PERCEPTION OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS’ VOCATIONAL CHOICE OF SECRETARIAL STUDIES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN EDO STATE OF NIGERIA.

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Abstract: This paper examines the perceived factors that influence students’ vocational choice of secretarial studies in tertiary institutions in Edo State of Nigeria. The factors investigated included parental, peer group, gender and interest. This is informed by the low enrolment into secretarial education programmes across the universities and college of education and the poor attitude of students with regard to their self worth in spite of the many job opportunities and career satisfaction offered by this all pervasive skill oriented vocational academic programme. The design of the study was descriptive with a stratified sample of 191 subjects randomly selected from a population of 447 students enrolled in secretarial studies programmes in public tertiary institutions in Edo State during the 2006/2007 academic session. A questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data from the field for analysis. Two research questions were raised and answered; while two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The results showed that there were variations in the perceived factors that influence students’ vocational choice of secretarial studies between male and female students; and also students from the universities and college of education differed significantly with regard to some of the factors that influence their choice. Based on this conclusions were drawn and recommendation made.

Keywords: Career choice; career aspiration; vocational competence; occupational competence; decision.

INTRODUCTION

The major factors influencing occupational and vocational choice include psychological, sociological, economic, situational, political and religious. Making a good choice of career is a major concern of students, parents and governments since the aim of education is to help the individual develop occupational and vocational competences. Two related theories: the Holland’s Trait-factor theory and Developmental theories by Eli Ginzberg and Donald Super are examined.

A trait-factor theorist of note, Holland (1971), has provided a highly rational explanation of the relationship between personality traits and career development. Unlike most other theorists who emphasize the matching of individuals’
abilities to particular jobs, his theory model centers on how individuals with given personality characteristics are likely to react in work environments that are congruent with their characteristics. Holland’s major viewpoint is that a person’s choice of a vocation is an expression of his personality and that interest inventories are expression of personality and their preferred work environments. According to the theory, people search for environment that will allow them to exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values and to take on agreeable problems and avoid those found to be disagreeable. Again, it states that a person’s behaviour is determined by an interaction between his personality and the characteristics of his environment.

One of the most significant of Holland’s tenets is that ‘vocational satisfaction, stability and achievement depend upon the congruence between one’s personality and the environment (composed largely of other people). However, one of the issues against Holland’ propositions is that they have failed to sufficiently explain how people come to fall in one personality continuum, rather than another. They have also failed to point to the learning process of socialization or other factors, which make one person to be realistic, and another largely social (Weinrach, 1979). The developmental theories on the other hand, according to Ekpennyong (2005), have had an overwhelming influence on careers guidance. The basic tenet of developmental theorists is that career aspiration, occupation choice and job entry constitutes aspects of individual’s developmental tasks. The two key developmental theorists include Eli Ginzberg and Donald Super. For Ginzberg, the central assumption is that occupational choice has an irreversible process and not a once-for-all event. By irreversibility, he meant that the skill and experience acquired in one career affect future decision on career choice. Simply put, a person in a person-oriented job seeking to change jobs would normally tend to go for that which is already acquired skill and experience would be in congruence.

Ginzberg sees career development as covering three major stages:

1) Fantasy stage: (0-11years)

2) Tentative stage (early adolescent: 11-17years).

3) Realistic stage (adolescent and adulthood: 17years onward).

Career choice, Ginzberg claims, involves making compromise, that is choosing a career which one can make maximum use of one’s interests and capabilities in such a manner that will satisfy his goals, but in doing that, “one has to weigh the environmental factors likely to either enhance or inhibit achieving a maximum degree of satisfaction in one’s life and work”. Ginzberg has since modified his ideas on career decision-making process including those of irreversibility. This change of position came about as a response to serious objection by his critics. Ginzberg (1972) later view is that occupational choice is a life-long process of decision making of which an individual seeks to find the optimal fit between his career preparation of goals and the realities of the world of work.

