

Full Length Research Paper

Influence of demographic variables on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria

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Received 4 February, 2015; Accepted 7 March, 2015

The paper examined the influence of demographic variables on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. Three null hypotheses were generated for the study. The descriptive research design was used for the study. A self-designed questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the respondents. Section A of the instrument dealt with the demographic data of the respondents while section B dealt with the variables such as expected occupation remuneration and career prospect. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through the test and re-test reliability method and reliability co-efficient of 0.80 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using percentages, mean, standard deviation and simple regression. The findings revealed that sex (gender), expected occupation remuneration and career prospects have significant influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the north-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. The study concluded that the low preference for secretarial option of business education at this level is as a result of the students' inadequate awareness of the relevance and prospects of the skills acquired in secretarial education offered in colleges of education, polytechnics and universities and its lucrateness in the world of work. This has resulted in the escalating shortage of secretarial teachers in the primary and post primary institutions of learning and secretarial professionals in office occupation respectively. The study recommended among others that the leadership of the department of business education should contact non-governmental organizations to sponsor media-chats where the professionals will properly create awareness for the students on the relevance, prospects and lucrateness of secretarial education in tertiary institutions.

Key words: Sex, age, occupation remuneration, career prospect and secretarial education.

INTRODUCTION

Many factors have been identified as the determinants responsible for the decline of students enrolment into

secretarial education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, some of which Bude (2007) and David (2008) identified

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to include the perception of business education students, low esteem for secretarial profession, lack of students interest in the vocation. Harrison and Jones (2009) examine students' interest, prestige, student to students' interaction and teachers' influence as factors influencing career choice in tertiary institutions of learning, and how these factors differ between men and women. Most men make their career choice based on financial benefits whereas most women based their career choice on the social good of the career. Ferry (2006) asserts that adolescent occupational choice is influenced by many factors, including life context, personal aptitudes, and educational attainment.

Ferry (2006) asserts further that whether college-bound or work-bound, meeting the challenge of this developmental milestone is critical in adolescents' lives. Each man or woman undertaking the process of career choice is influenced by many factors, including the context in which they live, their personal aptitudes, and educational attainment (Bandura et al., 2001). Students all over the world are usually faced with the task of career decision taking. The choice of careers, subjects, and courses of study in schools and of subsequent paths to follow, are always difficult problems facing prospective undergraduates. The choice of careers and courses of study in schools and of subsequent paths to follow are always difficult problems facing prospective undergraduates.

Often, choosing the right subject combination leading to the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future, therefore, dedicating oneself to academic and career choices that are unattainable leads to frustration. In support of this observation, Nwosu (2009) opines that educational and vocational decision-making is not an easy task, yet at one time or the other, students are faced with the task of making choice in academic and career. The researcher emphasized that the point of choice is undoubtedly the most critical stage; this is because making a wrong choice can mar one's happiness in life as this could result to vocational maladjustment. Nwosu (2009) stresses that wrong academic and career choice may spell doom not only for the students but also the entire society; therefore, for appropriate and effective academic decision to be made by the students, many factors must be put into consideration. Tony (2009), in support of Nwosu's observation, posits that academic decision-making process generally depends on several variables. Tony (2009) explains further that students make their academic choices in tertiary institutions based on some factors.

Despite the fact that much has been written about several variables influencing choice of academic programmes in tertiary institutions and career, the literature, however, revealed that very little empirical studies have been done on demographic variables such as sex, age, expected occupation remuneration and career prospect on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. This study will, therefore, fill up this miss-

ing gap.

Statement of Problem

The lists of students enrolment into business education programme with the Heads of Departments of Business Education in four Colleges of education in the North-West geo-political zone, Nigeria namely: Federal College of Education, Zaria, Federal College of Education, Kano, Federal College of Education, Katsina and College of Education Gidan Waya, Kafanchan have shown that only very few students opt for secretarial education at NCE III level in Colleges of Education in the North-West geo-political zone, Nigeria. It is observed that inadequate enrolment of students into secretarial option of business education may be responsible for inadequate number of students in secretarial option of business education in the Colleges of Education; inadequate number of students into secretarial option of business education in Nigerian universities; inadequate trained secretarial educators to teach in secondary and post secondary schools, and inadequate trained secretaries for office occupation and even for business centre.

