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Career Choice and Students' Personality Traits: Does Gender Matter?

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Abstract: *The study explored the relationship between career choice and students' personality traits among university students. The study employed quantitative research approach and correlational research design to test the hypotheses. Questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. Three hundred and fifty-four (354) students were selected through multi-stage sampling approach. The study was limited to final year students in three universities. The data were analysed using Pearson correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test. It was found that there is statistically significant relationship between career choice and personality trait. It was further observed that career choice of females and males do not differ. It was recommended that the institutions formulate a policy to ensure that counselors continue to educate students on the essence of career choice and personality traits. Again, it was recommended that workshops and seminars be organized to encourage the University students to venture into careers of their choice.*

Key Words: personality trait, career, university students, gender, career decision, Ghana

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INTRODUCTION

Career choice is one of the important decisions students have to make in determining their future plans, but it has become a complex one with the dawn of information technology, as well as the emergence of post-industrial revolution and the competition of jobs (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley 2019). According to Wattles (2009), industrialization and post industrialization have made it possible for some individuals to be rich so long as they have the required skills and knowledge that will help them throughout their lives. In today's world of competitive knowledge and continuous economic hardships, one does not only have to make due planning of career, but also exhaustive career research before making a good choice of career.

Muribwathoho (2015) posits that students have limited occupational knowledge as well as the narrow range of alternatives available to them. Kemboi, *et al*, (2016) examined the relationship between Personality Types and Career Choices of Undergraduate Students in Moi University, Kenya and found that a lot of students make numerous changes when they are choosing their course of study before they even gain admission into the university.

Previous Studies (Olawaiye and Olawaiye 2013; Alkhelil, 2016; Gati, Levin, & Landman-Tal, 2019) focused on the way careers were chosen, and how students see their personality traits, as well as the career choice they prefer. For instance, Alkhelil's study focused on three (3) career choice; however, this present study sought to examine six (6) career choices vis-à-vis Holland's Personality Theory of Career Choice. Notwithstanding what previous studies have observed, there still appears a lacuna that needs to be filled. It is for this reason that this study sought to examine the correlation between career choice and personality traits among university students, by taking into account whether gender plays any role in career choice and personality traits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CAREER CHOICE

Kemboi, Kindiki and Misigo (2016), investigated the relationship between personality types and career choices of undergraduate students of Moi University. A sample of 399 participants was selected for the research. A survey research design was used because the study aimed at assessing relationships among the naturally occurring variables to help examine predictive relationships. The research used John Holland's Personality Theory of Career Choice as a foundation (Holland, 1997). The research paper utilized Holland's Self-Directed Search (SDS) questionnaires to sort out students' personality types, and Holland's Occupational Finder checklist to categorize degree programs into career options based on Holland's Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC) mode. There was statistically significant relationship between personality types and employment choice, according to the findings. The majority of students (73.3 percent) were content with their field of study, according to the research.

Another study was conducted by Munene and Mulwa (2020) on the relationship between career personality type and career indecision among college students in Machakos County, Kenya. A sample size of 250 participants was used in the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used to gather the data for the study. The findings showed that many respondents had the Social and Conventional personality types and a third of the sample reported career indecision. The realistic career personality type marginally significantly and negatively predicted career indecision.

Jemini-Gashi and Berxulli (2017) conducted research on Personality types, career choice and career certainty among high school students. A sample size of 587 participants took part in the

research. The instrument used by the researcher to gather data was a questionnaire. The study was analysed statistically with mean and t-test. The findings indicated adolescence with congruence of personality trait and professions for realistic, investigative, artistic and social categories showed higher career certainty.

DIFFERENCES IN CAREER CHOICE BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES

An individual's career choice can be viewed as a reflection of their self-concept, as selection of a profession requires evaluation of one's abilities and capabilities as a person. Several studies show that gender biases exist with regard to feminist or masculinity of certain professions. For example, one study using the IAT found participants' reaction times in categorizing engineer as a masculine profession were faster in comparison to categorizing it as a feminine profession (Ganesan, 2014). Faster reaction times were also shown for categorizing elementary school teacher as a feminine profession, than a masculine profession (Wilbourn & Kee 2010). The issue of gender on careers may begin at a young age, as one study showed elementary school students of both genders were more likely to draw a male engineer than a female one, when they are asked to draw an engineer (Capobianco, Diefes-dux, Mena, & Weller, 2011).

