




Implications of Career Choice of Undergraduates on their Employability Prospects in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

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ABSTRACT

Choice of career is one of the most important decisions that everyone makes in life. This choice in most cases determines placement in the workplace. The determinants of the choices students make career-wise include parents, peers, passion and perceived prospects among others. The choice of career made by individuals have long-term implications on their employability status most especially in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) which aims at raising global income levels and improve the quality of life for populations around the world through applied science and technology. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used. A purposive sampling technique was used to select five faculties out of the existing thirteen faculties at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Five hundred (500) undergraduates were selected across the five selected faculties using simple random sampling technique with 100 students selected from each faculty. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected for the study. The study found out that parental values and expectations has significant influence on the career choice of students and that career choice in turn has significant relationship with their employability prospects. The paper recommended among others the need for students to be allowed to make their career choices based on interest and ability with proper guidance by parents and surrogate parents.

KEYWORDS

Career choice; undergraduates; employability; fourth industrial revolution (4IR).

INTRODUCTION

Career is simply a profession or line of work that an individual pursues which usually is expected to be born out interest of the concerned person. Choice of career is one of the most important decisions that everyone makes in life. This choice in most cases then eventually determines placement in the world of work. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) number 8 is decent work and economic growth which is meant to promote sustained inclusive and sustainable growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. (United Nations, 2022) The SDG 8 is relevant to this study as the choice of career and employability prospects of individuals revolve around inclusive and sustainable growth, productive employment and decency of work which is the main thrust of the eighth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal.

There are different determinants of the choices students make towards their career path, these range from parents, peers, passion and perceived prospects among others. Uwalfo (n.d) noted that one of the determinants of career choice among vocational and technical education students is the prestige value of the job. In the African society however, particularly in Nigeria, parents and guardians appears to be the main determinant of the choice of the career of their wards right from the selection of the subject area in the senior secondary school, down to the choice of course to study at the tertiary level. This is supported by a study conducted by Uwalfo (n.d) in one of the Nigerian universities. The study found out that most of students' choices of the courses they are studying in the university were majorly influenced by their parents.

This trend has been of concern to experts in the field of education in Nigeria due to its attendant effect on the performance of students who are victims of being forced to take up a career path which is not their choice, and which in most cases they do not have the capacity for. An average Nigerian parent wants her children to study Medicine and Surgery in the university (Atafoam University, 2023). They therefore mandate such ward to choose the science option at the Senior Secondary School level, in which students are expected to pick out of the options of Science, Social science and Humanities. In most cases, for example in the Secondary school from which the researcher graduated, the Science class is usually divided into two arms 'A' and 'B' because they have a lot of students registered in that arm; not necessarily because they made the choice independently, but because they have been mandated to do so by their parents.

A typical example of the situation is that of a popular Nigerian afro-beat musician, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti who after his secondary school education was mandated, against his wish, and sent to study Medicine in the United Kingdom alongside his elder brother, Olikoye. However, Fela could not cope because "he didn't have the brain" for medicine. It was then his parent had to withdraw him and later enrolled him in a music school. This account was shared by his son, Seun Anikulapo Kuti in an interview granted to Daddy Freeze in June 2022. (Hip Hop Ville, 2022). Fela was lucky that his parents were able to succumb, and early remediation was made.

However, not all victims of such situations have such stories; most of them struggle to scale through, but end up not finding fulfilment in the supposed discipline they have been forced into. There was also another case of a popular personality in Nigeria who had passion for Music as a career but the parent insisted that he must study Law. Report has it that he went ahead to study the course his parent wanted, gave them the certificate and then told them that he will now proceed to study Music which was his own choice.

The researcher (the author of this article) equally is aware of another case where a young undergraduate, a very close person to the researcher, in a Nigerian university some years back who applied for and was admitted for Political Science which was his choice course. Shortly after his resumption for the first year of the four-year course, he was “helped” to change his course from Political Science to Economics by his guardian although with the consent of the parent. The guardian argued that Economics has better prospect than Political Science in the country. He obviously did that with good intention but that was not the best for the young man. This is because he is not very sound in Mathematics, and the mathematical aspect of Economics are those that are taught in Further Mathematics in secondary school which the candidate unfortunately did not go through. As a matter of fact, the candidate recognised his weakness in mathematics but was forced into Economics because of the supposed help from the guardian. The candidate struggled to scale through course and had poor performance in the mathematics-based courses which constituted more than 60% of the course contents. Interestingly, the candidate passed with distinction in the courses taken from the Department of Political Science. The said candidate has a Master degree in Economics today but did not find fulfilment in the discipline because it was never his choice and he recognised early enough that it was never his area of strength. Up till now, he still has a passion to pursue a career in Political Science even though it is now more challenging to achieve due to other commitments of adult life. These are few out of the many of such cases which is a subject of concern in the study.

