

Research Article

The impact of family background on career decisions of senior high school students: A case of Ghana

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The study investigated the effect of family background on career decision-making among senior high school students. Descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted in the study. Multiphase stage sampling was used to sample 248 senior high school students. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analysed through linear multiple regression independent sample t-test. The study revealed that self-efficacy of the home factors influenced students' career decision-making more than any other variable. It was concluded that self-efficacy should be enhanced to improve career decision-making and parents should be interested in the program of study of students in their career decision-making. It was also found that perception of students on the influence of family factors on career decision making is not affected by the sex of the students. It was recommended parents should be interested in their wards programme choice and in developing the self-efficacy of students.

Keywords: Decision-making, family background, students

1. Introduction

The family is recognised as an influential and important factor affecting the career decision processes among young adults (Blustein, Preziros, & Schultheiss, 1995; Braunstein-Bercovitz, Benjamin, Asor, & Lev, 2012; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2009; Ketterson & Blustein, 1997; Lease & Dahlbeck, 2009; Petegem, Beyers, Brenning, & Vansteenkiste, 2012; Vignoli, 2009). Vignoli (2009) investigated the role of adolescent global self-esteem and career indecision on the relationship between mother and father attachment and self-esteem. The global self-esteem aspect was based upon the relationship between adolescents' parental attachment and career indecision. Parental attachment and career indecision were negatively correlated, as were self-esteem and career indecision, while parental attachment and self-esteem were positively correlated. More specifically, the results of the study showed that the more attached an adolescent felt to their mother and father, the easier it was for the adolescent to make career related decisions (Vignoli, 2009).

Using longitudinal data collected from high school students, Germeijs and Verschueren (2009) examined how parental attachment security affected an adolescent's process of choosing a college major. Selecting a college major is an important task in the career exploration process. The results of this study revealed that higher levels of secure attachment relationships benefited an individual's process of choosing a major in higher education. Also, in terms of gender, the researchers found that one's perceived attachment with his or her mother, not father, was a significant predictor of how the adolescent will cope with decision-making tasks (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2009). The results further indicated that the impact of attachment relationships on the selection process of choosing a major is similar for both boys and girls.

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Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) for instance, observed that parents affected the level of education or training that their children achieved, the knowledge they had about work and different occupations, the beliefs and attitudes they had about work and the job skills they learned. Some of the ways they did this was by the attitudes and behaviour they approved or disapproved of, the expectations they had for their children's education and careers, examples they were setting for their children, the influence they exerted on who was around the children, the opportunities they offered their children to learn and develop and the kind of parent-child relationship they developed. According to Baines (2009), parents were very important for students when reviewing a job offer in fact the most important reason; 80% of students selecting it and 46% having it as their first choice. This fits in with previous studies which show parents are an important influence in students' decision making.

Furthermore, Rojewski and Yang (1997) indicated socio-economic status was the most significant indicator of how occupational aspirations. McCandles, Lueptow and McKee (1989) found that traditional gender/stereotypes were more common in high income families' occupational choice. The findings from these studies indicate that there is a relationship between socio-economic status and career choice/vocational aspiration. The socio-economic pressure on the parents of large families is such that their children including the able ones depend on other family members or generally have to leave school early in order to bring a wage and seek their higher education through more strenuous correspondence routes (Olayinka, 1983). Mortimer (1992) found that parents with low socio-economic status are less likely to have completed high school than those high socio-economic status. Adolescents from affluent families tend to choose vocations that they believe are befitting to their family's status even when such a vocation is against their own personal interest or capabilities while those from less privileged homes tend to grapple with vocations that are within the financial capacity of their parents irrespective of their own interest or capability.

