

Career Guidance, Motivation and Career Decision-Making among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto State

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Abstract

This study investigated the Career Guidance, Motivation and Career Decision-Making among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto State. The study addressed two main objectives, two hypotheses the study guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and Frank Parsons' Trait and Factor Theory, the study adopted a quantitative correlational survey research design. The target population comprised teachers across six educational zones in Sokoto State (Bodinga, Gwadabawa, Wamakko, Sokoto North, Yabo, and Goronyo). Using a simple random and proportionate sampling technique, a sample size of 234 participants was utilized for data analysis. Data were collected using structured, four-point Likert-scale questionnaires: the Career Guidance on Career Decision-Making Questionnaire (CGCDMQ) adapted from Hirschi (2012) and the Motivation on Career Decision-Making Questionnaire (MCDMQ) adapted from Betz and Taylor (1996). Face and content validity were established by experts in Counseling Psychology at Sokoto State University, while instrument reliability was established through a test-retest method evaluated via SPSS. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to test the research hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between career guidance and career decision-making ($r=.903, p<.05$), leading to the rejection of the first null hypothesis (H01). Similarly, a strong, statistically significant positive relationship was found between motivation and career decision-making ($r=.881, p<.05$), resulting in the rejection of the second null hypothesis (H02). The study concluded that structured career guidance and high student motivation are crucial, complementary drivers for successful career choice preparation. Recommendations include establishing functional guidance counseling units in all secondary schools and integrating motivation-enhancing initiatives, such as mentorship and goal-setting workshops, into school curricula.

Keywords: Career Guidance, Motivation, Career Decision-Making, Senior Secondary, Sokoto State

Cite this as: Salihu, M. N., & Abubakar, A. (2026). Career Guidance, Motivation and Career Decision-Making among Public Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto State. *Rima International Journal of Education*, 5(5), 190—204. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65760/rijessu.v5.5.14>

Introduction

Career guidance is a structured support service that helps individuals make informed educational, occupational, and life choices by aligning their interests, values, and skills with market opportunities. Through information, counseling, and planning tools, it enables students and job seekers to explore options, set realistic goals, and build skills for personal and professional growth. In educational settings, effective guidance assists learners with subject selection, vocational paths, and employment transitions (Watts & Sultana, 2020). Ultimately, it boosts student motivation, improves academic performance, lowers dropout rates, and prepares individuals to navigate a rapidly evolving labor market (Hooley, Watts & Sultana 2021). In Nigeria, career guidance has become increasingly important due to youth unemployment and skill mismatch challenges. Oviawe (2020) emphasizes that integrating career guidance into school curricula can help students align their aspirations with realistic opportunities in the job market. Career guidance empowers individuals to make informed, meaningful decisions about their educational and occupational futures.

Motivation is the internal drive or external stimulus that initiates, directs, and sustains goal-directed behavior, compelling individuals to act, persist, and achieve desired outcomes. It includes intrinsic motivation (internal drive, like personal enjoyment) and extrinsic motivation (external rewards/pressures) (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In education, motivated students show higher effort, use better learning strategies, and persist through academic challenges, supported by teachers, parents, and school environments (Schunk *et al.*, 2014). In the workplace, motivation boosts productivity, innovation, and organizational success (Kanfer *et al.*, 2017). In Nigeria, it helps students overcome challenges like poverty and limited resources (Adewumi & Olayemi 2021).

Career decision-making is the cognitive and emotional process of choosing a career path aligned with personal interests, values, skills, and goals through evaluating alternatives and gathering information. It is shaped by individual factors, environment, and guidance access (Gati & Levin, 2021). Nigerian secondary students receiving structured guidance show greater confidence and focus (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2022), though peer influence and parental expectations strongly shape adolescent choices (Nweke & Ofole, 2023). Because career indecision leads to dissatisfaction and dropout, early

counseling and development programs are vital. In Sokoto State, public senior secondary students' career decisions depend heavily on guidance and motivation.

This study will be guided by two theories, in order to have a theoretical direction and focus: the theories will be reviewed to showcase their suitability and relevance to the study. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) – Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory explains career development through self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals. It proposes that students' confidence, expected career outcomes, learning experiences, and environmental supports or barriers influence their career interests, choices, and actions. Trait and Factor Theory – Frank Parsons Trait and Factor Theory explains career choice as matching an individual's abilities, interests, and resources with occupational requirements. It emphasizes person-environment fit, suggesting that appropriate matching promotes career satisfaction and success. Motivation and emotional intelligence can support effective self-assessment and career adaptation.

