

PARENTS, PEER GROUP AND SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS CORRELATES OF CHOICE OF SUBJECT COMBINATION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OSOGBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OSUN STATE

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Abstract

This study examined parents, peer group and school counselors as correlates of choice of subject combination among secondary school students in Osogbo local government area of Osun state. Three research questions were raised while three research hypotheses were generated for the study. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey descriptive design. The study population comprised all secondary school teachers in Osogbo local government area of Osun state. A total of 212 secondary school teachers were selected using simple random sampling technique from five selected secondary schools in Osogbo local government area of Osun state, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire named “Influence of parents, peer group, councilors and students’ choice of subject combination questionnaire was used to collect data. Cronbach alpha coefficient estimate was calculated to be 0.82 meaning the instrument is reliable. Percentage was used to answer the research questions while t-test analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Based on the findings from this study, parents, peer groups and school counselors have significant influence on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school. This led to the conclusion that, in the near future, students will choose their senior secondary school courses based on recommendations from parents, peer groups, and school counselors. It was recommended among others that parents should be invited by school principals and career masters to raise awareness among them. This can help parents recognize the value of their children's subject combination selection and cease discouraging them from pursuing subjects in secondary education.

Keywords: Parents, Peer groups, School Counselor, Correlates and Subject Combination.

Introduction

Students’ academic achievement has been garnering the attention of stakeholders in education (Clark, 2022). People believe that education is costly and consumes a large amount of national resources, whether they are allocated for it or not (Clark, 2022). According to Cooley & Comber (2023), secondary school is a transitional period of schooling and this is a time of emerging youth ability (examining talents) to choose between studying science, social science, art, or business, depending on the student's abilities. The ability to do so can be largely predicted based on test results or aptitude assessments administered by schools, or it can be influenced by peer pressure, parental influence, or teacher advice, depending on the situation (Davies, Adnett & Turnbull, 2023).

Making decisions from a variety of options is a necessary aspect of living. People must make certain significant decisions at different points in their lives (Begg, Bentham & Tyler, 2018). A person may be affected by some of these choices for the rest of their life. The selection of subjects for senior secondary school is one such delicate and life-altering decision. It is one choice that often affects how far a student will go in their schooling and profession (Burchett, 2020). Numerous elements that impact secondary school pupils' choice of subjects have been

found by researchers. Numerous factors, including school policies, parental, peer group and school counselor influence, academic ability, intelligence, age, sex, ignorance, and accidental choice, are identified in some of the literature as potentially influencing students' choice of subjects (Owoyele & Toyobo, 2018; Walean & Koyongian, 2018; Kikechi et al., 2023). It is still unclear how much of each of these elements contributed.

Parents that are exceedingly wealthy and rich tend to programming the kind of discipline or vocations they want their children to offer. Parents in the medical, legal, or artistic fields, for example, would prefer that their kids follow in their footsteps to avoid having the large sums of money invested in the firm either become useless or be inherited by someone outside the family. They frequently have an impact on students' topic choices, which may not be in the best interests of the young person. While parent from the remote places with less means may not be luxury to advice their wards to select choice of subject basing on their interest. Consequently, these kids are easily swayed by the influence of their peers or school counselors. Okeke (2020) found that parents significantly influenced their children's choice of academic and careers. The traits of their parents were a major factor in the technical subject that students chose. Also, Mabunda (2022) noted that parents' role in getting their child ready for school was vital. Parents influenced the child's development and future choices in life more than anybody else during the socialization process.

Numerous peers serve as significant role models and are seen as effective channels for transferring attitudes, values, conventions, and thought and behavior patterns. Students frequently express a want to be around their peers. In the end, peer pressure or influence leads them to pursue their purpose. Hashim and Embong (2021) found that peer groups influenced young people's job choices while they were in school. Adeyinka and Kolawole (2022) also noted that students' choices of subjects could be impacted by the expectations that schools had for them or by the goals of their peer group.

