



**INFLUENCE OF CAREER DECISION DIFFICULTIES ON
VOCATIONAL EXPLORATION BEHAVIOUR AMONG SENIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MINNA METROPOLIS OF
NIGER STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

**¹IBRAHIM NUHU SAIDU, ²MUAZU MAGAJI & ³ABDULGANEEY
ABDULQADRI MAKENGUDU**

^{1,2 & 3}Department of Education,
Bayero University, Kano

Corresponding Author: ibrahimnuhu001@gmail.com

Abstract

The study investigated influence of career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis of Niger State. Three research objectives and three null hypotheses guided the study. Correctional survey research design was used with a population of (4,658) SSII students and sample size of (370) respondents participated in study. A researchers' self-designed instrument(s) named "Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) and Vocational Explorative Behaviour Questionnaire (VEBQ) was utilized. Data collected were analysed using Pearsons' Correlation to test the null hypotheses. Results revealed was a significant relationships between indecision and vocational exploration behavior while there is no significant relationship between readiness, and information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis. These findings suggest that while career decision difficulties may be prevalent, they may impede students' engagement in vocational exploration activities. Based on the results, it was recommended that among others that, implementing career guidance programs, offering individualized career counselling sessions, and fostering collaboration among parents, teachers, and community organizations to create a supportive environment for students' career development..

Keywords: Career, decision difficulties, vocational exploration, behavior and Senior Secondary



Introduction

Career or occupation is not a simple linear progression. It is fraught with many decisions are simple, while some are complex. A change in life circumstances can lead to a decision to search for a different job, or an opportunity may arise that seems too good to pass up. Each of these decisions is a step in an ongoing process, and even the concept of decision is not a discrete occurrence but a process of deliberation (Spokane & Holland, 1995). Stump et al. (2019) have called the process of choosing an occupation or a job a vocational choice. This is a very broad concept, encompassing a lifelong series of decisions. It includes the basic decisions such as whether to obtain work or pursue further education, to more complex decisions about specific job fields. Because of this broad scope, we can also consider vocational choice to be a series of more discrete decisions. For instance, a student may be focusing on occupational exploration, trying to discover the types of occupations that are available. A person decides upon an occupation at a point after considering many alternatives (Gysbers, 2002). This decision then leads to the implementation of an occupational plan.

The nature of work has significantly changed over the years. In the past, few students continued their education after completing high school. Moreover, students were expected to find full-time employment and work their way up the ladder as far as possible. In this ideal, a person would learn about one field and dedicate their entire working life to that same field. Since these ideal conditions no longer hold, we must prepare students to be flexible in their occupational choices. As noted by Gysbers (2002) students need to be prepared to change jobs several times in a rapidly changing work environment. They will need to be more flexible and prepared for unexpected occupational changes. This evolution of the world of work, although beneficial in many ways, makes the transition from school to work much more complex and anxiety-ridden. This can be an overwhelming process for anyone.

More so, research has shown that career decision difficulties are related to previous indecisiveness and information, and more difficult choices are linked to less desirable outcomes. It is said that when there are too many barriers or a lack of career alternatives, this can lead to a negative effect on career plans and lower expectations. Career decision-making can be quite complex, and recent studies have identified a unique emotional or psychological state in which a person is avoiding decision-making caused by the anxiety and fear of making the wrong decision. This is known as the state of career indecision. When a person is too indecisive, they can often delay or have premature occupational choices. Difficulty in career decisions can lead to negative results on mental health and poor adjustment. This is a large concern as adolescence is a key time of transitioning into



young adulthood, and it is important that a person can develop the necessary career tasks for coping and development. By far, research has concentrated more on Western cultures and has been surprisingly lacking in the ever-growing and diverse cultures of younger generations. However, it is still important to research knowledge for the overall improvement of career education and counselling.

The level of career decision is said to vary across different developmental periods during adolescence. Through mid-adolescence, this is a time around 16-17 years of age, career decisions become more focused and specific to an occupation. It is agreed that better career decisions made at earlier ages would lead to fewer difficulties and more vocational exploration behaviour. This can be said for students coming from a good educational background and in deciding the college or tertiary education. At this age, adolescents are considering different alternatives and are being pushed to make decisions. However, poor decisions made from earlier stages that lead to unclear occupation choices can cause difficulties.

To be a well-functioning individual, a conclusive decision on career choice is one humanitarian function that does not just occur and is not always easy. It generally occurs during adolescence, which is a time when self-concept is forming and individuals are trying to understand themselves. They are asking for the answers to "Who am I" and "How do I fit in". This process of self-evaluation often leads to a career decision, choosing an occupation. Careers have been defined as the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities spanning a person's life. They usually range in different careers but often lead to a few long-term professions. The career an individual chooses will be a vital form of finding a place in our society. It contributes to our social identity and is a primary form of how people evaluate others. Although status can be acquired from any type of career, it is the level of income and education required that determines the social class to which the person belongs. This demanding process of career decision can still be undecided and ever-changing at its later stages in life. However, it has been proven to be more stable and satisfactory when a well-informed and timely decision has been made in adolescence.

