

Career Aspirations of Secondary School Students with Visual Impairment in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the career aspirations of students with visual impairment in senior secondary schools in Enugu state. Three research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population was 28 senior secondary students who are visually impaired in three secondary schools designated for students with visual impairment in the state. There was no sampling technique since the population was small. The researcher designed questionnaire was used to generate data. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis. Findings showed that the career aspirations of the visually impaired students were mainly in the Arts, Social Sciences and Education. While the main sources of career information was from their colleagues and mass media. It was also noted that counsellors' influence was not felt by the students with visual impairment. Furthermore, the inaccessibility to basic facilities such as library and science laboratory were major factors affecting the career aspirations of the students. Parents had an influence on the career aspirations of the students but peer pressure was not a dominant factor affecting their career aspirations. Gender had a significant influence on the career aspirations of the students. Recommendations were made based on the findings.

Keywords: Career Aspirations, Secondary School Students, Visual Impairment, Enugu State

INTRODUCTION

The choice of a career is a crucial decision one makes in life, yet such an important decision is made by many individuals without giving much thought to it. Many Nigerian students especially at the senior secondary level are faced with the reality that they are about to enter the occupational world and have to narrow their occupational possibilities to something quite specific. Some students may not even have an inclination of what career they would like to pursue out of the myriads that exist among which are medicine, engineering, education, computer science, architecture, law and business administration among others (Rao, cited in Obura & Ajowi, 2012). This issue becomes more problematic when the student has some disabilities. Recently, many social scientists have paid attention to the plight of disabled students not only in developed but also in developing countries. Although, technological advancement, globalization, internationalization of media and effort made by international institutions, including international non-governmental organizations have

created rooms for students with disabilities to compete equally for jobs with others. The situation unfortunately is still unsatisfactory.

Research has shown that one of the major ways through which persons with disability can contribute meaningfully to the national economy is involvement in career activities. Several authors have tried to define career. According to Omeje (2007), career is a progress or general course of action of a person through life or through some phase of life. He further saw career as the totality of occupation which an individual occupies throughout his life or the totality of occupation, job positions throughout a person's working life. Also Eze (2010) sees career as the series of work, roles or position one has assumed in a chosen field of work and pursued in a lifetime. The researchers view career as the sum total of life activities, which begins with professional training that is geared towards the world of work and later life activities. It is the totality of human tasks from cradle to grave. This involves practical skill acquisition, job or duty and lifelong occupation or vocation. Therefore, career cannot be complete without employment.

According to Olubela (2003), persons with disabilities generally can be employed in government establishment (skilled, semi-skilled and menial jobs), non-governmental organisations, private business establishments, private home keeping jobs and self-employment. However, the story of employment for disabled persons in Nigeria is not a very good one. The military Head of State in 1986 made a policy statement that 2% of the government workforce should be reserved for persons with disabilities. This was also re-echoed in the Nigerians with disabilities decree of 1993, which proposed 10% of the government workforce to be reserved for persons with disabilities. However, the picture remains bleak for many students with visual impairment. This is basically due to the imbalance in the career aspirations of people with visual impairment generally on one hand and societal stigmatization on the other hand. Most Nigerian students with visual impairment aspire to study disciplines in the arts and social sciences rather than the fields of engineering and natural sciences. In every part of Nigeria, there are persons with special needs who are begging on the streets. Okafor (2003) maintained that majority of these disabled beggars whether young or old cannot read or write. Even those who can read and write are forced to beg because they have no opportunity for employment. This is because the society feels that their deformities will limit their abilities to work or contribute in any way to the economy of the nation.