Sjogen (2002) found that parental formal education is another factor influencing occupational choice of the student. He posited that youths from poorly educated parents are sensitive to economic incentives since they are to a greater extent attracted to occupations with high rates and high return to education. Adesemowo and Adenuga (1998) had earlier noted that educated parents were more concerned about their children than the uneducated ones. This might be as a result of their levels of education which have exposed them to series of information about life generally. Ali (2003) stated that "there is evidence to show that parents' education has the strongest influence on students' choice of career, thereby influencing achievement in mathematics. Students who come from families with limited education are less likely to go to college or achieve a professional occupational goal (De Ridder, 1990). Mburza (2003) asserted that research had shown that parents of Nigerian secondary school students being largely illiterates are scarcely capable of reading well informed decisions about the future of their youths. Furthermore, Bojuwoje (2000) noted that Nigerian parents (especially the educated ones) are known to be in the habit of dictating career choices to the students. These parents, he stressed, needs assistance of a counselling nature in developing appropriate skills in parents-child interaction.

Echeche (2000) noted that development of interest in occupation starts from the home. He stressed that the occupation of the individual's parents and other key figures in his/her family influences the occupational choice of such an individual. In the same vein, parental occupation may also influence how students perceive the value of mathematics learning environment at home. Examining this further, if occupation is considered as an indicator of parental skill use it appears that students whose parents worked in occupations with greater skill requirements also performed better in mathematics. Critically examining the PISA (2002) results, students whose parents were in professional or managerial occupations were found to have higher mathematics achievement than others. In other words, students whose parents had occupations those specifically required strong mathematical skills – that is physical mathematical and engineering science professionals tended to have highest mathematical scores than other students. It was also observed that students whose officials, executives occupational category that include legislators, senior officials, executives and managers in fact performed almost one proficiency level lower than students whose parents worked in the mathematics – intensive occupational group. Jamabo (2014) is of the opinion that families with high occupational aspirations have higher occupational aspirations for their children and are more inclined to value their children's occupation.

Smith and Cheung (2004) conducted a study in the Philippines primary school children and found that home support for education from the parents had shaped the school attainment of their children. The programme for international student assessment PISA (2005) contended that

“parents play an important role in their children’s learning. Aside from being actively involved in their children’s education, parents also provide a home environment that can affect learning. Furthermore, parents serve as a model for learning, determine the educational resources available in the home and hold particular attitudes and values towards education. Although it is difficult to examine the home environment of each student, the educational attainment and occupation of parents serves as an indicator of the values and resources with which parents create this environment. Corroborating this view, Sjogen (2002), Sharma (1997) and Onoyase (1996) contended that the home environment exerts a significant influence on students’ educational aspirations.

Previous research focused on the relationship between self-efficacy and the career exploration and planning process (Betz & Voyten, 1997; Creed, Patton & Prideaux, 2007; Rogers, Creed & Glendon, 2008). The term career decision-making self-efficacy is frequently used in the literature and is defined as an individual’s belief in his or her ability to engage in certain behaviors in specific career-related domains (Betz & Voyten, 1997). According to the research of Betz and Voyten (1997), career indecision is best predicted by one’s beliefs surrounding educational and occupational capabilities. Research defines self-efficacy as an important and influential factor in the career exploration and decision-making process. “Career self-efficacy is an important motivational variable as it influences the focus, initiation and persistence of behaviors, including career behaviors” (Creed, Patton, & Prideaux, 2007) Creed et al. also defined self-efficacy as a cognitive mechanism responsible for behaviors and changes in behaviors.

A common finding in the research literature is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and career exploration. In their research on the influence of self-efficacy and outcome expectations on career exploration, Betz and Voyten (1997) found a negative correlation between self-efficacy and career indecision. In a study focused on career maturity, Creed et al., (2007), found that students with higher levels of confidence in career decision-making were more likely to report higher incidences of career exploration than students with lower levels of self-efficacy.

Rogers, Creed, and Glendon (2008) were interested in exploring the role of personality in the career planning process. The researchers tested the relationships between personality, social supports, and variables of the social cognitive career theory. The overall findings of this research suggested the individuals who displayed confidence, or self-efficacy, in making career specific decisions were more likely to set career-related goals. In addition, individuals capable of setting goals were also more likely to create plans and explore career opportunities (Rogers et al., 2008). A study by Gushue, Scanlan, Pantzer, and Clarke (2006) examined career decision-making self-efficacy of urban African American students. The researchers revealed a positive correlation between career decision-making self-efficacy and career exploration activities. The students that experienced greater self-confidence in regard to career decision-making were more likely to engage in activities related to career exploration (Gushue et al., 2006).

