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SELECTION OF SUBJECTS AS CORRELATE OF THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT
In this study, the researchers investigated Selection of Subjects as Correlate of the Academic Achievement of Students in Public Secondary School in Imo State. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Four research questions and four hypotheses were adopted to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of 19,550 students in the study area while the sample size of the study was 582 students chosen through the proportionate random sampling. The instrument that was used to collect responses from respondents was the, "Selection of Subjects as Correlate of the Academic Achievement of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Imo State Questionnaire, (SSCAASPSSISQ)". The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was divided into four sections with an average correlational value of 0.88 which was high enough for the instrument to be reliable for the study. The reliability of instrument was obtained through a pilot-testing and analysis by cronbach alpha. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For the purpose of analysis, each of the item was weighted and scored as Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4points, Agreed (A) = 3points, Disagreed (D) = 2points and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1point. In testing the hypotheses, when p-value was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), the null-hypothesis was rejected but if otherwise, it was accepted. The finding of the study among others is that most students choose subjects wrongly and this has affected the quality of their academic achievement. It was then recommended that, school authorities should organize seminars to teach students how to select subjects correctly.

Keywords: Selection of Students, Correlate, Academic Achievement, Public Secondary Schools.

Introduction

Selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools is their first step towards a deliberate and directed journey to academic prowess. In Nigeria, it is the first exercise students going into the senior secondary schools are expected to do. This exercise must be completed before students settle down for academic work. Ilobi (2018) stated that it is an indication of a new phase in the students' quest for higher education. Selection of subjects is a fundamental task of fresh students at the senior secondary school and this assignment is sorted out in secondary school one.

Students are the objects or reasons for government investment in education and their selection of subjects is the foremost step to a myriad of examinations (internal and external) at the end of their senior secondary education. Joseph (2014) is of the opinion that the type of subjects chosen by a student is a pointer to what academic pursuit the child is intended to pursue. Beyond this, it shows in advance the career or profession the child is likely to take and in most cases, the type of person the student would turn out to be.

Subject selection by definition is the process by which students select from a number of

subjects, those subjects he considers relevant to his desired course of study at the tertiary institution. It is a well thought out exercise that consists of the interplay between genetic, environmental and socio-economic factors (Chalom, 2013). Taking redundantly, it is the representation of students' dreams and a symbolic disposition of a student's intellectual composition. It makes a student a science student, an art student or a vocational student.

Selection of subjects by students is influenced by different factors. The first consideration is the students' aptitude. Mushtaq (2012) explains aptitude as the inherent ability to perform a task. It is the student's inherent capacity to do well in a subject or a number of subjects. Students first of all select subjects they have the ability to handle well. These are subjects the students like and consider easy to himself.

Another factor that is considered during subject selection by students is the prospect of gainful employment. The essence of going to school is to acquire the education and certificate required to secure job. Most students therefore at the early stages of their lives have dreams of the places they would like to work. They desire for such jobs prompts them to choose or prefer certain subjects to others (Chalomers, 2013). In most cases, choice of subjects in this regard, is without consideration of aptitude or performance ability.

Peer group pressure also accounts for why some students select certain subjects. These are students who choose subjects that their friends selected. According to Trantwein and Ludtke (2009), several reasons make students go with their friends when making choices of subjects. They are the need for belongingness, the desire to be like others and the tendency to be grouped among intelligent students in the class.

Parental influence is another factor that determines the type of subjects students select at the senior secondary school level. Largill and Connor (2012) submitted that to a reasonable extent most parents decide the career choices of students and this inadvertently, affect students' choices of subjects. Without consulting their children, parents desire that their children should be doctors, lawyers or engineers. Once they take such decisions, students (their children) are made to select the subjects that are relevant to these career without regards to their subject competences (Wakili, 2014).

Indolence or laziness equally affects students' selection of subjects. A good number of students choose subjects that appear simple or easy to them. Such students do not want to be stressed. As Kukulsha-Hulme (2012) puts it, this group of students choose their simple subjects without thinking of where their choices will take them in terms of career and job employment.

Sometimes too, pride or arrogance can influence a student's selection of subjects. Such students desire to be seen as strong and witty. To them, some subjects are very simple and as such meant for weak students. They don't want to be considered weak and so, they select subjects that seem mentally tasking. Felix (2017) stated that they want to demonstrate toughness and do not want to be classified among those regarded as unintelligent.

Public secondary schools are post-primary institutions that are established and regulated by the government. It could be federal or state government. In most cases, private individuals or missions can set up secondary schools but when government takes over such schools, they become public secondary schools. This means that government recruit teachers, post them to the schools and pay their salaries (Wakili, 2014).

