



Research Article

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The Impact of Age and Type of School in Career Decision-Making Difficulties

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Abstract

The research investigated age, type of school and career decision-making difficulties. It used a purposeful drawn sample of 341 secondary school students in Delta State. To guide the study, two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated. The Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) by Gati, Krausz and Osipow (1996) was used for data collection. Data obtained were analysed by inferential statistics of mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis. The results revealed no significant differences in terms of age and type of school attended, but there was a significant difference between private and public schools in seven of the ten distinct categories. Discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations are provided.

Keywords: Career decision-making, Age, Type of school, Career decision-making difficulties questionnaire (CDDQ), Taxonomy of career difficulties, Decision theory

1. Introduction

We are living in an age, where there is an increasing number of occupations to choose from at the secondary school level. The world is ever-changing and the frontiers of knowledge in science and technology are widening. A career decision is a crucial aspect of life hence it is seen as a complicated process (Jedidah and Duffy, 2012). The counsellors in schools have, as one of their aims, ensuring that students make appropriate decisions as regards good career choice (Gati, 2013). Studies have shown that students struggle to make decisions about their future (Bacanli, 2012; Tewierik, Beishuizen & Van Os, 2014; Mau, 2004; Creed & Yin, 2006; Hijazi, Tatar & Gati, 2004). When students make a wrong decision, they have negative implications on their occupational choice, social life and well-being.

There is increasing evidence that secondary school students have difficulties in career decision-making (Tagay, 2014; Hou et al., 2014; Dongan & Bacanli, 2012; Bullock Yowel et al., 2014; Saka et al., 2008; Albion, 2001; Vertsberger & Gati, 2016; Oztemel, 2013; Bacanli, 2012a). Counsellors, therefore, have to locate these difficulties and make their clients deal with them (Gati et al., 2000).

Students' career decision-making is expected to go through a process of showing some understanding. This involves trying to define what they want to engage in and looking at different career options with guidance (Porfeli and Lee, 2012). The career decision process duly followed helps

to confirm an individual's identity, fosters well-being and gives job satisfaction and stability (Kunnen, 2013). It is an important decision that adolescents have to make (Bimrose and Mulvey, 2015). This makes it very necessary to identify the difficulties that students may encounter.

Age is one of the concerns of this paper as the researcher wants to find out how age differences affect career decision-making difficulties. Do students below age 15 encounter different difficulties as against those that are 15 years and above?

In Nigeria's educational system, primary education is supposed to commence at age six lasts six years, secondary education another six years. Secondary education begins at age twelve and the students will be sixteen years when in senior secondary school II (SSS II), the time for a career decision. It is not a straitjacket affair, some might be older than that and some younger. On the contrary, some students start primary school at age 5 and some at age four, spend five years or six in secondary school. This category of students will be 14 years in SSS II. The bottom line is that students get to SSS II at different ages depending on when they start primary education and how many years they spend there.

The researcher would want to find out the impact of age on career decision-making difficulties. Will the older students face more difficulties than the younger ones? Researchers have revealed that age-related data are crucial since the construct is useful in providing an index for the development of career interventions (Patton & Creed, 2001). The implication is that from the result of the findings, counsellors will know the type of intervention programmes to recommend for different age levels.

There are inconclusive results about age and career decision making difficulties. The findings of Martincin and Stead (2014) revealed that age did not affect decision-making difficulties. In the same line, Schmidt et al. (2011) and Lopez et al. (2006) found no significant relationship between age and career indecision. Similarly, Fabunmi and Adedayo (2017) in their research reported that age was not significant for age differences between 15 and 17 years. On the other hand, the findings of the following studies (Bacanli, 2012a; Kleiman et al., 2004; Gati et al., 2000) showed that age is a crucial variable that has a significant impact on career decision making difficulties. In Albion and Fogarty (2002) work the result showed a common pattern of difficulties experienced by individuals of different ages. However, older students reported fewer difficulties with internal conflicts and conflicts with others than did younger students. Jenrette (2004) investigation indicated that older individuals reported more difficulties in lack of readiness compared to younger persons. In another vein, Laveck (2018) in his work suggested that younger participants demonstrated higher levels of lack of readiness.

Type of school is another variable in this study. In Nigeria, we have public schools owned by Federal and State governments. There are also the private schools owned by individuals, Faith-based organizations and corporate bodies. It can be assumed that the type of school an individual attends partly determines the difficulties that an individual will pass through in terms of career decision making. To this end, Migunde, Lucas and Mbagays (2015) discovered that secondary school students from public schools are more career matured and experience lower career indecision than their counterparts from private schools. There is a paucity of materials as related to these two variables, that is age and type of school, hence this study is very crucial.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain if there were differences in career decision-making difficulties based on age and type of school.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. Does age make a difference in the career decision-making difficulties encountered by secondary school students?
2. What are the differences between private and public secondary school students as regards difficulties encountered in career decision making in Nigeria.

