



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Career aspirations as a predictor of academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special secondary schools in north eastern Nigeria

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2023, 09(02), 760–767

Publication history: Received on 08 July 2023; revised on 19 August 2023; accepted on 22 August 2023

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2023.9.2.0664>

Abstract

This study focused on career aspirations as predictor of academic achievement among learners with hearing impairment in special schools in North eastern Nigeria. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. Total 351 learners with hearing impairment in Senior Secondary Two (SS II) was selected based on multistage sampling technique across five special schools in North Eastern Nigeria. The instruments for data collection are Learners' Career Aspiration Questionnaire (LCAQ), and English Language Pro forma (ELP). Data gathered from the respondents were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at a 0.05 alpha level. The study found a strong relationship between career aspiration and academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in English language in North Eastern, Nigeria. However, gender did not correlate with career aspiration of students with hearing impairment toward their academic achievement. The study concludes that career aspiration can independently enhance students' academic performance. The study recommends among others that teachers should work toward boosting career aspiration of their students through constructive teaching approach that will make education look achievable and admirable to them.

Keywords: Career Aspiration; Gender, Academic Achievement; Leaners with Hearing Impairment

1. Introduction

In Africa, for certain reasons, the education of children with disabilities has always been of inferior importance (Iweka, 2018). Stereotypically, children with disabilities have been deemed to be indifferent to education and unable to perform as perfectly as others. This misconception led to exclusion of children with disabilities in education which left them out of focus not only in education but also in almost all areas of social life (Craig, Richard, & du-Plessis, 2018). Therefore, this sphere always demanded special, harder and affectionate consideration throughout all stages of history as disabilities vary in terms of mental and physical aspects and both require deep consideration and professional approach in every corner of the world (Bleidorn, Jaap, Peter, & Samuel, 2016).

Nigeria and North East region (Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Borno & Taraba States) in particular like other countries in Africa and the world at large considers inclusive education as a very essential process of increasing access and quality of education for all. Many African states including Nigeria, are signatories of various international education documents that includes the International Declarations of Human Rights which states that education is a right for all; World Declaration on Education For All (EFA) which focused on universalizing access and promoting equity in education by considering disability; and Salamanca Statements and Frameworks of Action on Special Needs Education which emphasized on attention of education to children with special needs (UNESCO in Rishaelly, 2019). However, the right to education of leaners with disabilities in North East Nigeria, is still been trampled by the Federal Government of Nigeria, as not all students with disabilities can access quality education (Iweka, 2018).

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Career aspiration is one of the positive outcome variables considered in vocational psychology (Rishaelly, 2019). Aspiration is expressed by Eccles (2017) as a strong desire, longing, or aim to attain particular level of achievement. Carlson, Brooklyn and Adsworth (2018) argued that aspiration require a good ambition, wisdom and intellectual to follow up someone set goal. Hassan (2019) expressed aspiration as a goal or objective that is strongly desired. The author hinted that aspiration is used to attain a goal. Aspiration is a hope or ambition of achieving something while the goal is the object of a person's ambition or effort; an aim or desired result. Craig et al. (2018) expressed those goals are objective, measurable, a tangible target to shoot for, whereas, aspiration is motivators toward achieving the set goal. In short, unlike goal, aspirations are typically subjective, immeasurable, and intangible. Therefore, having career aspiration could be a factor for learners to show dedication toward learning. However, this assumption requires substantial proves, especially when considering learning with hearing impairment.

Hearing is very important for the overall development of any human being. Apart from vision, hearing accounts for the ability of the learner to perform well in school-related tasks. Learners who are hearing-impaired may find it impossible to have stable social and emotional relationships for sustainable development. Learners who fall into this category are known as Learners with Hearing Impairment (LHI). Learners with hearing impairment are those who lost their hearing either due to disease or accident (Ugwuanyi, 2018). This loss of hearing has a devastating effect on the ability of these students to think, communicate and learn like others. LHI seem to exhibit flexible patterns of adjustment, sometimes acting out when upset and withdrawing at other times, all point to communication difficulty. Any learner with a disorder in one or more of these basic psychological processes involved in understanding spoken or written language tend to have maladjustment due to communication gap (Ugwuanyi, 2018).