The term 'aspiration' is widely used to capture the various desires and ambitions held by young people about their future. Aspirations may centre on lifestyle or self-fulfillment, or revolve around roles in the family or community (such as occupying a caring or leadership function). Interests are sometimes used interchangeably with aspirations. However, Rojewski (2005) emphasized that "Aspirations represent individual goals given ideal conditions, while interests reflect an individual's emotional disposition toward particular career options". Career aspirations also refer to the goals that one has set out to achieve in either the current profession, or another desired profession. They are usually future oriented and aim to provide personal satisfaction. The researchers view career aspiration as a desire to achieve personally spelt out occupational goals. It is a desired and willing intention made towards specific life activities which gives satisfaction to the individuals involved. In other words, students with disabilities at the secondary school level are expected to formulate and desire their goals in terms of making career choice, as they advance towards tertiary education. This could be in the arts, social sciences, education, physical sciences and engineering fields respectively.

Recently, persons with visual impairment in Enugu state of Nigeria, are pitching deep into the formal education system. This scenario has witnessed persons with visual impairment acquiring university education mainly in the Art, Social Sciences and Education faculties. It is also important to note that the physical sciences and engineering fields of study are not widely open to persons with visual impairment, particularly in Nigeria. even though Bitrus Gani, a visually impaired person has contributed immensely to the field of physiotherapy and was head of department of Physiotherapy, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Abang, 2003). This is in sharp contrast to persons with visual impairment in the west, who made their impacts felt in the fields of science and engineering. For instance, Nicholas Saunderson (1682-1739) was so brilliant that he surpassed his entire lecturers. He advanced the "Palpable Arithmetic" which is a forerunner of the present day arithmetic Board for the blind. Leonard Euler (1707-1783) left his foot prints in Switzerland. As a blind person, he became a great mathematician, credited with first evolving the calculus of variation. Louis Braille (1804-1924) was a blind man who made the most impressive technological innovations in the world of music, education, economic and social problem in the world through his invention of the Braille alphabets. Through this invention, a New World was opened to the blind. Other notable visually impaired scientists include; Dr D. Kent Cullers, the National American Space Agency (NASA) scientist who developed the computer software radio which astronomers use to hunt for alien microwave signals in the SETI project (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence), has been blind since birth. Cullers heads the SETI Institute's Project Phoenix search of nearby Sun-like stars and has devoted most of his professional life to seeking evidence of life elsewhere in the Universe. Another famous visually impaired scientist was the Belgian physicist Joseph Plateau (1801-1883), who was the inventor of the stroboscope. He interpreted the results in a great work "Statique experimentale et theoretique des liquidessoumis aux seules forces moleculaires", where he was the first to

enunciate the role of intermolecular forces in film stability. Also, Geerat J.V. appeared in a "New Scientist" supplement (2 November 1996, pp. 10), a professor of Geology at the University of California in Davis, who studied marine molluscs by touch. He became blind when he was six. He has written several scientific books and a biography, "Privileged Hands" published in 1997. He has received several awards for his scientific work (Abang, 2003).

Therefore, the present situation where the majority of persons with visual impairment are condemned to a life of total dependence on career aspirations in the arts and social sciences cannot be justified because they can also do well in the natural sciences and engineering if they are properly educated. The paper postulated the following reasons as factors that influence the career aspiration of visually impaired students in Enugu state. The perceived challenges include the main agents of socialisation. The family, school and peer are social forces whose influence on human activities cannot be overlooked. Disabled people have always been discriminated and stigmatized across cultures for thousands of years (Livenah, 1980). The attitude of students without disability towards disabled ones is stigmatizing and discriminating. Negative attitudes of peers have a tremendous impact on the life of an individual with handicap. The person's self-concept, cognitive and social development, academic performance, and general psychological health may be largely affected. When an individual is not accepted by his or her peers, the educational environment and social opportunities in the school, community and work may greatly suffer (Woodard, 1995). Also in line with Ann Roe's postulation where she identified three types of parental rearing practices in the home. These rearing practices are majorly responsible for the child's vocation later in life. With this assertion, it is possible that the career aspirations of visually impaired students especially towards the physical sciences and engineering may have been negatively affected by the social environment where they live.