1.3 Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for this study were

1. There is no significant difference in career decision-making difficulties based on age.
2. There is no significant difference between students in private and public schools in terms of difficulties encountered in career decision making.

2. The Taxonomy of Difficulties

The theory upon which this research is based is the taxonomy of difficulties in career decision making by Gati et al (1996). The taxonomy was developed based on Decision Theory. This theory postulates that career decision making involves three aspects which are the options available, evaluation of all options and the decision to be made. However, this taxonomy depends on the construct of the ideal career decision-maker (Vaiopoulou, Alexiou and Stamoulasis, 2019). The ideal career decision-maker in this instance is a student who is aware, willing and is capable of making a right decision and any deviation from this is regarded as a potential problem (Gati and Saka, 2001).

The taxonomy has three major categories of difficulty which are lack of readiness, lack of information and inconsistent information. These were further classified into ten specific categories of difficulty (Gati et al., 1996) which are lack of readiness, indecisiveness, dysfunctional myths, lack of knowledge about the process of a career decision, lack of information about the self, lack of information about occupations, lack of information about ways of obtaining additional information, inconsistent information, unreliable information, internal conflicts and external conflicts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants were secondary school students in the Delta State of Nigeria. The 341 students for this study were drawn by purposeful sampling. The age of the participants was above 10 years of age.

3.2 Instrument

The instrument employed for the study was the adapted form of the career decision-making difficulties questionnaire (CDDQ) by Gati et al (1996). The original instrument had 44 items but this author modified it to 39 items and on a four-point scale response format of strongly agree to disagree, unlike the original one that was on a nine-point scale. This became necessary as students were finding it difficult to respond to the nine-point scale. The instrument was made up of two sections namely A and B. Section A sought for demographic information about the subjects age, type of school and class in school. In section B the modified instrument was utilized.

3.3 Validity of the Instrument

The instrument as explained in Akpochafo (2020) initially had 44 items but when subjected to Principal Component Analysis and Varimax Rotation Method, with Kaiser Normalization, the items in the instrument, were reduced to 39. For instance, Lack of readiness scale now has 3 items, Indecisiveness scale has 2 items, Dysfunctional myths scale has 3 items, Lack of knowledge career decision scale has 3 items, Lack of information scale has 7 items, Lack of information about occupation scale has 4 items, Lack of information about ways of obtaining information scale has 2 items, Inconsistent information: Unreliable information scale has 6 items, Internal conflicts scale has 5 items, while External conflicts scale has 4 items.

Content validity of the scales revealed that Lack of readiness scale accounted for 48.97% of

variance, Indecisiveness scale accounted for 61.23% of variance, Dysfunctional myths scale accounted for 55.02% of variance, Lack of knowledge career decision scale accounted for 58.95% of variance, Lack of information scale accounted for 65.46% of variance, Lack of information about occupation scale accounted for 63.55% of variance, Lack of information about ways of obtaining information scale accounted for 88.70% of variance, Inconsistent information: Unreliable information scale accounted for 54.86% of variance, internal conflicts scale accounted for 46.68% of variance, External conflicts scale accounted for 70.32% of variance, while Difficulties in career decision making scale accounted for 77.98% of variance.

The construct validity of the scales was determined using the Factor Loadings Matrixes. For instance, the factor matrix for the instruments has the following: Lack of readiness scale range from .59 to .80, Indecisiveness scale range from .75 to .78, Dysfunctional myths scale range from .65 to .85, Lack of knowledge career decision scale range from .61 to .86, Lack of information scale range from .59 to .78, Lack of information about occupation scale range from .77 to .91, Lack of information about ways of obtaining information scale .94 to .94, Inconsistent information: Unreliable information scale range from .59 to .78, Internal conflicts scale range from .59 to .80, External conflicts scale range from .72 to .93, while Difficulties in career decision making scale range from .48 to .70.

