

Self-Concept, Socio-Economic Status of Parents and Selection of Areas of Study among Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto State Metropolis: Implications for Counselling

Bazza Rukayya Abubakar

Department of Counselling Psychology, Sokoto State University, Sokoto State, Nigeria. **Email:**

Abstract

This study examined the self-concept, parents' social status, on the selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis, Nigeria. A descriptive correlational survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from 380 senior secondary school students using a structured questionnaire. Mean scores and standard deviations were used for data analysis, with a decision rule based on a critical mean of 2.50. The findings revealed that students generally possess a positive self-concept, which significantly influences their selection of areas of study, as most students chose subjects that aligned with their perceived abilities and strengths. The study also revealed that parents' social status particularly their level of education, occupation, income, and guidance plays a significant role in shaping students' academic choices. The study concludes that the selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis is the outcome of an interaction between individual self-concept and parental social factors. It recommends the strengthening of school-based career guidance services, promotion of positive self-concept development, parental sensitisation, and the provision of financial support to reduce social barriers and enable informed academic decision-making.

Keywords: Self-concept, Parents, Social status, Economic status

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Introduction

It has been observed that many students at various levels of their academic career, mostly at secondary school level, have been confronted with the issue of subject selection or making decisions of their course(s) of study at higher institution of learning. In many instances such decisions are made by their parents or guardian based on their interest and not that of the students nor from any professional who might have understand the academic performance of the student from school. Although, some schools take the responsibility of engaging the students in career guidance and counselling through the guidance and counselling unit of the school, while some of these schools have to engage the students themselves, asking them of their career choices and possibly to give reasons for their choices.

According to Kolo (2020), when these choices are not properly supervised and monitored to identify the performance despite the expressed of interest by the students, the ultimate goals might be defeated. The influence of parents is one of the most persistent factors determining the child's interests in school. Not only do parents influence children attitudes towards school in general, but they have profound influence on their attitude towards the importance of education, towards studying, different subject and anything that has to do with the school in general. The emphasis given to secondary school education was perhaps because of its strategic position in any nation's educational system. Secondary school education, is seen as having both consumer and producer status with ability to determine not only the fate but also the pace of education at the primary and tertiary levels. The senior secondary school education represents the third stage in the current educational system, the revised edition (2004), known as 9-3-4 system, which exposes the learner to as many disciplines as possible in the Universal Basic Education level (UBE) and then allows them to make choices of subjects in the senior secondary school level (SSS). It is also stated that, the laudable aims and objectives of senior secondary education as outline in the national Policy on education (2004:18) to prepare an individual for living within the society and for higher education coupled with the list of subjects in the curriculum to achieve such stated objective.

Self-concept is the picture or image a person has of himself. It is the sum of what people believe to be true about them. Together with the significance attached to those beliefs (Bala 2017). The student's personal attitudes towards

basic knowledge and learning have either positive or negative impacts on subjects they offer. Interest is a gearing factor that pushes individuals to choose and aspires to certain subjects for the purpose of individual development. For instance, when pupils express lack of interest in subject(s), it affects the way they listen or pay attention to the subject teacher. Thus, influencing the academic achievement of the students. The socio-economic status of parents is equally one of the contributory factors that impacts on the learner's choice on subject area selection.

Parents especially the educated are known to dictate which subjects their children take regardless of the student's interest or potentials. The job prospect of subject related profession is closely related to why parents influence some of their children's choices. This is to a large extent may be due to ignorance about how wide and how far knowledge in subjects could facilitate academic performance on different fields and professions. It is believed that the influenced of parent/guardian in students' subject selection in secondary schools and their career choices has a lot to do with the student's parental background and socio-economic status. Students from well to do families who are well taking care of, in terms of foods as well as their various and basic needs are believed to be easily influenced by the decisions of their parents, unlike their counterparts who are economically deprived of their basic needs (Uche, 2015). According to him, some Parents may place great values on education and emphasize on the need for hard work on a regular basis and offer helping hand and instruction. Yet others are nonchalant about the students' choice of subjects and what they do at school. When parents show an interest in the child's schooling and pride in his achievements, the child usually lives up to his capacities. On the other hand, when parents are indifferent, the child is likely to be encounter challenges of subject selection and career choices as well. In some cases where most parents' education was short-lived, they go extra-mile in making sure that their own children acquire the best form of education they much desired (Cobb, 2022).

