



## Influence of Peer Group and Sex on Career Choice of Secondary School Students

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**Abstract:** This study examined influence of peer group and sex on career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted correlational survey. Population comprised 19,555 SS 3 students, sample size of 500 students drawn from the eight Local Government Areas, Delta Central Senatorial District through stratified and simple random sampling. Instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled Influence of Peer Group and Sex on Career Choice of Secondary School Students (IPGSCSSS), validated by 3 experts from Guidance and Counselling. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was obtained. 0.65 for Peer Group Influence Rating Scale; and 0.70 for Career Choice Rating Scale. Data obtained was analysed using Pearson coefficient of determination for research questions, hypotheses tested using regression statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed thus: significant relationship between peer group influence and career choice of secondary school students; no significant relationship between sex and career choice of secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that counsellors working directly with peers as it affects career choice should endeavour to lay more emphasis on positive aspects of peer group, while playing down on negative aspect.

**Key words:** Peer Group Influence; Sex; Career; Vocational Guidance; Career Counsellors.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Career can be considered as the way the individual expresses himself and relates to society through life. <sup>[1]</sup> Sees it as a job, or profession for which one undergoes regulated education and training over a period of time and which one intends to follow for the whole of one's life. It is thus a chosen pursuit, life work and success in one's profession. It is the sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout his/her lifetime. It is the totality of work one does in one's lifetime and it is person-centred.

It is a meaningful progression on a person's working life or a course pursued over a period of time <sup>[2]</sup>. Choosing a career path or course of action essentially boils down to a career decision-making process. The effectiveness of an individual's career decision-making relies heavily on the available information at the decision-making point. Information is power and the more it is at one's disposal, the easier it is to make well-informed decisions. Often times, inability to choose a career path over another tend to indicate that one is lacking in sufficient information. Although work has different meanings for human beings, essentially, it is the backbone of an individual's life. The presence or absence of work is perhaps the most important pivotal point in a human's life. Generally, individuals spend their early years preparing for work, the major section of life doing chosen work, and the last part of life retired from work.

It is sad to note, however, that as important and delicate as the choice of career is, secondary school students still have problem making the right career choice. This is characterised by wrong choice of course to study in the university, wrong choice of subject combinations and inability to enter into the right vocation. According to <sup>[3]</sup>, a major problem facing adolescent students in Nigerian secondary schools is that of choosing an appropriate and relevant choice of subjects in schools, securing admission into higher institutions and finding a satisfactory job after university education. In their

view, this is the first and major challenge that confronts young people. A study by <sup>[4, 5, 6, 7]</sup> revealed that secondary school students have problems in making appropriate career decision.

Several factors have been identified to be responsible for the choice of career among secondary school students. These include situational, environmental and educational <sup>[3]</sup>; parental influence and personal interest <sup>[8]</sup>; personality and available opportunities <sup>[9]</sup>. This study will however focus on the influence of peer-group and sex on career choice of secondary school students.

Peer group is made up of playmates, friends or people within the same age bracket. They serve as confidants to their members. In most cases they belong to same social clubs where they share the same values and ideals. Peer group usually influence its members in doing things uniformly irrespective of individual differences among members. Peer group influence seems to be more influential in adolescence than at any other time in life. The quality of the relationship between adolescents and their peers, as well as the type of peers they associate with, play important roles in aiding or impeding their career choice. As a result, students are found studying courses either beyond their natural capabilities or against their educational background. According to <sup>[10]</sup>, mostly students pick interest through friends in school or even at home.

Sex is a state of being male or female. Some studies have shown significant relationship between sex and occupational aspirations, preferences and choice. Since boys and girls undergo different socializing experiences, they tend to learn different sex roles and interests which later became dominant factors in career choice. <sup>[11,12]</sup> in his study of some determinants of vocational preferences among Nigeria secondary school students, found sex differences to be a dominant factor.