3.4 Reliability of Instrument

A test re-test reliability of 0.67, 0.74, 0.72 and 0.80 was reported by Gati et al (1996) for the three components and the overall instrument. The researcher did a single reliability index for the whole instrument using Cronbach alpha method. The reliability coefficient of 0.90 was obtained for the whole instrument. This shows an indication that the instrument was valid and fit for use in Nigeria.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis was done with the use of mean and standard deviation. The benchmark as stated in Akpochafo (2020) used to answer the research questions were as follows: 6.00 for lack of readiness; 4.00 for indecisiveness, 6.00 for dysfunctional myth, 6.00 for lack of knowledge of the career decision process; 14.00 for lack of information about self; 8.00 for lack of information about the occupation; 4.00 for lack of information about ways of obtaining additional information about self; 12.00 for inconsistent information; unreliable information, 10.00 for internal conflicts and 8.00 for external conflicts. The benchmark was obtained by calculating the average mean for all the items in each of the sub-categories. The independent sample t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results

To answer research question 1 and hypothesis 1, mean, standard deviation and T-test table were computed. The result of data analysis is presented in Table 1.

Research Question 1: Does age make a difference in the career decision-making difficulties encountered by secondary school students?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in career decision-making difficulties based on age.

To answer research question one and hypothesis one, mean, standard deviation and t-test were computed. The result of data analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, Standard deviations and T-test table showing the Difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision making based on age

Variables	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	t	df	Mean difference	P
Lack of Readiness	Below 16yrs	212	7.118	2.11523	.14527	3.175	-.931	339	-.231	.353
	Above 16yrs	129	7.349	2.38698	.21016					
Indecisiveness	Below 16yrs	212	4.976	2.65280	.18220	.053	-.989	339	-.295	.323
	Above 16yrs	129	5.271	2.69766						
Dysfunctional myth	Below 16yrs	212	5.726	1.99541	.13705	1.538	2.043	339	.455	.042
	Above 16yrs	129	5.271	1.99512						
Lack of knowledge of the career decision process	Below 16yrs	212	7.609	3.19842	.21967	.775	-.526	339	-.189	.599
	Above 16yrs	129	7.798	3.28676						
Lack of information	Below 16yrs	212	18.297	6.12751	.42084	.950	1.437	339	1.010	.151
	Above 16yrs	129	17.286	6.56005						
Lack of information about the occupation	Below 16yrs	212	10.057	3.48682	.23948	1.049	1.444	339	.568	.150
	Above 16yrs	129	9.488	3.58189						
Lack of information about ways of obtaining additional information about self	Below 16yrs	212	5.382	2.85183	.19586	.840	.317	339	.103	.751
	Above 16yrs	129	5.279	2.99473						
Inconsistent Information: Unreliable information	Below 16yrs	212	14.524	4.48741	.30820	1.455	.807	339	.422	.420
	Above 16yrs	129	14.101	5.01692						
Internal conflicts	Below 16yrs	212	12.377	4.33317	.29760	.581	.510	339	.253	.611
	Above 16yrs	129	12.124	4.64019						
External conflicts	Below 16yrs	212	9.703	3.57206	.24533	.180	1.155	339	.462	.249
	Above 16yrs	129	9.240	3.61156						

As shown in Table 1, the results produced an output Lack of readiness: $df(339)$, $t=-.931$; with a mean difference of $-.231$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Indecisiveness: $df(339)$, $t=-.989$; with a mean difference of $-.295$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Dysfunctional myth: $df(339)$, $t=2.043$; with a mean difference of $.455$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Lack of knowledge of career decision process: $df(339)$, $t=-.526$; with a mean difference of $-.189$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Lack of information: $df(339)$, $t=1.437$; with a mean difference of 1.010 , $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Lack of information about occupation: $df(339)$, $t=1.444$; with a mean difference of $.568$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Lack of information about ways of obtaining additional information about self: $df(339)$, $t=.317$; with a mean difference of $.103$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Inconsistency information: Unreliable information: $df(339)$, $t=.807$; with a mean difference of $.422$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, Internal conflicts: $df(339)$, $t=.510$; with a mean difference of $.253$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance, External conflicts: $df(339)$, $t=1.155$; with a mean difference of $.462$, $P \geq .05$ level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision making based on age was accepted. The finding is that there is no significant difference between difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision making based on age. The conclusion is drawn that age does not make a difference in the difficulties encountered in career decision making.

Research Question 2: What are the difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision-making based on the type of school?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision-making based on the type of school.

