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Influence of Self-Concept on Occupational Preferences of Final Year Students of Senior Secondary Schools in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abel Mercy OLADAPO (PhD)[1], Bamiyo ONOJA[2], Alex James ESSON[2]

[1]Department of Guidance and Counselling, City College of Education, Mararaba, Nasarawa State, Nigeria,

[2]Hassan Odukale Methodist Theological College, Zonkwa, Kaduna State, Nigeria,

Correspondence: Abel Mercy OLADAPO (PhD), meccianooladapo@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the influence of self-concept on occupational preferences of final year students of senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State. Specific variables considered under self-concept include self-image, self-esteem and ideal-self. The researcher formulated three research hypotheses to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive cross sectional survey design with a sample size of 380 students, obtained from a population of 146,616 students in Nasarawa State. The instruments were two open-ended questionnaires, one of which was researcher-constructed questionnaire called: Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) and the second was Akinade Vocational Interest Survey (AVIS) which was adopted. The instruments were validated by two experts from Guidance and Counselling department of Nasarawa State University, Keffi and confirmed to be valid. The instruments were also confirmed to be reliable using Cronbach Alpha. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; the hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that there is a significant influence of self-image, self-esteem and ideal-self on occupational preferences of final year students of senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State. The study recommended that government, counsellors, school heads, teachers and parents should create enabling atmosphere for students to develop self-knowledge to enhance appropriate Occupational decisions.

Keywords: Self-Concept, Self-Image, Self-Esteem, Ideal-Self, Occupation, Occupational Preference

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INTRODUCTION

Occupational preference or choice is a major determinant to a fulfilling and happy life for individuals but it also constitutes one of the most difficult areas for decision-making for adolescents because of the myriads of challenges surrounding the idea of choosing an occupation. These obstacles make it often necessary for students to seek help of professional counsellors so that they could go for occupational choices that would align with their self- concepts and personality traits. Adolescence is a good time to plan for the future to make occupational choices that are determined by adequate self-perception. Students battle with many forces to be able to arrive at particular occupational choices. They contend with peer pressure, parental influence, and society's views about occupations. Their occupational awareness which includes information such as education requirements, skill requirements, and job descriptions in a particular field though important may not be sufficient for them to arrive at occupational decisions that could be congruent with their psychological endowments to make them productive, happy and meet the expectations of employers and the society at large. Thus, the dilemma final year students could face as they are about to proceed to tertiary institutions like universities, polytechnics and other similar institutions to acquire prerequisite training for the world of work could be tortuous and lead them to lives of regrets. Mistakes of occupational choice could affect individuals' physical health, and lead to undesirable lifestyles, and occupational instability. Choices of occupations by students could be influenced by their perception, expectation, and supportive environment (Egbochuku, Igbineweka,&Aghahowa, 2021).

Self-concept is complex, organized and dynamic perceptions in terms of beliefs, attitudes and values individuals hold about themselves. Self-concept could influence occupational preferences because it could find expressions in occupational responsibilities. Self-concept is self-assessment or self-perception and it is a product of self-development as an individual grows up. Self-concept could be said to have three components comprising self- image (how individuals see themselves), self-esteem (the value individuals place on themselves), and ideal self (future of individuals of themselves), Crone, E.A., el at.(2022). Each of these three components has a crucial role to play in students' occupational preferences. Self-concept also consists of the physical, psychological and social well-being of a person which can be influenced by attitude, habits, beliefs and ideas (Prescott, 2006). Elder, J., el at. (2023) postulated that self-concept is the totality of a complex, organized and dynamic system of learnt beliefs, attitudes and opinions a person holds to be true about his or her personal existence. Individuals become what they are or know who they are through interactions with others. The components of self-concepts could provide domains for measuring how students understand themselves and how such understating could and influence their occupational preferences.

Self-image as a component of self-concept relates to how individuals see themselves physically, psychologically, academically and socially. It is a self-mirror which reflects how an individual is. Self-image could help students to understands themselves and also help them to align themselves with occupational preferences that are congruent with their self-images. Generally, students may wish to feel, experience, and behave in ways consistent with their self-image. Careers could provide the needed platform for the manifestation of the expression of individuals' self-image.

