like the university. The present result also corroborates the study conducted by Smith and Erickson (1980) their findings revealed that students required information about educational and occupational training inside and outside school. Schertizer and Shelly (1981) found that a good information service help young people meet the challenges of today and tomorrow and that informational services appropriately designed, staffed and disseminated, will enable individuals to realize their potentials by becoming aware of their opportunities to choose a nice university in their career life. In line with what Okpara (1984) found out stated that before becoming involved in the process of degree-subjects or course selection, individuals need to verify that university entrance – the Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination (JAME) is a realistic goal in terms of one's academic ability and career prospects.

In contrary with the above, Bergeron and Romano, (1994); Betz, Heesacker, & Shuttleworth, (1990); Hackett, (1985); Trusty (2000), found out that rather than academic abilities, per se, students perception or beliefs about their own abilities and their feelings of self-efficacy have been shown to play a role in college major choice.

The second null hypothesis which said that gender had no influence on choice of university is in support with some researchers like Harren, Kass, Tinsley and Moreland and Lunenburg, (1978), Betz, Heesacker & Shuttleworth, (1990) In Kass, Tinsley, Mooreland Lunenburg, (1978) studies found out that early studies of career choices of women are not affected by sex roles and stereotypes as they were a decade earlier. In contrary with the above, Connor, H., Burton R., Pearson, R., Pollard, E., Regan, J. (1999) found out gender was significant factor in choice of university: girls were more likely than boys to say they were considering higher education.

Summary and conclusion

The study investigated the effect for academic information and gender on the student's choice of university among undergraduate's students of UNN. A total sample of 200 (99 males and 101 females) students participated in the study. They were drawn from two universities: University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu state University of science and Technology (ESUT). The research was a survey and questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The responses were made. Two hypotheses were proposed and tested for the study based on the previous literature these hypothesis are:

- 1) There will be no statically significant difference of academic information on the choice of university.
- 2) There will be no statically significant difference of gender on the choice of University.

The result and the implications of the findings were made from the foregoing, it is important to restate that choice of university involves a person's total life. An inadequate understanding of how an individual select a particular occupation among several alternatives is a basic step towards arresting future career maladjustment and its associated problems. Thus, an adequate understanding of how Nigerians youths, especially students who make their life choice of career will not only enhance their future career adjustment, but also will facilitate efficient use of human resources for good functioning of the economy.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest: All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval: All procedure performed in this study involving human participants filled the consent form to declare the free will to participate in the study.



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