The significance of guidance and counselling programs in secondary schools is in giving students a better understanding of how to select course combinations that will help them reach their long-term educational professional and vocational goals (Adebowale, 2022). Eliamani, Richard and Peter (2017) listed education as one of the socio economic and cultural elements influencing profession choice. Adeyemi (2019) stated that because students look up to their instructors as role models, they may desire to choose the subjects that the teachers are teaching. Ming-Shang and Chin-Shark (2021) found that teacher expectation had an influence on secondary school students' professional decision making. When a student has been misled by friends to choose a subject based on the interests of his peers rather than necessary taking into account their interests and talents, peer pressure can impede the progress of guidance and counseling programs. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the influence of parents, peer group and school counselors as correlates of choice of subject combination among secondary school students in Osogbo local government area of Osun state.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of choice of subject combination among secondary school students in Osogbo local government area of Osun state is increasingly complex and multi-faced. A significant challenge lies in understanding the intricate interplay of parental influence, peer group pressure and counsellor influence in shaping these choice decisions. Despite the crucial role that informed subject combination choices play in determining the future success and satisfaction of these students, many students still struggle with making decisions that align with their interest.

The traditional expectation and aspirations of parents often exert a considerable influence, sometimes overshadowing the personal interest and aptitudes of the impact subject

combination choices, as students. Automatically, peer group pressure can significantly impact students' combination choices, as students are often swayed by the opinion and decisions of their friends, sometimes leading to choices that are not in their best interest. Furthermore, when a student has been misled by friends to choose a subject based on the interests of his peers rather than necessary taking into account their interest and talents peer pressure can impede the progress of guidance and counselling programs. Consequently, there is a critical need to explore and address these factors to help students make more informed and autonomous subject combination choices that are conducive to their long-term development and success. It is on this back drop that this study investigates influence of parents, peer group and counselors as correlates of choice of subject combination among secondary school students in Osogbo local government area of Osun state.

Objectives of the study

The specific objective are to:

- 1) examine the influence of parents on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.
- 2) identify the influence of peer group on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.
- 3) find out the influence of school counselors on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What is the level of influence of parents on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state?
2. What is the level of influence of peer group on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state?
3. What is the level of influence of school counselors on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated:

H₀₁: Parents do not have significant influence on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.

H₀₂: Peer groups do not have significant influence on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.

H₀₃: School counselors do not have significant influence on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.

Methodology

The study employed cross-sectional survey descriptive design. The study population comprised all secondary school teachers in Osogbo local government area of Osun state. The sample size of 212 teachers were used for the study, 212 teachers were chosen by a simple random selection approach from five selected secondary schools in Osogbo Local Government Area of Osun State using simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire named "Influence of parents, peer group, councilors and student's choice of subject combination" was used for data collection for this study. The questionnaire has four sections: Section A contains items that were used to draw out the demographic data about the respondent such as school, class etc. Sections B contains 4 likert scale questions strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

The structured questionnaire was presented to experts who made necessary modification to give face and content validities. A pre-test of the questionnaire was carried out with 10% of the sample size. The questionnaire was administered and Cronbach alpha coefficient estimate was calculated to be 0.82 meaning the instrument is reliable. The research personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents at their schools for data collection, which lasted for two days. The collected data were analyzed using percentages and t-test analysis. Percentage was used to answer the research questions raised while the t-test analysis was used to test the hypotheses generated. The research hypotheses were evaluated at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Question 1: What is the influence of parents on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state?

Table 1: Influence of Parents on Student’s Choice of Subject Combination in Secondary School

