

Socialization Indices and Career Aspiration Among Female Students in Secondary School in Uyo Local Government Area

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of socialization indices on career aspiration female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwalbom State, Nigeria. Two specific purposes, two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted ex post facto research design using the population of 1732 senior secondary two students in the two single sex secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwalbom State. The sample of 173 participants was used for the study. Two instruments; Socialization Indices Questionnaire (SIQ) and the Career Aspiration Scale by O'Brien, Gray, Tourajdi and Eigenbrode, (1996) were for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling in the University of Uyo, Uyo. The questionnaire had the reliability coefficient of 0.88 with Cronbach Alpha statistics. The data collected were analysed with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at .05 level of significance. The findings indicated that family background has a strong and positive impact on the career aspirations of female students in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwalbom State. It was recommended among others that educational policy makers should establish mentorship and career guidance programs that connect female students with successful women in diverse professions, serving as role models and providing guidance on navigating career paths.

Keywords: Aspirations, career, Family, gender-stereotype, Socialization

Introduction

Career is an essential part of an individual's life. This is true in the sense that a person's lifestyle and manner of living are determined by the kind of work they choose. Career aspiration has been defined as intrinsic motivation for succeeding in one's chosen career field. Women may aspire to a traditional career but be highly motivated to become a leader within that field (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). Career aspirations of female students are crucial for promoting gender equity and empowering young women. Choosing a career is a complex decision-making process that coincides with so many environmental, cultural, social and economic variables, which creates psycho-social stress for students especially those in secondary school. Historically, societal norms and cultural biases have limited the career options and aspirations of female students, often steering them towards traditionally "feminine" occupations (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). This highlights the potentiality of socialization in career development of individuals especially female.

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise further emphasizes the role of socialization in shaping an individual's career aspirations (Gottfredson, 2019). This theory

posits that as individuals develop, they gradually narrow down their career options based on their perceived compatibility with their self-concept and societal expectations, which are heavily influenced by their socialization experiences. Socialization is a fundamental process that shapes an individual's personality, beliefs, and behaviors throughout their lifespan. It is the means by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to function effectively within a particular society or group. The process of socialization is crucial in the development of career aspirations, as it helps individuals understand their interests, abilities, and the available opportunities in the world of work (Gottfredson, 2019). In the context of secondary school students, the process of socialization and its impact on career aspirations is particularly crucial. This is a critical developmental period when adolescents are exploring their identity, including their interests, values, and goals for the future. During this time, secondary school students are exposed to a variety of socialization agents, such as family and broader sociocultural environment, which can shape their career aspirations.

Family background is an important force in preparing youth for their role as workers. Young people form many of their attitudes about work and careers as a result of interactions within the family. Family background provided the basis from which young female career plans and decision making evolve. Family, as a primary source of social support, exerts a substantial influence on female students' career development and decision-making process (Xing & Rojewski, 2018). Factors of the family that could be associated with career development include parents' Socioeconomic Status (SES), their educational level, and biogenetic factors such as physical size, gender, ability, and temperament"

Family processes of interaction, communication and behaviour influence what the child learns about work and work experiences. Educational and career goals and aspirations, and values have a long term impact on youth's career choices, decisions and plans. "Parents as daily models provide cultural standards and expectations and, in many ways, determine the eventual adequacy of self- acceptance and confidence, of social skills and sex roles. Amoako *et al.* (2020) investigated the effect of family background on career decision-making among senior high school students using descriptive cross-sectional survey design and structured questionnaire for data collection. The study revealed that self-efficacy of the home factors influenced students' career decision-making more than any other variable. Similarly, Nwoka *et al.* (2022) reported that students from poor families often made wrong career decisions, and chose professions which required a short duration of training and minimal cost, primarily due to financial constraints. The opposite is the case of students who came from influential families. Dominic *et al.* (2024) also reported that parents' occupational backgrounds and income levels influence secondary school students' career choice significantly.