Self-esteem or self-worth is another component of the self-concept. It refers to the value individuals place on themselves. Self-esteem creates a sense of good feelings and could be responsible for living a happy life. Students with high self-esteem are likely to value occupational environments that are in harmony with their psychological endowments. This is likely so because work environments that support their self-esteem are likely to be more acceptable to them towards their self-actualization. Thus, the worth students place on themselves may influence their occupational preferences.

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Ideal-self is the third component of the self-concept and relates to the understanding of what an individual want to be in the future. According to Crone, E, A.,& Van Drunen, L. (2024), the closer individuals' self-image and ideal self are to each other, the more consistent or congruent they are and the stronger their sense of self-worth. Students who have good understanding of their ideal-self may strive very hard to attain their dreams. Occupation provides an enabling environment for the actualization of the ideal-self. Hence, students who understand themselves and what they wish to become in future are more likely to go for occupation preferences that can help them to actualize their ideal-self.

According to Super, Elder, J., el at. (2023) self-concept is fundamental care development formation. Individuals develop an understanding of roles, personality traits and abilities as part of their growth and developmental processes. This self-perception provides people with the knowledge of the numerous occupational opportunities available in order to make decisions of choices that can cater for their individual personality traits, self-image, self-esteem, and ideal self. Similarly, Self-concepts aid people to define themselves through specific roles, focusing their attention on the given contexts and allowing them to navigate and adapt to environments (Wehrle, &Fasbender, 2019). Denga (1986) suggested that students' self-concept is relevant vocational developmental competences. These competences would enhance the tendency for students to understand themselves in line with their occupational preferences which could make them fruitful and productive.

Holland (1981) admitted that self-concept and vocational development are interwoven. This means people's self-perception aligns with their occupational preferences if they are psychologically congruent with their occupations. People's career development involves four phases: searching for a vocation, vocational maturity, vocational self-concept and then career choice; Salunkhe, R. B. (2024). It is obvious therefore, that self-concept precedes occupational preferences as individuals seek to express their interests, characters, feelings, needs in their occupations (Super, 1963). Students with low self-concept are likely to align with unrealistic occupational references (Denga, 1986: Karakayali, N.(2021) that could lead to underperformance and lack of productivity. Thus, occupational preferences should provide platforms for individuals to express their self-concept or the perception they hold about themselves. Self-concept is a crucial aspect of globalization as it helps people to be prepared to be mentally to face the challenges (Nasir, et al., 2013). Students' perceptions of occupations, interest, aptitude, and ability could significantly likely to affect their occupational preferences negatively (Agbo, 2022). This is a proof that self-concept is a critical psychological resource for guiding students towards their occupational preferences.

Self-image relates to the self-picture of someone which includes an overview of physical appearance (e.g., height, complexion), psychological attributes (e.g., interest, attitude) and social attributes (e.g., beliefs, social value). Self-image equips students to clearly understand the kind of occupations that could align with their physical, psychological and socio-cultural characteristics. Studies have shown that self-image awareness leads to better self-understanding, emotional intelligence, personality, social behavior, and attitudes towards working with individuals from different racial groups. Self-image can also relate to the childhood experiences and knowledge (O'Connell 2001) and provide the basis for choice of occupation as previous life experience helps individual to understand who they are and who they have always been. Occupational awareness forms the basis for the exploration of occupational options (Perry &VanZandt, 2006). Occupational awareness which is part of vocational development process helps students to be open to the choices and possibilities of occupations available to them (Eliason et al., 2008; Nasir, et al., 2013). This can be realistically done when students have a good understanding of their self-image.

Self-image also plays a significant role in the workplace, influencing various aspects such as self-confidence, attitudes towards others, and professional choices.

