



# FAMILY DYNAMICS IN CAREER DECISION-MAKING AMONG ADOLESCENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN CALABAR METROPOLIS

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored parental factors as determinants of career choice among adolescents with learning disabilities in Calabar metropolis. The study focused on three variables: parents' economic status, number of siblings, and parents' educational level. A survey research design was adopted, and the sample comprised 100 students with learning disabilities, purposively selected. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire titled family dynamics in Career Decision Making of Adolescents with Learning Disabilities. The reliability of the instrument, determined was Cronbach's Alpha, yielded a value of  $r = 0.877$ , Data was analyzed using Chi-square tests. The findings showed that parental economic status, categorized as high, moderate, and low, had no significant association with career choice ( $X^2(df = 6) = 4.816$ ,  $p = .444$ ), as  $p > .05$ . Thus, the null hypothesis was retained, the number of siblings, categorized into 1–3, 4–6, and above 6, had a significant influence with career choice ( $X^2(df = 6) = 26.214$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with  $p < .05$ . Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis was accepted, and there was no significant association between parental educational qualifications categorized into primary, secondary, and tertiary and career choice ( $X^2(df = 6) = 10.02$ ,  $p = .124$ ), as  $p > .05$ . The null hypothesis was retained. Based on these findings, it is recommended that families foster better interaction between adolescents with learning disabilities and their siblings to enhance the dissemination of career-related information. Additionally, families should develop a deeper understanding of the nature and effects of the learning disabilities on career choice, as this will enable them to plan and support their career and job placement.

**KEYWORDS:** Adolescent, Parents, Career, learning disability.

## INTRODUCTION

The major part of people's life is spent in occupational activities and these pursuits do more than simply provide income for livelihood.

There is a widespread agreement that the high school years are crucial for adolescents to become prepared for the transition from school to work or college.

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Secondary school years present the transition from the cooperatively sheltered life of primary school to the freedom and responsibility of tertiary education or employment. Career guidance is widely accepted as a powerful and effective method of bridging the gap between education and the world of work. Career guidance programmes are therefore intended to help students understand their own potential and develop them to the full. The process of making a choice is complex and unique for each individual depending on cognitive factors and social structures of the individual's milieu (Braza & Guillo, 2015) A career choice is a decision that most human beings make sometime in their lives; it is a decision that should be carefully considered since it can affect the rest of a person's life. Therefore, the goal of career guidance and counseling is to allow an individual to explore his or her options (Lazarus & Ihuoma, 2011). Career guidance comprises a range of processes designed to enable individuals to make informed choices and transitions related to their educational, vocational and personal development (Watts, 2005). The goal of guidance and counseling services is to enable each learner in institutions of learning to derive optimal educational benefits to utilize his or her potential. It also instills confidence and positive attitudes, derives fulfillment and inculcates an eagerness for lifelong learning (Ajufu, 2013). Countries need citizens who are able to make the best use of their talents and make career choices that will help them to be motivated and productive (Hiebert, 2019).

Career choice is simply the selection of vocations from given alternatives. Career choice is also the selection or picking up of a career, which one has the potentials of entering. Before a choice exists, there must be an alternative occupations for one to pick from. The freedom of choice is also very fundamental in the success of any kind of work an individual will pursue. The author also noted that in primitive societies choice is highly restricted or may not even exist; while in developed societies, the possibility of choice is much greater. He further observed that although some societies could have range of different occupations, certain strong societal sanctions often compel and restrict individuals to work in the same occupations of their parents. However, the freedom of choice of occupation has very

important consequence both for the individual and the society.

Career is a sequence of employment related positions, roles, actions and experiences. A career defines how one sees oneself in the context of one's social environment, in terms of one's future plans, one's past accomplishments or failures and one's present competences and attributes. Career is also seen as the interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person's lifespan including both paid and unpaid work. Career is also seen as the progress and actions taken by a person throughout a lifetime, especially related to that person's occupations (Oloasebikan & Olusakin, 2014). In this study, the term "career" refers to any type of professional engagement students pursue whether paid or unpaid.

