

DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS CHOICE OF CAREER IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

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Abstract

This research specifically investigated the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education. Based on this specific objective, one research question was asked and three corresponding null hypotheses were formulated. A survey research design was adopted for the study. A four-point scaled questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. A sample of 286 undergraduate students of business education from the three federal universities in south-south, Nigeria participated in the research. The instrument was validated and reliability coefficient obtained using Cronbach' alpha method was 0.66. The research found that there are factors that influence students' perception towards choice of career in business education. Consequently, the authors drew a logical conclusion, and it was recommended, among others, that federal government should endeavour to formulate policies and implement advocacy programmes in order to enhance students' perception towards the choice of career business education.

Keywords: business education, career choice, student's perceptions.

Introduction

The choice of a career is an important and often a difficult tasks for individuals especially adolescents and young adults. Several recent studies unfold adolescents' self-doubt, anxiety and uncertainty in career decision-making process (Negru-Subtirica, Pop, & Crocetti, 2015; Vignoli, 2015). Negative or positive interests toward any profession have an influence in students' choice of career. Therefore, making the best and optimal choice of career is crucial for students as they transit especially from secondary to a higher level of education. During this transition process a career path decision made by an individual may determine the individual's lifestyle and values as well as one of the most important development tasks (Park & Yang, 2014). Based on students' decisions to pursue the best and optimal career paths in life, their career motivation may be determined. Studies have shown that the choice of a career can be influence by numerous factors, ranging from intrinsic to extrinsic, such as ignorance, gender, interest, parents, peers, prestige, public interest, child's upbringing, school curricula, family values, environment, salaries/income, teacher's

counsel, religion, employability, personality characteristics, economic situation, and so on (Issa & Nwalo, 2008; Orenuga & Da Costa, 2006; Igbinedion, 2011; Gambo, Osagie, Salihu & Ogungbemi, 2012; Boz & Boz, 2008; Balyer & Özcan, 2014; Tomšik & Čerešnik, 2017).

Furthermore, some individuals are attracted to a career because of the mode of dressing of the individuals in that profession, for example, lawyers, physicians, accountants, engineers, pilots, nurses, to mention but a few (Azubuike, cited in Egunjobi, Salisu & Ogunkeye, 2013). However, among the aforementioned factors, prestige and public interest seem to be the major issues, if not the most challenging factors influencing students' perception towards their choice of career.

There are many definitions of the term career. A comparison of these various definitions revealed some common elements that described career as individual work histories, sequences of and patterns in occupations and work positions, and upward progression in an ordered hierarchy and occupation or in life generally (Greenhaus & Callanan, 2006; Watts, 2013). Some other definitions go beyond working life and narrow the definition of career to lifelong education and training (OECD, 2004; European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, ELGPN, 2012). Bringing together these two sets of elements defines career as individual's lifelong progression in work, education and training and life in general (Leong, 2012; Lovšin, 2017). Accordingly, the ELGPN (2014) defined career choice as an individual's career intention based on their personal aptitudes, abilities, aspirations and goals, tempered by the realities of the labour market and their personal circumstances. The ELGPN (2014) also pointed out that career choice can be viewed as the process through which an individual's career intention is developed and realized.

Business education is perhaps one of the most academic disciplines that undergraduate students may not have chosen as a first choice of career path because it is perceived as a 'non-prestigious' or 'dis-reputable' discipline. The issue of career choice or fallback career in business education is particularly sensitive. Interestingly, business education is a dynamic programme required by the Nigerian government to solve her social problems, such as, insecurity, poverty, hunger, unemployment, underemployment and social servitude. It is a skill-based programme that provides opportunities for young adults to make choices among varieties of career options. This is because business education is an academic field that offers various skills in marketing, accounting, office technology and management (OTM) (Edokpolor & Owenvbuigie, 2017a). In other words, business education can be defined as a skill-development programme that prepares students to become qualified for a particular profession, such as, accountant, office technologist and manager, or marketing manager (Edokpolor & Muritala, 2017; Edokpolor & Muritala, 2018).

Edokpolor and Oduma (2018) acknowledged that a well-implemented business education programmes aimed at achieving three broad goals, which include: to prepare recipients for career in office occupations; to equip recipients with requisite attributes for job creation and entrepreneurship; and to expose recipients with the

knowledge about business, including a good blend of computer technology, which incorporates the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). One would observe from these broad objectives that business education is a dynamic programme of instruction that educates students *_about_*, *_for_* and *_through_* careers. For instance, educating students *_about_* careers implies a theoretical approach which aims at providing a sound foundation and a general understanding of the phenomenon for further studies. Educating students *_for_* careers involves a practical-oriented approach which aims at equipping students with the skills to become gainfully employed after graduation. Educating students *_through_* careers further involves a process-based approach where individual students go through career learning process throughout their lifetime.