Another study was conducted by Semordzi, Odame-Mensah, Hammond and Amoako (2019), on the moderating role of gender in the relationship between personality trait and career choice among undergraduate students. The study employed a quantitative research methodology with a descriptive survey design. The researchers used a sample size of 226. The Big Five Personality Scale which was developed by Lounsbury, Hutchens and Loveland (2005) and Career Choice Inventory developed by Schein (1993) were adapted and used as the research instrument. Conditional Process analysis by Andrews Hayes was used to analyse the data. The study found that, the relationship between personality traits and career path option of person was not influenced by gender and that gender as a third intervening variable does not affect how personality trait and career choice relate.

Pang (2014) did another study in New Zealand on the factors that influence students' job choices. For the study, a sample size of 151 respondents was used. Pearson correlation was used to analyze the variables, and an independent sample t-test was employed to check for mean differences. There were no gender variations in how significant others were perceived, and both genders preferred obtaining job advice from their moms or stepmothers over their fathers or stepfathers, according to the findings. The relationship between career choice and field of study remained strong as students got older, and it was stronger for students enrolled in a field of study that required specific abilities in students pursuing post-graduate degrees.

Ganesan (2014) conducted a study on gender differences in self-concept consistency and career choices under stereotype threat. The purpose of the study was to examine whether the working self-concepts of men and women are affected when they are in an environment where negative stereotypes pertaining to their gender are activated. A sample size of 176 undergraduate psychology students which comprise 79 males and 97 females was used. Questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data for the research. the findings showed that only men showed significant reduction in the number of gender atypical careers associated with themselves after experiencing the threatening cue, suggesting that men may disassociate themselves from care-related careers once gender-related negative stereotypes about men in those careers are activated. Women remained unaffected by the threatening cue, possibly as a result of the negative stereotypes about women and mathematics being more prevalent, and thus more generalized rather than cue-dependent. The extent to which men and women identified with mathematics and care-related

careers did not significantly moderate the number of gender atypical careers selected or their reaction times in categorizing these careers.

From the Literature, it can be established that copious research has been done on career choice and personality traits in different contexts; however, it appears that there are differences in context, culture as well as geographical location, which make their conclusion not applicable to our Ghanaian tertiary education landscape. This study, further, argues that career choice and personality traits have not been internationalized, as in global research conducted to cover all regions around the world; hence, one cannot simply use such studies as a basis for planning and decision making in Ghana, taking into account the study area. It would, therefore, be imperative for context-based research to be carried out to arrive at a set of facts and conclusions suitable to our peculiar circumstances.

HYPOTHESES

HYPOTHESIS 1

Ho: There is no statistically significant correlation between career choice and students' personality traits.

HYPOTHESIS 2

Ho: There is no statistically significant difference between career choice of males and females.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

Correlational research design was used in this study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. In this regard numerical information was collected and analysed systematically in order to give a detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation.

The rationale for adopting this design is that it helps to determine the relationship between variables rather than to draw conclusions about cause and effect. As Creswell (2014) asserts, correlational research design helps to determine relationship, assess consistency and predict occurrence.

In terms of paradigm, the present study was based on the positivist research paradigm, which explains that social phenomena can be observed. Positivists think that reality is constant and that it can be viewed and represented objectively without compromising with the events being researched (Ary, Sorensen & Razavieh, 2017).

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In this study, the target population was three (3) tertiary institutions in the Bono region of Ghana. For the purpose of the study, the accessible population was restricted to final year undergraduate students in these Universities who were on the verge of completing their programme. The reason for selecting such units of analyses is that they are in a better position to provide responses to aid the study, and these participants were, most likely, ready for the job market. The data gathered from the population can be generalized to cover the rest of the category that share similar characteristics with the target population. The accessible population was 3092 final year students. The sample size was determined using Slovin (1960) formula for sample size determination. The formula is as follows:

$n = \frac{N}{1+N(a^2)}$.