Several empirical studies in Nigeria have investigated factors influencing secondary school students' career choices. Salami (2018) surveyed 500 SSS II and III students in Oyo State using the Emotional Intelligence Scale and Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (reliability >0.70). Pearson correlation and multiple regression revealed that higher emotional intelligence significantly predicted fewer decision-making difficulties, prompting recommendations for curriculum-integrated emotional intelligence training. Similarly, Ojo and Oyelade (2017) conducted a correlational survey of 500 Osun State students using similar scales (reliability >0.75), finding a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and career decision-making difficulties, advocating for emotional intelligence integration in school counseling.

Regarding institutional and motivational factors, Adebisi and Adebisi (2020) examined 400 SSS II and III students in Lagos State using a validated, reliable questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha >0.70). Pearson correlation and regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between career guidance and students' confidence and clarity in career choices, recommending well-funded guidance programs and more counselors. Finally, Nwosu, Ohia, and Nwogu (2018) studied 300 SSS III students in Abia State using the Motivation and Career Choice Questionnaire (alpha = 0.81). Analysis showed that

intrinsic motivation (personal interests and skills) was a stronger predictor of stable career choices than extrinsic influences, recommending that schools help students identify their core abilities.

Objectives of the Study

1. Find out the relationship between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto state.
2. Find out the relationship between intrinsic motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto state.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto state

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto state.

Methodology

The study employed a correlational survey research design. However, quantitative approach adopted to examine the Career Guidance, Motivation and Career Decision-Making Among Public Senior Secondary School Students In Sokoto State. The target population of the study contains all the 3,331 teachers in the senior secondary schools in Sokoto state. The population involved the six educational zones as: Bodinga, Gwadabawa, Wamakko, Sokoto North, Yabo and Goronyo. Simple random and proportionate sampling technique were used for this study where 19,246 for Schools and 553 for students were sampled across 6 educational zones in Sokoto state.

Researcher develop instruments of four point likert type rating scale was used. The scale rated from Strongly Agree (SA=4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2) and Strongly Disagree (SD=1). The instruments are; Adapted by Hirschi (2012), Career Guidance on Career Decision-Making Questionnaire (CGCDMQ). Adapted by Betz and Taylor (1996) Motivation on Career

Decision-Making Questionnaire (MCDMQ). Adapted by Mayer and Salovey (1997) Emotional Intelligence on Career Decision-Making Questionnaire (EICDMQ). To ensure that the instruments are valid, draft copies of the instruments were submitted to the supervisor and two experts in the department of Counselling Psychology Sokoto State University. In order to ensure the reliability of the instruments 30 copies of each instrument were administered to respondents in a separate school which are not part of the sample to be studied. At exactly two weeks the same number of instruments were re-administered, the instruments were analysed using SPSS Package to find the correlation reliability indexes.

The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher with the assistance of five trained research assistants. The research assistants administered copies of the questionnaire to target participants in their respective schools and retrieve them on spot. The questionnaire reach the respondents by the researcher and research assistants as schedule through Direct Delivery and Retrieval Technique (DDRT) and also ensure that responses are in line with objectives of the study and also ensure a reasonable rate of return. Data obtained would be analyzed using Statistic analytical software. Research hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) while research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviations.

Results: Testing Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State.

In testing null hypothesis one (H₀₁), the data on career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State collected from the 234 selected participants who were administered with the research instruments were sorted and scored accordingly. The scores were correlated electronically using simple Linear Regression on SPSS version 20.0 and the results are presented in Table 4.7 below.

Table 1 is a Summary Table Showing Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis for Relationship Between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State.

Table 1:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics showing relationship between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Career Guidance	234	2.88	1.037	.903**	.000	H ₀ Rejected
Career Decision Making	234	2.93	1.004			

$\alpha = .05$

The result presented in table 1 shows a strong and statistically significant relationship between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State , with a correlation coefficient of $r(234) = .903^{**}$, $p < .05$. This finding underscores the significant association between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State as the p-value is below the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which posited that no significant relationship exists between career guidance and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State, was rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State.

In testing null hypothesis one (H_{02}), the data on motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State collected from the 234 selected participants who were administered with the research instruments were sorted and scored accordingly. The scores were correlated electronically using simple Linear Regression on SPSS version 20.0 and the results are presented in Table 4.7 below.

Table 2 is a Summary Table Showing Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis for Relationship Between motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State.