Selection of subjects by students takes place at the beginning of the senior secondary schools, that is, in secondary school one. Before this is done, school authorities are supposed to organize

seminars for SS one students to teach them how to select subjects that will lead them to their desired career choices. The absence of such expository teaching has resulted in students choosing wrong subjects, the outcome of which is poor performance of students in examinations (Uwadie, 2012).

Sometimes too, it is not out of place for school authorities to organise career choice tour or excursion to areas of interest for students to interface with professionals on the intricacies of various professions. The advantages or opportunities associated with such professions could be, requirement for admission which have to do with the subjects to be chosen and how to gain admission to universities to study such courses (Oladele, 2013).

Students' selection of subjects at the secondary school level is as important as education itself. The success or failure of a students' academic journey starts at the point of subject selection.

Statement of the Problem

Selection of subjects in public secondary schools is one of the first major assignments students in senior secondary school one (SS 1) try to settle as they step into the senior secondary education. Considering their predegree from their junior secondary school, the exercise is entirely moved to them.

The essence of choosing their subjects at this level, is to provide a road map that will facilitate their eventual transition to tertiary institutions. Quite often, they embrace this task with so much zeal but without knowledge of how to go about it. The result of this is that parents use their influence to choose subjects for them. Those of them whose parents are not educated depend on their friends and relatives with good knowledge of the various subjects to select their subjects.

Beyond the absence of seminars in their various schools to teach or guide them on how to choose their subjects' correctly, there seems to be the scarcity or inadequate empirical research findings on how students in public secondary schools can choose their subjects. It is in view of the above background that this study is directed at investigating the relationship between subject selection and academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

i. To what extent does aptitude influence students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo state?
ii. How does peer group pressure determine students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo state?
iii. To what extent do parents' decisions influence selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo State?
iv. How does selection of subjects influence the academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study;

i. There is no significant relationship between selection of subjects and the aptitude of students in public secondary schools in Imo State.
ii. There is no significant relationship between selection of subjects and students peer group influence in public secondary schools in Imo state.
iii. There is no significant relationship between selection of subjects and the decision of the parents of students in public secondary schools in Imo state.
iv. There is no significant relationship between selection of subjects and academic

achievements of students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

Research Method

In this study, the researcher investigated Subjects Selection as Correlate of the Academic Achievement of Students in Public Secondary School in Imo State. The descriptive research design was adopted in the study. Four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consisted of 19,550 SS 3 students in the study area. The proportionate random sampling was used to choose 582 students as the sample size of the study. The instrument used to collect data from respondents was a 16-item questionnaire titled; "Selection of Subjects as Correlate of the Academic Achievement of Students in Public Secondary School in Imo State Questionnaire, (SSCAASPPSSISQ)". The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from the Department of Education Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was divided into four sections. Section A dealt with subject selection and students' aptitude. Section B was concerned with subject selection and peer group influence. Section C involved subject selection and parents' decisions while section D dealt with subject selection and academic achievement of students. The reliability of the instrument was established through pilot-testing and analysis by Cronbach alpha with an average correlational value 0.88 which was considered high enough for the study to be reliable. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.5 level of significance. The researcher personally administered the instrument on the respondents in their classes with the help of four research assistants who were adequately briefed on the method of administration and retrieval of the questionnaires. Out of 582 copies of questionnaire distributed, 571 were correctly filled and returned and used for analysis. For the purpose of analysis, each of the items was weighted and scored as; Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. In testing the hypotheses, when p-value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected, otherwise, the null hypothesis was accepted. Data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between aptitude and selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient of the Relationship between Aptitude and Selection of Subjects by Students

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	rxy	P-value	Decision
Students' Aptitude (X)		3.36	0.67				
	571			569	0.74*	0.00	Significant
Selection of Subjects by Students (Y)		2.85	0.83				

Data in table 1 shows a correlation value of 0.74 which indicates a strong and positive relationship between aptitude and students' selection of subjects. This means that students' aptitude was a strong factor in students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo state.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between aptitude and selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

The correlational analysis on of the relationship between aptitude and selection of subjects is presented on Table 1, (r (569) = 0.74; p = 0.00). Since the p-value is less than the significant value of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the relationship between aptitude and selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

Research Question 2
What is the relationship between peer group pressure students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo state?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient of the Relationship between Peer Group Pressure and Selection of Subjects by Students

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	rxy	P-value	Decision
Peer Group Pressure (X)		2.76	0.91				
	571			569	0.68*	0.01	Significant
Selection of Subjects by Students (Y)		3.45	0.87				

Data in table 2 shows a correlation value of 0.68 which indicates a strong and positive relationship between peer group pressure and students' selection of subjects. This menas that peer group pressure was a strong factor in students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo State.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between peer group pressure and selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

The correlational analysis on peer group pressure and students' selection of subjects on Table 2, (r (569) = 0.68; p = 0.01), showed that the relationship between peer group pressure and students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo State is significant since p-value of 0.01 is less than 0.05 level of significant on which the hypothesis was stated. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Research Question 3 : What is the relationship between parental decision and selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state?