Ngunjiri (2013) posits that many young people are subtly pressured into a given career by parents and/or guardians and other persons in positions of moral superiority over them. But the question is “to what extent does family background influences the career decisions of the adolescents?” Bedu-Addo (2014) indicated that a right choice of career tends to result in a happy, progressive and fulfilled life while the wrong choice mars the future prospect of an individual. It is through the process of making choices that we become humans and find our personal sense of meaning in life. The study therefore investigates the influence of family background on career decision among adolescents. The following research question was investigated in the paper: Which of the family factors influence career decision-making the most among senior high school students? Besides, the following hypotheses were considered:

H₀: There is no statistical sex difference among students on family factors that influence their career decision-making.

H₁: There is a statistical sex difference among students on family factors that influence their career decision-making.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design and Participants

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional survey. The researchers obtained pertinent and precise information from a large spectrum of participants concerning their current perceptions on the influence of family background on their career decisions within a limited time schedule. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), descriptive surveys mainly seek to obtain information that describes an existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions,

attitudes, or values. The population of the study was 766 senior high school students in the Winneba Township. A sample size of 248 respondents were used for the study. This sample size was considered based on the sample frame of Krejcie and Morgan (1970). In selecting the participants, multiphase sampling technique was used. In the first phase of the sampling process, simple random sampling method was used to select two (2) out of the four (4) senior high schools in the Township. The two schools that made it to the sample were the Winneba Senior High School (Public) and Uncle Rich Senior High School (Private). In the second phase, the third-year students were purposively selected from these two schools. These group of students were chosen because they were information reach. Stratified sampling technique was then used to put the population into two strata, which were male and female strata in order to have proportionally equal representation from the sex groupings. Since the population of the two schools was not the same, proportional random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from each school. At the end of the sampling process, 221 students from the Winneba High School and 27 students from the Uncle Rich Senior High School formed the sample population for the study.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

Career Decision-Making Scale (CD-MS) was the main tool used for the data collection. It was designed based on the study objectives and consisted of close-ended items. The questionnaire has four sections: Section A comprised demographic data of the participants (e.g. sex, age and programme of study). Section B comprised items on career decision making of participants. Section C solicited information on the family background of participants. A four-point Likert scale was used in measuring for participants' career decision making and family background analysis. The Likert scale questions allowed participants to choose the extent to which they agree or disagree to an item. The response mode was: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3 and Strongly Agree = 4. A pre-test was carried out on students with similar characteristics to the study population. The pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted among 50 students from the Winneba School of Business. Face validity of the instrument was ensured by other peer researchers to see whether the arrangement and language in the items are appropriate to the level of the participants. The pre-testing of the instrument provided reliability alpha of 0.78.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data of coded responses were entered into the computer using the Statistical Product for Services Solution (SPSS, version 23.0) application software for analysis. Correlation and Linear multiple regression were used to analyse the research question whilst the research hypothesis was tested using independent samples t-test.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the research questions and the results obtained from the hypotheses that were presented. Firstly, a regression analysis was used to answer the first research question: Which of the family factors influence career decision-making the most among senior high school students. Initially a correlation test was run to determine if there was any relationship to pave way for the regression analysis.

In Table 1, results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant negative association between Socio-economic level of parent and Career decision-making, ($r(248) = -.35$, $p = .00$). This was followed by Education level of parent, ($r(248) = -.30$, $p = .00$). In addition, there was a significant negative association between Career of parent and Career decision-making, ($r(248) = -.16$, $p = .01$). Lastly, there was a significant negative association between Self-Efficacy and Career decision-making, ($r(248) = -.16$, $p = .01$). It can be concluded that there was a statistical significant relationship between family factors and career decision-making.