Statement of the Problem

In the contemporary society, career choice difficulties among students have been a major concern to parents, teachers, school counsellors, and the students themselves. There are numerous influences and constraints surrounding this issue, but the most critical of them is the difficulty about their career decisions. However, career decision difficulties are struggle or barriers an individual faces when making career



decisions. It is said to be the negative affect an individual feels when he or she is making career decisions and also it is also linked with the lack of knowledge an individual has about the decision-making process. Students making this transition period from school to post-secondary education face a crucial turning point in their lives. There are many options open to them, and a considerable amount of time is spent in an attempt to pursue these opportunities. Decision-making and lack of knowledge in each of these opportunities can lead to a high level of career decision difficulties. The career decisions made by senior secondary school students play a pivotal role in shaping their future challenges. Moreso, within the educational setting of Minna Metropolis in Niger State, Nigeria, there exists a significant challenge in the form of career decision difficulties among students. These difficulties can hinder effective vocational exploration behaviors, thereby potentially limiting students' future career prospects and overall well-being. Therefore, understanding the extent and impact of career decision difficulties on vocational exploration behaviors is crucial for designing targeted interventions to support students in navigating this critical phase of their academic and professional development. It is based on this background; the study investigates influence of Career Decision Difficulties on Vocational Exploration Behavior among Senior Secondary School Students in Minna Metropolis of Niger State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate Influence of Career Decision Difficulties on Vocational Exploration Behaviour among Senior Secondary School Students in Minna Metropolis of Niger State, Nigeria. However, the following specific objectives guided the study:

1. To examine the relationship between indecision career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behaviour among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.
2. To determine the relationship between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behaviour among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.
3. To find out the relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behaviour among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study and they are:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between indecision career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behaviour among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.



H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behaviour among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behaviour among senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis.

Research Methodology

The study employed correctional survey research design, which provided the researcher with an opportunity to gather, summarize, present, and interpret necessary data and information as it occurred, aiming for clarity. This design facilitated the description, recording, analysis, and reporting of existing or past conditions, allowing the generation of data to measure variables under investigation. In this study, the correctional survey research design was utilized to generate statistical data and information concerning the Career Decision Difficulties and Vocational Explorative Behaviour of secondary school students. Consequently, employing this design involved gaining insight into the overall situation without encompassing the entire population. The study population comprised four thousand, six hundred, and fifty-eight (4,658) senior secondary school students in (SSII) in Minna Metropolis of Niger State (Niger State Ministry of Education, 2022).

The sample for this study consisted of 370 senior secondary school students (SSII) in Minna Metropolis of Niger State. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's (1996) formula for determining sample size from a population. However, for this study, a multistage sampling technique was employed. Initially, a simple random sampling technique was used to select four (4) public secondary schools in Minna Metropolis. Subsequently, a proportionate sampling technique was adopted to select 370 respondents from four (4) public senior secondary schools based on population size of each school. Finally, a random sampling technique was utilized to select 370 secondary school students for the study, ensuring fair representation based on the selected secondary schools. The researchers' utilized a self-designed questionnaires tagged the "Career Decision Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) and Vocational Explorative Behaviour Questionnaire (VEBQ)." These instruments focused the career decision difficulties and vocational explorative behaviour using a four-point modified Likert scale (strongly agree (SA) - 4, agree (A) - 3, disagree (D) - 2, and strongly disagree (SD) - 1). Additionally, face and content validity were ensured through the input of four experts from the field of Counselling, Test and Measurement. The instruments were refined based on their recommendations and suggestions, confirming its suitability for the study. Reliability was established using the internal consistency and the instruments were administered to (50) students from Government Day Secondary School and reliability coefficient of 0.80 and 0.87 were obtained indicated high reliability, confirming the suitability of these



instruments for data collection. To collect data from the respondents via administered questionnaires and subsequently the completed questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents for further coding and analysis. Data were analyzed using Pearson Correlation as the statistical tool to test the null hypotheses.

Results

The results are presented below:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between indecision career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior in Minna Metropolis, Niger State.