The goals highlighted above showed that business education has the capacity of fulfilling two basic missions: (1) to equip students with the requisite attributes to engage in entrepreneurial career tasks; and (2) to equip students with the requisite attributes to engage in lifelong learning. Despite these laudable missions, researchers and educators still continue to lament over the poor perceptions accorded to business education programme by the general public (Ekpenyong, 1992; Ekpenyong & Nwabuisi, 2003; Obunadike, 2015; Oladunjoye, 2016). The general perception about business education is that, it is meant for those who are academically less endowed. This situation has made parents and elites to avoid business education for they erroneously believed that, it is meant for the never-do-well, a class they do not want their children or wards to belong.

The low status associated with business education has made parents to have a strong preference towards white collar careers (Gambo, cited in Idialu, 2007). Parents and elites clamor for other types of academic disciplines and only opt for business education as a last resort. Most parents prefer their children to study more prestigious courses like medicine, engineering, and law (Federal Ministry of Education, 2005). Today, business education does not command prestige; rather, it is generally perceived as academic discipline often reserved for low intelligent students (Osuala, 1995), dropouts (Nwachokor, 2002), or dullards (Idialu & Adavbiele, 2005).

Although quite a number of students have continued to develop their interest during the study process. The stimulation of students' interest towards the choice of career in business education inevitably depends on the optimization of unique and high quality resources. Therefore, the importance of optimizing unique and high quality resources is crucial for the effective delivery of business education in Nigeria. Supplying adequate financial resources, employing qualified and talented manpower, procuring modern facilities and equipment, as well as, utilizing quality curriculum would go a long way in making business education an attractive academic discipline. However, little is known about the factors that could determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education. This is the gap the research intends to fill.

Statement of the Problem

Business education is an academic field of study aimed at equipping students with the skills to become fully and productively engaged in entrepreneurial activities and to have the capacity to adapt their skills to meet the changing demands of the society and labour market. Despite this laudable objective, educators still lament over the poor perceptions accorded to business education programme. Parents in particular appear to shun business education for they erroneously believed that, it is meant for the never-do-well, a class they don't want their children to belong. They are discouraged by the standard and quality of business education, which appear to be attributed to a number of factors, such as, inadequate supply of financial, manpower, material resources. The implication is that quite a number of students would not be interested in pursuing their career in business education programme. They would only opt for business education programme as a last resort. It is based on this unpleasant situation that the authors embarked on this research in order to provide an empirical data on factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

Purpose of the Study

Generally, this study aimed to assess factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education. Specifically, the study aims:

1. to assess the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following question:

1. What are the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students regarding their perception towards choice of career in business education.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of OTM and accounting education students regarding their reasons behind their perception towards choice of career in business education.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students regarding factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

Method

A descriptive survey design was employed for this research. The target population for the study consisted of all final year students of business education programme in

University of Benin, University of Uyo and University of Calabar in south-south, Nigeria. The accessible population included 286 OTM and accounting education students in the region. Therefore, a total number of 286 students responded to the questionnaire items, meaning that there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which had a 4-point rating scale. The instrument was validated by two experts, one from business education and the other from measurement and evaluation respectively. The reliability coefficient obtained using Cronbach' alpha method was 0.66. The instrument was administered on the respondents by the authors with the help of two research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. The decision rule for the research questions was based on any calculated mean scores equal to, or greater than 2.50 implies that business education students agreed with the questionnaire items raised; while any calculated mean scores less than 2.50 implies that business education students disagreed with the questionnaire items raised. The standard deviation values between .00 and .96 imply that business education student's responses are very close, which further means that their responses are clustered around the mean. Furthermore, the probability value (p) was used in taking decisions on the null hypotheses. If the value (p) is less than or equal to .05, the null hypotheses is rejected, but if the value (p) is greater than .05, the null hypotheses is retained.

Findings of the Research

The data collected from the respondents were presented in Table 1.

Research Question 1: What are the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education?

Table 1: Mean responses and standard deviations of factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

S/N	Perception towards choice of career in Business Education		SD	Remarks
1.	Implementation of Advocacy programmes would change students' perception towards choice of career in business education.	3.12	.48	Agree
2.	Provision of research project grants would change students' perception towards choice of career in business education.	2.50	.75	Agree
3.	Awarding outstanding students' scholarships would change students' mindset towards choice of career in business education.	3.14	.62	Agree
4.	Motivating poor students with bursary schemes would change students' mindset towards choice of career in business education.	2.60	.80	Agree

Table 1(Contd.)
Mean responses and standard deviations of factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

S/N	Perception towards choice of career in Business Education		SD	Remarks
5.	Providing enabling environment for instruction where students can think creatively and act innovatively would change students' mindset towards choice of career in business education.	3.18	.51	Agree
6.	Providing resource persons (career counselors) for positive encouragement would change students' mindset towards choice of career in business education.	3.69	.53	Agree
7.	Providing opportunities for students to follow as apprentice for a period of time would change their mindset towards choice of career in business education.	3.08	.51	Agree entrepreneurs
8.	Organizing career competitions among students would change their perception towards choice of career in business education.	3.12	.63	Agree
9.	Regular supplies of quality instructional (both human and material) resources would change students' perception towards choice of career in business education.	3.09	.62	Agree
10.	Positive or negative emotions of students would change their perception towards choice of career in business education.	3.67	.60	Agree
11.	Successes of staff and students would change the perceptions of students' toward choice of career in business education.	3.05	.65	Agree

The results presented in Table 1 showed the mean ratings of the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education. The results showed that 11 items had the mean scores that ranged from 2.50 to 3.67, while the corresponding standard deviation values ranged from .48 to .75 respectively. This is an indication that there are factors that can determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education, while the corresponding standard deviation values is an indication that respondents opinion regarding the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education are very close irrespective of their gender differences.