By far the most publicized theory of vocational development is that put forward by Super (1957; 1971). The significance of Super’s theory, which incidentally takes its roots from that of Ginzberg, lies partly in his 10 and later in (Super 1981) 12 propositions about career development. The central theme of the proposition is that career development is characterized by life stages and involves a process of compromise and adjustment as well as the implementation of one’s self-concept. Super (1971) adds that work is a way of life and adequate vocational and personal adjustments are most likely to result when both the nature of work itself and the way of life that goes with it (the kind of community, home, leisure time activities, friends, etc.) are congenial to the aptitudes, interest and value of the person. These theories are examined because they related to the vocational aspirations of vocational students, especially in this instance, secretarial education students. Ekpenyong (2005) admonishes that those concerned with vocational education and, in particular, career teachers, are aware that it is only a small fraction of youth that can on their own solve their career and identity problems. These identity and career problems are peculiar to many secretarial education students because the secretarial studies, is usually not their first choice of study.

Parental influence has been implicated in the career choice of children (Roe 1987, Adigwe 1981, Okeke 1996, Gesinde 1986). Okeke for example also studied the relationship between parental occupations and their children’s occupational preferences. Okeke found that 60% of the children were willing to take after their fathers' occupations (medicine) while 23% were willing to follow their mothers’ occupations (nursing). Gesinde on the other hand posits that parents influence is much more intricate and more pervasive than is shown. Students of secondary and tertiary institutions are often not aware of these influences and may accept the choice of their parents as theirs. The situation owes its origin to early childhood when the child grabs his parent’s attitude towards different vocations. A conflict therefore occurs when the child submits to his parent’s choice while at the same time deeply resenting his submissions as he becomes aware of his loss of independence and finds his area of interest.
Peer groups also have influence on the occupation choice of students. In his view Hinchilife (1973) observes that friends are an important factor in the career choice of adolescents. Durojaiye (1970) also found that 76.5% of the pupils he studied said that their classmates would be employed in professional occupations just like them; while 24% said that their chosen jobs would be same as those of their friends.

Interest is also a significant factor in students’ vocational choice. Owie (2003) advanced the position that the most important reason why a person chooses a particular career is that the person has intrinsic interest in the field. While this may be highly influenced by prior academic achievement, it is, however, expected that intrinsic interest remains a primary factor if the individual is going to be effective, satisfied and excel in the career. Where intrinsic interest is lacking, no amount of training motivation or gratification would significantly increase the person’s professional effectiveness. He pointed out that a considerably large numbers of prospective teachers in this country found themselves in colleges of education not because of a basic interest in teaching but as a result of a complex combination of factors such as poor secondary school academic records, and low JAMB scores. However a good number of students seem to prefer a career in teaching because they are intrinsically motivated and hence highly interested in the job.

The role of gender in students’ vocational choice cannot be underplayed. In most parts of the country, the cultural roles expectations of men and women are known to be clearly defined. Some studies have shown significant relationship between gender and occupational aspirations, preference and choice. In the Nigeria society, boys and girls often undergo different socialization experiences and they tend to learn different gender roles and behaviour patterns and hence develop different interests. These roles and interests later become the dominant factors in career choice. Gesinde’s (1976) study also showed that gender plays an important role in determining the career preferences of students. Other research findings which support gender differences in career preferences and choices include the works of Yuh (1980) who in her study of some correlates of vocational orientations of some Nigerian secondary students discovered that significantly, more male students preferred realistic, investigative and enterprising careers than females.

Secretarial studies, is a very viable career option for competent graduates. Secretarial Studies is the specialized phase of vocational business education. It prepares recipients for office occupations as secretaries, executive secretaries, administrative assistants, and function in other similar titles describing jobs similar or overlapping those of the traditional secretary such as office coordinator, executive assistant, office manager and administrative professional. Secretarial Studies is offered in the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. The secretarial studies programmes offered in the universities and colleges of education, however, have the education components that give the graduates the option to teach in secondary schools or source for employment in offices as secretaries. Those especially from the universities can also function as administrative officers in the public and private sectors of the economy. Executive secretaries/assistants and personal assistants are very much in demand in the present political dispensation in Nigeria where they act as influential and trusted aides to politicians. They also assist chief executives of different types of organizations to function maximally. With the developments in ICT the secretarial graduate can offer secretarial services as an entrepreneur on commercial scale. He/she can also act as consultant to many organizations in fashioning out modern office procedures and practices.