It has been hypothesized that learners with hearing impairment are difficult to be thrilled with particular future career, which lead to their low participation in various academic activities, but such contention is yet to be substantiated with enough data. Though. Punch, Hyde and Creed (2021) argued that anxiety and embarrassment may occur as a result of fear of misunderstanding and callous comments from others which may jeopardize the personal safety or self-esteem, which in turn may make them become frustrated, drop out of school, resort to be begging and become permissive about future career.

The functional effects of hearing loss and other people's negative attitudes have created career barriers for many people who are deaf or hard of hearing (Punch et al., 2021). Further, the effects of their hearing loss may be perceived by young people and by important others such as parents, teachers, and potential employers as a limitation to the accessibility of many occupations (Weisel & Cinamon, 2019). Although job accommodations may resolve some difficulties in the workplace for people with disabilities (Szymanski, Hershenson, Enright, & Ettinger, 2018), ignorance of the possibility of job accommodations and the rights of workers to access them may lead students to be adversely affected by a perception of barriers associated with their disability. To this end this study investigates whether the career aspiration of learners with hearing impairment and gender correlate with their academic achievement.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Evidences from earlier study in Nigeria, has shown that education of learners with hearing impairment has always been below average (Agu, 2017). Also, Oyesiku (2019) argued that children with disabilities have been deemed to be indifferent to education and unable to perform as perfectly as others. Some parents as well as education planners are seemed not totally convinced that children with disabilities especially learners with hearing impairment can cope with others in the labour markets. Therefore, the inputs from both parents and other stakeholders to motivate children with hearing impairment regarding choosing promising career were low.

Though, poor performance in academic is worrisome and has attracted different research that led to series of findings and conclusions. The need to seek the causes of such under performance among children with hearing impairment, especially in north-eastern part of Nigeria is high. Considering the fact that academic achievement of students in special schools is of paramount to their future and national development. The persistent poor performance as reported by Omollo and Yambo (2017); Udonsa (2020) across secondary schools in Northern part of Nigeria, with larger proportion of such poor result recorded among children with disabilities called for through examination. Specifically, initial assessment of the external examination results conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) in English Language, revealed that only 22% of candidates that sat for the examination passed at credit or distinction level (Udonsa, 2020), while more than 78% were all below average. One of the factors earlier pointed as motivator for learners' commitment and high performance is career aspiration (Oyesiku, 2019). Incidentally, having huge proportion of failure among hearing impairment students raise the curiosity to determine whether level of career aspiration among them could be responsible for the underachievement of students with hearing impairment. It was against the backdrop

that this study investigates the contribution of career aspiration on academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special schools, North Eastern Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Establish the relationship between career aspiration and academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special secondary schools.
- Determine whether career aspiration interact with gender to predict the academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special secondary schools.

1.2. Research Hypotheses

- Ha1: There is a relationship between career aspirations and academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special secondary schools
- Ha2: There is no significant interaction between career aspiration and gender toward prediction of academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special secondary schools

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study is supported by Michelle and Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Development (Michelle & Krumboltz, 1996). The Social Learning Theory of Career Development (SLTCD) Michelle and Krumboltz developed attempts to explain why people make the career decisions they make. People make their career decisions through an indefinite number of learning opportunities in their social environment which influence their views and ideas. These planned and unplanned learning moments, through the views and perceptions they influence and create, have an impact on which route an individual takes through the myriad of career and educational opportunities available to them. Michelle and Krumboltz social learning theory consist of two parts: The Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (SLTCMD) and The Learning Theory of Career Counselling (LTCC). This study adopts the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (SLTCMD) to explain students' career aspiration and their academic achievement. SLTCMD attempts to explain the origin of career choice. The theory presented by Michelle and Krumboltz, known as social learning theory of career decision making, explains how educational and occupational skills are required for selection of career (Michelle and Krumboltz, 1996 cited in Pattanayak & Naik, 2020). The theory is said to explain the development of career aspirations and clarifies the role of decision making. According to SLTCMD, there are four major factors that influence how people make career decisions. These four factors are environmental conditions and events, genetic endowment and special abilities, task approach skills and educational experiences.