Carucci (2020) gave some insight into the above situation when he noted that in the relationship between parent and child, there are times when the choices of children does not align with those of parents, one of which is the choice of career. He suggested four ways of handling pressures from parents in this regard. One is to rehearse the conversation; this implies that children need to talk to the parents on their plans and give them genuine and convincing reasons for such plans. The second intervention provided was the need for children to resist defending their viewpoints, this means that children should not be confrontational about their plight; such must be presented in a polite and responsible manner, acknowledging the fact that the parents know more than they do. The third is to “dig for deeper anxieties.” Carrucci explained the need for children to be patient to know the reasons for their parents’ insistence some of which may be out some genuine concerns and foresight. The parents need re-assurance of safety of the children as they pursue their chosen dreams different from theirs. The fourth intervention is the need for children to remember the loving intentions of

the parents. He noted that every parent has good and loving intentions for their children and the children must acknowledge this whatever friction that arises in the course of making choices. The consideration of most parents is that their children should study a course with attractive prospects, but this must be done with caution. The interventions of Carruci (2020) are very important but parents must take note that their role is to provide guidance, proper mentorship, and an enabling environment for their children while the choice of the career to pursue must be based on the interest and ability of individual children. This is important for them to be able to fit in to the workplace especially in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) which advocates for innovation and creativity in the workplace; which can only be driven by individuals who have a good mastery of their disciplines and not those who chose out of coercion. According to the World Economic Forum, the 4IR is a development of the Third Industrial Revolution evolving at an exponential rather than a linear pace, which is said to be characterized by the advancement of technologies that has brought about a lot of development. The forum also noted that the 4IR is impacting various sector in every country which has led to huge transformation of the systems of management, operations and governance (Nwosu et al., 2023; Schwab, 2016).

One major concern of this study is that the wrong career choice by students either through coercion or misguidance would lead to frustration, emotional and vocational maladjustment which could mar their happiness for life. This study therefore seeks to investigate the determinants of career choice among undergraduates in Nigerian universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career is the sequence and variety of work roles, paid or unpaid, that individuals undertake for a lifetime and which enables them to be productively engaged and professionally relevant. (Career Development Institute, CDI, 2017). A career is not just an occupation, position or office, it is the sum of jobs, task and work accomplished over a long period of time. Okeke (2007) noted that what students learn at school, shape their future choice of career and condition their interest as regards their area of specialisation.

The decision around the choice of a career path is a vital process in the life of every individual. Every young person with ambitions, a category in which prospective and current undergraduates in the institutions of higher learning belongs are faced with the challenge of being critical about the decision in carefully taking into consideration before choosing a career. (CDI, 2017)

Among the various factors that determine career choice of students in literature is school subjects. Nwoke (2008) found out in a study that school subjects stimulate the choice of career and courses offered at higher educational levels, which have vocational implications, in view of this, policy makers and educators needs to structure the curriculum in such a way that students get needed insight and proper guidance in making decisions. The study equally found peer group as another critical factor, it was noted that peer group exerts a lot of

influence on the students choice of any given course of study. This is a very crucial factor because people generally like association and social relations which tends to influence certain decisions. Young people are the most susceptible in this regard hence the need for proper and earlier career education.

Many scholars have contributed to the view that the home or family environment has significant influence on student's choice of a vocation. Olatunji (2003) found out in a study that there is positive relationship between the educational aspiration of the students and the social status of the family. The study established that the advice and encouragement given by parents irrespective of the social status of the family has a significant influence on raising educational aspiration. It is advised therefore, that schools should recognize the family which is the first agent of socialisation as a teaching institution. An earlier study by McLaughlin and Muntgome (1976) discovered that the family economic and social status determines the career choice of the children. The study found out that students often involuntarily choose careers reflecting the socio-status of their family. The educational attainment of parents also plays a significant role in the student choice of career which in some cases makes parents want their children to tour the line of their career. Similarly, Moorish (1972) noted that the parents' interest and their occupational aspirations for children cannot be separated from their own personal educational and cultural level and the home environment they provide for their children. It has been largely observed that while students from literate homes tend to aspire to higher education, this is not always the situation for their counterparts from illiterate homes due to financial limitations.