Statement of the Problem

The world economy took a downward turn in early 2008 due to the global economic meltdown. Nigeria as country was not insulated from the effect of this meltdown. There were job losses not only as a result of downsizing or rightsizing the workforce but also as a result of capacity underutilization in industries. There has been general unemployment and especially graduate unemployment which still persists. There are, however, numerous job opportunities for competent secretarial studies graduates in many industries ranging from education, health to government and retail trade. Indeed, secretaries and administrative assistants are said to have held 4.3 million jobs in 2008 in the United States and accounts for the largest job category in the United State. The situation in Nigeria may not be different but many youths are unaware of the vast opportunities secretarial studies would provide them with. They see secretarial education is a course of last resort and for many youths it is essentially for the female. Unemployment is ravaging graduates from all levels of tertiary education yet the goldmine of secretarial studies records low enrolment (the author, 2009) and the few students enrolled do not seem to see much self worth in themselves. What have to be determined are the factors that are responsible for the vocational choice of secretarial studies by students of tertiary institutions in Edo State of Nigeria.
Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the perceived factors that influence both male and female secretarial studies students’ choice of secretarial studies programmes. Secondly, the study also determined whether both sexes differ in their perception of the factors that influenced their choice of secretarial studies as a course of study as well as whether there was any difference in perception between students in the universities and those in college of education with regard to these factors.

Research Questions

To guide the study, the following four research questions were asked:

1. What are the perceived factors that influence male students’ choice of Secretarial Studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State?

2. What are the perceived factors that influence female students’ choice of Secretarial Studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State?

3. Is there any significant difference between male and female students in the perception of factors that influence their choice of Secretarial Studies programmes in tertiary institution in Edo State?

4. Is there any significant difference between students in the universities and those in the colleges of education in their perceptions of factors that influence their choice of Secretarial Studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State?

Questions one and two were answered while three and four were formulated into null hypotheses for testing

Hypotheses

The two null hypotheses formulated and tested are reported here below:

HO₁: There is no significant difference between male and female students in the perception of factors that influenced their choice of Secretarial Studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the perceived factors that influence the choice of Secretarial Studies programmes between students in the universities and those in the college of education in Edo State.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covered public tertiary institutions in Edo State offering Business Education (Secretarial Studies) programmes. There are two public universities and one college of education offering secretarial studies programmes in Edo State. Male and female students’ ratings of perceived factors that influence their choice of secretarial studies as a vocational programme including gender, parental and peer group influences, and interest are covered.
METHOD OF STUDY

The research design was descriptive. This is because information collected from the subjects was not manipulated. The subjects used for the study were students who were already in the programme. The perceived factors that influenced their vocational choice included parental and peer group, interest and gender.

Population and sample for the Study

The population for the study consisted of two universities and one college of education with a registered secretarial students population of 447 in 2006/2007 session. This figure was made up of 52 or 12% from University of Benin, 323 or 72% from Ambrose Ali University, and 72 or 16% from College of Education. The sample size of the study comprised 191 subjects representing 43% of the total population of 447 students enrolled in secretarial studies programmes in the three public tertiary institutions in Edo State during the 2006/2007 academic session. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 191 subjects comprising 300 and 400 level students from the universities and 200 and 300 level students from the college of education. The sample of 191 was distributed among the three institutions in this manner - University of Benin 44 (23%), Ambrose Ali University 70 (40%), and College of Education, Ekiadolor 70 (37%)

Instrumentation

An instrument titled “Questionnaire on Factors that Influenced Students’ Choice of Secretarial Studies” was used. The first part of the questionnaire dealt with the sex type of students and their academic levels; 200 and 300 levels for college of education students and 300 and 400 levels for university students, respectively. The second part with a 4-point response scale dealt with parental, peer group, gender and interest as perceived factors that influence students’ choice of secretarial studies. The research instrument was subjected to thorough examination by specialists in measurement and evaluation in the Faculty of Education to ensure the content and construct validity. The test re-test measurement technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A pilot study was conducted using 15 students each from Delta State University, Abraka and College of Education, Agbor. The questionnaire was administered to them twice within an interval of two weeks. The two sets of data collected were treated to Pearson (r) and a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was established.