It was based on these problems that this study was conducted to examine factors such as sex, age, expected occupation remuneration and career prospects so as to determine their influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option in Colleges of Education in the North-West geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the influence of sex on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of age on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria?
3. What is the influence of expected occupation remuneration on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria?
4. What is the influence of career prospect on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant influence of sex on business education students' choice of secretarial option in

colleges of education in North-west Geo-political Zone, Nigeria.

2. There is no significant influence of age on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west Geo-political Zone, Nigeria.

3. There is no significant influence of expected occupation remuneration on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone.

4. Career prospect has no significant influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design of the survey type was used for the study. All NCE III final year students from colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria formed the population. Four hundred (400) final year NCEIII students were purposively sampled from the colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. A self designed questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the respondents. Section A dealt with the demographic data of the respondents while section B dealt with the expected occupation remuneration and career prospects. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through the test, re-test reliability method and reliability co-efficient of 0.80 was obtained.

In the course of answering research questions, "strongly agree" and "agree" were classified as "agree". Similarly, "strongly disagree" and "disagree" were classified as "disagree". A weighted mean of 2.5 and above was considered as an index for agree, while the weighted mean of less than 2.5 was considered as disagree. The perceptions of respondents generated were coded, entered into the computer and analyzed using the SHAZAM statistical package to run logistic regression to test all the null hypotheses 1 – 4.

RESULTS

Research question one

What is the influence of sex on students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria?

Table 1 provides answer to research question one. It shows the distribution of the business education options according to sex. Data presented in Table 1 clearly revealed that while most male students opted for accounting, more of the females opted for secretarial. This implies that most of the students perceived that secretarial education is meant for women and this discourages the majority of the students to opt for secretarial education.

Research questions two:

What is the influence of age on students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west

Table 1. Sex distribution of respondents in business education options.

Sex	Accounting	Secretarial	Total
Male	240	28	268
Female	35	52	87
Total	275	80	355

Table 2. Respondents' opinions on influence age on students' choice of secretarial option.

Option	Total score	Mean score	SD	Decision
Agree	247	1.0		
Disagree	720	3.0	0.75	1.0<2.5
Total	967	4		

geo-political zone, Nigeria?

The answer to this research question is presented in Table 2. It shows that the scores of 247 with a weighted mean of 1.0 represent the respondents who agreed that age influences business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. Those who disagreed scored 720 with a weighted mean score of 3.0 and mean deviation value of 0.75. From this analysis, the calculated value was $1.0 < 2.5$ index score. This implies that age has no significant influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Research question three:

What is the influence of expected occupation remuneration on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria?

The answer to this research question is presented in Table 3. It shows that the scores of 966 with a weighted mean of 3.4 represents the respondents who agreed that expected occupation remuneration influenced students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. Those who disagreed scored 164 with a weighted mean score of 0.6 and mean deviation value of 0.70. From this analysis, the calculated value was $3.4 > 2.5$ index score. This implies that expected occupation remuneration has influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Research question four

What is the influence of career prospect on business

Table 3. Respondents' opinions on influence of expected occupation remuneration on Students' choice of secretarial option.

Option	Total score	Mean score	SD	Decision
Agree	966	3.4		
Disagree	164	0.6	0.70	3.4>2.5
Total	1130	4		

Table 4. Respondents' opinions on influence of career prospects on students' choice of secretarial option.

Option	Total score	Mean score	SD	Decision
Agree	904	3.3		
Disagree	194	0.7	0.78	3.3>2.5
Total	1098	4		

Table 5. Estimates of demographic factors influencing students choice of secretarial option.

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic
Age	0.678	0.089
Sex	0.145*	1.998
Expected occupation remuneration	0.343**	3.694
Career prospect	0.679*	1.088
Maddalla R ²	0.756	
McFadden R ²	0.893	
LR Test	45.21	
No of Correct Predictions	98%	

*P<0.05; **P<0.10.

education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria?