In Table 2, a multiple regression was conducted to see if family factors predicted the total value of career decision-making of students. Using the enter method it was found that family factors explain a significant amount of the variance in the value of career decision-making of students ($F(4, 243) = 12.56$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .17$, $R^2_{Adjusted} = .16$). The analysis shows that Self-Efficacy of students did not significantly predict value of career decision-making of students ($Beta = -.06$, $t(248) = -.84$, $p < .40$), however Education level of parent did significantly predict value of career decision-making of students ($Beta = -.32$, $t(248) = -2.90$, $p < .00$); Career of parent did significantly predict value of career decision-making of students ($Beta = .39$, $t(248) = 3.66$, $p < .00$) and Socioeconomic level of parent did significantly predict value of career decision-making of students ($Beta = .37$, $t(248) = -3.84$, $p < .00$).

Table 1
Correlation Analysis of Career Decision-making and Family Factors

		SE	EL	CP	SE	CDM
SE of parent	Pearson	1	.758**	.728**	.418**	-.350**
	Correlation		.000	.000	.000	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		248	248	248	248
	N					
EL of parent	Pearson		1	.809**	.349**	-.303
	Correlation			.000	.000	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)			248	248	248
	N					
CP of parent	Pearson			1	.415**	-.161
	Correlation				.000	.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)				248	248
	N					
SE	Pearson				1	-.159
	Correlation					.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)					248
	N					
CDM	Pearson					1
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N					

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Key: Socio-Economic level (SE), Educational level (EL), Career of Parent (CP), Self-Efficacy (SE), Career Decision-making scale (CDM)

Table 2
Multiple Regression of Relative Contribution of the Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.106	.789		11.547	.000
	Socioeconomic level of parent	-.502	.131	-.367	-3.838	.000
	Education level of parent	-.477	.165	-.318	-2.902	.004
	Career of parent	.524	.143	.387	3.657	.000
	Self-Efficacy of student	-.050	.060	-.055	-.840	.401
	R ²	.171				
	Adjusted R ²	.158				
	F	12.560				
	P	.000				

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

On the strength of the analysis, it was deduced that socioeconomic level of parent, educational level of parent and career of parents predicted the career decision-making of students whilst self-efficacy of students did not significantly predict career decision-making of students. According to the data, self-efficacy was not significant, the finding contradicts Creed et al. (2007), when they found that students with higher level of confidence in career decision-making were more likely to report higher incidences of career exploration than students with lower levels of self-efficacy. In the view of the researcher, the data confirms the culture of the study area. In the culture of the study area, children are brought up to be seen but not heard with regards to issues of their development. This family training affects children confidence when they need to make career decision. In a culture where children are brought up to be seen not heard affects their self-efficacy. According to Creed et al (2007), career self-efficacy is an important motivational variable

as it influences the focus, initiation and persistence of behaviours including career behaviours. The outcome of this culture practices is they intend rely on their parent to choose a career or program of study for them. For example, some of the respondents tick strongly agree indicating they feel relieved if someone else makes a career decision for them.

The finding of socio-economic level of parents buttress Rojewski and Yang (1997), they indicated socio-economic status was the most significant indicator of how occupational aspirations are chosen. According to Crinic and Lambert (1994), family with high socio-economic status are able to support their children's educational development. On the other hand, Mortimer (1992) found that parent with low socio-economic status are less likely to have completed high school than those high socio-economic status. In Ghana, the 2017 West African Senior School Certificate Examination recorded a science student who had 8 'As' in all his paper but because the parents were not have the fund to support his career in medicine, they had to seek the support from the general public to aid him to go to pursue his career in medicine. The situation is no different from the study area, where students had to truncate their dream career because the family is not able to support them financially. As a result, some of the school leavers enter into "sakawa" business which end up endangering their life and the life of others in the society.

The finding of educational level of parents support Sjogen (2002), who found that parental formal education is another factor influencing occupational choice of the student. This was buttressed by Ali (2003), who assert that in Nigeria, there is evidence to show that parents' education has the strongest influence in students' choice of career, thereby influencing achievement in mathematics. This was support by some of the students who ticked strong agreed to the statement, my parents chose my high school program and again that my mother wants me on to follow her educational path. It is a public knowledge, parents who have attain high education turn to dictate for their children on the kind of career they should chose in line with the parents' aspiration and not in the interest of the students. Some students have performed abysmally in their education because they were not allowed to choose the program within their capabilities but in the interest of their parents.