According to Marsh and Craven (2023), self-concept is an individual's perception of themselves, shaped by experiences, social interactions, and personal achievements. It is a multidimensional construct encompassing academic, social, emotional, and physical self-perceptions. Oyserman and Elmore (2024) define self-concept as a dynamic and evolving understanding of oneself, influenced by personal experiences and cultural contexts. It

includes self-evaluation and identity formation, shaping motivation and behavior. According to Harter (2023), self-concept develops through cognitive and social processes, with early childhood interactions playing a fundamental role. It influences confidence, self-esteem, and personal aspirations. Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves, encompassing beliefs, emotions, and thoughts about their abilities, personality, and social roles. It is a crucial psychological construct influencing motivation, behavior, and overall well-being.

Studies by Bracken and Lamprecht (2024) suggest that individuals with a strong, positive self-concept are more likely to set ambitious goals and persist through challenges. Conversely, a negative self-concept can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, and poor performance. Self-concept is a fundamental aspect of human psychology that shapes identity, motivation, and social interactions. It is influenced by personal experiences, societal expectations, and cultural norms, and it plays a significant role in psychological well-being and success.

Socioeconomic status (SES) refers to an individual's or group's position in a social and economic hierarchy, often measured through indicators such as income, education, and occupation (Diemer, 2023). It is a crucial determinant of quality of life, affecting access to resources, opportunities, and overall well-being. Socioeconomic status is multidimensional, as it shapes various life outcomes, including health, education, and employment, and is interlinked with social inequalities and mobility (Williams & Mohammed, 2024). One of the primary components of socioeconomic status is income, which directly influences an individual's ability to afford necessities such as housing, food, healthcare, and education.

Furthermore, Socioeconomic status intersects with other social determinants such as race, gender, and geographic location, leading to compounded inequalities. Marginalized groups often face systemic barriers that limit their economic opportunities and access to essential services, further widening the socioeconomic status gap (Bradley & Corwyn, 2023). Parenting is a multifaceted responsibility that involves the provision of basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety as well as emotional support, guidance, and education. A parent's role is crucial in fostering the social, cognitive, and emotional development of children, influencing their behavior, academic achievement, and overall health (Baumrind, 2023).

The concept of areas of study refers to specific academic fields or domains that scholars explore through systematic research and inquiry. These areas, shaped by theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and subject matter, help researchers to concentrate their work on particular issues or phenomena, creating a structured approach to knowledge creation. An area of study can be broad, such as social sciences or natural sciences, or more specialized, focusing on a narrower topic within a discipline (Kunisch, Denyer & Cardinal 2023). Within each academic domain, there are distinct areas that focus on unique questions. For instance, in the social sciences, disciplines like sociology, psychology, and anthropology explore human behavior, societal patterns, and cultures.

Statement of the Problem

There have been a lot of challenges facing senior secondary school children in respect of subject selection as well as deciding on what career choices and subjects' areas they should venture into which will determine their prospective careers in the future. But this daunting task which students faced in their early days of study, was further compounded by the interference of their parents/guardians in their subject selection and career choices. This problem is what the researcher is posed to identify and find out the impacts of parents' interference in subject selection and career choices in senior secondary schools in Sokoto state. Most senior secondary school in Sokoto lack adequate counselling, most parent do not have modern education to assist their child in choosing subject combination.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives are fundamental and to find out if relationship exist between:

- I. Self-concept and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis
- II. Social status of parents and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between self-concept and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between social status of parent's and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis

Methodology

This is a correlational study, which is a type of descriptive research that is concerned with determining or measuring the degree of relationship between two or more variables for the purpose of making predictions about relationships. A correlational study can be used to know if a relationship exists between variables but does not indicate causation (Salawu, 2014). Correlation survey studies include all research projects in which an attempt is made to discover or clarify relationship between variables through the use of correlational statistical method.