Where; n = *sample size*; N = *Sampling Frame;* 1 = *Constant; and* a = *Margin of error*

Table 1

Population of the Universities

Name of University	Pop. of Final Year Students	Sample Size
University of Energy and Natural Resources	1511	173
Catholic University College of Ghana	184	21
Sunyani Technical University	1397	160
Total Sample Size	3092	354

Stratified sampling technique (proportionate) was used to select the respondents. The samples from the three strata (see Table 1) were added to get the total sample size of Three hundred and Fifty-Four (354) students based on Slovin's (1960) formula for sample size determination.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. The questionnaire was adapted from Holland's Career Test and Lewis Goldberg's The Big Five Personality Traits. RIASEC stands for 6 characteristics: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. The RIASEC test asks questions about your aspirations, activities, skills, and interests in different jobs to help you discover careers and fields of study that are likely to satisfy you. Holland Occupational Theme is a personality theory that focuses on career and occupational selection. It classifies people based on their suitability for six distinct occupational categories.

The Big 5 Personality Test, which was developed in the 1980s, aims to shed light on a person's character traits, beliefs and driving forces. This questionnaire, also known as the Lewis Goldberg Test (after the psychologist who developed it), employs specific questions to ask respondents to score themselves on certain crucial criteria.

The items on the questionnaire were categorized into three sections: Section A comprised the Bio-Data o, Section B focused on Students' Choice of Career (Holland Occupational Themes) and Section C also focused on the various Personality Traits (The Big 5 Personality Test).

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In terms of validity, the questionnaire was carefully constructed under the guidance of colleagues with substantial knowledge in career counselling since content validity is determined by expert judgment. The Cronbach's alpha value was used to establish reliability of the instrument on 302 respondents at Valley View University in the Bono East region, as they share similar characteristics with the target population. The pre-test revealed that the questions were sufficient and covered all the objectives. The Cronbach's alpha scores ranged from 0.9 to 0.8 (see Table 2). According to Pallant (2020), a reliability value of 0.7 or above may be considered adequate. This suggests that all of the test items were accurate.

Table 2
Reliability of Questionnaire Items Leading to their Construct

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Realistic	5	0.739
Investigative	5	0.740
Artistic	6	0.712
Social	5	0.865
Enterprising	6	0.857
Conventional	6	0.902
Openness to Experience	6	0.771
Conscientiousness	6	0.753
Extraversion	5	0.749
Agreeableness	5	0.954
Neuroticism	6	0.828

DATA ANALYSES

The hypothesis was tested using a correlation module: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. It helped to draw a line of best fit between the two variables (personality trait and career choice) and the two groups (males and females). It also helped the researcher to know the strength of the association between personality trait and career choice.

The Pearson product-moment correlation does not take into consideration whether a variable has been classified as dependent variable or independent variable. In the context of this study, the Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient as outlined by Tredoux, Noor and Paulo (2009) were applied.

P≤.10	Less significant
P≤.01 to.05	Significant
P≤.001 to .01	Very significant
p ≤. 001	Extremely significant

In addition, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was interpreted by means of the conventional guidelines provided by Cohen (1992) to determine the practical significant:

r ≥ .10 (small practical effect)
r ≥ .30 (medium practical effect) and
r ≥ .50 (large practical effect)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

NEXUS BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND CAREER CHOICE

Table 3 summarizes the correlation matrix of all the related variables of career choices in terms of *realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising* and *conventional* as against personality trait related variables: *openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness* and *neuroticism*. Correlation coefficient between variables greater than 0.5 [$r > 0.5$] are considered highly related and coefficient variable less than 0.5[$r < 0.5$] are non-highly related.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix of Personality Traits and Career Choice

Variables			Personality	Traits	
Career Choices	Open.	Cons.	Extra.	Agree.	Neur.
Realistic	0.555**	0.522**	0.421**	0.276**	0.328**
Investigative	0.560**	0.430**	0.371**	0.202**	0.096**
Artistic	0.502**	0.461**	0.512**	0.161**	0.064
Social	0.638**	0.580**	0.509**	0.390**	0.329**
Enterprising	0.625**	0.584**	0.476**	0.388**	0.317**
Conventional	0.706**	0.629**	0.453**	0.365**	0.201**

The asterisks indicate that the correlation is significant.
Key: Open = Openness to Experience, Cons = Conscientiousness, Extra = Extraversion, Agree= Agreeableness, Neur.= Neuroticisms

The results showed that all career choices related variables have strong positive significant relationship with openness to experience at 1% significant level [$r_{Pearson's} > 0.5$]. The results further indicated that realistic, social, enterprising and conventional have strong positive significant relationship with conscientiousness at 1% significant level [$r_{Pearson's} > 0.5$]. Also, the results revealed that artistic and social have high positive statistically significant relationship with extraversion at 1% significant level [$r_{Pearson's} > 0.5$. On the other hand, result showed that all career choices related variables have low statistically positive significant relation with agreeableness and neuroticism at 1% significant level [$r_{Pearson's} < 0.5$]. Extraversion, as personality trait, has low statistically significant relationship with realistic, investigative, enterprising and conventional at 1% significant level [$r_{Pearson's} < 0.5$].