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Self-esteem as a component of the self-concept is the value or worth individuals place on themselves by showing the extent they consider themselves important, worthy, capable, and able to succeed (Pignault, Rastoder, Houssemand, 2023). Self-concept has been noted in studies to influence career maturity or career readiness (Sneva, 2011; Gonzalez, 2008), which helps to develop students' vocational readiness for effective occupational choice. People with high self-esteem and high self-efficacy tend to map out a clear path for their success and seek help to achieve career goals (Bullock-Yowell, Andrews, Buzzetta, 2011). Rogers (1959) opined that a person who has high self-worth can cope with challenges in life, endures failures and sadness and likely to be open with others around him or her. Rogers believed anxiety is a result of incongruence between experience and self-perception leading a defensive process in individuals (Rossier et al.). Low self-esteem has been found to positively correlate with career exploration and decision (Rossier, Rochat, Sovet, Bernaud, 2021). This indicates that self-esteem can affect students' occupational preferences. Individuals who value themselves experience self-movement and growth toward realizing their potentials to become fully functioning people who are well balanced, and adjusted (Rogers, 1961; Mcleod, 2007). Thus, students' self-esteem could inspire them to work towards occupational choices that can align with their perceptions of the values and respects they place on themselves.

Ideal-self is a component of self-concept which represents people strivings to achieve in their goals or ideals, making it the part of self that propels people towards fulfilling their dynamic ambitions and goals (McLeod, 2007). The ideal-self forms the basis for dreams of what one wants to be. The ideal-self component of the self-concept plays a role in influencing students' occupational maturity just like self-image and self-esteem do. The higher the occupational maturities of individuals are, the higher their chances of making wise and satisfactory occupational choices (Kaur, 2012). Super (1951) also explains that career maturity is demonstrated when a person exhibits behaviors that show career readiness that is equivalent to people in the same chronological age. Thus, students' perception of their ideal-selves could guide their occupational decisions and preferences in order to self-actualize their dreams. Hence, the higher the perception of the students' ideal-selves, the higher they are likely to demonstrate occupational maturity which can translate to satisfactory in occupational choice.

The word occupation originated from the Latin word "occupare or occupatio" which means 'taking possession' or 'occupy 'one and also vocational comes from the Latin word "vocare" which means "to call" (Wedekind, 2018). According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary "occupation implies work in which a person engages regularly especially as a result of training". Occupation can also be as work done by an individual to earn a living and fulfillment. A vocation can also be seen as any kind of work individuals engage in because they believe and have interest in it to have a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction without placing emphasis on monetary gains (Akume, 2010). Similarly, career can be defined as the succession of events that occur throughout one's life, including advances, pauses, and regressions in employment and profession (Özyürek, 2016; Yeşilyaprak, 2019). UNESCO (2002) described career as the "interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person's lifespan including both paid and unpaid work in an individual's life". The term could be broadly defined as the roles people play including students, parents, employees, retirees, and employers, in securing a livelihood (Eremie & Okwulehie, 2018). In this study occupation is seen as work people to do for means of livelihood and to satisfy their psychological needs in terms of personal satisfaction.

Occupational preference refers to the choices people make in terms of occupation. According to Holland's theory, career indecision might result from the person scoring high on completely different domains (Holland, 1997). Occupational decision-making is complex (1957), Ginsburg, et al., 1951; Tiedeman & O'hara, 1953), and unique for individuals depending on their psychological make-ups (Braza & Guillo, 2015). Thus, determining occupational choices is essential in one's life journey (Iriani, Harum, &Saman,

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2023). Individuals interact adaptively with their work environments and enjoy their occupations if their occupational preferences align with their personality traits (Spokane, Luchetta, &Richwine 2002; Jemini-Gashi, & Bërxulli, 2017).

Good occupational choices make workers to stand a good chance of succeeding as they are likely to develop strengths and abilities suitable for their occupations. All occupations are worth doing, but they are only satisfying to the right people (Wingfield, 2003). This reinforces the need for career maturity for the enhancement of students' career development (Kim & Oh, 2013; Efendy & Haryanti, 2020) to determine their readiness to pick occupations they are psychologically harmonious with. Holland (1997) posited that individuals with specific vocational personality types are attracted to activities and occupations related to those types. Several studies have found personality types to be predictive of students' choice of a degree program as presented by Holland's typology (Porter &Umbach, 2006; Onoyase & Onoyase, 2009; Atela, Agak, & Othuon, 2020).