The population of this study is made up of all students in public senior secondary schools in Sokoto state. According to the Sokoto State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (2024), there are 10 senior secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis, which together have a combine population of 15,881 (fifteen thousand eight hundred and eighty-one). Therefore, the targeted population in this study will be all the students in SS1, SS2 and SS3 (see Appendix III).

A simple random sampling method will be employed to select students from the targeted schools. Based on the Research Advisor (2006) table for determining sample size, a total of 382 students will be selected for this study. The schools will be selected using a purposive sampling technique, as all of them are located within Sokoto Metropolis. The purposive selection of these schools is considered appropriate because it allows for the deliberate inclusion of schools that are relevant to the study. The co-efficient alpha was 0.75. He called this as an index of items homogeneity. According to Akinboye (2001), this will indicate by a fairly high co-efficient alpha of 0.874. Thus, the current researcher adopted the validation and adopted the instrumentation for this study. The questionnaire will utilise a four-point Likert scale comprising

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Items will be scored using the following ranges: 3.50–4.00 (SA), 2.50–3.49 (A), 1.50–2.49 (D), and 1.00–1.49 (SD). Accordingly, a cut-off mean score of 2.50 and above will indicate agreement with a statement, while mean scores below 2.50 will indicate disagreement. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents will be analysed using tabulation, frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient will be used to test Hypotheses.

Results

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between self-concept and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis

Table 1: Relationship between self-concept and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	p	Decision
Student's confidence in their abilities	380	3.39	.947	0.929**	0.000	H0 Rejected
		3.53	.829			

Selection of area of study

Note. Level of significance = 0.05. r = Pearson correlation coefficient. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation between self-concept and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. The analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables, $r(378)=0.929$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that students with higher self-concept are more likely to choose areas of study that reflect their abilities and strengths. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected, suggesting that self-concept significantly influences students' selection of areas of study.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between social status of parent's and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.

Table 2: Relationship between social status of parent's and selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	p	Decision
Parents' level of education	380	3.49	.732	0.929**	0.000	H0
Parental encouragement for subject choice		3.47	.848			Rejected

Note. Level of significance = 0.05. r = Pearson correlation coefficient. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation between parents' social status, measured by parents' level of education, and students' selection of areas of study, measured by parental encouragement for subject choice. The analysis revealed a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables, $r(378)=0.956$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that students whose parents have higher levels of education and actively encourage subject selection are more likely to choose subjects that align with parental expectations and perceived social standing. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected, suggesting that parental social status significantly influences students' choice of subjects.

Discussions

This section discusses the key findings of the research. The section is organised thematically according to the research objectives. The findings of this study indicate that senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis generally possess a positive self-concept, which is closely related to their selection of areas of study. Specifically, students reported confidence in their academic abilities, competence in handling school tasks, and belief in their capacity to achieve high academic goals. This aligns with Marsh and Craven's (2023) assertion that self-concept encompasses multiple dimensions, including academic, social, emotional, and physical aspects, which collectively influence motivation and performance. The students' confidence in their abilities reflects a strong academic self-concept, highlighting the role of self-perception in educational choices (Marsh & Craven, 2024).

The highest mean score was observed for the statement indicating that students' chosen areas of study reflect their abilities and strengths, suggesting a strong alignment between self-concept and academic decision-making. This finding is consistent with Oyserman and Elmore's (2024) view that self-concept is a dynamic understanding of oneself, shaped by personal experiences and influencing behavior and motivation. In this case, students appear to select study areas that correspond with their perceived strengths,

demonstrating how self-evaluation and identity formation guide important life decisions. Furthermore, the overall positive self-concept observed among respondents resonates with Harter's (2023) and Rosenberg's (2023) perspectives, which emphasize that self-concept develops through social and cognitive experiences and shapes confidence, self-esteem, and personal aspirations.