From the above discussion, it is clear that as important as the choice of career is, secondary school students still find it difficult to choose a satisfying career. Such situations abound today among adults and young adults who do not find fulfilment in what they are doing at the moment. The implication is that a student, who understands himself or herself in relation to what he/she will want to do in life, will make a career choice that revolves around his/her interest and ability. In most cases, factors that are not innate may interact against this all-important life choice. It is based on this background that this study will examine the influence of peer-group and sex on the career choice of secondary school students.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

<sup>[13]</sup> Investigated factors influencing career choices among Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling techniques were adopted to select four hundred (400) Senior Secondary School Student from five Secondary Schools in Rivers State. The “Comprehensive Career Choice Survey” (CCCS) was administered to the respondents to collect necessary data. The t-test statistics was used to test three null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there were significant differences among male and female secondary school students in their career choices in terms of: Prestige of a profession, sex parity, and parental influence.

<sup>[14]</sup> Examined if parents and peer groups of school students have any influence in the choice of a career among secondary school students. The relationship between the two primary factors (parental and peer group influence) and career choice was determined using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. One research question and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Three research instruments were used. They are: the student’s occupational clusters preference scale (OCPS), peer pressure assessment scale (PPAS) and the parental influence assessment inventory (PIA). The population of the study comprises students in senior secondary school two (SS2). Result showed that there was no significant relationship between parental and peer group influence on career choice in humanities among secondary school students.

<sup>[15]</sup> Investigated the variables that influence career choice among secondary school students in Kenya. The study was guided by two objectives: to determine the influence of peer groups on students’ career choice at secondary school level and to determine the impact of career guidance and information on students’ career choice. The study adopted a survey design. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select the sample of the study. The sample of the study comprised of 24 teacher-counsellors and 240 form four students in twelve selected schools in Machakos and Kitui Counties, Kenya. Two data collection instruments were used for this study; teachers’ and students’ questionnaires. The data was analysed by the use of frequencies and percentages. The results of the

study revealed that only 17.50% of the student respondents stated that they were influenced by their peers when choosing their future career. Presence of career guidance programmes was evident in all the schools selected for this study. Majority of the student respondents (89.5%) indicated that the provision of career guidance and information helped them to make better decisions in choosing their career.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of the relationship between peer group and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?
2. What is the extent of the relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?
3. What is the relative contribution of peer group influence and sex on the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?

#### **3.1. Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District
2. There is no significant relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District
3. There is no significant relationship among peer group influence, sex and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District

### **4. METHOD**

#### **4.1. Research Design**

This study adopted a correlational survey research design. The correlational survey research design is adopted because the researcher was interested in studying the relationship between peer group, sex and career choice of Secondary School Students.

#### **4.2. Population and Sample**

The population of the study comprised 19,555 Senior Secondary School III (SSS 3) students in Delta Central Senatorial District. The sample size comprised 500 SS 3 students, who were selected from schools across the eight local government areas of Delta Central Senatorial District. The sampling techniques that were adopted include stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The simple random sampling technique of the balloting method was used to select 5 schools each from the 8 Local Government Areas, making a total of 40 schools. From the 40 schools, the stratified random sampling technique was used to group 500 students based on their school location. A total of 250 students were selected from urban schools and another 250 students from rural schools.

#### **4.3. Research Instrument**

The instrument that was used to obtain data in this study is questionnaire containing two scales which comprised Peer Group Influence Rating Scale (PGIRS) and Career Choice Rating Scale (CDMRS).

#### **4.4. Peer Influence Rating Scale (PIRS),**

PIRS was adapted from the Peer Influence Inventory (PPI) prepared by <sup>[16]</sup>. The instrument was made of 20 items describing how peers influence one another in career decisions. Participants were asked to rate the items on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree.