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section outlines the following: the demographic characteristics of the subjects; answers to the research questions raised to guide the study; and testing of the hypotheses formulated for the investigation of the problem under study.
Sample Description of Subjects in frequency Tables 1, 2 and 3

Table 1: Distribution of Subjects by Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Benin</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrose Ali University</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>191</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

Table 1 shows that 44 (23%) of the subjects of the study were from University of Benin, Benin City (UNIBEN); while 77 (40.3%) were from Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma (AAU) and 70 (36.6%) of them were from the College of Education, Ekiadolor.

Table 2: Distribution of Subjects by Academic level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>191</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

As presented in Table 2 (two) 55 (29%) of the 191 subjects in universities were drawn from 300 level, while 65 (34.03%) were from 400 level. For college of education subjects 33 (17.30%) were drawn from 200 level; while 37 (19.40%) were from 300 level.

Table 3: Distribution of Subjects by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>191</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork

Table 3 shows that out of the 191 subjects used for the study 53 (27.7%) were male; while 138 (73.3%) were female.
**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The three research questions asked to guide the study were answered in this section.

**Research Question One:** What are the perceived factors that influenced male students’ choice of Secretarial Studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State?

The four perceived factors of gender, parental, peer group and interest were ranked by mean, standard deviation and mean percentage statistics. The ranking is shown in table 4.

**Table 4:** Mean % ranking table of perceived factors that influenced male Students’ Choice of Secretarial Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>2.356</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>2.376</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Group</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>2.669</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>3.664</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Fieldwork*

Table 4 shows that peer group with a mean per cent of 66 ranked first as a factor that influenced male students choice of secretarial studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State while parental factor followed second with a mean per cent of 63. Gender ranked third with a mean per cent of 61 and interest was in the fourth position with a mean per cent of 57.

**Research Question Two:** What are the perceived factors that influenced female students choice of secretarial studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State?

To answer the above research question the four perceived factors of gender, parental, peer group and interest were ranked by mean, standard deviation and mean percentage statistics. The ranking is shown in table 5.

**Table 5:** Mean % ranking table of perceived factors that influenced female Students’ Choice of Secretarial Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Factors</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>3.042</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>3.061</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Group</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>3.266</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>4.790</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Fieldwork*

Table 5 indicates that interest ranked first as a factor that influenced female students choice of secretarial studies programmes with a mean per cent of 46 whereas in the second position was peer group with a mean per cent of 33; while both gender and parental factors ranked third with a mean per cent of 30 each.
Hypotheses:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between male and female students in the perception of factors that influenced their choice of Secretarial Studies programmes in tertiary institutions in Edo State.

The t-test statistic was used to test this hypothesis along the four perceived factors of parental influence, gender, peer group and interest between male and female students. The result is presented in table 6.

**Table 6:** t-test summary table of difference between male and female students in the perceived factors that influenced their choice of secretarial studies programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Factors</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>t-cal.</th>
<th>t-table</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Parental</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>2.375</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2.002</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>3.042</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Peer Group</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Interest</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11.40</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>9.72</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork α=0.05

(a) Parental Factor

Table 6 item (a) shows that with regard to parental factor as a variable that influenced male and female students choice of secretarial studies the result indicates that the calculated ‘t’ was 2.002 which is greater than the table ‘t’ of 1.96 at .05 level of significance hence the hypothesis with regard to that factor is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between male and female secretarial studies students with regard to their perception of parents as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies programmes. The mean score of the male students (7.51) is higher than female students (6.58) establishing that male students perceive parental factor more than female students as a factor that influenced their choice secretarial studies.

(b) Gender Factor

Table 6 item (b) indicates that there was no significant difference between male and female secretarial studies students in their perception of gender as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies. The calculated ‘t’ of 1.72 was less than the table value of ‘t’ of 1.96 thus the hypothesis with regard to this factor is retained.