Realistic worker includes a mechanic working in an auto repair shop (Atela, et al., 2020). The following areas describe the potential realistic work environment in terms of likely interest area, key skills, examples of realistic workers, and subjects needed to develop the required skills.

- **Interest area:** You like working mainly with your hands making, fixing, assembling or building things, using and operating equipment, tools or machines. You often like to work outdoors.
- **Key skills:** Using and operating tools, equipment and machinery, designing, building, repairing, maintaining, measuring, working in detail, driving, moving, caring for animals, working with plants. Examples of realistic workers: Pilot, farmer, horticulturist, builder, engineer, armed services personnel, mechanic, upholsterer, electrician, computer technologist, park ranger, and sportsperson.
- **Subjects needed to develop required skills:** English, Mathematics, Science, Workshop, Technology, Computing, Business Studies, Agriculture, Horticulture, and Physical Education.

Investigative worker is drawn to scientific and mathematical occupations, trouble-shooting, problem-solving, and explorative or positions classified as analytical or intellectual, for example, a scientist working in a laboratory (Shearer, 2010; Turner et al, 2008). The following areas describe the potential investigative work environment in terms of likely interest area, key skills, occupation with practical components, and subjects to develop the required skills.

- **Interest area:** You like to discover and research ideas, observe, investigate and experiment, ask questions and solve questions.
- **Key skills:** Thinking analytically and logically, computing, communicating by writing and speaking, designing, formulating, calculating, diagnosing, experimenting, and investigating. Examples of investigative workers: Science, research, medical and health occupations, chemist, marine scientist, forestry technician, medical or agricultural laboratory technician, zoologist, dentist, GP.
- **Subjects needed to develop required skills:** English, Maths, Science, Computing, and Technology.

The artistic worker like to work in artistic settings which offer opportunities for self and creative expression in artistic media hence rewarding their creative thinking and behavior (Lawrence, 2012; Hollandcodes.com, 2012; Turner et al, 2008; PASD, 2012; Gottfredson & Holland, 1996). The following areas describe the potential investigative work environments in terms of likely interest area, key skills, occupation with practical components, and subjects to develop the required skills.

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- **Interest area:** You like using words, art, music or drama to express yourself, communicate or perform or you like to create or design things.
- **Key skills:** Expressing artistically or physically, communicating by speaking, writing and singing, performing, designing, presenting, planning, composing, playing, and dancing. Examples of artistic workers: Artist, illustrator, photographer, sign-writer, composer, singer, instrument player, dancer, actor, reporter, writer, editor, hairdresser, and fashion designer.
- **Subjects needed to develop required skills:** English, Social Studies, Music, Drama, Art, Graphic Design, Computing, Business Studies, and Languages

Social worker is suited for social or interpersonal occupations such as teaching and advising or simply working in an industry were helping or exercising their humanitarian efforts is a goal. Enterprising personality type is interested in taking on a leadership role would benefit in finance or entrepreneurship. Atela, et al., (2020). The following areas describe the potential social worker in terms of likely interest area, key skills, occupation with practical components, and subjects to develop the required skills.

- **Interest area:** You like working with people to teach, train, inform, help, treat, heal, cure, serve and greet. You are concerned for others' well-being and welfare.
- **Key skills:** Communicating by writing and speaking, caring and supporting, training, meeting, greeting, assisting, teaching, informing, interviewing, and coaching. Examples of Social workers: Teacher, nurse, counsellor, police officer, social worker, salesperson, customer secretary, service officer, and waiter.
- **Subjects needed to develop required skills:** English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Health, Physical Education, Art, Computing, Business Studies, and Languages

Enterprising worker is usually interested in taking on a leadership role (Atela, et al., 2020). The following areas describe the potential enterprising worker in terms of likely interest area, key skills, examples of enterprising workers, and subjects needed to develop the required skills.

- **Interest area:** You like meeting people, leading, talking to and influencing others, encouraging others, working in business.
- **Key skills:** Selling, promoting and persuading, developing ideas, public speaking, managing, organising, leading and captaining, computing, and planning. Examples of enterprising workers: Sales-person, lawyer, politician, accountant, business owner, executive or manager, travel agent, and music or sports promoter.
- **Subjects needed to develop required skills:** English, Mathematics, Business Studies, Accounting, Economics, Social Studies, Drama, Computing, and Languages.