Items	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean (\bar{x})
Parental guidance affected the subject’s combination that students chose	91(42.9%)	77 (36.3%)	29 (13.7%)	15 (7.1%)	3.41
The subject’s combination that students choose to study are influenced by parents who want their kids to inherit their business.	106 (50.0%)	69 (32.6%)	20 (9.4%)	17 (8.0%)	3.05
The choice of subject’s combination is influenced by the socioeconomic position of the parents.	57 (26.9%)	81 (38.2%)	32 (15.1%)	42 (19.8%)	3.68
The careers of the parents influenced the subject combination that the students chose.	85 (40.1%)	72 (34.0%)	30 (14.2%)	25 (11.8%)	3.12
A child's upbringing at home is influenced by the subject’s combination they choose	71 (32.5%)	77 (36.3%)	36 (17.0%)	28 (13.2%)	3.39
Sometimes parents push their children to offer a subject combination that differs from what they had originally intended to offer	74 (34.9%)	86 (40.6%)	27 (12.7%)	25 (11.8%)	3.11
Parents occupation influences the choice of subject combination	80 (37.7%)	57 (26.9%)	37 (17.5%)	38 (17.9%)	3.35
weighted mean					3.30

Decision: Low 1.00 – 2.49 High 2.50 - 4.00

Table 1 revealed the influence of parents on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school. Of the 200 respondents, 42.9% strongly agreed that parental guidance

affected the subject's combination that students chose while 36.3% agreed, 13.7% disagreed and 7.1% strongly disagreed. 50.0% strongly agreed that the subject's combination that students choose to study are influenced by parents who want their kids to inherit their business while 32.6% agreed, 9.4% disagreed and 8.0% strongly disagreed. 26.9% strongly agreed that the choice of subject's combination is influenced by the socioeconomic position of the parents while 38.2% agreed, 15.1% disagreed and 19.8% strongly disagreed. 40.1% strongly agreed that the careers of the parents influenced the subject combination that the students chose while 34.0% agreed, 14.2% disagreed and 11.8% strongly disagreed. 33.5% strongly agreed that a child's upbringing at home is influenced by the subject's combination they choose while 36.3% agreed, 17.0% disagreed and 13.2% strongly disagreed. 34.9% strongly agreed that sometimes parents push their children to offer a subject combination that differs from what they had originally intended to offer while 40.6% agreed, 12.7% disagreed and 11.8% strongly disagreed. 37.7% strongly agreed that parents' occupation influences the choice of subject combination while 26.9% agreed, 17.5% disagreed and 17.9% strongly disagreed. The weighted mean 3.30 is greater than 2.49 the baseline for positive opinion. This therefore shows a numeric indicator that the level of influence of parents on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state was high.

Question 2: What is the influence of peer group on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state?

Table 2: Influence of Peer Group on Student's Choice of Subject Combination in Secondary School

Items	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean (\bar{x})
Peer group have an impact on kids' subject combination choices	71 (33.5%)	68 (32.1%)	34 (16.0%)	39 (18.4%)	3.11
The choice of subject combination is influenced by friends' imitations	70 (33.0%)	84 (39.6%)	32 (15.1%)	26 (12.3%)	3.57
Students' choice of subjects is influenced by their peers' desire to emulate society.	58 (27.4%)	66 (31.1%)	40 (18.9%)	48 (22.6%)	2.53
Peer group gender differences have an impact on the subject's combination they choose	49 (23.1%)	53 (25.0%)	59 (27.8%)	51 (24.1%)	2.51
Students' choice of subject combination is influenced by peer group socioeconomic factors.	37 (17.5%)	43 (20.3%)	56 (26.4%)	76 (35.8%)	2.72
Students' choice of subject's combination could be influenced by their peer groups' perceptions of their own worth	69 (32.5%)	82 (38.7%)	33 (15.6%)	25 (13.2%)	3.31
Peer groups have no influence over our school's decision-	38 (17.9%)	46 (21.7%)	71 (33.5%)	57 (26.9%)	3.08