Adolescence is a time of rapid physical, emotional and mental development, which is occasionally complicated by high school setting, increased responsibilities and the desire to become an adult. Problems of emancipation, independence and freedom from the family occupy the early stage, while problems of social role and personal purpose within are the wider prevalent world during the later stage. Over the whole span of adolescent, the developmental task is to integrate earlier elements into a true sense of identity as a separate individual, no longer taking a partial or external view of self. Gottfredson (2022) observed that it is during adolescence that student develop an orientation toward their internal and unique self. During the adolescence period, young adolescents begin their experience with the learning process of educational decision-making. This process which will be repeated in various forms and across many points throughout the lifespan (Brynes, 2022), with most adolescents recognizing that decisions made at school can have a significant impact on future life paths in education and career decision (Furlonger, 2022). Parental attitude towards their children with learning disabilities is important in determining their career choice and achievement of the child. Favorable attitude enhances parental involvement in children's present and future decisions. The first interactions of a child with people takes place within its home among members of its family who include parents, siblings and relatives (Bollu-steve & Sanni, 2013).

A child is affected by a number of family-related factors such as the marital relationship of the parents, the economic status of the family, the atmosphere of the home (whether parents are warm or hostile), the environmental condition, occupational status of the parents and the number of siblings in the family, but this study will focus on parent economic status, number of siblings, and parental educational level. It is the parents who exert the major influence on the development of the child from birth to maturity. Agulana (2016) pointed out that the family lays the psychological, moral and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child. Healthy parental attitudes results in acceptance of the child's disability and facilitates therapeutic progress of the child.

The choice of career is a crucial decision one makes in life, yet such an important decision is made without giving much thought to it. Many learning disabilities adolescents 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 adolescents with learning disabilities may not even have an inclination of what vocation or 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).

A child with learning disabilities is one having learning problems characterized by difficulty with certain skills such as reading, writing, mathematics or listening not found in individuals with normal intelligence. Learning disabilities affect the ability to process and interpret what the child sees and hears or the ability to link information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways such as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, coordination, self-regulation, or attention. Such difficulties extend to schoolwork and impede learning to read, or write, listen or solve mathematics problems (Lazarus, 2011). Children with learning disabilities face enormous problems trying to learn, some of them never acquire the level of proficiency that will equip them for a successful life. A child who is constantly working and achieving below peers, leaves a puzzling effect in the minds of teachers, parents, peers and even on his/her own mind. What is more disturbing is the trauma the child goes through

thinking about school, trying to unravel why the constant failure in specific academic areas, this must be very frustrating for the child. It is therefore obvious that for a child with a learning disability to attain the expected skills and knowledge level, teachers play a crucial role beyond what is obtainable for typically developing children. Classroom teachers need certain cognitive and affective traits that not only strengthen learning enthusiasm and weaken the psychology of learned helplessness typical of these children but also importantly improve learning outcome of these learners.

Regardless of the fact that children with learning disabilities may have average or above average intelligence, they continue to face overarching problems trying to learn. Some of them never acquire the level of proficiency that will equip them for a successful life in becoming problem solvers, planners, creators, learners and thinkers, communicators among others. This poor learning outcome has become concerning not only to themselves and parents but also the society at large. This is a travesty of societal expectation of educating them to contribute their quota to the development of the nation. What is more disturbing is the trauma the adolescent with learning disability goes through thinking about choosing a career for themselves, trying to unravel why they constantly fail in specific academic and career decisions regardless of their academic potential. The poor academic achievements spiral out to the wrong choice of career even though this concern over the years has led national and international governments to increase educational investments in terms of funding, resources and inclusive education policies and even creating skill acquisition centers for persons with learning disability, but the problem still persist, hence the reason for this study, to determine parental factor such as, parent economic status, number of siblings and parent educational status, influence career choice of adolescent with learning disability in Calabar metropolis.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of this study was to determine:

- 1 the influence of parent economic status as a determinant of career choice among adolescents with learning disability in Calabar Metropolis
- 2 influence of number of siblings as determinant of career choice among adolescents with learning disability in Calabar Metropolis

3 influence of parent educational level as determinants of career choice among adolescents with learning disability in Calabar Metropolis

#### **Statement of hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study

1 There is no significant influence of parent economic status as a determinant of career choice among adolescents with learning disability

2 There is no significant influence of number of siblings as determinant of career choice among adolescents with learning disability

3 There is no significant influence of parent educational level as determinants of career choice among adolescents with learning disability

#### **Research questions**

1 What is the influence of parent economic status as a determinant of career choice among adolescents with learning disability?

2 What is the influence of number of siblings as determinant of career choice among adolescents with learning disability?