Testing of the Hypotheses

The data analysis for testing the hypotheses was carried out using the t-test statistic. The results are presented in Tables 2 to 4.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students regarding their perception towards choice of career in business education.

Table 2

Summary of t-test analysis between the mean ratings of male and female students regarding their perception towards choice of career in business education

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p-value	Decision
Male	118	2.78	.37	284	3.06	.00	Reject H ₀
Female	168	2.91	.32				
Total	286						

Source: Field Study, 2018

The results presented in Table 2 showed that the aggregate mean responses of male and female students regarding their perception towards choice of career in business education are 2.78 and 2.91, while the corresponding standard deviation values are .37 and .32 respectively. The Table also showed that t-value is 3.06 at df of 284, while p-value (.00) is less than alpha value (.05); therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students regarding their perception towards choice of career in business education.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of OTM and accounting education students regarding their reasons behind their perception towards choice of career in business education.

Table 3
Summary of t-test analysis between the mean ratings of OTM and accounting education students regarding their reasons behind their perception towards choice of career in business education

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p	Decision
OTM	102	3.16	.31	284	1.87	.06	Don't Reject H0
ACC	184	3.08	.36				
Total	286						

Source: Field Study, 2018

The results presented in Table 3 showed that the aggregate mean responses of OTM and accounting education students regarding their reasons behind their perception towards choice of career in business education are 3.16 and 3.08, while the corresponding standard deviation values are .31 and .36 respectively. The Table also showed that t-value is 1.87 at df of 284, while p-value (.06) is not less than alpha value (.05); therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of OTM and accounting education students regarding their reasons behind their perception towards choice of career in business education.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students regarding the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

Table 4
Summary of t-test analysis between the mean ratings of male and female students regarding the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	p	Decision
Male	118	2.84	.45	284	1.24	.22	Don't Reject H0
Female	168	2.77	.47				
Total	286						

Source: Field Study, 2018

The results presented in Table 4 showed that the aggregate mean responses of male and female students regarding factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education are 2.84 and 2.77, while the

corresponding standard deviation values are .45 and .47 respectively. The Table also showed that t-value is 1.24 at df of 284, while p-value (.22) is higher than the alpha value (.05); therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference between mean responses of male and female students regarding the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

Discussion of Results

The trust of this research was to assess the factors that determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education. However, a good number of students' responses revealed that there are possible ways of enhancing students choice of career in business education. These determinant factors that can help to enhance students' perception towards choice of career in business education include implementation of advocacy programmes, provision of research project grants, awarding outstanding students' scholarships, motivating poor students with bursary schemes, providing enabling environment for instructional delivery, providing resource persons (career counselors or career officers) for positive encouragement, providing opportunities for students to follow entrepreneurs as apprentice for a period of time, and many others. Although, this finding conforms to early research findings which revealed that students are motivated to pursue career in education with mostly extrinsic reasons (Chan, 1998; Schutz., Crowder., & White, 2001). Unfortunately, the finding of this current research is contrary to what other studies (Thornton, Bricheno & Reid, 2002; Lortie, 2002; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Richardson & Watt, 2005) have found to be the factors that can influence students' choice of career in education.

Conclusion

Young youths and adults who are deciding about their future professional careers may be attracted by business education programme, which offers the opportunity to overcome the social economic burdens of Nigeria such as unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and insecurity. In this research, the factors that could determine students' perception towards choice of career in business education were analyzed, assuming that these factors could be seen as the predictors of students' choice of career in business education. One of the most relevant findings of this research is that statistically significant differences among male and female students were found regarding their perception towards choice of career in business education. In addition, the analysis of the research questions revealed that there are factors that could help to enhance the perceptions of students' toward choice of career in business education. Based on these findings, the authors concluded that factors such as implementation of advocacy programmes, provision of research grants, awarding scholarships, motivating poor students with bursary schemes, providing enabling environment for instructional delivery, providing resource for positive encouragement, among other factors could assist in neither determining nor enhancing students' perception towards choice of career in business education.

Recommendations

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

1. The Federal Government is requested to formulate policies and implement advocacy programmes that would help to enhance the value of business education programme.
2. The Federal Government through its agencies should endeavour to collaborate with major stakeholders in ensuring adequate supply of resources (both financially and otherwise), to enhance students' interest in pursuing their career of choice in business education.
3. A functional University Scholarship Board should be created by government to support business education in Nigeria.
4. Managers of business education should consider the engagement of career experts like counselors to provide encouragement and persuasion to students regarding the pursuit of career in business education.

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