The answer to this research question is presented in Table 4. It shows that the scores of 904 with a weighted mean of 3.3 represent the respondents who agreed that career prospect influenced business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. Those who disagreed scored 194 with a weighted mean score of 0.7 and mean deviation value of 0.78. From this analysis, the calculated value was 3.3 > 2.5 index score. This implies that career prospect has influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria.

Table 5 shows maximum estimates of the logit model that shows demographic factors that influence business education students' choice of secretarial option. The Log-likelihood Ratio (LR) test using the SHAZAM statistical package showed that the estimated model with the set of explanatory variables for the data was better compared

with the null model.

This suggests that the variables included in the model contribute significantly as a group to the explanation of choice behaviour of the sampled students. The R² value and percentage of predictions also suggested that the estimated choice model had a fairly good explanatory power. All the variables show as expected. Attempt has also been made to detect and correct multicollinearity among the explanatory variables in the model. The multiple regression analysis using SHAZAM was run and the Durbin-Watson statistic calculated. The result (1.469) of the analysis gave an indication that the model did not suffer from the problem of multicollinearity.

Sex, age and expected occupation remunerations and career prospects were statistically significant. The Expected Occupational Remunerations variable was found to be the most significant (P<0.05). The higher the remunerations from accounting, the more the likelihood of students choosing accounting education as against secretarial education as a career option. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted with some of the respondents revealed that most students felt occupational remunerations can better be obtained from the accounting option. Moreover, the students indicated that their intellectual and occupational potentials can best be achieved as an accountant than as secretary. When the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) respondents were asked to list and rank three most significant variables that influence their choice of career option, occupational remunerations scored 1 as the most important. The study also revealed that the sex variable was statistically significant (P<0.10).

This implied that as sex variable increases, the probability of the students opting for secretarial option increases. There were more females than males that opted for secretarial option. The FGD conducted in the field indicated that more female had interest in secretarial studies than male. This may be the reason why secretarial occupation is considered as women's world.

DISCUSSION

The result of the finding in hypothesis one revealed that sex has significant influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option. This shows that majority of students in secretarial option were females, and this formed the opinion of business education students that secretarial profession is meant for women. The result is in line with the submission of scholars like Grover (2001), Gieger (2002) and Chukwuma (2011) who state that sex (gender) has influence on choice of academic pursuit.

The finding in hypothesis two showed that age has no significant influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option. This implies that age does not really influence the choice of business education students. This simply supports the observation of Hans

(2000) and Femi and Ogunwale (2011) that age does not have impact on academic and career choice. The result in hypothesis three revealed that expected occupation remuneration had significant influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option. This implies that because of the perceived higher remuneration for accountants in office occupation, majority of students opt for accounting instead of secretarial option. This is in line with Harrison and Jone (2009) and Ifenwanta and Gardener (2010). Lastly, the finding revealed that career prospect has significant influence on business education students' choice of secretarial option in colleges of education in North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. This finding agrees with Hindi and Renninger (2006), Braden (2007) and Asagwara (2011).

Conclusion

The study concluded that the students' low preference for secretarial option of business education at this level is as a result of their inadequate awareness of the relevance and prospects of the skills acquired in secretarial education offered in colleges of education, polytechnics and universities and its lucrateness in the world of work. Consequently, this has resulted in the escalating shortage of secretarial teachers in the primary and post primary institutions of learning and secretarial professionals in office occupation respectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the study concludes that the majority of the students in colleges of education in the North-west geo-political zone, Nigeria do not opt for secretarial education as a result of inadequate awareness of its relevance, prospects and its subsequent lucrateness in the world of work, it is recommended that adequate awareness of the relevance, prospects and lucrateness of the skills acquired in secretarial education in colleges of education, polytechnics and universities be created for the students through:

1. Students' orientation programmes, seminars, workshops and conferences organize by the department of business education;
2. Guidance and Counselling Unit. The department of business education should mount this unit and be charged with the responsibility to counsel the students on appropriate career choice.
3. Media chats - the leadership of the department of business education should contact non-governmental organizations to sponsor media-chats and professionals be invited to create awareness to the students on the relevance, prospects and lucrateness of secretarial education in tertiary institutions and its corresponding usefulness in the world of work.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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