From the Correlation matrix results, it can be established that there is statistically significant relationship between variables leading to students' career choices variables such as realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, conventional and the personality trait variables such as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. The correlation matrix, however, shows that there is no statistically significant relation between artistic and neuroticism.

DIFFERENCE IN CAREER CHOICE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS

The descriptive statistics output in table 4 showed that the mean responses of gender with respect to career choices in terms of realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional [Male = 3.99, Female = 3.93, Mean difference = 0.055] [Male = 4.13, Female = 4.20, Mean difference = -0.072] [Male = 3.64, Female = 3.79, Mean difference = -0.160] [Male = 3.99, Female = 4.00, Mean difference = -0.006] [Male = 3.93, Female = 3.95, Mean difference = -0.032] and [Male = 4.06, Female = 4.10, Mean difference = -0.042] respectively.

The table further indicated independent samples test with t-value of 0.726 and degree of freedom of 352 with corresponding p-value of 0.468[p-value > 0.05] for realistic, t-value of -0.705 and degree of freedom of 352 with corresponding p-value of 0.481[p-value > 0.05] for investigative, t-value of -1.764 and degree of freedom of 352 with corresponding p-value of 0.079[p-value >0.05] for artistic, t-value of -0.092 and degree of freedom of 352 with corresponding p-value of 0.927[p-value > 0.05] for social, t-value of -0.425 and degree of freedom

of 352 with corresponding p-value of 0.671[p-value > 0.05] for enterprising, t-value of -0.623 and degree of freedom of 352 with corresponding p-value of 0.533[p-value > 0.05] for conventional.

Since the p-values of all the independent samples t-test for equality of means test are greater than 5% significant level, it indicates that the difference seen in the means among males and female in their responses leading to their career choices are not statistically significant.

Table 4
Independent-Samples on Career Choice and Gender

Career choices	Gender	Mean	Diff	t	df	P-value
Realistic	Male	3.99	0.055	0.726	352	0.468
	Female	3.93				
Investigative	Male	4.13	-0.072	-0.705	352	0.481
	Female	4.20				
Artistic	Male	3.64	-0.160	-1.764	352	0.079
	Female	3.79				
Social	Male	3.99	-0.006	-0.092	352	0.927
	Female	4.00				
Enterprising	Male	3.93	-0.032	-0.425	352	0.671
	Female	3.95				
Conventional	Male	4.06	-0.042	-0.623	352	0.533
	Female	4.10				

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The correlation matrix results established that there is statistically significant relationship between variables leading to students' career choices. The result of the study confirms the findings of Hossein and Taher (2012) that openness to experience significantly influences career choice. Again, the correlation matrix shows that there is no significant relation between artistic and neuroticism. This result also corroborates the study by Chinyere (2017) that there is no statistically positive relationship between artistic and neuroticism. Judging from this, the researchers contend that, for specific neural reasons, high scorers on neuroticism have a highly active imagination, which acts as a built-in threat generator. The implication is that students have more insight in the career choice that matches their individual personality trait, so that there will be a form of congruence.

The results showed that the mean responses of the students with respect to career choices and average responses of females are not higher than males for investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional except realistic. This result also confirmed studies by (Pang 2014; Hossein, 2012), but contradicts the position of Carrell (2001). It can be contended that, as far as career choice and personality traits are concerned, gender has no place.

The findings of the study have an implication for career guidance and counseling among both male and female students, as this would help the school counselors to recognize that gender does not necessarily play any significant factor in determining the carrier pathways of university students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated the relationship between career choice and personality traits of university students. The study was prompted by the fact that some students are not aware of their personality traits. Therefore, there is a possibility that they could be in career that is not in line with their personality traits; therefore, there was the need to establish the status of the relationship between career choice and students' personality traits vis-à-vis gender

There is a correlation between career choice and personality traits, which means that students might have chosen careers that will help them to perform well in the occupational ladder. The findings further indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in career choice between male and female students.