**making process when it comes to
subject combination
weighted mean**

2.98

Decision: Low: 1.00 - 2.49 High: 2.50 - 4.00

Table 2 revealed the influence of peer group on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school. 33.5% strongly agreed that peer group have an impact on kids' subject combination choices while 32.1% agreed, 16.0% disagreed and 18.4% strongly disagreed. 33.0% strongly agreed that the choice of subject combination is influenced by friends' imitations while 39.6% agreed, 15.1% disagreed and 12.3% strongly disagreed. 27.4% strongly agreed that students’ choice of subjects is influenced by their peers' desire to emulate society while 31.1% agreed, 18.9% disagreed and 22.6% strongly disagreed. 23.1% strongly agreed that peer group gender differences have an impact on the subject’s combination they choose while 25.0% agreed, 27.8% disagreed and 24.1% strongly disagreed. 17.5% strongly agreed that students' choice of subject combination is influenced by peer group socioeconomic factors while 20.3% agreed, 26.4% disagreed and 35.8% strongly disagreed. 32.5% strongly agreed that students' choice of subject’s combination could be influenced by their peer groups' perceptions of their own worth, while 38.7% agreed, 15.6% disagreed and 13.2% strongly disagreed. 17.9% strongly agreed that peer groups have no influence over our school's decision-making process when it comes to subject combination while 21.7% agreed, 33.5% disagreed and 26.9% strongly disagreed. The weighted mean 2.98 is greater than 2.49 the baseline for positive opinion. This shows the numeric indicator that the level of influence of peer group on students’ choice on subject combination in secondary in Osogbo local government area, Osun state was high.

Question 3: What is the influence of school counselors on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school?

Table 3: Influence of School Counselors on Student’s Choice of Subject Combination in Secondary School

Items	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean (\bar{x})
School counseling is a significant factor in the subject’s combination that students choose.	92 (43.4%)	66 (31.1%)	30 (14.2%)	24 (11.3%)	3.93
Students were compelled against their will by the school counselor to select a combination of subjects	22 (10.4%)	17 (8.0%)	74 (34.9%)	99 (46.7%)	3.86
Students' subject combinations are suggested by school counselors based on their aptitude	102 (48.1%)	88 (41.5%)	10 (4.7%)	12 (5.7%)	3.72

Students may be misled into selecting the incorrect combination of subjects if school counselors are unable to influence the suitable knowledge career track	57 (26.9%)	55 (25.9%)	51(24.1%)	49 (23.1%)	3.01
School counselor personal qualities affect students' choice of subject combination	68 (32.1%)	72(34.0 %)	38 (17.9%)	34 (16.0%)	3.43
The role of the school counselor in assisting students with their subject selection is crucial	37 (17.4%)	57 (26.9%)	58 (27.4%)	60 (28.3%)	3.24
Some school counselor prefers intelligent students to offer other of subject combination rather than their own intentions	71 (33.5%)	64(30.s2 %)	45(21.2%)	32(15.1%)	3.39
weighted mean					3.51

Decision Low: 1.00 - 2.49 High: 2.50-4.00

Table 3 revealed the influence of school counselors on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school. 43.4% strongly agreed that school counseling is a significant factor in the subject's combination that students choose while 31.1% agreed, 14.2% disagreed and 11.3% strongly disagreed. 10.4% strongly agreed that students were compelled against their will by the school counselor to select a combination of subjects while 8.0% agreed, 34.9% disagreed and 46.7% strongly disagreed. 48.1% strongly agreed that students' subject combinations are suggested by school counselors based on their aptitude while 41.5% agreed, 4.7% disagreed and 5.7% strongly disagreed. 26.9% strongly agreed that students may be misled into selecting the incorrect combination of subjects if school counselors are unable to influence the suitable knowledge career track while 25.9% agreed, 24.1% disagreed and 23.1% strongly disagreed. 32.1% strongly agreed that school counselor personal qualities affect students' choice of subject combination while 34.0% agreed, 17.9% disagreed and 16.0% strongly disagreed. 17.4% strongly agreed that the role of the school counselor in assisting students with their subject selection is crucial while 26.9% agreed, 27.4% disagreed and 28.3% strongly disagreed. 33.5% strongly agreed that some school counselor prefers intelligent students to offer other of subject combination rather than their own intentions while 30.2% agreed, 21.2% disagreed and 15.1% strongly disagreed. Having the bench mark as 2.50 and the weighted mean as 3.51, this shows that the level of influence of school counsellors on student's choice of subject combination in Osogbo local government area, Osun state was high.

