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Dynamics Influencing Senior High School Students' Interest in their Career Aspirations

By

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Abstract:

The study examined the dynamics influencing Senior High School students' interest on their career aspirations in the Berekum Municipality of Ghana. One research question and three hypotheses framed the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. One hundred and ninety-six students were sampled from three public Senior High Schools in the Berekum Municipality of Ghana to respond to the questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study indicated that: The interest of students does not have much influence on their career aspirations. Again, students' interest does not influence the career aspirations of male and female students differently. Also, the influence of interest on career aspirations of students does not vary on the basis of age as well as programme offered. It is recommended from the study that: School counsellors should encourage students during orientations and especially when they are preparing to leave school to pursue careers that are in line with their interests. Again, school authorities should make career issues a fundamental part of the co-curricular activities in Ghanaian Senior High Schools.

Keywords: Ghana, influence, career aspirations, students' interest, gender, age, programme of study

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Introduction

Decision making about one's career is vital. According to Fry, Stoner and Hattwick (1998) being in high school is the time to be thinking about careers and aiming to have clear career direction in mind. Such thoughts and career directions may affect life in and beyond college. Career decision is a complex task for students since it determines the kind of profession that they intend to pursue in life (Edwards & Quinter, 2011). As students try to aspire for their career while in senior high school, they face some problems like matching their career with their abilities and school performance. The significance of career decision making among Senior High School students cannot be overemphasised. Students at this level are adolescents who are moving from this stage of development into adulthood. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2011) viewed an adolescent as a young person, usually between the ages of 10 and 19, who is developing into an adult.

Bonnie, Stroud and Breiner (2015) defined adolescence as the phase of life stretching between childhood and adulthood. Adolescent period encompasses elements of biological growth and major social role transitions, both of which have changed in the past century. Early puberty has accelerated the onset of adolescence in nearly all populations, while understanding of continued growth has lifted its endpoint age well into the 20s. According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2011), adolescence should be a time when children have a safe and clear space to come to terms with cognitive, emotional, sexual and psychological transformation – unencumbered by engagement in adult roles and with the full support of nurturing adults at home, at school and in the community. It is therefore important to give adolescents all the information they need about career and the world of work exploitation. For too many children, such knowledge becomes available too late, if at all, when the course of their lives has already been affected and their development and well-being undermined (UNICEF, 2011).

According to Kerka (2010), a career is a continuous life process consisting of many work experiences and life roles. Your career consists of your life history, which not only includes your vocation but the time you spent in school, in your community and with your family. Sears and Gordon (2011) also argued that a career is the imposition of direction in a person's vocational behaviour, subject to his or her comprehension and will. Therefore, each decision one makes will have an impact on his or her life in the short run and in the future. Hooley (2012) opined that a career choice is a complex science with the advent of information technology. Industrialisation and post industrialisation have made it possible for a common person to be richer as long as she or he has due skills and knowledge (Wattles, 2009). One ought to not only make due career planning but also exhaustive career research before making a career choice so as to adjust with the evolving socio-economic conditions (Wattles, 2009). Most of the students in Senior High Schools do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate career choice, but university students are considered mature enough to be able to make career choice decisions on their own (Hooley, 2012).

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According to Kerka (2010), career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalisation, socialization, role model, social support and finances. Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (2008) also stated that each individual undertaking the process is influenced by several factors including the context in which they live in, their personal aptitudes, social contacts and educational attainment. Hewitt (2010) added that factors influencing career aspiration can either be intrinsic or extrinsic or both. Hewitt further stated that most people are influenced by careers that their parents favour, others follow the careers that their educational aspirations have opened for them, some choose to follow their passion regardless of how much or little it will make them while others choose the careers that give high income. Students perception of being suitable for a particular job also has been found to be influenced by a number of factors including ethnic background, year in school, level of achievement, choice of science subjects, attitudes and differences in job characteristics (McQuaid & Bond, 2003). Perception of students of being appropriate for certain jobs also has been found to be influenced by a number of factors including cultural background, period of schooling, accomplishment level, science subject's choice, attitudes and variances in job features (Stebleton, 2007).

