

Original Research Article

Does Self-efficacy have a Relationship with Career Aspiration? A Study among Secondary School Students in Anambra State

Abstract

Aims: In Anambra state, Nigeria, making a choice of career has remained a constant challenge for many students, especially those in the senior secondary who are on the verge of making a choice of career. This study investigated academic self-efficacy as predictor of achievement career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Methodology: The study adopted a correlation research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The sample 2,700 SS1 and SS 2 students were selected from a population of 32,450 senior secondary school students. Two research instruments were used for data collection. These are: Career Aspiration Scale (CAS) and Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES). The internal consistency reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha statistics. The results are as follows: CAS 0.891; ASES 0.842. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed and retrieved through direct delivery method. Data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Simple linear regression analysis was used in answering research questions and testing the hypotheses.

Results: The finding of the study revealed among others that academic self-efficacy of the secondary school students is not a significant predictor of their career aspiration.

Conclusion: Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that academic self-efficacy of secondary school students is not a significant predictor of their achievement career, leaderships and educational aspiration. It was recommended that Guidance Counsellors working in secondary schools should organise workshops that will be geared towards enhancing students' academic self-efficacy and help them in aspiring for careers that are in line with their academic self-efficacy.

Keywords: career aspiration, academic, self-efficacy, achievement, leadership, educational, students

1. Introduction

Taking decisions concerning ones career is an important task among students which typically begins as early as in primary schools for and progresses throughout the lifespan. For these students, the desire to choose a career could mean a lot because it has the tendency to guides and shape their life. Career aspiration is a progressive process that could extend

throughout life and tends to involve not a single decision, but a series of decisions. Career aspiration is more than just wanting a job that is a good fit for a person's interests; it is a far more difficult process. This is because a profession has different traits that allow it to be classified as a type of labour. According to Chemeli (2013), these features create an environment in which career counselling and assistance may take place. Chemeli's features include volition and choice, appropriateness, preparedness, on-going growth, and social-personal elements.

Career could be any area of life that is related with work. However, in the context of career counselling, the breadth is far larger and more extensive. As a result, from an occupational standpoint, it might be viewed as an employment or a profession that often requires specific training or formal education and is regarded to be a person's life job. When regarded in this light, a career is considered as a series of connected occupations, generally undertaken within a certain industry or sector (Hooley, Marriott, Watts and Coiffait, 2012). Choosing a career entails more than just selecting an employment; yet, the choice serves as the foundation from which one's career develops.

According to Pam (2013), career aspiration is the choice of a vocation based on a variety of criteria such as ability, parental influence, career counselling, and part-time work, among others. Career achievement aspiration, on the other hand is defined by Phifer (2014) as the sum of decisions that shape one's educational, social, economic, political, and spiritual endeavours and represent the people's distinctive and essential life values. It entails more than just choosing an occupation, however that choice serves as the foundation from which one's career develops. It might be considered as a process that assists people in developing and accepting who they are and their perceived responsibilities in the workplace by supporting them in comparing these conceptions to what is actual and what can offer them and the society happiness. Thus, in the context of this study, career aspiration is defined as

secondary school students' desires, dreams, and career thoughts (verbalised or non-verbalized) that influence what they intend to study in school that will help them engage in the world of work to achieve their desired educational or leadership goals.

The above definition assumes that career aspiration relates to a variety of aspects of a student's life, learning, and later, work, which allows one to understand how the student aspires to achieve within their career and how their career aspiration may change over time. In essence, career aspiration could be a predictor of one's future success in the workplace.

In this day and age of innovation, digitalization, and globalisation, students, particularly those in secondary school, may find it difficult to choose a career path. **Despina, Kostas, Argyropoulou & Tampouri (2012)** and **Jamali, Araqi & kalantarkousheh (2015)** have found that without proper career guidance, these students become insecure about career decisions. Adedunni and Oyesoji (2013) also noted that between 20% and 60% of new students entering institutions of higher learning are undecided about their intended career paths. Career navigation and planning is difficult and stressful, but it is one of the most important decisions for success and growth. It involves uncertainty, twists, and the job market changing at an even faster rate, such that choosing or changing a career path for most students may be a confusing and anxiety-ridden experience due to recent advancements in various careers.