Again, the study approves the alternate hypothesis which states that there is statistically significant relationship between Career Choice and Personality Traits of students. This finding conveys a strong message to school administrators and career guidance co-ordinators, especially at the basic and senior high school levels, that students need to be educated and exposed to the various personality traits and the career to choose.

Furthermore, the study approves the hypothesis two which states that there is no statistically significant difference between career choices of the male and female students. The implication, then, is that this would necessitate the fashioning of guidance programme, which would suit both male and female students. Consequently, this would enhance their choice of appropriate careers which will inure to the benefits of themselves and the society at large. Based on the above, it is recommended that seminars be organized by counsellors to encourage both male and female students to venture into careers of their choice. Also, much attention should be given to students who chose Artistic and Enterprising careers since they are the least among the university students. Notwithstanding the above, it is prudent that Continuous counselling be given to students with personality trait that received less attention among the students.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the particular characteristics of the university students in the Bono region, Ghana, the demographics of this research limits the external dependability of the findings. Since it was assumed that only personality traits of individuals play a significant role, there was not much emphasis placed on the importance of other external factors such as family background, cognitive abilities, socioeconomic status, lifetime earnings, peer influences, interest, etc. which are also factors that can influence the choice of career of university students. It is necessary for future studies to account for these factors.

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APPENDIX A

This is basically an academic exercise as such you are assured that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Your kind co-operation is highly appreciated.

Section A: Bio data of Respondents (Kindly tick the boxes).

1. Age: 20-25[ ]26-30 [ ] 31-35 [ ]36-40 [ ] 41 and beyond [ ]
2. Gender: Male[ ] Female [ ]
3. Marital Status: Married [ ] Single [ ]
4. Programme of study/Course:
5. What career do you want to pursue after school

APPENDIX B: CAREER CHOICES

(ii) Please tick the box 1-5 that applies to your choice of career.

1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Not sure, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree

	Description	1	2	3	4	5
	REALISTIC					

1	I like putting things together or assembling things.					
2	I like to cook.					
3	I like working outdoors.					
4	I like to build things.					
5	I am a practical person.					
	INVESTIGATIVE					
6	I like to do experiments.					
7	I enjoy trying to figure out how things work.					
8	I like to analyze things (problems/situations).					
9	I like to do puzzles.					
10	I enjoy science.					
11	ARTISTIC I am good at working independently.					
12	I like to read about art and music.					
13	I enjoy creative writing.					
14	I like to play instruments or sing.					
15	I like acting in plays.					
16	I like to draw.					
	SOCIAL					
17	I like to work in teams.					
18	I like to teach or train people.					
19	I like trying to help people solve their problems.					
20	I like to get into discussions about issues.					
21	I am interested in healing people.					
22	I enjoy learning about other cultures.					
	ENTERPRISING					
23	I am an ambitious person, I set goals for myself.					
24	I like to try to influence or persuade people.					
25	I am quick to take on new responsibilities.					
26	I would like to start my own business.					
27	I like to lead.					
28	I like to give speeches.					
	CONVENTIONAL					
29	I like to organize things (files, desks/offices)					
30	I like to have clear instructions to follow.					
31	I am good at keeping records of my work.					
32	I would like to work in an office.					
33	I pay attention to details.					
34	I like to do filing or typing.					
	SECTION C					
	PERSONALITY TRAITS	1	2	3	4	5
35	OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE I am quick to understand things.					
36	I spend time reflecting on things.					
37	I have a vivid imagination.					

38	I am full of ideas.					
39	I have a rich vocabulary.					
40	I use difficulty words.					
	CONCIENTIOUSNESS					
41	I pay attention to details.					
42	I follow a schedule.					
43	I am always prepared.					
44	I am exacting in my work.					
45	I like order.					
46	I get chores done right away.					
	EXTRAVERSATION					
47	I don't mind being the centre of attention.					
48	I feel comfortable around my course mates.					
49	I start conversation.					
50	I talk to a lot of different students on campus.					
51	I am the life of the party.					
	AGREEABLENESS I sympathize with others feelings.					
52	I have a soft heart.					
53	I feel others emotions.					
54	I am interested in people.					
55	I make people feel at ease.					
	NEUROTICISM					
56	I get upset easily.					
57	I have frequent mood swings.					
58	I worry about things.					
59	I get stressed out easily.					
60	I am easily disturbed.					