Aside the earlier identified implication of parents dictating career choice for their wards, which leaves them unfulfilled and incapable of fitting into the career due to poor performance, there is another very unfortunate danger of such imposition, such pressure makes the children desperate of wanting to do what their parents wants at all cost. A case was reported in 2021 by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), this is body that conducts the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), an examination which every prospective tertiary school student must undergo. The Spokesperson of the Board, Dr. Febian Benjamin, while responding to an interview on a recent case of mutilation of result by a candidate on the Leadership Television in Nigeria, made reference to a case that happened last year when a student was found to have mutilated his UTME result and when the candidate was caught and interviewed, he noted that he had to do that due to the pressure from his father who is a Professor who wanted him to study Medicine in the University at all cost. Unfortunately, when the candidate checked his result that year, he found out that his score was lower than the benchmark for admission into the Medical School. According to the candidate, out of fear of what the reaction of his father will be, he went to mutilate the result in order to upgrade the score but he was caught. While the conduct of that candidate is inexcusable, the place of the pressure placed on him by the father contributed greatly to his

fraudulent act. This is just a few out of many possible unreported cases of parent's imposition on career choice which has led to immediate and later consequences.

Another component of this study is the employability prospects of graduates which is closely linked to the choice of career made by students. In situations when students' choice of career is determined by their parents and such course is pursued involuntarily, the results is usually such that the students do not have an adequate mastery of the course they have studied which leaves them grossly unprepared for such career, thus putting their employability status to question and consequently leading to economic wastage. Adebakin and Fasanmi (2019) noted with concern that upon graduation from university, many Nigerians stays for years without job, thereby leading to economic wastage. In line with this, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) states that 201 million people (6.2%) globally are unemployed and this may continue to rise geometrically. (Adebakin and Fasanmi, 2019)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) was an intervention of the United Nations with the agenda of plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. It aimed at eradicating poverty in all its ramifications and providing better life for the people in a sustainable manner. There are 17 of those goals with 169 targets. (United Nations, 2022). The eighth SDG, which is decent work and economic growth is found to be relevant to this study. This is very central to the discussion in this study which has a close link to the tenets of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) which advocates for innovation and creativity in the workplace for sustainable development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Learning Theory of Career Development

This study is based on the Social Learning Theory of Career Development (SLTCD) by Mitchell and Krumboltz (1990). The theory explains the reason behind the career decisions of people. The social learning theory of Mitchell and Krumboltz is categorised in two. One is the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (SLTCDM) and the other is Learning Theory of Career Counselling (LTCC). The SLTCDM explains the origin of career choice by proposing four major factors that influence decisions of individuals. The first relates to natural abilities, this implies that certain innate abilities influence the career choice of people. The second factor is environmental factors which relate to things that are not within the immediate control of individuals, that is non-personal factors such as parents, peer-group, and prospects among others. The third factor is skill-based which refers to the skills required to choose a career or work path to pursue. Such skills include problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills among others. The fourth factor is that of interactive and imitation of experiences in the course of daily interaction by way of talking, listening and reading about other people. Young people learn a lot by imitation and they can also be easily influenced by such interactive and observational processes. (Career MACRC, und).

The Learning Theory of Career Counselling (LTCC) on the other hand is aimed at helping people in the position of offering career guidance to students to be more effective. The intervention is in two broad categories. The first category of support is that individuals who are in the position of providing career guidance should be willing to stimulate the students to be creative and innovative. They must have the understanding that critical thinking and problem solving is key to every career choice. The second category of support is that career counsellors must work towards value re-orientation of students in order to correct all forms of notions that have been registered in them through observations and prevailing situations around. The notion that there is no reward for hard work, and that no matter one effort put in, there is no hope for employment. All these notions must be corrected through deliberate value re-orientation. (Rumboltz, & Hamel, 1977 in Career MACRC, und).