The availability of so many career options with few opportunities for its application in Nigeria may have contributed to students becoming even more confused and concerned about which career to pursue. As a result, many students' career goals may be influenced more by an individual's employability than by their potentials, interests, values, and special abilities. Opinions and attitudes of family members, teachers, relatives, and peers are also significant factors influencing students' career aspirations. However, according to Alkhelil (2016), only a minority of people may consider their capabilities when making career decisions.

The individual's view about his or her capabilities is referred to as self-efficacy. According to **Bandura (2001)**, self-efficacy is defined as one's belief in ability to accomplish a task in particular perspective. According to Bandura, the students' beliefs and attitudes toward their capabilities to achieve academic success, as well as belief in their ability to fulfil academic tasks and the successful learning of the materials is referred to as academic self-efficacy. It is defined by Khan (2013) as students' confidence in mastering academic subjects. Thus, in the context of this study, academic self-efficacy refers to the students' beliefs and attitudes toward their capabilities to achieve academic success.

Academic self-efficacy is specific to the context of academia and focuses on a person's belief about themselves regarding academic tasks. Academic self-efficacy according to Tembo and Ngwira (2016) is one of the important factors influencing academic performance. Moreover, a study conducted by Crisan and Turda (2015) on connection between the level of career indecision and the perceived self-efficacy have confirmed that perceived self-efficacy impacts on students' aspirations, levels of interest in academic pursuit, academic accomplishments and how well they prepare themselves for different occupational careers. This indicates that some students may enter school better prepared and, as a result, have higher levels of academic self-efficacy which would allow them to perform better.

From the foregoing, it is evident that self-efficacy has received considerable attention in the career literature over the years. However, not much of the research has focused on investing the contribution of students' self-efficacy on career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. However, for students in secondary schools in Anambra state, Nigeria, the process of making a choice is complex and unique for each individual depending on cognitive factors and social structures of the individual's environment which in most cases does not seem to present a clear direction for the students. The context in which career decisions occur seems complex and therefore many students require assistance in exploring

the most suitable choice of career. This researcher was consequently motivated to investigate academic self-efficacy as predictor of students' career aspiration in secondary schools in Anambra state.

1. Statement of the Problem

The process of making a decision is complex and unique for each student, depending on cognitive factors and social structures in the individual's environment, which does not always appear to provide a clear direction for the students. As a result, students tend to face challenges in deciding on the right career. Although globally, studies have been conducted to investigate factors influencing students' career choices, no study that this researcher is aware of has investigated students' academic self-efficacy as predictor of secondary school students' career aspirations in Anambra state, Nigeria. This is a known gap in the literature that this study intends to fill.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate academic self-efficacy as predictor of career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. The extent to which academic self-efficacy predict achievement career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.
2. The extent to which academic self-efficacy predict leadership career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.
3. The extent to which academic self-efficacy predict educational career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.

2.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study.

- 1 To what extent does academic self-efficacy predict achievement career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state?
- 2 To what extent does academic self-efficacy predict leadership career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state?
- 3 To what extent does academic self-efficacy predict educational career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state?

2.3 Hypotheses

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

1. Academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of achievement career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.
2. Academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of leadership career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.
3. Academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of educational career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

The study was conducted using a correlational research design. The design was used because it sought to establish the relationship that exists between variables; academic self-efficacy and career aspiration of secondary school students and in Anambra State, Nigeria.

3.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in Anambra State, located in the South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. A good number of students in secondary schools seems to have challenge when it comes to making a choice of career.

3.3 Participants

A total 2,700 SS1 and SS 2 students in public secondary schools in Anambra state made up the sample for this study. In selecting the sample for the study, a multi-stage sampling approach was used in selecting the sample from a population of 32,450 students.

3.4 Instrument for Data Collection

In this sample, two research instruments were used to gather input from married school teachers. The tools include the Career Aspiration Scale (CAS) and Academic Self-efficacy Scale (ASES). The scale was developed by Gregor and O'Brien (2015) and adapted for this study. The instrument consists of 24 items that measures student's aspiration in the achievement, leadership and education domain.

Data Collection and Analysis

The two test instruments were administered to all study participants through direct distribution. Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the data collected. Linear regression analysis was used in answering research questions and testing the null hypotheses.