Table 2:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics showing relationship between motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Motivation	234	2.85	1.030	.881**	.000	H ₀ Rejected
Career Decision Making	234	2.90	1.005			

$\alpha = .05$

The result presented in table 2 shows a strong and statistically significant relationship between motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State , with a correlation coefficient of $r(234) = .881^{**}$, $p < .05$. This finding underscores the significant association between motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State as the p-value is below the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H₀₂), which posited that no significant relationship exists between motivation and career decision making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State, was rejected.

Discussion

This study investigated career guidance, motivation and career decision-making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto state. Results were discussed in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses of the study. The finding presented in Table 1, which revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between career guidance and career decision-making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State, connotes that as the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of career guidance increase, students' capacity to make appropriate career decisions also tends to increase. The statistical significance of the relationship indicates that the observed association is unlikely to be attributable to sampling fluctuation alone, thereby providing empirical evidence that career guidance is an important correlate of students' career decision-making.

Substantively, this finding suggests that activities such as career counselling, provision of occupational information, identification of students' interests and abilities, exposure to diverse career opportunities, goal setting, career exploration and assistance in resolving career indecision can contribute meaningfully to students' readiness to select and pursue suitable career pathways. This finding corroborates the OECD (2021) evidence that

secondary-school students who actively explore, experience and think about their futures in work demonstrate career-readiness patterns associated with better subsequent employment outcomes. The OECD further emphasizes that effective career guidance enables young people to understand themselves and the world of work and to make more informed educational and occupational transitions. Thus, the present finding resonates with and supports the submission that career guidance is not an ancillary school activity but a developmental mechanism through which students acquire the informational and reflective resources necessary for effective career decision-making.

The finding also corroborates the systematic review by Wang, Li and Wang (2024), which synthesized evidence from 25 studies of career interventions for high school students and found that career interventions commonly produce positive outcomes in career adaptability and career decision-making. Their review identified career curriculum, group counselling and individual counselling as complementary approaches capable of addressing career decision-making self-efficacy, career indecisiveness, career certainty and career-choice anxiety. This scholarly position provides a strong basis for interpreting the statistically significant positive relationship observed in the present study because the essence of career guidance is to equip students with competencies for exploring alternatives, evaluating occupational information and developing confidence in their eventual choices. Similarly, Riba and Goswami (2024) found a strong positive relationship between self-awareness and career decidedness among adolescents and emphasized the role of career guidance in adolescents' career decision-making. The convergence of these scholarly views with the present finding integrates and strengthens the argument that students are more likely to make purposeful career decisions when schools provide structured opportunities for self-exploration, occupational exploration and guided reflection. Consequently, the significant positive relationship observed in Sokoto State provides empirical support for strengthening school-based guidance services as a means of improving students' career decision-making capabilities.

Furthermore, the finding resonates with the intervention evidence of Cakolli et al. (2023), who examined a structured career-guidance workshop involving high school students and reported significant improvements in career self-efficacy and career goals following the intervention. Their programme incorporated self-awareness, career exploration, educational and career

pathways, real-world encounters and decision-making activities, leading the authors to conclude that structured career guidance provides a valuable basis for improving adolescents' career decision-making skills. The finding is also consistent with OECD (2024) evidence that career-development programmes can reduce teenage career uncertainty and that students with clearer career plans tend to experience better subsequent employment outcomes. These scholarly positions corroborate, support and give broader explanatory meaning to the present result, demonstrating that the positive relationship between career guidance and career decision-making is theoretically and empirically plausible. Importantly, when considered alongside the earlier finding in Table 4.3 that the extent of career guidance was low (grand mean = 1.85), the significant positive relationship in Table 4.7 suggests a critical paradox: although career guidance is insufficiently available or effectively implemented among the students, variations in the level of guidance that students receive are nevertheless associated with variations in their career decision-making. This implies that improving the quantity, quality, regularity and personalization of career guidance could potentially strengthen students' career decision-making, particularly through professionally delivered counselling, individualized career assessment, current labour-market information, exposure to workplaces and professionals, experiential learning, mentoring, and systematic follow-up.

The finding therefore makes a substantive contribution to the study by demonstrating that career guidance constitutes a significant educational resource for supporting students to move from uncertainty and limited career awareness toward informed, realistic and purposeful career choices.

The finding presented in Table 4.8, which revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between motivation and career decision-making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State, connotes that students who possess stronger motivational orientations toward their careers tend to demonstrate greater capacity and readiness to make career decisions. The statistical significance of the relationship indicates that the observed association is unlikely to be a product of random variation, thereby providing empirical evidence that motivation constitutes an important factor associated with students' career decision-making.