#### **4.5. Career Choice Rating Scale (CCRS)**

CCRS was adapted from the Career choice Scale (CDS) by <sup>[17]</sup> to measure career choice of students. The scale contained 16 items measuring career decision and the degree of certainty felt in having made a career decision. The obtained responses on a four-point scale were scored as: Strongly Disagree -SD (1) to Strongly Agreed- SA (4) (The instruments can be found in appendix I).

**4.6. Procedure**

The instrument was administered directly to the respondents by the researcher with the help of 3 research assistants. The instrument was retrieved on the spot. At the end of the exercise, a total of 500 copies of questionnaires were administered while 441 were returned, indicating 88.2% retrieval rate.

**4.7. Data Analysis**

The data obtained were analysed with the aid of descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered with the aid of descriptive statistics of Pearson coefficient of determination while the hypotheses were tested using regression statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

**5. RESULT**

**Research Question 1:** What is the extent of the relationship between peer group and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?

**Table1.** Correlation and coefficient of determination of peer group and the career choice of secondary school students

Variable	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
Peer Group	0.37	0.14	14	Positive Relationship
Career Choice				

Table 1 showed that  $r^2 = 0.14$  which signified the extent of relationship between peer group and the career choice of secondary school students, which portrayed a positive relationship between the two variables. Peer group therefore contributed 14% of the variance in career choice among secondary school students.

**Research Question 2:** What is the extent of the relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?

**Table2.** Correlation and coefficient of determination of sex and the career choice of secondary school students

Variable	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
Sex	0.02	0.0004	0.04	Positive Relationship
Career Choice				

Table 2 showed that  $r^2 = 0.0004$  which signified the extent of the relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students, which portrayed a positive relationship between the two variables. Sex however contributed only 0.04% of the variance in career choice among secondary school students.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relative contribution of peer group influence and sex on the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District?

**Table3.** Correlation and coefficient of determination of peer group influence, sex and the career choice of secondary school students

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
Peer Group	0.37	0.14	14	Positive Relationship
Sex				
Career Choice				

Table 3 showed that  $R^2 = 0.14$  which signified the extent of the relationship between peer group influence, sex and the career choice of secondary school students, which portrayed a positive relationship between the three variables. Peer group influence and sex therefore jointly contributed 14% of the variance in career choice among secondary school students.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District

**Table4.** Regression Analysis of the relationship between peer group influence and the career choice of secondary school students

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	2292.443	1	2292.443	67.400	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	14897.534	438	34.013		
Total	17189.977	439			

## Influence of Peer Group and Sex on Career Choice of Secondary School Students

Variables in Equation					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	32.159	1.662	.365	19.355	.000
Peer Group	.260	.032		8.210	.000
$\alpha = 0.05$ , $R = 0.365$ , $R\text{-Square} = 0.133$ <b>a. Dependent Variable:</b> Career Choice <b>b. Predictors (Constant):</b> Peer Group					

Table 4 shows a regression analysis of the relationship between peer group influence and the career choice of secondary school students. From the result,  $F(1, 439) = 67.400$ ,  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between peer group influence and the career choice of secondary school students. The beta value of 0.37 showed that peer group accounted for 37% of the variance in career choice among secondary school students.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District

**Table 5.** Regression analysis of the relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	7.217	1	7.217	.184	.668 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	17143.602	437	39.230		
Total	17150.820	438			
Variables in Equation					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	45.188	1.022		44.199	.000
Sex	.262	.611	.021	.429	.668
$\alpha = 0.05$ , $R = 0.021$ , $R\text{-Square} = 0.000$ <b>a. Dependent Variable:</b> Career Choice <b>b. Predictors (Constant):</b> Sex					

Table 5 is the result of a regression analysis conducted to determine the relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students. From the result,  $F(1, 438) = 0.184$ ,  $p > 0.05$  level of significance. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted, an indication that there is no significant relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students. As indicated in the beta value of 0.02, sex only accounted for 2% of the variance in career choice among secondary school students.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship among peer group influence, sex and the career choice of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial District

**Table 6.** Regression analysis of the relationship among peer group influence, sex and the career choice of secondary school students