Based on the premise that several factors influence career aspirations, career experts recommend identifying personal characteristics and matching them with compatible occupations (Kerka, 2010). For instance, a person who is excellent in math and enjoys the challenges and tasks associated with the field might explore math related occupations such as engineering or accounting (Sears & Gordon, 2011). Other people believe that our family and socio-economic background really matter when it comes to making career decision (Stebleton, 2007). Still others believe our perceptions of who we are, or our self-concept, have influences on our career aspirations (Kerka, 2010). Career aspirations take place in numerous steps or stages, since every person is unique in personality characteristics, matures at a different pace, and lives in a specific environment, career decision making becomes an individual life journey (Hewitt, 2010). The need to be flexible and open-minded is critical in choosing career (Sears & Gordon, 2011).

In Ghana, at the Senior High School level, a student may choose to pursue either science, art, vocational or business-based subjects. This is the first instance when a student is faced with the task of choosing a future career path. It can be suggested that a Ghanaian student's future career is predetermined by the choice of subjects pursued at secondary school level and the level of achievement at WASSCE. Career orientation should therefore be an important exercise for Senior High School students.

According to Ayiro (2016), a major turning point in adolescents' lives involves the career choice that they make while in high school. This is frequently viewed by the family and the community as a mere start to workplace readiness. This decision however plays a major role in establishing adolescents on a career path that opens as well as closes opportunities, given the differences in the social and economic context of the individual (Bluestein, Phillips, Davis, Finkelberg, & Roarke, 1997). Globally, Edwards and Quinter (2011) have revealed that career decision creates a great burden for young people because of their wrong or deficient aspirations. Bhusumane (1993) posited that students have a limited knowledge about occupations and of the narrow range of alternatives available to them. This ignorance leads to unrealistic career aspirations.

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Statement of the Problem

Several studies have found career aspirations of students to be problematic. For instance, Omotosho and Nyarko-Sampson (2012) demonstrated in their study that the career aspirations of students were poorly matched with the trends in the labour market. Omotosho (2014) also asserted that, in choosing our careers in a hit or miss fashion, we often miss more than hit. While a few students find career aspirations less cumbersome, many others including students in the Berekum Municipality struggle with career aspirations. Regardless of this, it appears that most secondary school students in Ghana and for that matter Berekum Municipality have very little help in finding a career direction while still in the Senior High School (Otuei, 2017). Students in the Berekum Municipality are often influenced by parents, teachers, peers, and with very little knowledge on what they might primarily be interested in or motivated to do and it leads to uncertainty about their career aspirations (Takyi 2011). Much attention has not been focused on students' interest which is one of the intriguing factors considered in making career decisions (Kerka 2010). Against this background the researchers decided to examine the dynamics influencing Senior High School students' interest on their career aspirations in the Berekum Municipality of Ghana.

Purpose of the Study

The study specifically examined:

1. The influence of Senior High School students' interest on their career aspirations in the Berekum Municipality.
2. Whether Senior High School students' interest influences the career aspirations of male and female students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality
3. Whether interest influences the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality on the basis of age
4. Whether interest influences the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality on the basis of programme of study

Research Question

1. What is the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students in public Senior High Schools in the Berekum municipality?

Hypotheses

- H₀: There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of male and female students in public senior high schools in the Berekum Municipality.
- H₁: There is statistically significant difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of male and female students in public senior high schools in the Berekum Municipality.
- H₀: There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality on the basis of age.
- H₁: There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality on the basis of age.

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H₀: There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality on the basis of programme of study.

H₁: There is statistically significant difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of students in public SHS in the Berekum Municipality on the basis of programme of study.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

The theory on which this study is premised is Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura (1986) developed the Social-Cognitive Theory (SCT) which concerns the belief and ideas based on the interconnection between personal, cognitive and environmental parameter in the decisions on the career choice. The Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of cognitive domain. Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) believed that three social cognitive variables of self-efficacy belief, outcome expectation, and goal choice need to be given consideration. Based on this theory, students choose career based on their personal desires and interest. Individual's interest has great influence of career choice. People also choose careers based on their cognitive or intellectual endowment. The cognitive abilities of children do dictate to the job they can effectively perform in future.