Summarily, the Social Learning Theory of Career Development through its two dimensions posits that career choices should be made through proper guidance and with the recognition of the interest and ability of the participants. This makes the theory very applicable to this study. Parents as surrogate career counsellor are expected to perform a guidance role to their wards and not mandate them to choose any field of study.

Research Objectives

The research was guided by the following objectives;

- To identify factors that influence choice of career of university undergraduates in Nigeria.
- To examine the relationship between parental values and expectations and the career choice of university undergraduates.
- To determine the relationship between career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates in the study area.

From the above research objectives, one research question and two research hypotheses (null hypothesis) were generated as follows;

Research Question 1: What are the factors that influence choice of career of university undergraduates in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis 1: Parental values and expectations have no significant influence on the career choice of university undergraduates.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised 34,800 undergraduates in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife as provided by the Division of Student Affairs of the university which is the custodian of such information. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used. A purposive sampling technique was used to select five faculties out of the existing thirteen faculties in the University. The justification for the

selection is to ensure the three broad disciplines of sciences, social sciences and humanities are captured. These include Faculties of Science, Social Sciences, Education, Arts and Law. Five hundred (500) undergraduates (230 males and 270 females) were selected across the five selected faculties using simple random sampling technique with 100 students selected from each faculty. A self-designed questionnaire was used to elicit responses from respondents for the study. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. The first section elicited information on the demographic information of respondents. The second section elicited information on the factors that influence career choice of university undergraduates. The third section elicited information on the influence of parental values and expectations on the career choice of university undergraduates while the fourth section elicited information on the career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates. The questionnaires were administered on students from five faculties within Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. The administration of the questionnaire was done over a period of four weeks. Some were able to fill it immediately while some others returned it after some days. The questionnaires were retrieved for collation and analysis. The questionnaire was validated by experts in the field of Test, Measurement and Evaluation as well as experts from the Department of Educational Management. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected for the study.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are the factors that influence choice of career of university undergraduates in Nigeria?

Table 1.

Factors that influence choice of career of university undergraduates in Nigeria.

Keys: SA-Strongly, A-Agree, NS- Not Sure, D-Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

Influencing Factors	SA %	A %	NS %	D %	SD %
My parents chose my secondary school subjects.	53.5	6.8	4.2	3.4	32.1
My career choice has been influenced by the occupation of my parents/close relatives	41.3	13.8	12.3	8.4	8.4
I have the opportunity to take up the venture of my family	35.8	12.8	7.0	21.4	23.0
I am not interested in taking after my parents' career path, instead I will go for my choice course which will give me fulfilment	73.4	16.2	3.9	3.4	3.1
I am interested in pursuing the career path of my parent because I see it as my choice and area of strength	5.2	6.8	16.7	30.8	40.5
I developed interest for my career choice as a result of inspiration received from my parent.	15.1	15.1	17.2	31.1	21.4

Table 1 shows that the career choice of respondents was greatly influenced by their parents. A development which started from the choice of courses at the secondary school level. This agrees with an observation earlier raised in this study that parents that it makes compulsory for their wards to choose the science class in the Senior secondary school because they desire that their wards should study medicine which usually result to a large number of students in the science class not necessarily because it is their choice but because they need to do what the parents wants.

Hypothesis 1: Parental values and expectations has not significant influence on the career choice of university undergraduates

Table 2.

Influence of parental values and expectations on the career choice of university undergraduates.

Parents values and expectations	SA %	A %	NS %	D %	SD %
My parent tells me they have high expectations for my career	65.5	23.8	7.6	2.1	1.0
My parent encourages me to be take after their career.	40.7	35.2	7.6	12.0	4.4
My parents provided support by giving me relevant texts for certain career	8.9	21.4	4.4	47.3	18.0
My parents showed keen interest in my career consideration at different times.	59.5	33.9	1.0	4.4	1.0
My parents gives me options of career choice to consider	26.1	39.4	6.5	21.1	6.8

The null hypothesis was rejected as Table 2 shows that the parents' values and expectations (expression of their interest and expectations based on their own background, providing encouragements towards their own career line, providing guidance on specific career areas, asking probing questions on their career plans and sharing personal experiences on their chosen career to the children) as contained in the table have a significant positive influence on career choice of undergraduates. The responses therefore showed that the values and expectations of parent influence to a large extent the decision of undergraduates on the course they are presently pursuing in the university and consequently the career path that the course they are studying presently will lead them to in the final analysis.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates in the study area.