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	2315.332	2	1157.666	35.300	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	14265.675	435	32.795		
Total	16581.007	437			
Variables in Equation					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	32.344	1.815		17.825	.000
Peer Group	.262	.031	.374	8.395	.000
Sex	-.114	.560	-.009	-.203	.839
$\alpha = 0.05$ , $R = 0.374$ , $R\text{-Square} = 0.140$ <b>a. Dependent Variable:</b> Career Choice <b>b. Predictors (Constant):</b> Peer Group Influence, Sex					

Table 6 shows a multiple regression, which was run to determine the relationship among peer group influence, sex and the career choice of secondary school students. Result showed that the model (combination of all the predictors) as a whole can predict career choice among secondary school



students. However, the model as a whole explains 14% of career choice among secondary school students,  $R^2 = 0.140$ ,  $F(2, 437) = 35.300$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Peer group influence makes the strongest unique contribution in explaining career choice among secondary school students (with a Beta value of 0.37) while sex make less of the contribution (with a Beta value of 0.01). Peer group influence make a statistically significant unique contribution to the equation with a P-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05 level of significance, while sex did not make a statistically significant unique contribution to the equation with a p-value of 0.84, which is greater than 0.05 level of significance.

### 5.1. Discussion

The finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between peer group and the career choice of secondary school students. This means that peer group is determinant of career choice. This is because, having friends who serve as academic and social resources can have a direct and positive influence on achievement outcomes in school and career plans for the future. This finding agrees with the finding of <sup>[18]</sup>, who found out that peer groups affect adolescent decisions on many issues including career choice. The finding however disagrees with the finding of <sup>[14]</sup>, which showed that there is no significant relationship between peer group and career choice of students in humanities.

The second finding also revealed that there is no significant relationship between sex and the career choice of secondary school students. This finding has shown that sex has no role to play in the career choice of secondary school students. This could be because, this day, women tend to do jobs that were considered masculine in the past and vis versa. For instance, a walk into town will show men who are doing manicure and pedicure, making hairs and other jobs considered as feminine in the past. Also, in most of the urban areas, women are often seen driving cab and buses including tricycle, hitherto considered as masculine jobs. This finding is consistent with the finding of <sup>[19]</sup>, which found that there was no significant difference between the sex of students and their vocational interest. The finding is however, at variance with <sup>[20]</sup>, who noted that although women are now struggling for equal right with men in different sectors of life (occupation choices being one), not much achievement has been done to bridge the gap in occupational sex stereotyping and roles as knowledge of such discriminations cannot be denied in our society.

The finding further showed that there is a significant relationship between peer group influence, sex and the career choice of Secondary School Students. This finding implies that all the independent variables make a strong joint contribution to the career choice of secondary school students. The plausible reason for this study is that students who are capable of being influenced by their peers will choose careers that are similar to their friends. This finding is in line with the finding of <sup>[21]</sup>, who examined the factors influencing students' career choices in public secondary school in Manga Sub County, Nyamira County-Kenya and found that parental, peers and sibling influence affected students as they made their career choice. The finding however disagrees with <sup>[22]</sup>, who found no significant relationship between parental and peer group influence on career choice in humanities among secondary school students.

## 6. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer influence plays an important role in the academic achievement of adolescents by exerting extraordinary influence over each other particularly with regard to academic aspirations and attitudes towards school. This happened to be one of the reasons many youths make wrong career choices due to peer pressure and advice from friends.

Secondly though sex discrimination exists in students occupational operatives, women are now struggling for equal right with men in different sectors of life (Occupation Choices being ore).

Based on the findings, it was recommended that counsellors working directly with peers especially as it affects career choice should endeavour to lay more emphasis on the positive aspects of peer group, while playing down on the negative aspect; and that both male and female students should understand that there is no specific career for men and specific career for women. Careers are for both sexes. Students should, therefore feel free to select their careers according to their interests

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