Despite these challenges facing the career life of persons with disabilities in general and persons with visual disabilities in particular, they are expected to aspire towards their career without any hindrances to any field of choice. This is especially so for those who are literate and possess the necessary means for educational advancement. However, judging from experience, it has been revealed that students with visual impairments in Nigeria were admitted more in the faculties of arts, social sciences and education, the reason for this trend is not yet known or fully understood. In order to accomplish this task, three research questions and one null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Nworgu (2006:77) observed that descriptive surveys "are those studies which aim at collecting data on and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population." Descriptive survey design therefore has the quality of revealing current conditions of issues in order to illustrate areas where there is need for

adjustment. This design is appropriate as it would thus seek the opinion of respondents on their attended careers and the factors affecting their career aspiration. The study was carried out in Enugu state south-eastern Nigeria. There are two hundred and eighty seven (287) senior secondary schools spread across the 17 local Government areas of Enugu state. Out of which three senior secondary schools are known to accommodate visually impaired students. These schools are: College of Immaculate Conception (C.I.C), Girls High school Ngwo and Queens College Enugu. The population of study consisted of all the 28 senior secondary school students in Enugu state who are visually impaired in the three designated secondary schools which cater for students with visual impairment. The breakdown of the population is as follows: College of Immaculate Conception (7 boys), Girls High School, Ngwo (11 girls) and Queens College (10 girls) respectively making a total population of 28 students. All the students who were visually impaired were used for the study: (7 Males) and (21 females). Therefore there was no need for sampling since the population is manageable. The instrument that was used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, titled Visual Impairment and Career Aspiration (VICA) questionnaire. This questionnaire adopted a four point scale. The instrument is divided into two sections A and B. Section A dealt with the demographic variables, while B contains 18 items in 3 clusters. Cluster A which dealt on their career aspiration has five items, while Cluster B which identified sources of career information, in the study area has four items. Cluster C which looked at the various factors affecting career aspiration of the visually impaired, has nine items. The respondents were provided a response pattern of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4points, Agree (A) = 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1point. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument for the study, 15 copies of the instrument was trial tested among senior class students in special school for the blind Afara, Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, which is outside the study area. The internal consistency was determined using Cronbach Alpha and an internal consistency reliability scores were obtained as follows: Cluster A= 0.73, Cluster B =0.79 and Cluster C= 0.64. The overall internal reliability estimate was 0.74. These coefficient values were considered satisfactory to attest to the reliability of the instrument. Mean and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions while the hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The decision level was determined using a mean score of 2.50. Therefore, any item with the mean score of 2.50 and above was considered agree or accepted while those below 2.50 were considered disagree or rejected.

RESULTS

The data analyzed are presented in Tables based on the research questions and hypotheses which guided the study.

Research Question 1: What are the career aspirations of the visually impaired senior secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation (SD) ratings of career aspirations of the visually impaired senior secondary school students in Enugu State?

No	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	I will love to be an Engineer	1.46	0.83	Disagreed
2.	I will love to be a medical practitioner	2.43	1.10	Disagreed
3.	I love to be a journalist	3.25	.512	Agreed
4.	I love to be a social worker	2.79	1.07	Agreed
5.	I love to be a teacher	2.75	1.11	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.54	0.93	Agreed

The result in Table 1 indicates that item one and two on career aspirations of the visually impaired which capture careers in Engineering and Medical fields are not acceptable among the careers chosen by visually impaired students in Enugu State.. While item 3, 4 and 5 agreed mean of 3.25, 2.79 and 2.75 respectively. The grand mean for the entire items was 2.54 which was above the acceptable level of 2.50, which implies that visually impaired students preferred courses in Arts, Social Science and Education.

Research Question 2: What are sources of career information available to visually impaired senior secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) ratings on sources of career information available to senior secondary school visually impaired students in Enugu State.

