

Parental Factors and Career Decisions of Commercial Students in Public Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District

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Abstract

The study examined the extent to which parental factors influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Specifically, the study determined the extent to which parents' socio-economic status, parents' level of education, and parents' occupation influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 6897 senior secondary three (SS3) commercial students of public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. The sample size comprised 386 senior secondary three (SS3) commercial students of public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample for the study. A 15-item questionnaire was developed by the researchers titled "Parental Factors and Career Decisions of Commercial Students Questionnaire (PFCDCSQ)" for data collection. The instrument was trial tested on 20 commercial students in public secondary schools who were not part of the sample for the actual and Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient which yielded 0.88. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that parents' socio-economic status, parents' level of education and parents' occupation influence to a low extent the career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Furthermore, the findings indicated that all the parental factors significantly influence the career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. It is recommended among others that parents should enhance their socio-economic status so to be able to meet the needs of their children.

Keywords: Career, Commercial, Decisions, Factors, Students

Introduction

Parental factors affect commercial students' career decisions and selections. Career decision is a critical approach that impacts an individual's whole life. This decision demands carefulness as it can make or mar an individual's future or life pattern. People play different roles in a sequence to determine a career. Selecting a profession refers to the actions a person takes throughout his life, particularly those related to their line of work in order to get hired. It is debatable whether or not this decision can be made in isolation because a variety of circumstances might affect a logical and well-informed professional decision. It is worthy of

note that family background, personal values, cultural values, training opportunities, school climate, community setting, vocational counseling, social and economic backgrounds are probably going to influence a student's career selection processes and subsequently his career decision. Students who offer business related courses including accounting, business studies, commerce, and economics among others, are the commercial students. These students may work in fields like banking and finance, insurance, marketing, human resources, and management consulting, among others. Commercial students are prepared for prosperous careers in the business world by honing their abilities in the business areas like market research, financial analysis, and company planning.

According to Wachira (2018), a career is a possession that calls for formal education or training. It is a person's path through education and employment. According to McKay (2017) and Wachira (2018), choosing a job is an individual-centered process that entails figuring out what kind of learning entails unique information and abilities that can only be obtained through a certain educational course. According to University of Kent Careers and Employability Service (2017), a person's job decision is crucial for anybody looking to begin a career since it will affect their success throughout their life.

Parents have a lasting impact on their children's personalities as they grow up. According to Alphonse (2016), parents play a critical role in getting their kids ready for school. Richer students are more likely than impoverished students to receive high-quality education. The parents' job of socializing their children shapes their personalities by having a big impact on their choices in life and on how they grow. Parents have a significant impact on their children's personalities through their education and training, their understanding of work and various professions, their attitudes and views about work, and their drive for success. As they take in the expectations and attitudes of their parents, they unintentionally pick them up.

Parental perspective, according to Tillman and Tillman (2015), is crucial to children's development on all fronts, including their academic status, professional careers, and personal lives. Parents genuinely have a big influence on how well their kids do in their careers and how their professions function. Shellenbarger (2016) posited that parents want their kids to find fulfilment and success throughout their life, and one thing that influences these things is the vocation or profession that a child chooses. Additionally, Kumar (2016) stated that people who are negatively impacted by their peers are less likely to choose careers that are comparable to their own. Guardians are more serious counsellors and supports in important instructional and career-related matters, according to OppusuPaapaAgyiri (2020). Another important consideration in a person's professional selection is their social circumstances.

According to Nawabi (2019), research continues to show that parents have a greater influence on a kid's career selection than teachers do. They may even affect the programme their child chooses to enrol in after graduation. Nawabi noted that professional choices are likely to be influenced by parental standards and traits; thus, it is important for parents to be aware of the modest ways in which they communicate these standards and qualities. In addition to being aware of the values and characteristics they represent, parents and guardians must acknowledge that their kids are likely to internalize these values and characteristics as well. The appropriation of norms and desires frequently occurs in stealth, oftentimes without

guardians realizing it. Due (2019) noted that guardians do this by exhibiting minimal interest for some hobbies or by responding nonverbally to certain statements. The comments made on particular careers will have a significant impact since even seemingly little behaviours, such as nonverbal cues, signals, or speech patterns, can influence how youngsters see particular careers. Parental factors taken into account in this analysis include parents' socio-economic status, parents' level of education and parents' occupation.