Generally, in all societies, whether Western or non-western, women appear to have been brought up to believe in and adhere to gender roles which are conveyed to them on a daily basis. Park and Lee (2021) noted that these beliefs are so entrenched into the females that they are extended to vocational choices. Acceptance of these stereotypes by individuals would have a strong effect upon whether or not one is willing to step outside the boundaries

of career traditionalism. Through this socialization process, children grow into maturity to develop different interests. When time comes to make occupational choices, they've already internalized their gendered roles. Both men and women's future ambitions are shaped by social norms and gender role expectations (Bianchi & Milkie, 2016). Men tend to focus more on employment goals while women have a more diverse set of goals, including goals for "carriage and family as well as career.

Gender issue affect women's career development as it entails multiple role planning for women. Bianchi and Milkie (2016) indicated that one of the most consistent findings in the literature is the incompatibility between the wife and mother role and women's career development. It is believed that women's lowered career aspirations result from their struggling with decisions to balance career and family. Stereotypical role expectations refer to the societal beliefs and norms that dictate the roles and behaviors individuals are expected to adopt based on their gender. In addition to career choices, stereotypical role expectations have been studied in the context of household and caregiving responsibilities. A study by Peel (2019) investigated the impact of gender role expectations on the provision of care for older family members. The research demonstrated that societal expectations often influence the allocation of caregiving roles, with women assuming a greater caregiving responsibility. Stereotypical role expectations also play a significant role in shaping educational experiences and outcomes. Furthermore a study by Hofstra et al. (2018) examined the impact of gender bias in student evaluations of college instructors. Their findings revealed that students often hold biased perceptions of instructors based on stereotypical gender roles, resulting in differential evaluations. Similarly, study by Johnson et al. (2017) investigated the role of gender stereotypes in influencing career preferences among adolescents. Their findings revealed that stereotypical expectations and societal norms significantly influenced the career choices of both boys and girls. The current study aims to investigate the impact of socialization indices on career aspirations of female students in secondary schools in Uyo LGA, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There have been various initiatives in focusing on promoting gender equity through access to education and subsequent increase of women participation in economic activities. Despite the government's commitment to gender inclusive education and equitable representation of men and women in training and labour force participation, there is still disparity evident between men and women in the labor force. The careers most female choose are the culturally feminine careers such as teaching, nursing, secretarial, catering, hair dressing, and commerce which are not as well paying as medicine, engineering and accountancy, which are culturally masculine. Many female students tends to shy off from competitive professional careers (particularly those in science, Mathematics and technology fields. This is a major concern because students choose their university majors and careers while in high school. Given this disparity, that has life-long consequences. It becomes imperative to have a comprehensive understanding of how young women today are forming

their career aspirations and what factors are influencing them. In this study the influence of family background and gender stereotyping on career aspirations of female students was examined.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of socialization indices on career aspiration female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To assess the impact of family background on career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area
- ii. To examine the impact of gender-based stereotypes on career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of family influence on career aspirations of female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area?
2. What is the influence of gender-based stereotypes on career aspirations of female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives and questions, the following hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of family background on career aspirations of female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area

H₀₂: There is no significant impact of gender-based stereotypes on career aspirations of female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area

Methodology

The research design for this study was Ex Post Facto. Ex Post Facto is a research method which involves studies which investigate possible cause and effect relationships by observing an existing condition or state of affairs and looking back in time for valid causal factors (Akinlua, 2020). This design was appropriate for this study because it helped to explore possible causes that have led to the observed effect. Uyo Local Government Area is situated in Akwa Ibom State, which is located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The educational landscape in Uyo is diverse, with the presence of both public and private secondary schools. Most of the public secondary schools are co-educational schools and only two single sex (female) schools.

The population of study comprised of 1732 senior secondary two students in the two single sex secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The sample of 173 participants being 10% of the population of senior secondary 2 students in the two single sex schools (female) in the study area. The sample size was selected using simple

random sampling technique. Two instruments; Socialization Indices Questionnaire (SIQ) and the Career Aspiration Scale by O'Brien, Gray, Tourajdi and Eigenbrode, (1996) were for data collection. SIQ elicited information on socialization indices (family and gender stereotype) and items were structured under four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The Career Aspiration Scale 10 items instrument used to evaluate participants' career aspirations organized on a five point scale in measurable terms of ; Not at All true of me -5, Slightly True of me -4, Moderately True of me -3, Quite a bit True of me -2 and Very True of me -1. Four items were reverse scored and all item scores summed, with higher scores indicating a desire for career aspiration. The internal consistency reliability of the CAS has been reported as 0.74 O'Brien (1996).