Table 1

Showing Pearson Correlation Analysis between Indecision Career Decision Difficulties and Vocational Exploration Behavior in Minna Metropolis, Niger State

Decision Difficulties	Indecision Career	
Vocational Exploration	Pearson Correlation	0.12**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.25
	N	368

Indecision career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior, $r(368) = 0.12$, $p < 0.05$. The results suggest that indecision career decision difficulties do have relationship with vocational exploration behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis one which states that there is no significant relationship between indecision career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior of senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis was rejected.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior in Minna Metropolis, Niger State.

Table 2

Showing Pearson Correlation Analysis between Readiness Career Decision Difficulties and Vocational Exploration Behavior in Minna Metropolis, Niger State

Readiness	Career Decision Difficulties	
Vocational Exploration Behavior	Pearson Correlation	-0.08**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.42
	N	368

Between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior, $r(368) = 0.42$, $p > 0.05$. The results suggest that readiness career decision difficulties do not have statistically influence vocational exploration behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis two which states that there is no significant relationship



between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior of senior secondary school students in Minna metropolis was accepted.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior in Minna Metropolis, Niger State.

Table 3

Showing Pearson Correlation Analysis between Information Career Decision Difficulties and Vocational Exploration Behavior in Minna Metropolis, Niger State

Information		Career Decision Difficulties	
Vocational Exploration Behavior	Pearson Correlation		0.05**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.68
	N		368

The result in table 3 showed that there is no significant relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior, $r(368) = 0.68, p > 0.05$. The results suggest that information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis three which states that there is no significant relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior of senior secondary school students in Minna metropolis was accepted.

Summary of Major Findings

1. The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between indecision career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior.
2. The study indicated that there is no significant relationship between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior.
3. The study showed that there is no significant relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior.

Discussion of Results

The result of hypothesis one revealed that there was a significant relationship between indecision career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior. However, career decision difficulties among students have been a subject of interest in educational psychology. Studies by Osipow (1994) and Gati et al. (2013) have emphasized the importance of understanding the various dimensions of career decision-making difficulties, including indecision, lack of readiness, and insufficient information. While these difficulties can impede effective career exploration, their relationship with actual vocational exploration behavior is not always straightforward. The finding of the study does not aligns with some prior



research conducted by Brown and Ryan Krane (2000) that found that while indecision is a common issue among adolescents, it may not directly translate into decreased vocational exploration behavior. This lack of direct relationship could be due to other factors such as personal interests, social influences, and environmental opportunities, which may play a more significant role in shaping vocational exploration behavior (Gushue & Whitson, 2006).

The result of hypothesis two indicated that there is no significant relationship between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior. Thus, readiness career decision difficulties refer to the perceived lack of preparedness or confidence in making career decisions. This finding is in line with previous studies by Lent et al. (2002) and Creed et al. (2014) that have highlighted the importance of readiness in career decision-making processes. However, the relationship between readiness difficulties and vocational exploration behavior may not always be direct. The finding of the study resonates with the idea proposed by Lent et al. (2002) that readiness difficulties may act as motivators for individuals to seek out more information and engage in exploration to overcome their uncertainties. However, researchers did not expect there is no significant relationship between readiness career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior, this suggests that while senior secondary school students in Minna Metropolis may experience readiness challenges, these difficulties may not necessarily hinder their engagement in vocational exploration activities.

The result of hypothesis three showed that there is no significant relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior. Moreover, information career decision difficulties involve perceived deficits in knowledge or access to resources relevant to career decision-making. Studies by Saka et al. (2008) and Nota et al. (2014) have emphasized the role of information in facilitating effective career decision-making processes. However, the relationship between information difficulties and vocational exploration behavior may vary. The finding of the study is in consistent with the notion that individuals may employ various strategies, such as seeking advice from peers or utilizing online resources, to compensate for perceived information deficits (Creed et al., 2011). Again, the researchers were not expecting this result of there is no significant relationship between information career decision difficulties and vocational exploration behavior, subsequently this suggests that while senior secondary school students Minna Metropolis may perceive a lack of information, this may not deter them from actively engaging in vocational exploration behaviors.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that while career decision difficulties are prevalent among senior secondary school students, they may necessarily impede their vocational exploration behavior. Therefore, interventions aimed at promoting vocational exploration should focus not only on addressing



decision-making difficulties but also on providing students with opportunities for hands-on experiences, exposure to diverse career options, and access to relevant information and resources.

Recommendations

Thus, the study therefore recommended that and they include:

1. Implementing career guidance programmes that incorporate experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, job shadowing, and career workshops, to enhance students' vocational exploration experiences.
2. Providing students with access to comprehensive career resources, including online career assessments, informational interviews with professionals, and career exploration websites, to support informed decision-making.
3. Offering individualized career counselling sessions to help students identify their interests, values, and skills, and collaborate with parents, teachers, and community organizations to create a supportive environment that encourages students to explore their career interests and aspirations.

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