The socio-economic standing of one's parents determines where they stand in a hierarchical social hierarchy. The socioeconomic position of parents is determined by a number of variables, including employment, education, money, and place of residence. The socioeconomic position of parents influences their children's goals and performance in school. Socioeconomic status, according to Osa-Edo and Alutu (2011), is a person's relative standing in society determined by their wealth, power, employment, prestige, and level of education. Family background refers to all the items, factors, and circumstances inside the family that have an impact on the child's physical, intellectual, and emotional development and have a major influence on their life (Muola, 2010). Three classes—upper, medium, and lower class families—are used to categorize socioeconomic distinctions in families and illustrate the broad disparities that exist. Young people's expectations for their careers are influenced by their parents' socioeconomic standing, which can either encourage or discourage them from pursuing low-level professional status (Osa-Edo & Alutu, 2011). Student's choice of occupation is significantly influenced by their parents' socio-economic level.

Parents' level of education also has an impact on students' professional choices. According to OppusuPaapaAgyiri (2020), the social status and improvements of a home are determined by the educational attainment of its parents. Guardians who have received the necessary training consistently find lucrative employment. Similarly, they are in a better position to speak about job options with them and get educational resources for their kids because of their level of salary and presentation. Parents who have higher education levels tend to want their kids to have higher educations as well; parents who are less educated might not care as much about their kids' education, which could delay the kids' process of choosing a job. According to Kohout and Wicherski (2011), a student's eventual career path is mostly determined by the decisions made by the parents who shape their upbringing. Parents with education always take an interest in their children's academic progress and professional choices.

Parents' occupation is another element thought to affect students' career decisions. It has a major role in a child's decision about their career. Selecting a job may be both gratifying and distressing, depending on whether you made the right choice (Hay *et al.*, 2019). An incorrect choice could cause you to feel uncomfortable. Since every child is different from the others in some manner, he may have different abilities and talents. William (2016) proposed that it might not be the best course of action to obtain a professional career that is equivalent to that of either parent in this regard. The careers that parents pursue influence their children's future careers quite a bit. William further stated that it is not surprising that many people who work in a comparable field are the third or fourth generation in their family. It is easier for them to get into the industry since they have a quick insider's glimpse into their parents' professions.

Ekpo (2023) stressed that parents are responsible for providing for their children's physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and professional development requirements in Nigeria. Pilot and Regis (2012) proposed that parents should educate their children about the skills and demands of the workforce. Commercial students also frequently turn to their parents for guidance on how to understand the demands and goals of society when it comes to careers. Commercial students are those who study business related subjects like accounting, commerce, economics, and marketing, among others. Most of the time, these students have to choose between pursuing their own professional goals and their parents' preferences. This happens when parents' views diverge greatly from their children's desired careers. The reason for this issue is because parents are no longer helping their children make job decisions in the supporting capacity that they formerly did. As a result, there are instances of dropouts among students who, under parental pressure, have grudgingly abandoned their professional goals. There is no denying that parents have this kind of opportunity to influence their children's future goals and professional decisions. Unfortunately, it is commonly noticed that parental concerns prevent them from performing this crucial role in an appropriate manner. This is mostly because they place more focus on certain personal expectations than on the child's interests and skills.

The study upon completion guarantees that basic career education courses should be taught to secondary school students so that while in school and upon graduation, they can undertake a career that is based on their competencies and would meet the needs of the society. Proper vocational guidance should be taught to these graduates. They are expected to be managers, professionals and business owners who should acquire skills, competencies and knowledge needed for proper career aspiration. The findings also have implication on the tertiary education curriculum which should ensure that career education is well structured into it.

It is clear that parental factors have a direct impact on students' job decisions. Several studies carried out on this subject are not conducted in Nigeria and those studies have methodological gaps. For those in Nigeria, there are not adequately conducted to address the grey areas as none was found to address the literature and contents gaps in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. As a result, it is critical to look into the issues surrounding students' career decisions and the roles parents play in these decisions. Parents may not be aware of the significant influence that their socioeconomic status, level of education, and occupation have on their children's career decisions, but this influence can also present opportunities or challenges for students as they explore their options. This is the rationale for the study, which aims at ascertaining the extent to which parental factors influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which parental factors influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. the extent to which parents' socio-economic status influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.
2. the extent to which parents' level of education influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.
3. the extent to which parents' occupation influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent to which parents' socio-economic status influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District?
2. To what extent does parents' level of education influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District?
3. What is the extent to which parents' occupation influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-west Senatorial District?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study:

- Ho₁.** The extent to which parents' socio-economic status influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is not significant.
- Ho₂.** The extent to which parents' level of education influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is not significant.
- Ho₃.** The extent to which parents' occupation influence career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is not significant.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was employed for this study. This study used questionnaire to examine the opinions, preferences and perception of persons of interest to the researchers. The population of the study comprised 6897 senior secondary three (SS3) commercial students of public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District (Ministry of Education, Uyo, 2025). The sample size consisted of 386 senior secondary three (SS3) commercial students of public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West senatorial district. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample size for the study. A 15-item questionnaire was developed by the researchers tagged "Parental Factors and Career Decisions of Commercial Students Questionnaire (PFCDCSQ)" and was used to collect data for the study. Each questionnaire item had four response options namely: Very High