Substantively, the finding suggests that students' willingness to gather career information, establish career goals, persist when confronted with difficulties,

acquire relevant skills, seek career opportunities, assume responsibility for their career futures, and remain committed to their aspirations can facilitate more purposeful career choices. This interpretation corroborates the findings of Hirschi, Niles and Akos (2011), who, in a longitudinal study of high school students, established that motivational precursors, particularly positive work valences and personal agency beliefs, were associated with career exploration. Students who demonstrated stronger agency beliefs and more positive orientations toward work were more likely to engage in deeper career exploration over time. The present finding therefore resonates with and supports the submission that motivation provides the psychological energy through which students move from passive awareness of career alternatives to active exploration, evaluation and eventual career decision-making.

The finding further corroborates the work of Paixão and Gamboa (2022), who examined autonomous and controlled forms of motivation among 523 high-school students and found that the type of motivation underlying career development was consequential for career exploration and career indecision. Their study specifically demonstrated that motivation operates through career-exploration processes in shaping students' career indecision, thereby establishing an important connection between motivational orientation and career decision outcomes. This scholarly evidence provides a particularly strong basis for interpreting the present result because the motivation construct measured in Table 4.4 encompasses several dimensions central to autonomous career development, including career goal setting, initiative, persistence, optimism, responsibility, confidence and commitment. The significant positive relationship in Table 4.8 consequently integrates with the position of Self-Determination Theory that individuals are more likely to engage meaningfully in activities when their motivation is characterized by autonomy, competence and personal relevance.

This interpretation is further supported by Anwuzia (2021), whose doctoral study among adolescents in Nigeria found that career wellbeing was associated with intrinsic and autonomous extrinsic career motivation, career exploration and positive self-evaluation, while parental and teacher autonomy and emotional support influenced adolescents' career motivation and decision-making processes. Thus, the present finding is particularly significant within the Sokoto State context because it demonstrates that motivation is not merely an abstract psychological characteristic; it is directly relevant to how

secondary school students approach the complex process of selecting and committing to career pathways.

Furthermore, the finding supports and extends the work of Choi et al. (2024), who found that different profiles of career decision-making self-efficacy among senior high school students were significantly associated with differences in learning engagement and emphasized the need for career education that integrates academic learning, career interests and future professions. It also resonates with the findings of Wang et al. (2020), who demonstrated that career decision-making self-efficacy and career decision-making profiles significantly predicted career decision-making difficulties, with goal selection, effort invested in the decision process, procrastination and locus of control emerging as important predictors. These scholarly perspectives corroborate, strengthen and provide explanatory support for the present finding, particularly because the motivational indicators in the current study include persistence, goal setting, initiative, responsibility, determination and willingness to make decisions rather than procrastinate.

However, the finding should not be interpreted as demonstrating that motivation alone causes better career decision-making, since a statistically significant relationship establishes association rather than causation. Rather, it demonstrates that motivation is an important correlate of career decision-making and that variations in students' motivational dispositions are systematically related to variations in their career decision-making capacities. The finding therefore supports the need for interventions that deliberately strengthen autonomous motivation, career self-efficacy, goal commitment, personal agency, persistence and future orientation, alongside career guidance, so that students can become more active, confident and purposeful participants in their own career-development processes.

Conclusion

Based on the study's two objectives, both career guidance and motivation play fundamental roles in shaping career decision-making among public senior secondary school students in Sokoto State. First, the research revealed a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between career guidance and career decision-making, rejecting the first null hypothesis. Access to structured counseling, relevant occupational information, and goal-setting tools directly enhances students' capacity to evaluate options, overcome indecision, and choose appropriate career paths.

Second, a strong, statistically significant positive relationship was found between motivation and career decision-making, rejecting the second null hypothesis. Intrinsic drive, personal agency, persistence, and goal commitment supply the psychological energy needed for students to actively explore career choices and assume responsibility for their futures. Finally, both structured career guidance and intrinsic motivation are essential, complementary drivers that enable secondary school students in Sokoto State to transition from career uncertainty toward informed, confident, and purposeful educational and occupational decisions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are raised:

1. Given the strong positive relationship between career guidance and career decision-making, school administrators and the Sokoto State Ministry of Education should bridge the gap between low guidance availability and its high impact by deploying trained counselors, providing updated labor market data, and scheduling mandatory career exploration sessions across all public secondary schools.
2. Given the strong positive relationship between student motivation and career decision-making, teachers and counselors should incorporate goal-setting workshops, personal agency building, and mentorship opportunities into the school environment to boost students' self-efficacy, persistence, and proactive involvement in their career planning

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