Individual's self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations present as key determinants of individual's career choice (Gainor & Lent, 1998). The concept of self-efficacy is the focal point of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. By means of the self-system, individuals exercise control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Among the beliefs with which an individual evaluates the control over his/her actions and environment, self-efficacy beliefs are the most influential predictor of human behavior. The level and strength of self-efficacy will determine:

- a. whether coping behavior will be initiated;
- b. how much effort will result;
- c. how long the effort will be sustained in the face of obstacles.

According to Bandura (2009), among the mechanisms of human activity, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal or self-efficacy. Bandura argued further that this core belief is the foundation of human motivation, well-being and accomplishments. This is because unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Several other factors that serve as guides and motivators are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions.

Self-efficacy therefore involves the belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1986). Some of the most influential sources of self-efficacy are:

- a. Personal Performance - Accomplishments-previous successes or failures (most influential)
- b. Vicarious Experience - Watching others, modeling, mentoring
- c. Verbal Persuasion - Verbal encouragement or discouragement
- d. Physiological and Emotional Factors - Perceptions of stress reactions in the body

The Social Cognitive Theory also posited that one's environment has a great impact on his or her career choice. The careers students are exposed to have the tendency for them to

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develop either positive or negative attitudes for them. Improved environment make students put up behaviour and choice that make them end up in elite occupations. Rogers, Creed, and Glendon (2008) also insist on the interconnection role of self-efficacy belief among personality characteristics as one of the personal factors and career decision behaviours. Throughout one's life, a person receives new ideas and acquires insights both about oneself, about possibilities, life and the chaotic experiences it offers, change human's understanding about oneself and one's possibilities, but the task of career counsellors is to make learners more aware of the fact that they will acquire certain information and experiences automatically through time when moving from one life event to another.

The importance of the Social Cognitive theory in the study of career choice behaviours of students, many researchers have seen and taken advantages of the theory in the studies. For instance, Jin, Watkins and Yuen, (2009) studied the effects of parameters like personality characteristics, and self-efficacy belief on the career decision making of Chinese students and found that preparation and students' belief in themselves are vital in career decision making. This theory was used in the study because it is believed to have the potency to help establish the dynamics that influence career decision of students.

Influence of Students' Interest on their Career Aspirations

Interest can be defined as the things that hold one's attention or arouse one's curiosity (Sears & Gordon, 2002). Interests are the likes or dislikes of a person and are characterized by the person's intensity of feeling about a subject or things (Hooley, 2012). Interests are learned from parents, in school, from friends, and from your life long experiences. One continues to acquire interests throughout his or her life and this in return influences the reasoning and choices one makes including career choices (Hewitt, 2010). Scholars believe that the more interested people are in their work, the more likely they will succeed. Interest is an intrinsic factor since it deals with individual's likes and dislikes. An individual thus chooses an occupation he likes and avoids occupation he does not like. According to Hooley (2012), people who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be satisfied and successful.

Choosing an occupation involves choosing a work that interests individuals most. An individual's interest develops out of one's original drives, appetites and needs, fluctuating into our age, experience and opportunity. Super and Bohn (1970) asserted that interest is a moderately effective predictor of vocational success. Interests can change, as one experiences life and meet more people; one become interested in new things and discard some of his/her old interests. One also develops more complex thinking and understanding process, and one may even seek new interest and activities with hope of improving his/her and making life more exciting (Hewitt, 2010). Once the interest of one keeps changes so does the career choice of a person changes. One seeks a career that meets his interest at time hence the career that one may have wished to take when he was young is not what he eventually does.

According to Hewitt (2010), interest has become the most important factors in determining and measuring occupational selection. Most people would like to work at something they enjoy. Sears and Gordon (2002) also opined that interest inventories have been developed to help identify interests and relate them to career and occupations. Interests inventories tall ranking for specific career and occupational preferences. By measuring interests of successful and satisfied people in an occupation, researchers have developed scales that compare the interests of individuals to the interests of people who are certain about what they want to do.