3 How does parent educational level influence career choice among adolescents with learning disability?

#### **METHODOLOGY**

Survey research design was adopted for this study because it examined the attitudes, opinions and views of families (including parents and other members of family) factors as determinants of career choice of adolescents with learning disability. The variables were examined the way they exist naturally without manipulation. The population for the study was One hundred adolescents with learning disability and the sampling technique was purposive sampling technique and the sample was 100 persons with

learning disabilities in the study area which was based on their availability, personal consent and their unique characteristics. The selection was made through the Special Education Centre, Ibom Layout, Calabar and department of special education, university of Calabar. Based on the societal attitude towards persons with LD and their families, the ethical responsibility of confidentiality was assured and maintained. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Parental Factor as Determinant of Career Choice of Adolescents with LD (PFDCCAL). The instrument contained fifteen items on parents' opinions on the career choice of adolescents with learning disability which was self-design and It was dully validated by experts in test and measurement, and the reliability value was determined using Cronbach Alpha, was  $r = 0.877$  which indicated that it was significant .

#### **Study variables**

Variables include parent economic status, number of siblings, and parents educational level.

#### **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

Hypothesis one

There is no significant association between parental economic factor and career choice among adolescents with learning disability. The independent variable is parental economic factor categorized as high, moderate, and low while the dependent variable is career choice categorized as those who choose medicine, engineering, law and others. To test this hypothesis, chi square statistic was used and the result showed that  $\chi^2 (df=6)=4.816, p>.05$ . Since  $p (.444)$  is greater than  $p(.05)$ , this implies that the null hypothesis that parental economic factors has no association with career choice among adolescents with learning disability is retained. Hence, the null hypothesis accepted.

**Table 1:** Chi -squares result of the association between parental economic factor and career choice

			Economic factors				X <sup>2</sup>	Df	p-val
			High	moderate	Low	Total			
Career	Medicine	Count	7	7	2	16	5.816	6	.444
		Expected Count	4.6	7.5	3.8	16.0			
	Engineering	Count	11	13	11	35			
		Expected Count	10.1	16.5	8.4	35.0			
	Law	Count	4	12	6	22			
		Expected Count	6.4	10.3	5.3	22.0			
	Others	Count	7	15	5	27			
		Expected Count	7.8	12.7	6.5	27.0			
	Total	Count	29	47	24	100			
		Expected Count	29.0	47.0	24.0	100.0			

**Hypothesis two**

There is no significant association between number of siblings and career choice among adolescents with learning disability. The independent variable is number of siblings categorized 1-3 children, 4-6 children and above 6 children while the dependent variable is career choice categorized as those who choose medicine, engineering, law and others. To test this

hypothesis, chi square statistic was used and the result showed that  $X^2(df=6)=26.214$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Since  $p(.000)$  is less than  $p(.05)$ , this implies that the null hypothesis that number of siblings has no association with career choice among adolescents with learning disability is rejected. Hence, the null hypothesis rejected and the alternate hypothesis retained

**Table 2:** Chi -squares result of the association between number of siblings and career choice

			Number			Total	X <sup>2</sup>	Df	p-val
			1-3 children	4-6children	above 6 children				
Career	Medicine	Count	7	9	0	16	26.214	6	.000
		Expected Count	6.1	7.0	2.9	16.0			
	Engineering	Count	18	15	2	35			
		Expected Count	13.3	15.4	6.3	35.0			
	Law	Count	9	10	3	22			
		Expected Count	8.4	9.7	4.0	22.0			
	Others	Count	4	10	13	27			
		Expected Count	10.3	11.9	4.9	27.0			
	Total	Count	38	44	18	100			
		Expected Count	38.0	44.0	18.0	100.0			

**Hypothesis three**

There is no significant association between parental educational qualification and career choice among adolescents with learning disability. The independent variable is parental educational qualification, categorized as those with primary, secondary and tertiary qualifications, while the dependent variable is career choice, categorized as those who choose medicine, engineering, law

and others. To test this hypothesis, chi-square statistic was used, and the result showed that  $X^2((df=6)=10.02$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Since  $p(.124)$  is greater than  $p(.05)$ , this implies that the null hypothesis that parental educational qualification has no association with career choice among adolescents with learning disability is retained. Hence, the null hypothesis is retained, and the alternate hypothesis is rejected