Hypothesis One: Parents do not have significant influence on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.

Table 4: T-test Statistics for Parents and Student’s Choice of Subject Combination

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab
Parents	212	3.51	1.56	210	5.21	1.99
Student’s choice of subject combination		2.83	1.87			

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The result of analysis in table 4 showed that t-calculated (5.21) is greater than t-table (1.99) at df = 210, 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, parents have significant influence on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school.

Hypothesis Two: Peer groups do not have significant influence on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.

Table 5: T-test Statistics for Peer Groups and Students’ Choice of Subject Combination

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab
Peer groups	212	2.52	1.75	210	2.64	1.87
Students’ choice of subject combination		2.73	1.53			

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The result of analysis in table 5 showed that t-calculated (2.64) was greater than t-table (1.87) at df = 210, 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means peer groups have significant influence on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school.

Hypothesis Three: School counselors do not have significant influence on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school in Osogbo local government area, Osun state.

Table 6: T-test statistics for School Counselors and Students’ Choice of Subject Combination

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab
School counselors	212	3.58	1.86	210	4.67	1.98
Students’ choice of subject combination		3.86	1.68			

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The result of analysis in table 6 showed that t-calculated (4.67) was greater than t-table (1.98) at df = 210, 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means school counselors have significant influence on student’s choice of subject combination in secondary school.

Discussion of the Findings

The study revealed that parents have significant influence on their children choice of subject’s combination in Secondary Schools. This result supported Okeke's (2020) finding that parents

significantly influenced their children's choice of academics and careers. The traits of their parents were a major factor in the technical subjects that students chose. In a similar vein, Mabunda (2022) noted that parents' role in getting their child ready for school was vital. Parents influenced the child's development and future choices in life more than anybody else during the socialization process.

The finding of null hypothesis two showed that peer groups have significant influence on student's choice of subject combination in secondary school. This was in consonance with the finding of Hashim and Embong (2024) that peer groups influenced young people's job choices while they were in school. Adeleke, Adeyinka & Kofoworade (2022) also noted that students' choices of subjects could be impacted by the expectations that schools had for them or by the goals of their peer group. School administrators felt that some disciplines were more suited for the kind of students that came to their institution. According to Mabunda (2022) study, peers can have an impact on a person's career decision due to the information they give.

The result of test of null hypothesis three showed that school counselors have influence on choice of students' subject combination in secondary school. The results are comparable to those of Eliamani, Richard & Peter (2019), who listed education as one of the socioeconomic and cultural elements influencing profession choice. Adeyemi (2019) states that because students look up to their instructors as role models, they may desire to choose the subjects that the teachers are teaching. Ming-Shang and Chin-Shark (2021) found that teacher expectations had an impact on secondary school students' professional decision-making.

Conclusion

From the research findings, it was established that parents, peer groups and school counselors are significant factors that influence the choice of students' subjects' combination in secondary schools. This led to the conclusion that, in the near future, students will choose their senior secondary school courses based on recommendations from parents, peer groups, and school counselors.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. On career day, parents should be invited by school principals and career masters to raise awareness among them. This can help parents recognize the value of their children's subject combination selection and cease discouraging them from pursuing subjects in secondary education.
2. The Ministry of Education's counseling departments ought to set up an orientation program that informs students about the vast array of occupations available to them based on their subject combination. By doing this, students' perceptions would grow and the detrimental impact of peer groups on career decisions would be reduced.
3. Schools should improve their guidance and counseling programs to support students in exploring career options and making well-informed selections. This would help students make better choices regarding the subjects they choose to take. Appropriate advice and counseling services could assist limit the impact of teachers, which could deter students from choosing certain disciplines in secondary education.
4. In order to properly help their students in making informed career decisions, teachers and career masters in schools must be well-equipped to facilitate a shift in mindset about their students' career aspirations and choices.

5. In order to assist students in making career decisions, teachers ought to receive training in guidance and counseling seminars and lectures. In order to maximize the diffusion of information among teachers, it is also necessary to strengthen their terms of service.

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