On career of parent, although the beta weight seems the lowest among the other variables, it is an undeniable fact that career of parents affects the career decision making of students. The finding is incongruence with Echeche (2000), who noted that development of interest in occupation starts from the home and that the occupation of the individual's parents and other key figures in his/her family influences the occupational choice of such an individual. In the same vein, parental occupation may also influence how students perceive the value of mathematics learning environment at home. In other words, PISA (2002) said, students whose parents had occupations those specifically required strong mathematical skills – that is physical mathematical and engineering science professionals tended to have highest mathematical scores that other students. In addition, Jamabo (2014) is of the opinion that families with high occupational aspirations have higher occupational aspirations for their children and are more inclined to value their children's occupation. In the view of the researcher, some students career decision-making is influence by the kind of career their parents are involved. This are mostly seen during career day where students are allowed to dress in their future career. Some the students turn to address in the kind of uniform they see their parent wear when they go to work.

The finding of study confirms earlier findings in the family factors which demonstrate the educational level of parent has influence on the career decision making of students. This is because parent through various means dictates to their children on what course/programme to study in the senior high school. A child in the grammar type school who wish to go into technical school might not be able to change it because some parent equates it to student of lowest academic scores and this is confirmed by Jules (2011) and Shakes (2011). An informal chat with some students shows that if they had their own way they would have changed their program but they are afraid their parents will say otherwise.

The hypothesis sought to find out if there was statistical sex difference among the factors in the influence of career decision making. The Independent Sample t-test was used for the analysis. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Analysis of Independent Sample t-test on Sex Difference among Family Factors of Career Decision-Making of Students

Nature	Frequency	Mean	df	t	Sig.
Family Factors			246	-.742	.31
Male	129	21.74			
Female	119	22.15			

The data in Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in the reported influence of family factors on career decision making of students [$t = .742$, $p = 0.31$]. The null hypothesis which states that there is no statistical sex difference among family factors that influence career decision-making of students is failed to be rejected at an alpha level of 0.05. However, the alternate hypothesis is not supported by the statistical information available. The statistical implication of the result suggests that differences in the reported means for family factors on career decision making of students were due to chance.

It can be concluded that there is no sex difference among home factors. This implies that Senior High School students, irrespective of their sex consider home factors in the process of career decision-making of career choice. The finding contradicts Arnold and Bye (2008), suggested self-concept masculinity showed a strong positive relationship with career decision-making, and self-concept femininity showed a weak positive relationship. In the view of the researcher, modernisation and gender advocacy has change attitude of parent regard to the treatment of male and female in the home. Some parents now turn to give equal attention to both male and female education.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the study, it was concluded that self-efficacy is the major contributing variable when it comes to family factors that influence the career decision making of students in the study area. In addition, program of study also plays a pivotal role in variables when it comes to school factors that influence the career decision making of students in the study area. It is recommended that school Guidance and Counselling Coordinators incorporate these factors in their various career guidance programme. Also, parents and teachers should be interested in developing the self-efficacy of students. This will help them to make inform career decision and also have confidence in the career decision they making towards career choice.

4.1. Implication for Counselling

Career planning is necessary in the life of adolescents. Adolescent learn about the job markets and the opportunities available to young people. This is because even though the adolescent students may have learnt about certain jobs, they know little about the job market. For his purpose, career guidance and counselling should be intensified not only in the senior high school but in the basic schools. Career orientation for students should be geared towards helping students to understand first themselves and also know how the environment around them influence and shape their career path. This will help them to make inform career decision and inform career choice. School Counsellors should work in collaborate with other Non-Government Organisations and Government Scholarship Scheme to secure educational scholarship for students who are finding it difficult to realise their career dreams due to inadequate financial support from the family.

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