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Otuei (2017) sought to identify the career decision-making difficulties of Senior High School (S.H.S) students in Koforidua Municipality. The descriptive survey method was employed for conducting the study. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 364 senior high school students from Koforidua Municipality. Data were collected mainly by the use of an adapted questionnaire. Means, standard deviation, frequency counts, rank order, t-test and analysis of variance were used in the analysis of data. The study found that dysfunctional myths were the most prevailing difficulties that senior high school students encountered in their career decision-making. These dysfunctional myths affected the career aspirations of the students.

Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) have revealed that the interest of students is the least significant factor that influences career aspirations of students. Kazi and Akhlaq compared the influence of interest, peers, teachers and parents and found interest to be the least influential factor. They explained their finding to be due to students being young and as such valuing the opinions of peers, teachers and parents more than theirs. Nyamwange (2016) also found that student interest is significant in determining career choice decisions for an individual's career. Suutari (2003) however reported that several studies have indicated a positive relationship between interests and career choice. Kerka (2000) indicated that the interest of student influence students' career choice when considered along with personality, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and financial. The implication of the view of Kerka is that students' interest alone does not significantly influence the career aspirations of students.

Methodology

The study examined the influence of Senior High School students' interest on their career aspirations in the Berekum Municipality. This invariably involved finding the opinions of students on how their interest influences their career aspirations. Against this background, the descriptive survey was the research design used for the study. The descriptive survey design was chosen because it was helpful in indicating trends in attitudes, opinions and behaviours, and enabling generalisation of the findings of a study. Thus, in the context of this study, the descriptive survey design was helpful in knowing the thoughts and opinions of how students' interest influences their career aspirations (Neuman 2000).

The target population was made up of all form three students in the three public Senior High Schools which were composed of 401 students. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size from a known population, a sample of 196 students was selected for the study. The students were sampled using the stratified sampling procedure. Ogah (2013) noted that using stratified sampling ensures that important characteristics of the population are fairly represented in the sample. This approach was used to put the students into strata of school and gender (male and female). The use of these strata was to ensure a fair representation of the three public schools as well as both genders (males and females) in the study. The sample size of each stratum was determined by calculating on the basis of the size of each stratum within the main population. Asamoah-Gyimah and Duodo (2005) indicated that in stratified sampling, the proportion of each stratum sampled is identical to the proportion of the stratum in the population. After stratifying the sample, the simple random sampling was used to select the participants from each of the stratum for the study.

A self-designed close-ended type questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A dealt with personal background information on respondents and B dealt with responses to the research questions. The issues

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were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1="Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree". In order to determine if the composite weight of any item on the five-point, Likert-type scale was high or low, a cut-off point was established as follows: Range between the highest and lowest possible scores. Thus, $5-1=4$. The midpoint of the range was obtained as 4 divided by 2. Establishing the cut-off point therefore involved subtracting the midpoint of the range from the highest possible score. Thus, $5-2=3$. A cut-off point of 3 was set for the data. This implies that any mean value more than 3 was regarded as high and a mean value less than 3 was regarded as low. The instrument was piloted on a group of students ($n=40$) at Dormaa Municipality who were not part of the study. No ambiguous items were found, and reliability for the items yielded Cronbach alpha of .875, indicating a good internal consistency. Based on reliability coefficient of .875 from the pilot test, the researchers accepted the instrument as reliable and appropriate for the study and continued its administration.

Prior to the administration of the research instrument, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to participants and they were assured that data collected from them will remain anonymous and that at any time they could withdraw from the study. Thereafter, the questionnaires were personally distributed among the students in their respective schools. Respondents were given 15 minutes to respond to the items on the questionnaires. 100% return rate was realised from all the administered questionnaires.