Reliability of the Instrument

Inter-item reliability method was carried using 20 female students with in public schools in the study area who were not part of the main study. Data collected was analysed using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88 for Socialization Indices Questionnaire (SIQ). Hence, was deemed usable for the study. The researchers visited the school with a letter of introduction to principals of the selected schools for permission to use female students in their schools for the study. The data collected were analysed with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	Decision
Family Background	3.01	0.47	.424	Weak and Positive impact
Career Aspiration	3.97	0.86		

The result in Table 1 shows the correlation coefficient (r) value of PPMC of the impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area. The result shows that the r-value is 0.424, indicating a weak and positive impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	Decision
Gender-based Stereotype	2.75	0.54	0.731	Strong and Positive impact
Career Aspiration	3.97	0.86		

The result in Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient (r) value of PPMC of the impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area. The result shows that the r-value is 0.731, indicating a strong and positive impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing significant impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	df	p-value	Decision
Family Background	3.01	0.47	.424	172	.001	S
Career Aspiration	3.97	0.86				

S = Significant at $P < 0.05$

The result in Table 3 shows the correlation coefficient (r) value of PPMC of the impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area. The result shows that the r-value is 0.424 and the p-value of .001. Since the p-value is less than .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there was a significant impact of family background on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing significant impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in Uyo Local Government Area

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	df	p-value	Decision
Gender-based Stereotype	2.75	0.54	-.731	172	.000	S
Career Aspiration	3.97	0.86				

S = Significant at $P < 0.05$

The result in Table 4 shows the correlation coefficient (r) value of PPMC of the impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area. The result shows that the r-value is 0.731 and the p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there was a significant impact of gender-based stereotypes on the career aspirations among female students in secondary school in Uyo Local Government Area.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study indicate that family background has a strong and positive impact on the career aspirations of female students in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwalbom State. The finding may be triggered by the fact that students from improved background (higher socioeconomic status (SES) families, higher parental education) tend to have greater access to resources, opportunities, and support that can facilitate the development of higher educational and career aspirations. This includes access to quality education, exposure to diverse career options, and the ability to pursue extracurricular activities that broaden their perspectives and ambitions.

The finding is in agreement with the finding of Amoako et al. (2020) who reported that self-efficacy of the home factors influenced students' career decision-making more than any other variable. The finding is also supported by the finding of Dominic et al. (2024) who found that parents' occupational backgrounds and income levels influence secondary school students' career choice significantly. This underscores the crucial role that family plays in shaping the educational and professional trajectories of young women.

The findings of this study reveal that gender-based stereotypes have a strong and negative impact on the career aspirations of female students in secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwalbom State. The finding may be due to the fact that gender-based stereotypes often limit the range of career options that female students consider, steering them away from fields that are traditionally perceived as more suitable for men, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This can result in female students self-selecting out of these career paths, even if they have the aptitude and interest, due to the societal beliefs and expectations about their abilities and appropriate roles.

This is in line with the findings of Peel (2019) who reported that societal expectations often influence the allocation of caregiving roles, with women assuming a greater caregiving responsibility. It further agrees with the finding of Hofstra et al. (2018) who found that students often hold biased perceptions of instructors based on stereotypical gender roles, resulting in differential evaluations. The pervasive nature of gender-based stereotypes in society can create significant pressure for female students to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations, which may not align with their personal career aspirations.

Conclusion

Socialization shapes the trajectories of young women career aspirations. The findings reveal that family background has a strong and positive impact on the career aspirations of these female students, while gender-based stereotypes have a significant and negative influence. These findings underscore the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing the challenges faced by female students as they navigate their educational and career choices.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

- i. School administrators should collaborate with families to strengthen the home-school partnership and ensure that parents are equipped with the necessary resources and support to nurture the career aspirations of their daughters.
- ii. Educational policy makers should establish mentorship and career guidance programs that connect female students with successful women in diverse professions, serving as role models and providing guidance on navigating career paths.
- iii. Civil society should organize awareness campaigns and community-based programs that address gender-based stereotypes and promote the empowerment of women and girls in various spheres, including education and career development.

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