Krumboltz believes that genetic endowment and special abilities—qualities one inherited from birth, can make one more apt to pursue certain careers and limit one from chasing others. Everyone is born with specific qualities that make him/her better and most productive in one career and least effective in another. These differences effect on the person's occupational preference and educational exposure. These differences can be of race, gender, physical appearance and characteristics, and birth defects. Just as the mind and body one is born with have an effect on the person, so, also does the world into which one is born. Ideally, career development is the method in which an individual develops accurate perceptions of the available opportunities and the relationship between that individual and those opportunities. In this process the individual collects the information obtained in career development and construct their own reality using his cognitive theory and receiving input from the environment. This is called environmental conditions and events. Michelle and Krumboltz describe these environmental conditions and list twelve environmental categories as below: Job opportunities, social policies, benefits and salaries for certain jobs, labor laws, physical events, natural resources, technology development (technology), changes in social organizations, family education, educational resources, neighbors and social impact. These events are often beyond our control and may or may not be scheduled.

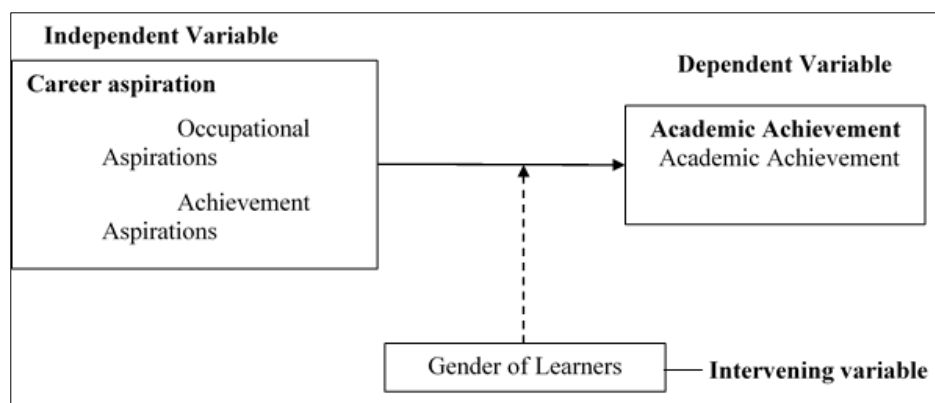
Krumboltz and his colleague emphasize that the uniqueness of each individual experiences in life brings about some factors which determine the job choices. According to the theory, these factors become the reasons for people to aspire for different careers opportunities. These factors interact with each other in complex and unpredictable ways in each individual and influence the beliefs we have of ourselves and the world. According to Mitchell and Krumboltz, the combination of these factors results in correct or incorrect beliefs, stereotypes and generalizations about the self, careers, the world of work, society, among others. The combined effect of these factors encourages the person to look for a new career that best suits him/her. The options available to every individual are influenced by both internal and

external factors, which either facilitate or discourage the person, and changes the shape and number of available opportunities and how the individual response to them.

The school is an environment where teaching and learning takes place and where learners' abilities in different subjects are tested. Environmental conditions and events, genetic endowment and special abilities, task approach skills and most importantly, educational experiences of learners with hearing impairment may interact to affect their career choices and consequently academic achievement based on those career choices. For example, a learner who obtained good grades in science-related subjects is likely to develop greater career aspirations in science-related careers than a learner who had bad grades in science-related subjects. Moreover, the environment in which a learner is born and raised provides only certain types of learning opportunities. The more learners actively engage in activities that give them joy and produces tangible results, the more likely they are to encounter valuable learning experiences that may shape their career aspirations.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

The study enhances conceptual framework demonstrates the relationship and interactions among predictor variables and outcome variables as illustrated in figure 1. It also envisions how career aspirations impact on students' academic achievement.