(c) Peer Group Factor

Table 6 item c shows that the calculated ‘t’ of 1.92 was less the critical ‘t’ of 1.96 thus the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their perception of peer group as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies is retained.
(d) Interest Factor

Table 6 item (d) indicates that there was a significant difference between male and female secretarial studies students in their perception of interest as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies. Thus, the hypothesis with regard to this factor is, therefore, rejected as the calculated \( t \) of 2.31 is greater than the table of \( t \) of 1.96. The mean score of the male students of 11.40 is higher than that of the female students of 9.72 which suggested that the male students perceive interest more as a that factor influenced their choice of secretarial studies than the female students.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the perception of factors that influenced the choice of secretarial studies programmes between students in the universities and college of education in Edo State

The t-test was used to test the above hypothesis to establish whether secretarial students from the universities and college of education differ significantly in their perception of factors that influenced their choice of secretarial studies programmes. The four perceived factors were parental, gender, peer group and interest. The result is shown in table 7.

Table 7: t-test Summary table of difference between universities and college of education students in the perceived factors that influenced their choice of secretarial studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Factors</th>
<th>Institution Students</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-cal.</th>
<th>t-table</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Parental</td>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-2.762</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coll. of Education</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-4.727</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Gender</td>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-2.343</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coll. of Education</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-3.427</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Peer Group</td>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-2.343</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coll. of Education</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-1.796</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Interest</td>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>9.74</td>
<td>5.518</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-1.796</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coll. of Education</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10.96</td>
<td>1.797</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>-1.796</td>
<td>-1.96</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork \( \alpha = 0.05 \)

(a) Parental Factor

Table 1 item (a) result shows that both secretarial students’ universities and college of education differ significantly with regard to parental factor as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies programmes. This is because the calculated \( t \) of −2.762 is greater than the critical \( t \) of −1.96 thus rejecting the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between students in the universities and college of education with regard to parental factor as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies is rejected. The mean score of college education students of 7.59 is higher than that of universities students of 6.40 suggesting that students in college of education perceive parental factor more as a factor responsible for their choice of secretarial studies.
(b) Gender Factor

Table 7 item (b) In terms of gender factor, this table result reveals that universities students and college of education students also differ significantly in their perception of gender as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies. The table ‘t’ was –1.96 while the calculated ‘t’ was –4.727. Since the calculated ‘t’ was greater than table ‘t’ the hypothesis is rejected. Looking at their mean scores the college of education students have a higher mean of 8.04 which is greater than the universities students of 6.09 thus indicating that college of education students perceive gender more as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies than universities students.

(c) Peer Group

Table 7 item (c) result shows that with regard to peer group as a factor that influenced universities and college of education students choice of secretarial studies there was a significant difference in their perception as the calculated ‘t’ of –2.343 is greater than table ‘t’ of –1.96 hence the hypothesis with regard to this factor is rejected. Eyeballing the mean scores the college of education student scored a mean 7.90 while universities students scored a mean of 6.81 suggesting also that college of education students perceive peer group factor stronger than their universities counterparts as the factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies.

(d) Interest Factor

Table 7 item (d) result indicates that there was no significant difference between universities students and college of education students with regard to their perception of interest as a factor that influenced their choice of secretarial studies. This was because the calculated ‘t’ of –1.796 was less than the critical ‘t’ of –1.96 thus the hypothesis with regard to this factor is retained.

DISCUSSING OF FINDINGS

The main purpose of this study was to determine the perceived factors that influence students’ choice of secretarial studies as a vocational education programme in tertiary institutions in Edo State of Nigeria. The factors included: gender, parents, peer group and interest. When the factors were ranked by the male students in order of which the factors were more influential to their choice it was revealed that peer group factor scored the highest mean per cent of 66 and a mean of 7.91 with a standard deviation of 2.669. This was closely followed in the second position by parental factor with a mean per cent of 63, while gender came third as it scored a mean per cent of 61; and interest factor was the fourth in ranking with a mean per cent of 57. This finding agrees with Hinchilife (1973) and Duroyaiye (1970) who found in their studies that friends weigh heavily with some students, and that friends are an important factor in the career choice of adolescents.