**Table 3:** Chi -squares result of the association between parental educational qualification and career choice

			Education				X²	Df	p-val
Career			primary	Secondary	tertiary	Total			
	Medicine	Count	8	6	2	16	10.02	6	.124
		Expected Count	6.4	7.2	2.4	16.0			
	Engineering	Count	12	21	2	35			
		Expected Count	14.0	15.7	5.3	35.0			
	Law	Count	9	10	3	22			
		Expected Count	8.8	9.9	3.3	22.0			
	Others	Count	11	8	8	27			
		Expected Count	10.8	12.2	4.1	27.0			
Total	Count	40	45	15	100				
	Expected Count	40.0	45.0	15.0	100.0				

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results in Table one indicated that there was a significant association between parental economic factor and career choice of the independent variables that is  $X^2(df=6)=4.816$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Since  $p(.444)$  is greater than  $p(.05)$ , this implies that the null hypothesis that parental economic factors have no association with career choice among adolescents with learning disability is retained. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. This result is in agreement with the work of Beavis (2016), who found out that family and teacher factors when combined effectively, could influence the career decisions of students. This is a result of the resultant efforts of both family and teacher support.

The result in the table 2 showed that  $X^2(df=6)=26.214$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Since  $p(.000)$  is less than  $p(.05)$ , this implies that the null hypothesis that a number of siblings has no association with career choice among adolescents with learning disability is rejected. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis was retained. This study agrees with Steelman, Powell, Werum, and Carter (2022), who described sibling configuration as incorporating features of the family system such as the number of siblings, ordinal position, age 10 spacing between children, and sex composition of the siblings. Sibling dynamics and individual development are affected by these configurations and are seen as "silent variables, or the components of one's experiences, perceptions, and "psychological position in the family" that are easily and often overlooked. Some of these aspects include the structure and dynamics of sibling relationships.

Therefore, these factors are likely to influence the acquired personality traits of each individual and not their career choices.

The results on table three showed that family attitudes are significant to career decision of adolescents with learning disability  $X^2(df=6)=10.02$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Since  $p(.124)$  is greater than  $p(.05)$ , this implies that the null hypothesis that parental educational qualification has no association with career choice among adolescents with learning disability is retained. This findings support the work of Clark, Marschark & Karchmer (2011) that students whose family are more concerned about their education have broader experience in both academic and career decision. This is also in line with the work of Author and Maker (2018) that family cohesion has a significant effect on the career decision of adolescents with learning disability. Moreover, the results from the study support the findings of Brown (2017) and Lent (2015) agree that family influence has great impact on the decision making of an individual. The reason for this could be that the family has much positive expectation about the adolescent ability to make career decisions. They provide enough motivation and encouragement that foster wider information and horizon about occupation and career decision.

### CONCLUSION

This study's findings showed that family and teacher factors positively contribute to the career decisions of adolescents with learning disability; with this revelation, their lack of adequate career decision knowledge can be enhanced through the concerted efforts of parents and siblings.

There is no doubt that these findings are consistent with the previous literature on career decisions of adolescents with learning disability, showing their deficit in career decisions and how the situation could be enhanced through active involvement of parental factors in their career decisions for maximum utilization of their potential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommendations;

- Families of adolescents with learning disability should have positive attitudes and expectations about their children with learning disability and career choices. They should be optimistic that their children with learning disability could make wise career decisions when given the appropriate support and training.
- There should be adequate interaction between other siblings and those with learning disability in order to foster proper dissemination of vital information about career education and career development. It would be advisable for families of adolescents with learning disability to understand the nature and level of learning disability to enhance job placement
- Career education programme should be offered as a routine advancement programme for adolescents with learning disability
- Special teachers who are saddled with the responsibility of pedagogue should perceive career decision as an important aspect of education of adolescents with learning disability for future satisfaction and fulfillment.

## Authorship Contribution Statement

Unimuke: conceptualization, analysis, writing, review, and editing; Michael: data acquisition, analysis, review, and editing; Woshor and Cynthia: analysis, writing, review, and editing.

## Ethical declarations

On January 23, 2024, the school authorities gave verbally informed consent to conduct research in the respective schools. Participant consent was not required, and all personal data were de-personalized. No other ethical declarations are applicable.

## Consent to participate.

Not applicable.

## Consent for publication.

Not applicable.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare zero interpersonal or financial conflict of interest.

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