No	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
6.	The counselor in my school gives career talk on a regular basis.	2.46	1.138	Disagreed
7.	I heard other students talk about the career.	2.82	.723	Agreed
8.	I heard of the career from the media.	2.71	.976	Agreed
9.	I was informed of my career from the local library.	1.82	.819	Disagreed
Grand Mean		2.45	0.91	Agreed

Results in Table 2 indicates that the highest rated item is item 7 with a mean score of 2.82 and standard deviation of 0.72. This item indicate that sources of career information or

awareness for visually impaired senior secondary school students in Enugu State comes from their fellow counterparts and also item 8 which captured information from the media with mean score of 2.71 and standard deviation of 0.976 respectively. Item 6 and 9 with mean scores of 2.46 and 1.82 with standard deviation of 1.138 and 0.819 are disagreed with by the respondents as sources of career information available to the visually impaired students in senior secondary school students in Enugu State. The grand mean was 2.45 with the standard deviation of 0.91 which was below decision mean of 2.50. By implication the available sources of career information to visually impaired students in Enugu State is relatively few.

Research Question 3: What are the factors that affect the career aspiration of visually impaired senior secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation (SD) ratings on factors affecting career aspirations of the secondary school visually impaired students in Enugu State.

No	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
10.	My choice of career is influenced by my friends	1.86	1.04	Disagreed
11.	It is safer to choose career already chosen by others	3.00	1.68	Agreed
12.	My friends always shout at me when i talk about my career	2.46	2.52	Disagreed
13.	The lab in my school is not accessible to students with visual impairment	3.09	2.05	Agreed
14.	There is no special education teacher in my school	3.07	1.11	Agreed
15.	The school library is not accessible to students with visual impairment	2.89	1.06	Agreed
16.	My parents asked me to choose a career on the basis of my interest	2.79	1.06	Agreed
17.	I prefer to choose the same career as my parents	2.50	3.93	Agreed
18.	My parents encourage me to choose a career of their choice	2.88	.653	Disagreed
Grand Mean		2.60	1.68	Agreed

The results of the analysis in Table 3 indicates that apart from items 10, and 12 with mean responses below the criterion mean of 2.50, every other item were rated positive and had a mean score above 2.50. This shows that the major factors affecting career aspirations of students with visual impairment are inaccessible school facilities and parental factors. The highest rated item in the table is item 13 which indicated that the highest factor affecting career aspiration of visually impaired is that, the laboratory in the schools is not accessible to students with visual impairment. On the other hand, item 10 which is the least rated item, shows that peer influence does not affect the career aspirations of students with visual impairment.

The null hypothesis for the study was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1: Gender has no significant influence on career aspiration of students with visual impairment of senior secondary school in Enugu State.

Table 4: t-test Analysis on the influence of gender on career aspiration of students with visual impairment of senior secondary school in Enugu State.

Gender	N	Mean	SD df	Sig.	Decision
Male	7	48.0	6.32 26	.024	Reject
Female	21	42.6	4.68		

The t-test analysis in Table 4 shows that gender has a significant influence on career aspiration of students with visual impairment. From the analysis, it was observed that 0.024 significant value at 26 degree of freedom was less than 0.05 probability level. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant influence of gender on career aspiration of students with visual impairment is rejected. The result shows that the male visually impaired students have more career aspirations than their female counterparts. Therefore, gender was a significant factor in the career aspiration of students with visual impairment of senior secondary school in Enugu State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings in this study showed that, students with visual impairment preferred to aspire towards careers in the arts, social sciences and education while showing disillusionment towards careers in the field of engineering and physical sciences. This is in sharp contrast to their counterparts in the western world, as noted by Abang (2002), who cited that visually impaired persons in the western world were excelling in the areas of science and engineering, while the visually impaired persons in Nigeria were lagging behind. Supporting

the findings, Okoro (2001) explained that disabled students generally are not gaining from the general science curriculum. This may be because many teachers who teach science to the exceptional children in our schools are not adequately skilled or knowledgeable in the appropriate teaching methods of exceptional children. This makes it difficult for them to understand the psychology of disability; hence they apply the same method used for normal children in the teaching of science to the exceptional children.