When the female students’ perception of factors was ranked as per the second research question, it slightly contradicted with that of the male students. In their case, interest ranked highest with a mean per cent of 46 and a mean of 9.72 and a standard deviation of 4.790. This was followed in the second position by peer group factor with a mean per cent of 33; while gender and parental factors bracketed in the third position with a mean per cent of 30. This finding agrees with Owie’s (2003) view that the most important reason why a person chooses a particular career is that the person has intrinsic interest in the field. He, however, observed that a large number of teachers in Nigeria found themselves in colleges of education not because of a basic interest in teaching but as a result of a complex combination of factors such as poor secondary school academic result, and low JAMB scores. He, nevertheless, remarked that a good number of students seem to prefer a career in teaching because they are intrinsically motivated and hence high interest in the job. What is not in doubt is that interest is a vital factor not only in the choice of a career but also contributes to learning. From the ranking of the perceived factors that influenced students’ choice of secretarial studies the result revealed that interest and peer group were most influential factors to both female and male respectively.
The result of hypothesis 1 which stated that there was no significant difference between male and female students’ in their perception of factors that influence their choice of secretarial studies was very interesting. A t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis with regard to each of the factors. The result revealed that male and female students did not differ significantly in their perception of peer group and gender factors thus the hypothesis with regard to these two factors was retained. With regard to parental and interest factors the hypothesis was rejected. This was because the t-calculated of 2.002 and 2.31 for parental and interest factors, respectively were greater than the table value of “t” of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. Nevertheless a critical examination of the result revealed that male students perceived parental factors more than the female students. The male students scored a mean of 7.51 with a standard deviation of 2.375 while the female students scored a mean of 6.58 with a standard deviation of 3.042.

On interest as a factor that influenced the choice of secretarial studies male students scored also a higher mean of 11.40 with a standard deviation of 3.64 while the female students scored a mean of 9.72 with a standard deviation of 4.79. The result also showed that male and female differ significantly in their perception of parents and interest as factors that influenced their choice of secretarial studies with the male students perceiving both factors stronger than female students. But on gender and peer group factors there was no significant difference in their perceptions.

Finally, the result of the t-test of hypothesis two which stated that there was no significant difference in the perception of factors that influenced students’ choice of secretarial students between students in the universities and college of education was retained with regard to the factor of interest only. Both students in universities and college of education did not differ in their perception of this factor. However, with regard to parental, gender and peer group factors there were significant differences as the hypotheses with reference to these factors were rejected. Students from college of education perceived parental factor as more influential to their choice than students from the universities. College of education students scored a mean of 7.59 with a standard deviation of 1.25 while the universities students scored a mean of 6.40 with a standard deviation of 3.43. The calculated “t” was -2.762 compared with the table value of “t” of -1.96; hence the hypothesis was rejected. With regards to gender as a factor college of education students scored a mean of 8.04 with standard deviation of 0.94 while universities students scored a mean of 6.09 with standard deviation of 3.38 with a table value of “t” of -1.96 while the calculated “t” was -4.727 the hypothesis was, therefore, rejected with regard to this factor.

Peer group was another factor tested with this hypothesis and the result showed that college of education students had a higher mean of 7.90 with a standard deviation of 1.05; while university students scored a mean of 6.81 with a standard deviation of 3.81. The hypothesis with regard to this factor was rejected as the calculated “t” of -2.343 was greater than the table value of “t” of -1.96. What the results signify is that both students in the universities and college of education in Edo State perceived the factors of parents, gender and peer group different from the factors that influenced their choice of secretarial studies programme. There was, however, no significant difference in their perception with regard to interest as a factor that influenced their choice.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There was a variation in the perception of perceived factors that influenced the choice secretarial studies between male and female students as male and female students differed significantly in their perception with regard to such factors as parental and interest. There was no significant difference in their perception in respect of gender and peer group factors. Secretarial studies students in the universities differ significantly from their college of education counterparts with regard to their perception of parental, gender and peer group as factors that influenced their choice of secretarial studies programmes. They, however, did not differ significantly with regard to interest as a factor.

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendation is made: Both male and female candidates should be encouraged to enroll into secretarial studies programmes through the activities of their professional bodies and beneficiaries of the programmes. This is because the result of this study showed that there was no gender bias by both male and female in their choice of secretarial studies.
REFERENCES