4. Results

In this section, the data collected from the field for this study were analysed and the summaries presented in tables to highlight the findings as follows:

Research Question 1

To what extent does academic self-efficacy predict achievement career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state?

Null Hypothesis 1

Academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of achievement career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.

Table 1: Regression analysis on academic self-efficacy prediction of achievement career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	%	Beta	df	Cal. t	P<0.05	Remark
0.026	0.001	0.000	0.0	0.026	2681	1.372	0.170	NS

In Table 1, it was observed that academic self-efficacy had Beta of 0.026. This indicates that academic self-efficacy contributed only 2.6 percent of achievement career aspiration of the students.

Again, at 2681df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t1.372 with P.value 0.170 which is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, academic self-efficacy of the secondary school students is not a significant predictor of their achievement career aspiration.

Research Question 2

To what extent does academic self-efficacy predict leadership career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state?

Null Hypothesis 2

Academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of leadership career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.

Table 2: Regression analysis on academic self-efficacy prediction of leadership career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	%	Beta	df	Cal. t	P<0.05	Remark
0.015	0.000	0.000	0.0	0.015	2681	0.765	0.444	NS

Table 2 reveals that academic self-efficacy had Beta of 0.015. This indicates that academic self-efficacy contributed only 1.5 percent of leadership career aspiration of the students.

Again, at 2681df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated $t_{0.765}$ with P.value 0.444 which is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, academic self-efficacy of the secondary school students is not a significant predictor of their leadership career aspiration.

Research Question 3

To what extent does academic self-efficacy predict educational career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state?

Null Hypothesis 3

Academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of educational career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state.

Table 3: Regression analysis on academic self-efficacy prediction of educational career aspiration of secondary school students in Anambra state

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	%	Beta	df	Cal. t	P<0.05	Remark
0.019	0.000	0.000	0.0	0.019	2681	1.004	0.316	NS

Table 3 shows that academic self-efficacy had Beta of 0.019. This indicates that academic self-efficacy contributed only 1.9 percent of educational career aspiration of the students.

Also, at 2681df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated $t_{1.004}$ with P.value 0.316 which is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, academic self-efficacy of the secondary school students is not a significant predictor of their educational career aspiration.

5. Discussions

The findings of the study as shown in table 1, 2 and 3 revealed that academic self-efficacy of the secondary school students is not a significant predictor of their achievement, leadership and educational career aspirations. The finding is an indication that the belief a student holds about his or her academic ability with regard to his or her academic do not have significant contribution on the extent to which the students believe that they can evaluate, collect career information, select goals, make plans and solve problems relevant to career decision making.

Although the results **is** surprising, the findings are in agreement with the findings of previous studies such as Houghton, Wood, Hattie, Gordon and Bower (2009) whose study findings reveal that academic and social self-efficacy had negative relationships respectively with academic aspiration and academic achievement. However the relationship between academic aspiration and academic achievement was not significant. The findings on the other hand disagreed with Bindu and Padmanabhan (2016) whose study found that there exists a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and career aspiration among higher secondary school students.

The reason for the findings could be attributed to the notion that most of the students may not have been adequately prepared to take career decisions by themselves. Hence, the students' major source of career information would likely be from the parents of the school. Winga (2021) study reveals that as much as other sources are available for career information, most students rely on their career masters for information. The results according to Winga also indicate that 9% of the students got career information from their parents, 23% got career information from the newspapers, 9% got career information from the internet and a total of 3.92% got career information from multiple sources. In such situation therefore, the students'

academic self-efficacy may be the only factor that will have meaningful contributions to their career aspiration.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that academic self-efficacy of secondary school students is not a significant predictor of their achievement career, leaderships and educational aspiration. Thus, these findings would likely help Guidance Counsellors and other educators in recognizing their students' individual academic efficacy in making career choices.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. The school management should work collaboratively with the school guidance counsellors to organise workshops for the students that will likely expose the students on the need to put into consideration their academic self-efficacy in choosing a career as understanding it will help them to make sense of their career key scores and how they relate to future job success.
2. Guidance Counsellors working in secondary schools should organise workshops that will be geared towards enhancing students' academic self-efficacy and help them in aspiring for careers that are in line with their academic self-efficacy.

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