Extent (VHE) =4 points, High Extent (HE) =3 points, Low Extent (LE) =2 points and Very Low Extent (VLE) =1 point. The research instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was trial tested on 20 public secondary school commercial students who were not part of the sample for the actual study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient statistically which yielded 0.88. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse data for testing hypotheses at .05 level of significance. In testing hypotheses, when the calculated F-value was greater than or equal to the p-value, the null hypotheses were rejected; otherwise retained. In answering the research questions, the extent to which parental factors influence career decisions of commercial students was determined using real limit of Very High Extent (VHE) = 3.50-4.00, High Extent (HE) = 2.50-3.49, Low Extent (LE) = 1.50-2.49 and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1.00-1.49.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent to which parents' socio-economic status influence commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District?

Table 1 Mean responses of the respondents on the extent of influence of parents' socio-economic status on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Parents with high economic status	2.02	0.02	LE
2	Parents with average economic status	1.49	0.57	VLE
3	Parents with low economic status	1.90	0.90	LE
4	Parents with steady monthly income	3.04	1.20	HE
5	Parents with daily income from their personal business	3.73	0.79	VHE

VHE=Very High Extent, HE= High Extent, VLE= Very Low Extent and LE= Low Extent

The result presented in Table1 revealed that parents' socio-economic status has low extent of influence on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Notably, item on parents with daily income from their personal business has the highest mean of 3.73, followed by item for parents with steady monthly income with the high mean of 3.04. This indicates that these items have high extent of influence on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. On the other hand, other items have their means between 1.70-2.02 indicating low extent for item on Parents with high economic status, very low extent for item on parents with average economic status and low extent for item on Parents with low economic status. More so, the standard deviation range between 0.02-1.20 showed that respondents were not very divergent in their responses.

Research Question 2: To what extent does parents' level of education influence commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District?

Table 2 Mean responses of the respondents on the extent of influence of parents' level of education on students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Parents without any formal education qualification	3.33	0.01	HE
2	Parents with primary education qualification	1.55	0.66	LE
3	Parents with secondary education qualification	2.21	0.91	LE
4	Parents with tertiary education qualification	3.05	1.11	HE
5	Parents with informal vocational training	3.65	0.83	VHE

HE= Very High Extent, HE= High Extent and LE= Low Extent

As showed in Table 2, the mean and standard deviation of 3.33 and 0.01 were obtained respectively for parents without any formal education qualification. This indicates a high extent of influence on commercial students' career decision. Parents with primary education qualification with the mean and standard deviation of 1.55 and 0.66 respectively indicate a low extent of influence. Parents with secondary education qualification with mean and standard deviation of 2.21 and 0.91 respectively indicate a low extent of influence. Parents with tertiary education qualification have the mean (3.05) and standard deviation (1.11) which shows high extent of influence. Parents with informal vocational training with mean (3.72) and standard deviation (0.83) indicate very high extent of influence. The result revealed that parents' level of education has low extent of influence on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District.

Research Question 3: What is the extent to which parents' occupation influence commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District?

Table 3: Mean responses of the respondents on the extent of influence of parents' occupation on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Parents with paid employment	3.40	0.03	HE
2	Parents in self-employment	1.59	0.58	LE
3	Parents who are peasant farmers	2.36	0.94	LE
4	Parents without any form of employment	3.41	1.13	HE
5	Parents already retired	3.70	0.79	VHE

VHE= Very High Extent, HE= High Extent and LE= Low Extent

The result in Table 3 showed that parents' occupation had low extent of influence on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West

Senatorial District. The item on parents already retired had the highest mean of 3.70. This indicated a very high extent of influence on commercial students' career decision. This was followed by 3.40 and 3.41 for items on parents with paid employment and parents without any form of employment which showed high extent of influence. Items for parents who were peasant farmers and parents in self-employment with mean of 1.59 and 2.36 respectively showed low extent of influence. The standard deviation ranges from 0.03 to 1.13 meaning that the respondents were convergent in their responses.

Null Hypothesis 1: The extent to which parents' socio-economic status influence commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is not significant.

Table 4: One-way analysis of variance on influence of parents' socio-economic status on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	146.328	4	36.082	66.324	.000	*
Within Groups	208.783	381	.543			
Total	355.111	385				

*significant at .000 ($p < .05$) (Source: Field Work (2025))

The result in Table 4 reveals that the (F-value = 66.324, df 4 381, @ $p = .000$). Since the probability value is less than the level of significance ($p < .05$), the result is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the extent to which parents' socio-economic status influences commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is significant.