The results suggest that students who perceive themselves as capable and successful are more likely to make academic choices that reinforce their abilities, supporting the multidimensional nature of self-concept in educational contexts. Additionally, cultural influences may play a role, as Markus and Kitayama (2023) argue that self-concept is shaped by societal norms; students in Sokoto may exhibit an interdependent self-concept that aligns academic goals with socially valued achievements. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of fostering a positive self-concept in secondary school students, as it directly influences academic motivation and the strategic selection of areas of study. Educators and policymakers can leverage these insights to design interventions that enhance students' self-perception, ensuring that academic guidance aligns with students' strengths and aspirations.

The results in the current study indicate that parents' social status significantly influences the selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. Students reported that their parents' level of education, type of occupation, income, and guidance strongly shaped their academic choices. The highest mean score was recorded for parental guidance in subject selection, suggesting that students highly value their parents' opinions when deciding on areas of study. These findings align with the conceptualization of socioeconomic status (SES) as a multidimensional construct encompassing education, occupation, and income, which shapes access to resources, opportunities, and life outcomes (Diemer, 2023; Williams & Mohammed, 2024).

Specifically, the influence of parental education on students' choices reflects the role of knowledge and exposure in guiding children toward suitable academic paths (Murnane, 2023). Similarly, parental occupation and income affect the resources available for education, such as school fees, learning materials, and extracurricular opportunities, which in turn influence the feasibility of pursuing certain subjects or career paths (Case & Deaton, 2023).

This corroborates the study's finding that students' selection of subjects often aligns with their parents' social standing and economic capacity, highlighting the interplay between SES and educational decision-making.

Furthermore, the results support the broader literature on the impact of socioeconomic status on life outcomes. SES affects not only access to education but also health, mental well-being, and social mobility, creating opportunities or constraints that shape individuals' trajectories (APA, 2024; Bradley & Corwyn, 2023). In the context of Sokoto metropolis, students from families with higher social status appear better positioned to select study areas that align with their abilities and career aspirations, while those from lower SES backgrounds may face limitations that constrain their academic choices. Overall, these findings underscore the critical role of parents' social status in shaping students' educational paths. Policy interventions aimed at reducing SES-related disparities—such as scholarships, career guidance programs, and targeted educational support—can help ensure that students' academic choices are informed by their abilities and interests rather than solely by their parents' socioeconomic position.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in the study, the following recommendations are offered:

- I. **Strengthening School-Based Career Guidance Services:** Secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis should establish or strengthen career guidance and counselling units to help students identify their abilities, interests, and strengths. Professional guidance will enable students to make informed choices of areas of study that align with their self-concept rather than relying solely on parental influence.
- II. **Promoting Positive Self-Concept Development among Students:** Schools should implement programmes that enhance students' academic confidence and self-belief, such as mentoring, academic coaching, and confidence-building activities. Teachers should adopt supportive instructional strategies that reinforce students' sense of competence and achievement.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of self-concept, parents' social status, and parents' economic status on the selection of areas of study among senior secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis. The findings demonstrate that students' academic choices are shaped by a combination of personal perceptions and family-related socioeconomic factors, rather than by individual ability or interest alone. The study concludes that self-concept plays a critical role in students' selection of areas of study. Students who possess a positive perception of their academic abilities are more likely to choose subjects that align with their strengths and aspirations. Confidence in one's competence, belief in the ability to achieve academic success, and alignment between self-perception and academic choices were found to be central to informed and purposeful subject selection. This highlights the importance of fostering positive self-concept among secondary school students to enhance motivation and academic decision-making.

Furthermore, the study establishes that parents' social status significantly influences students' academic choices. Parental education, occupation, income, and guidance shape students' exposure to academic options and expectations, often directing them toward areas of study considered appropriate for their social standing. The reliance on parental guidance observed in the study underscores the influential role of family social capital in shaping educational trajectories. In addition, the study concludes that parents' economic status strongly determines the range of academic choices available to students. Financial capacity affects access to learning materials, affordability of specific subject combinations, and long-term educational planning.

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