Discussion and Presentation of Findings

Research Question 1:

The research question sought to identify the influence of students' interest on their career aspirations. The data obtained from the students were analysed using means and standard deviations. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Influence of Students' Interest on Career Aspirations

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have a clear idea of what I want to be in future	1.55	0.92
I am really interested in the type of work I will do in future	1.40	0.72
What I personally want to do or be is more important that what my parents want	1.97	1.05
I will never choose a career I have no interest in	1.83	1.33
My teacher(s) know best what career I should choose	2.21	1.32
My parents know best what career I should choose	2.60	1.29
Average of Means & Standard Deviations	1.93	1.11

Source: Field Survey, (2018)

Table 1 shows the influence of students' interest on their career aspirations. It is shown that the statements 'my parents know best what career I should choose' recorded a mean of 2.60 and a standard deviation 1.29. This mean was closer to the cut-off point of 3.0. This implies that some of the respondents shared this view. Similarly, the statement 'my teacher(s) know best what career I should choose' recorded mean of 2.21 and a standard deviation of 1.32 implying that some of the respondents shared this view. The statement 'I will never choose a career I have no interest in' recorded a low mean of 1.83. This means that most of the respondents disagreed to this. Therefore, it means the respondents were of the view that they will choose careers that they are interested in. The average of the means was computed by adding up all the means and dividing by the number of items. It is shown that the average of

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the means is 1.93 which is below the cut-off point of 3.0. Therefore, it can be inferred that the students did not view interest as having a major influence on their career aspirations.

Hypothesis One:

Hypothesis one was meant to examine the difference in the influence of interest on the career aspirations of male and female students. The hypothesis was tested by using the independent samples t-test. The Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was done first. The results are presented in tables 2 and 3.

Table 2 – Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

	F	Sig
Equal variances assumed	.580	.447
Equal variances not assumed		

Source: Field Survey, (2018) * Significant P < 0.05

From Table 2, it can be seen that the significant value of .447 is greater than .05 the significant level. This implies that equal variances can be assumed. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met.

The results of the independent samples t-test are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Gender Difference in Influence of Interest on Career Aspirations

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	118	12.22	3.17	194	-1.863	.064
Female	78	13.10	3.28			

Source: Field Survey, (2018) * Significant P < 0.05

It is shown in Table 3 that there is no significant difference in the influence of interest on career aspirations of male and female students ($t(194) = -1.863, p > .05$). Even though the mean of the females was higher (13.10) than that of males (12.22), the statistical test reveal that the difference is not significant. This implies that male and female students perceived the influence of interest on their career aspirations in the same way. Based on the results in Table 3, the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected.

Hypothesis Two:

Hypothesis two sought to find out the difference in the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age. Since there were three independent groups (12-16 years, 17-19 years and 20 years and above) and one dependent variable (influence of students' interest on career aspirations), One-Way ANOVA was used in testing the hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 - Age Differences in the Influence of Interest on the Career Aspirations of Students

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.969	2	.484	.046	.955
Within Groups	2038.883	193	10.564		
Total	2039.852	195			

Source: Field Survey, (2018) * Significant P < 0.05

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Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age [$F(195)=.046$, $p>.05$]. The probability value (p-value) of .955 is greater than .05 alpha level. Based on this, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The implication is that there was no difference in the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age.

Hypothesis Three:

Hypothesis three sought to find out the difference in the influence of students' interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme of study. There were six independent groups (Science, General Arts, Home Economics, Business, Agriculture Science, and Visual Arts) and one dependent variable (influence of students' interest on career aspirations). Therefore, the One-Way ANOVA was used in testing the hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 - Differences in the Influence of Interest on the Career Aspirations of Students on the basis of Programme Offered

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	59.732	5	14.933	1.440	.222
Within Groups	1980.120	190	10.367		
Total	2039.852	195			

Source: Field Survey, (2018) * Significant $P < 0.05$

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme of study [$F(195)=1.440$, $p>.05$]. From the results in the table, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, by implication there was no difference in the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme of study.

Discussion

The study revealed that students did not have a clear idea of what they wanted to be in future. Overall, the study found that the students did not view their interest as having a major influence on their career aspirations. Comparing the views of the respondents regarding the influence of peer pressure and interest, it can be inferred that peer pressure influenced career aspirations of students more than interest. The students revealed however that they did not have much interest in their own career aspirations. This finding is probably the result of students not been assertive enough to put their own interests above the opinions of others.