Null Hypothesis 2: The extent to which parents' level of education influences commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is not significant.

Table 5: One-way analysis of variance on influence of parents' level of education on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	140.613	4	37.903	67.047	.000	*
Within Groups	219.970	381	.569			
Total	360.583	385				

*significant at .000 ($p < .05$) (Source: Field Work (2025))

Table 5 gives the summary of the one-way analysis of variance on influence of parents' level of education on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. The result presented in Table 5 shows the (F-value = 67.047, df 4, 381 @ p, = .000). Since the probability value is less than the level of significance ($p < .05$), the result is statistically significant. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the extent to which parents' level of education influences commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is significant.

Null Hypothesis 3: The extent to which parents' occupation influences commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is not significant.

Table 6: One-way analysis of variance on influence of parents' occupation on commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	155.181	4	34.299	53.145	.000	*
Within Groups	207.855	381	.624			
Total	363.036	385				

*significant at .000 ($p < .05$) (Source: Field Work (2025))

The result presented in Table 6 reveals that the (F-value = 53.145, df 4, 381, $p = .000$). Since the probability value is less than the level of significance ($p < .05$), the result is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the extent to which parents' occupation influences commercial students' career decisions in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District is significant.

Discussion of Findings

Discussion of findings was based on the research objectives, questions and hypotheses.

Parents' socio-economic status and career decisions of commercial students

The result of analysis in Table 1 showed a low extent of influence of parents' socio-economic status on career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Though the extent of influence is low, it is noteworthy that parents' socio-economic status influences career decisions of commercial students. This indicates that these items have high extent of influence on career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. More so, the standard deviation range between 0.02-1.20 showed that respondents were not very divergent in their responses. The finding is in agreement with the finding of Abisola (2018) who carried out a study on parental variables and involvement in career

decisions of secondary school students in Osun West Senatorial District, Osun State, Nigeria and found that parental socio-economic status influenced career decisions of students.

The result of analysis for hypothesis one in Table 4 revealed that parents' socio-economic status significantly influences career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. This finding is in agreement with that of Wachira (2018) who conducted a study on the relationship between parental variables and career choices among students in mixed day secondary schools in Kinangop sub-county, Nyandarua County, Kenya and found that parents' socio-economic status has a positive and statistically significant influence on students' career choice. It follows that for rational and informed career choices to be met; parents should strive to meet the needs of the children.

Parents' level of education and career decisions of commercial students

The finding for research question two as shown in Table 2 revealed that parents' level of education has low extent of influence on career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. This finding agreed with the finding of Mbagwu and Ajaegbu (2016) who carried out a study on the influence of parents' educational background on career choice of teenagers among senior secondary school students in Owerri and found that parents' educational background to a great extent influence career decision of teenagers.

The corresponding hypothesis in Table 5 revealed that parents' level of education significantly influences career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. This finding is similar to the finding of Mathatha and Ndhlovu (2018) who conducted a study on the influence of parental education on career development of youths with intellectual disabilities in selected skills training institutions in Zambia. The study showed that parental education influences career development of youths with intellectual disabilities. This implies that parental factors such as parents' level of education influences to a low extent the career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. Students' opinions on whether to continue their education and which direction to take their professional choices are influenced by their parents' educational backgrounds.

Parents' occupation and career decisions of commercial students

The result of analysis in Table 3 showed that parents' occupation had low extent of influence on career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. The corresponding result in Table 6 showed that parents' occupation significantly influences career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District. This finding revealed that parents' occupation exerts a significant influence on the career choice of secondary school students. The result is in line with the finding of Alphonse (2016) who carried out a study on parental factors influencing career choice among high school students in Nairobi County and found that parents' occupation influenced the career choice of students in Nairobi County. The result also agrees with the finding of Abisola (2014) who studied parental occupation and

career preference of adolescents in Uyo Urban Area of Akwa Ibom State and found that parents' occupation influenced career preference of adolescents in Uyo Urban of Akwa Ibom State.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research on parental factors and career decisions of commercial students in public secondary schools in the Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District, the following conclusions were made. The researchers come to conclusion that the career decisions of commercial students are influenced by their parents. The bulk of the items on the three parental factors had a strong effect on career decisions of commercial students, according to the data. The results showed that these factors had a great impact on the career decisions of commercial students. The study's conclusions also indicated that parents' socio-economic status, parents' level of education, and parents' occupation are having a growing impact on career decisions of commercial students.

Recommendations

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

1. In order to help children, parents should improve their socio-economic standing.
2. Parents who are not properly educated should offer the best education for their children that will make them achieve utmost potentials in career choices rather than being coerced by parents.
3. Parents should not seek to force their occupation on children against their will as students should choose career based on competencies and interests

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