To answer research question 2 and hypothesis 2, means, standard deviation and t-test table were computed. The result of data analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Means, Standard deviations and T-test table showing the Difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision making based on the type of school

Variables	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	t	df	Mean difference	P																																																																																																																																
Lack of Readiness	Private	142	7.669	2.357	.198	2.407	3.304	339	.795	.001																																																																																																																																
	Public	199	6.874	2.062							Indecisiveness	Private	142	6.338	3.319	.279	83.535	7.943	339	2.142	.000	Public	199	4.196	1.572	Dysfunctional myth	Private	142	5.859	2.030	.170	.080	2.389	339	.522	.017	Public	199	5.337	1.962	Lack of knowledge of the career decision process	Private	142	8.042	2.916	.245	1.472	1.754	339	.620	.080	Public	199	7.422	3.418	Lack of information	Private	142	19.845	6.433	.539	.304	4.937	339	3.307	.000	Public	199	16.538	5.848	Lack of information about the occupation	Private	142	10.563	3.526	.296	.270	3.235	339	1.237	.001	Public	199	9.327	3.448	Lack of information about ways of obtaining additional information about self	Private	142	5.880	3.060	.257	.009	2.918	339	.920	.004	Public	199	4.959	2.728	Inconsistent Information: Unreliable information	Private	142	15.521	4.611	.387	.094	3.929	339	1.983	.000	Public	199	13.538	4.584	Internal conflicts	Private	142	14.106	4.732	.397	9.994	6.813	339	3.126	.000	Public	199	10.979	3.731	External conflicts	Private	142	10.127	3.682	.309	.618	2.626
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As shown in Table 2, the results produced an output Lack of readiness: $df(339)$, $t=3.304$; with a mean difference of .795, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Indecisiveness: $df(339)$, $t=7.943$; with a mean difference of 2.142, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Dysfunctional myth: $df(339)$, $t=2.389$; with a mean difference of .522, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Lack of knowledge of career decision process: $df(339)$, $t=1.754$; with a mean difference of .620, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Lack of information: $df(339)$, $t=4.937$; with a mean difference of 3.307, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Lack of information about occupation: $df(339)$, $t=3.235$; with a mean difference of 1.237, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Lack of information about ways of obtaining additional information about self: $df(339)$, $t=2.918$; with a mean difference of .920, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Inconsistent information: Unreliable information: $df(339)$, $t=3.929$; with a mean difference of 1.983, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, Internal conflicts: $df(339)$, $t=6.813$; with a mean difference of 3.126, $P \leq .05$ level of significance, External conflicts: $df(339)$, $t=2.626$; with a mean difference of 1.026, $P \leq .05$ level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision making based on the type of school was rejected. The finding is that there is a significant difference between difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision making based on the type of school. The conclusion is drawn that type of school makes a difference in the difficulties encountered in career decision making.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings from the first research question and hypothesis revealed mean differences between students below 16 years and those above 16 years. These differences were not significant from the t and the significant levels. The implication is that age did not make any difference in the difficulties encountered by students in career decision making. The outcome of this result can be accounted for in the sense that both students below 16 years of age and those above 16 years are in the same class and are exposed to the same facilities, intervention programmes if there are any. Moreover, both have similar ideas about career opportunities. The economy has not expanded as to warrant the engagement of highly specialized professionals as in the productive economies of the advanced countries.

This finding is in agreement with the result of Fabunmi & Adedayo (2017), Martin & Stead (2014), Schmidt et al. (2011) and Lopez et al. (2006). However, the findings of Albion and Forgarty (2002); Jenrette (2004) and Laveck (2018) do not corroborate the findings of this study. Moreover, Migunde, Othuon and Mbagaya's finding revealed that age was not significantly predictive of career indecision.

The second finding revealed that the type of school makes a difference in the difficulties encountered by secondary school students in career decision making. This finding is in agreement with Migunde, Othuon and Mbagaya (2015) study which revealed that secondary school students from public schools are more career matured, have lower career indecision than students in private schools.

In this study of the ten discrete levels of difficulties, seven were significant while three (Dysfunctional myth, Lack of knowledge of the career decision process and External conflicts) were not significant. The implication is that both private and public schools were not having difficulties in those areas. As for the other seven levels, private schools had more difficulties. One likely reason for this is that some private schools, might not be able to employ professional counsellors, as against the public schools. Consequently, private schools might not be able to provide counselling and expose students to some intervention techniques. This is because some proprietors are profit-driven which is in line with capitalist tendencies.

6. Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study: that age has no impact on career decision making difficulties as no significant differences existed between the two age groups. Secondly, private schools experienced more career decision-making difficulties as the type of school was significant.

7. Recommendations

From the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should realize that age should not be taken into consideration when providing interventions. All the ages should be treated the same way.
2. Furthermore, since private schools encountered more difficulties, the government can instruct proprietors that they should compulsorily employ counsellors who will carry out some intervention activities like conferences, seminars, workshop to help reduce the problems confronting students in career decision making. This will also help the students to build more confidence in deciding the type of career they want to pursue.

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