The findings of the current study are in line with the findings of Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) that the interest of students is the least significant factor that influences career aspirations of students. Kazi and Akhlaq compared the influence of interest, peers, teachers and parents and found interest to be the least influential factor. They explained their finding to be due to students being young and as such valuing the opinions of peers, teachers and parents more than theirs. The findings however contradicted the finding of Nyamwange (2016) that students' interest is significant in determining career choice decisions for an individual's career. Suutari (2003) however reported that several studies have indicated a positive relationship between interests and career choice. This also contrasted the findings of the current study. Kerka (2010) indicated that students' interest influence their career choice when considered along with personality, globalisation, socialisation, role model, social

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support and available resources such as information and financial. The implication of the view of Kerka is that students' interest alone does not significantly influence the career aspirations of students. In other words, it can be inferred that the interests of students do not play strong roles in their career aspirations.

The study revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the influence of interest on career aspirations of male and female students. This implies that male and female students perceived the influence of interest on their career aspirations in the same way. This finding supported the finding of Shumba and Naong (2012) that interest is not a major factor that influences the career choice of both male and female students. The finding of the current study contradicted the finding of Sax (1994) which examined students' initial interest in science careers, factors influencing career choice during college, and how these factors differ between male and female students. Sax found that males who abandon career aspirations appeared to be driven by financial concerns while females were more concerned with the social good of their career choice. By implication Sax revealed that interest influences the career aspirations of male and female students differently. In addition, Garrahy (2001) found that interest influences males and females differently in terms of their career aspirations. The contradiction between the finding of the current study and the other studies could be because generally, in the current study, students' interest was not perceived to be influential in their career aspirations. Again, the contradiction could be because of the differences in the variables being measured. For instance, in the current study, interest was measured generally while in the study of Garrahy interest was measured in terms of desire for specific occupations.

The study again found that there was no statistically significant difference in the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of age. The implication is that age does not play a significant role in how interest influences career aspirations of students. The findings support the findings of a study by Joshua, Terungwa and Saanyol (2018) who examined career choice among 210 senior secondary school students in Tarka LGA of Benue State, Nigeria. They found among other things that in terms of how interest influenced career choice, age was not a significant factor. In a similar vein, Fabunmi and Adedayo (2017) explored the issues of gender and age difference in relation to choice of career among secondary school students in southwest Nigeria. They found that career choice was not significant with respect to age difference. This is particular in terms of how interests influenced career choices.

Finally, the study found that there was no statistically significant difference in the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme of study. The results imply that there is no variation in how interest influenced career aspirations of students on the basis of the programme of study. The findings are in line with the findings of Barrow (2009) who examined intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the degree of certainty students felt in their career decision-making processes. Barrow revealed that programme of study and grade levels of students are not significant demographic variables in terms of how interests influence career choice of students. Based on this, it is evident that students can be doing different programmes but the influence of interests on career aspirations of students may not vary.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study it is concluded that the interest of students in Senior High Schools do not have much influence on their career aspirations. This contradicts the common

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knowledge that people make career decisions based on their interests. However, this can be explained that students in senior high schools may not be assertive enough to follow their own interests in choosing a carrier.

It was also concluded that interest does not influence the career aspirations of male and female students differently. This conclusion goes against most previous studies which concluded that interest influences career aspirations of male and female students differently. This conclusion only supports a few previous conclusions in the literature.

Similarly, it is concluded that the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students does not vary on the basis of age. A similar conclusion is made about the influence of interest on the career aspirations of students on the basis of programme of study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. School counsellors should encourage students during orientations and when students are preparing to leave school to pursue careers that are in line with their interests. This will help ensure that students' interests have an influence on their career aspirations.
2. School authorities should make career issues a fundamental part of the co-curricular activities in school. This can help ensure that students receive attention to deal with their career decision issues.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study brought to fore the specific role that interests of students play in their career aspirations. This has not been covered in most local literature even though there is the shared view that interest can affect career aspirations. Thus, this study provides empirical data to support that view.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should have a larger sample size to increase the extent to which the results can be generalized.

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