Source: Researcher, 2021

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Variables in the Study

Figure 1.1 provides a graphical illustration of how career aspirations may influence learners' academic achievement. The framework shows that learners' career aspirations may determine their academic achievement. For instance, a learner's confidence to excel academically in certain subject areas may lead the learner towards the choice of careers related to that subject matter. Likewise, learners in secondary school, who hope to graduate someday, may develop different forms of career aspirations that they want to pursue in the future. These aspirations, be it occupational, achievement, leadership and educational may determine the efforts they put academically to achieve their dreams. However, the yardstick commonly used by learning institutions to determine this is the students' academic achievement. Therefore, this study will find out whether career aspirations singly predict academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment.

3. Material and methods

The study adopted survey research design. The locale for this study is north-eastern region of Nigeria, which located between latitude 7°N and 13.5°N, and longitude 8.5°E and 14.25°E, and has a land area of 402,159 square kilometres. The north-eastern region of Nigeria is made up of six states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Maiduguri, Yobe, and Taraba. The target population of this study includes all the 1,402 students with HI in Senior Secondary Two (SS II) across the five public special schools in north eastern Nigeria. These five public special schools are the only schools in North Eastern Nigeria that accommodate learners with disabilities. The sample size for this study is 351 which was randomly sampled across four school across north eastern region of Adamawa State. The instruments for this study include "Learners' Career Aspiration Questionnaire (LCAQ) and English Language Pro forma". Data collected was analyzed using Person Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 significance level.

4. Results and discussion

Table 1 Outcome of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on Relationship between Career Aspiration and Academic Achievement of Learners with Hearing Impairment in Special Secondary Schools, North Eastern, Nigeria

Stat	Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Sig.
Pearson's R	0.512	0.035	0.000 ^c
Eta	0.624		
N of Valid Cases	351		

Source: Field Work (2022)

The results on Table 1 established strong and positive relationship between career aspiration and students' academic achievement in English could be as results of motivation that can be attributed to career wishes among respective students. It is obvious and expected that those students seeking higher post and well-paid job are much likely to understand the need to sit tight for their studies in order to come out in flying colour. This concurs with the finding earlier made by Mahoney, Taylor and Kanarek (2018) which established significant relationship between students' career choice and students' academic performance.

Also, Bleidorn et al. (2016) attributed the significant relationship between career aspiration and academic performance to the level of students' awareness of the requirements for particular chosen career. This agrees with the finding earlier made by O'Brien (2019) who established that the degree to which individual hope to attain certain positions is related with the degree of efforts such individual could put-in toward achieving his/her goal.

Though, Hassan (2019), and Narimani and Mousazadeh (2018) show that irrespective of career aspiration by learners there is other aspect of cognitive capability, readiness and self-discipline that can impact on the learners' academic achievement. Students with higher career aspiration but with gross academic indiscipline are likely to seek ill-ways of passing their examination.

In the scope of this study, it is expected that learners with hearing impairment are much likely to be more ready to learn, working towards achieving their aim of career choice as well as attaining fairer academic achievement. The current finding shows consistency with the earlier conclusion by Pattanayak and Naik (2020) that the aspiration to secure good job after schooling promote good self-esteem among students as well as promoted positive participation and their overall academic achievement. Likewise, Narimani and Mousazadeh (2018) maintained that the students' career aspiration makes significant effect on their academic performance. Also, in the study by Agu (2017) it was recoded that career inspiration pattern of students related strongly with students' academic achievement. Thus, the current study has shown that career aspiration can serve as motivation for students to perform better in their respective academic activities. This agrees with the submission made by Hassan (2019) that aspiration is a goal or objective that is strongly desired. Therefore, aspiration needs to be used to attain a goal.

Pattanayak and Naik (2020) found that career aspiration, career development, self-esteem related strongly with learners' performance. Likewise, Agu (2017) maintained that students' career aspiration propelled their achievement academically. According to Carlson *et al.* (2018) most of the students in urban centred schools do aspire to pursue higher qualification such as university degrees. This show that students' interaction with immediate society could impact on their aspiration for specific career or position, which could push them to learn more and perform better. The similar view was shared by Booth and Gerard (2019) and Mahoney et al. (2018) that career aspiration related strongly with learning performance or learners' environment.