The study noted that the major sources of career information available to students with visual impairment were the media and discussion from peers. This finding agrees with the assertion of Okoro (2001) who said that students find it easier to get career information from their colleagues, i.e. taking career counselling from their peers instead of going to their teachers or guidance counsellors. Also supporting the finding, Omeje (2007) explained that the mass media is a veritable and relevant source for career information. This information may be in print or electronic media and in several forms such as career talk, career education workshops among others.

Furthermore, the study revealed that inaccessible school facilities and the family were major factors affecting the career aspirations of students with visual impairment. This is in line with the views of Okoro (2007) who stated that parents project their ambition into the careers of their children, dictating the type of career they want for their children, while peer influence was not a significant factor affecting the career aspirations of students with visual impairment. This is in sharp contrast with the assertions of Woodard (1995), which stated that peer pressure, had significant influence in the career aspirations of individuals. From the findings, it was noted that child rearing pattern by parents might also be responsible for their aspirations towards various vocations in life, as postulated by Anne Row. In a related development, Durojaiye (1976) noted that parents are known to have high level of aspiration and motivation quite in appropriate to their children's interest, personality and intellectual capabilities. Also as supported by Okoro, (2001), it is important to note that, school infrastructures such as, science laboratories, workshops, libraries, recreational facilities and so on, should be made accessible to students with visual impairment in Enugu state.

Gender influence on the career aspirations of visually impaired senior secondary school students the study revealed that gender had a significant influence on the career aspirations of students with visual impairment. From the analysis, it was observed that the male visually impaired students have higher career aspirations than their female counterparts. Therefore, gender was a significant factor in the career aspirations of visually impaired senior secondary school students in Enugu State. It is in the light of this, that Olokesusi (2003) observed that special educationists should devote more time and expertise on disability and gender related issues in order to avert any form of negative gender related consequences.

CONCLUSIONS

This research study has identified the career aspirations of visually impaired senior secondary school students, their sources of career information and factors affecting their aspirations. The career aspirations of students with visual impairment in Enugu State were in the Arts and Social Sciences; this is in sharp contrast to their counterparts in the Western World. The major sources of career information available to visually impaired students are from their fellow colleagues and the mass media. The influence of school counsellors and library as sources of career information available to students with visual impairment was not felt. The major factors affecting the career aspirations of students with visual impairment can be outlined thus; inaccessible school infrastructure, lack of efficient or effective manpower and family or parental factors. Gender has significant influence on the career aspirations of students with visual impairment.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study have important implications for visually impaired students, career counsellors, special educators, government and other stakeholders in the educational sector. The findings of the study shows that the major factors affecting the career aspiration of visually impaired students are inaccessible school facilities, lack of professional personnel and parental factors; this is irrespective of their gender disparity. As shown by the study, until the major barriers or factors affecting the career aspirations of students with visual impairment are addressed, students will not be able to aspire for careers in the physical sciences and Engineering fields respectively. The findings will enable the government, special educators and other stakeholders create the enabling environment that will support the widening of the scope of the career aspirations of students with visual impairment in the sciences to enable them measure up with their counterparts in the Western World.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study: Firstly, counsellors and special educators should attend workshops and seminars that will help to broaden their skills and knowledge, especially in the area of handling clients with special needs. Secondly, government should adapt school facilities such as libraries and laboratories so that they will be accessible to students with visual impairment in secondary schools. This is to enable them develop interest in the area of Sciences. Also, curriculum planners should as a matter of urgency and necessity address the general science curriculum with a view to making special adaptations that will suit the educational needs of students with special needs at all levels of the Nigerian educational system. Areas such as teaching methodology and teaching aids must be reviewed for special adaptations. This may go a long way in making visually impaired students to develop careers in the sciences. In addition, students with visual impairment should be encouraged to visit counselling unit so that they will be acquainted with the services rendered by the

counselors so as to be properly guided in their carrier. Finally, parents should be made to be aware of the right child rearing pattern especially when they have to deal with children with special needs. It should be noted that all necessary support services from the counsellors and special educators should be made available to parents and, at all times. This will help them to know their children's abilities in order not to jeopardise their career aspirations.

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