Table 3 : Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient of the Relationship between Parental Decision and Selection of Subjects by Students

Variables	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	rxy	P-value	Decision
Parental Decision (X)		3.03	0.64				
	571			569	0.71*	0.00	Significant

Selection of Subjects by Students (Y)	2.95	0.72

Data in table 3 shows a correlation value of 0.71 which indicates a strong and positive relationship between parental decision and students' selection of subjects. This menas that the decision of the students' parents was a strong factor in determining students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo State.

Null Hypothesis 3 : There is no significant relation between parental decision and selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

The correlational analysis on peer group pressure and students' selection of subjects on Table 3, (r (569) = 0.71; p = 0.00), showed that the relationship between parental decision and students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in Imo State is significant since p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 level of significant on which the hypothesis was stated. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between selection of subjects and academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Imo state?

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient of the Relationship between Selection of Subjects and Academic Achievement of Students

Variables	**N**	**$\overline{X}$**	**SD**	**df**	**rxy**	**P-value**	**Decision**
Selection of Subjects (X)		2.83	0.91				
	571			569	0.87*	0.00	Significant
Students' Academic Achievement (Y)		3.55	0.86				

Data in table 4 shows a correlation value of 0.87 which indicates a strong and positive relationship between selection of subjects and academic achievement of students. This menas that students' selection of subjects was a strong factor in determining their academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State.

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between selection of subjects and academic achievements of students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

The correlational analysis on students' selection of subjects and their academic achievement on Table 4, (r (569) = 0.87; p = 0.00), showed that the relationship between students' selection of subjects and their academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State is significant since p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 level of significant on which the hypothesis was stated. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between students' aptitude and the selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state. This presupposes that students selected subjects based in their relative ease or simplicity to them. This finding is in agreement with the works of Chalmest (2013) that submitted that the ability of a student to choose a career of study is determined by the relative ease with which he deals with the intricacies in the particular field of study. In another language, it is

indicated by the findings that there is a significant relationship between students aptitude and students' subject selection in public secondary in public secondary schools in Imo state.

Table 2 indicated that there is a significant relationship between peer group pressure and students' selection of subjects in public secondary schools in the study area. This is because, most students are group oriented. They therefore choose subjects in line with what their friends have done in that regard. This finding is supported by the works of Wakilis (2014) that opined that peer group relationship instils one mindedness in the group and creates a sense of belonging among the members of a group which makes do almost everything together and in the same way. The works of Mushtag (2013) lends support to the finding of the study as it submitted that group influence produces group ideology which tend to form uniformity in thought and action. It is therefore agreed that with the findings of this study, peer group influence has a positive strong relationship with students' subject selection in public secondary schools in the study area.

Table 3 showed that there is a significant relationship between parental decision and students' subject selection in public secondary schools in Imo state. This means that parents of students exert a lot of influence on children during the process of selecting their subjects for their future career. Joseph (2014) supported this finding by stating that parents feel the ownership of the students and as such desire certain career choices for their children and that one way they can do this, is to influence their children's subject selection. From the findings of the study, there is a strong positive relationship between parental decision and the selection of subjects by students in public secondary schools in Imo state.

Table 4 indicated that there is a significant relationship between students' subject selection and academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Imo state. This presupposes that the type of subjects chosen by students will determine to a large extent how they will perform academically. The works of Ilobe (2018) agrees with the finding that the quality of subject selection by a student is a corollary to the quality of his result. In other words, the academic achievement of a student is reasonably dependent on the choices of subjects be made. Also in agreement with the findings of this study is the works of Carqill, Conor and Li (2012) which stated that the extent of effort and carefulness made by a student when selecting his subjects for his educational advancement is a major determinant of the degree of his academic performance. They therefore indicated that students should be adequately guided while choosing subjects for enhanced academic achievement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, there is a significant relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. The researchers therefore concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between students' selection of subjects and academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Imo State.

Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the researchers recommended that;

1. Heads of public secondary schools in Imo state should organize seminars for their students to teach them how they should select their subject.
2. Parents should only guide their children to select their subjects and not necessarily choosing for them.
3. The Ministry of Education should release guidelines to schools, to help students choose their subjects rightly and stop learning on the mercy of their peer groups.
4. Finally, teachers should tell their students the implications of subject selection as this

will minimize the mistakes made by students at this level.

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