Ha2: There is no significant interaction between career aspiration and gender toward prediction of academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special secondary schools

Table 2 Summary of ANCOVA of Interaction Effects of Career Aspiration and Gender on Academic Achievement of learners with hearing impairment

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial Squared	Eta	Sig.
Corrected Model	10406.27	3	3468.76	19.02	0.02		.000
Intercept	118040.67	1	118040.67	647.25	0.04		.000
Career Aspiration	8919.17	1	8919.17	48.91	0.13		.000
Gender	16.147	1	16.15	0.09	0.11		.701
Career Aspiration * Gender	8.223	1	8.22	0.05	0.02		.757
Error	63830.16	350	182.37				
Total	212388.52	351					
Corrected Total	74236.41	350					
Dependent Variable: Performance; R Squared = .281 (Adjusted R Squared = .272)							

Table 2 presents summary of one-way ANCOVA results on interaction effects of career aspiration and gender on academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in English language. The table reveals $F(1, 351) = 0.050$ at $p = 0.757$. Thus, $F(0.050)$ is not significant, since $P(0.757) > P(0.05)$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This shows that there is no significant interaction effect of career aspiration and gender on academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in north eastern, Nigeria. In this case, gender is not a determinant of performance, it is basically the individual aspiration of learners toward future career.

The findings from this study did not establish a significant interaction effect between career aspiration and gender to affect different performance of students. This shows that interactive stimulation is capable of enhancing students' performance irrespective of their career aspiration. Thus, irrespective of gender, learners with hearing impairment that has higher career aspiration are expected to perform better in academic, while those with low aspiration may have weak performance in academic. This concurs with the finding in the earlier studies by Pattanayak and Naik (2020) and Iweka (2018) that encouraging learners on better career pursue could enhanced their input in education irrespective of gender. Carlson et al. (2018) expressed that both male and female learners with higher desired for good job doing well in their academic activities. Though, the current finding differed to that made by Rishaelly (2019), the study concluded that societal gender stereotypes such as job differentiation among gender within the society could responsible for having students of particular gender performed better than others.

The findings from this study that show moderate relationship between career aspiration and students' academic achievement that other variable such as when gender interacted with career aspiration against academic achievement, only career aspiration contributed meaningfully towards students' achievement while gender was not significant. The results further showed that most male students' choses white collar job while female dominated blue- and pink-collar jobs. However, the study showed that the higher the career aspiration, the higher the mean academic achievement score. This agrees with the finding made Agu (2017) that career aspiration interacted significantly with gender to enhance students' academic performance. Similar finding was also made by Bleidorn et al. (2016), which established gender as a weaker factor for predicting academic performance but was a moderating factor along with career aspiration to promote better learner academic performance.

5. Conclusion

This study has shown through its findings that career aspiration has significant relationship with academic achievement of learners with hearing impairment in special secondary schools in North Eastern, Nigeria. Thus, the study has justified the influence of mindset by individual students toward brighter future after graduation in term securing well paid job that can make them self-dependence. More so, this study has shown that gender is not a barrier toward learners' academic achievement, but their level of aspiration toward future career. In this case, students that aspired better job or a well-paid job after graduation will aware of the need to put more efforts toward study in order to attain require grade that can make them achieved their aspired career. In short, as career aspiration for individual students high their

chances to make good academic performance is also high, simply due to zeal to excel in academic activities in order to achieve the targeted career.

Recommendations

- There is need for teachers in the special school in north eastern Nigeria to make effort in giving students more supports in terms of guidance and orientation on various career that can encourage their readiness to learn and perform better in academic.
- There should be concerted efforts through management in special schools in north eastern Nigeria to form partnership with parents in encouraging the learners with hearing impairment on various career opportunities waiting for them after graduation, such inputs will increase their commitment toward academic as well as their performance in education.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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