The null hypothesis was rejected because the study as shown on Table 3 showed a significant relationship between career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates in universities.

Table 3.

Relationship between career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates in the study area

Career Choice and Employability	SA %	A %	NS %	D %	SD %
My cumulative performance in the course of my study is not likely to guarantee my employability due to the imposition	52.2	34.4	8.7	4.2	0.5
I would have performed better in my academics and be fulfilled career wise if my parents allowed me to choose my career	33.2	11.7	7.6	6.5	41.0
I did not put in my best in my study and may not be well prepared for the labour market due to the career choice I made involuntarily	37.9	9.1	6.0	5.0	42.0

The table showed that most of the students chose their course of studies involuntarily and could not perform well due to lack of interest and lack of capacity for the course and thus expressed concern that their present and cumulative performance may not guarantee their employability status upon completion of their current programme under reference.

DISCUSSION

One of the major findings of the study is that parents influenced the career choice of undergraduates at a coercive capacity. This agrees with Udoh and Sanni (2012) in their study which stated that the interest of parents about certain career tends to influence to the choice of undergraduates' career path. This further agrees with the account provided by the researcher earlier in the study which stated the experience of a then candidate (now an adult) close to him who was made to study Economics as against his choice of Political Science which resulted in the candidate's graduating from Economics with a poor performance while he passed the Political Science course taken as borrowed course excellently. Because the candidate is very close to the researcher, the latter is aware that the former, since graduation about two decades ago did not practice as an Economist or any related course because he continuously expressed his incapability to practice in that field not because he is intellectually incapable but because that was never his choice and obviously not his area of strength but a product of imposition by a guardian who thought he was offering "help".

The finding on career choice and employability prospects can further be corroborated by Jungen's (2008) thoughts who noted that without the approval of parents, children are often reluctant to pursue some careers. The study showed that young people usually want to take after their family's career and those that their parents and elderly ones have chosen. Kniveton (2004) also noted that parents tended to take special interest and show readiness to support career choices similar to theirs when chosen by their children.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the implications of career choice of undergraduates on their employability prospects in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In achieving this, the study identified factors that influence choice of career of university undergraduates in Nigeria. It examined the relationship between parental values and expectations and the career choice of university undergraduates and determined the relationship between career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates in the 4IR. To achieve the identified objectives, one research question and two research hypotheses were formulated. The study found out that parental preference predominantly influenced the career choice of undergraduates which was traced to the choice of area of study at the senior secondary school which was the foundation of the course they later study in universities. The findings of the study equally showed that parental values and expectations had significant influence on career choice of wards. The findings further established that there is a significant relationship between the career choice and employability prospects of undergraduates prior to and during the Fourth Industrial Revolution; which requires that graduates must have adequately mastered their discipline not only in theory but also in practice. The study established that the imposition of career choice on students at any level is counterproductive and consequential not only to the students both also to the attainment of the eighth sustainable development goal, which aims at facilitating full and productive employment and decent work with a view to promoting sustained inclusive and sustainable growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that parents should provide guidance and needed support for their wards and avoid imposing their career choices and preferences on them. The practice of “you must study medicine or any other professional course at all costs” must be discontinued. The study found the practice to be rampant but unhealthy for career satisfaction and fulfilment on the part of the students as well as weakening their employability chances upon completion of their academic programme. The study recommended that parents should be surrogate career counsellors and guardians for their wards given their experience and exposure. However, caution must be taken to ensure that such values and expectations are not forced on the students rather, enabling environment should be provided for children to voluntarily choose their career path after careful consideration. The study recommended that parents need to listen to their children and respect their career choices. Students must also be able to identify their area of strength which must as a matter of necessity guide their choice of subject, course of study and career. The study further recommended that career choice and decision must be taken after thorough consideration and assessment of all the variables involved which include interest, passion, intellectual abilities and capacity as well as their employability chances after graduation.

Disclosure and Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this paper, as well as the published research results, including the financial aspects of conducting the research, obtaining and using its results, as well as any non-financial personal relationships.

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