Conventional type is drawn to clerical occupations, such as the manipulation of data, or systematic details (Hollandcodes.com, 2012; Turner et al, 2008; PASD 2012; Gottfredson & Holland, 1996). The following areas describe the potential conventional workers in terms of likely interest area, key skills, examples of enterprising workers, and subjects needed to develop the required skills.

- **Interest area:** You like working indoors and at tasks that involve organising and being accurate, following procedures, working with data or numbers, planning work and events.
- **Key skills:** Keys required by conventional personality type are: computing and keyboarding, recording and keeping records, paying attention to detail, meeting and greeting, doing calculations, handling money, organizing, arranging, and working independently. Examples of conventional workers: Types of occupation for conventional personality include: Secretary, receptionist, office worker, librarian, bank clerk, computer operator, stores and dispatch clerk.

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- **Subjects needed to develop required skills:** English, Mathematics, Business Studies, Accounting, Economics, and Computing.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Determine the influence of self-image on occupational preferences among final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.
2. Ascertain the influence of self-esteem on occupational preferences among final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.
3. Establish influence of ideal self on occupational preferences among final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and examined.

1. There is no significant influence of self-image on occupational preferences among final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.
2. There is no significant influence of self-esteem on occupational preferences among final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.
3. There is no significant influence of ideal self on occupational preferences among final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Eremie, and Ikpah, (2017) investigated self-concept and occupational aspiration among Senior Secondary School Students in Ahoada East Local Government Area in Rivers State. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study was three thousand, one hundred and fifty (3,150) SS1 students. Three hundred and twelve (312) SS1 students were selected through stratified random sampling technique for the study. Two statistics were used: The Pearson Product Moment Correlation and t-test statistic were used at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that: (1) Self-concept has significant relationship with students' occupational aspiration. (2) There is significant difference between students with high self-concept and their occupational aspirations. (3) There is no significant difference between self-concept and occupational aspiration of male and female students. The gaps in the study of Eremie, et al. (2017) and this study are as follows: SS1 students were used as the population of the study of Eremie, et al. (2017) but the present used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the effects of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Eremie, et al. (2017) concentrated on the relationship between self-concept and career aspirations using a Product Moment correlation statistical tool, while the present study examined the influence of self-concept and the big five personality traits on occupational preference using linear regression and multiple regression analysis to show effects of the interactions of independent variables on the dependent variables.

Huda, Ismanto, and Kusumawati (2024) determined the extent of the correlation between self-concept and career selection of students in a research conducted at Junior High School Semarang with ninth grade students in the 2023/2024 school year. The study applied a correlational quantitative approach with descriptive research type and adopted a random sampling technique to select a sample of 260 students for the study. The results showed that the self-concept of ninth grade students of Junior High School Semarang is in the high classification at 83% and the career choice variable is also in the high category at 61%. A significant positive correlation was between self-concept and career choice of the students who participated in study. The gaps in the study of Huda, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from Semarang were used as participants in the study of Huda, et al. (2023) but the present used all final

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year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the influence of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Huda, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice). However, this present study considered the influence of the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

Iriani, Harum,and Saman(2023) examined the relationship between students' self-concept and career maturity and identity linking the influence of self-concept components on career choice maturity. The study used quantitative research with a correlation design with a population of all class XII students at SMA Negeri 2 Gowa, Indonesia totaling 396 students and a sample of 100 students (50 female students and 50 male students), using cluster random sampling technique. Data was collected using the self-concept scale from Rogers' theory and career choice maturity from Donald E. Super's career theory. Data analysis used descriptive analysis, product moment correlation analysis, and analysis of linear regression equations. The results showed that female and male students knew their self-concept, including perceptions of physical appearance and behaviour, based on goals, inspiration and values to be achieved, assessment of achievement according to the ideal self, ability to behave according to the environment, ability to master, respect for oneself, likewise, with the career choice maturity of female students and male students who are in the high category. Based on the correlation test results on variable X (Self-Concept) and Y (Career Choice Maturity) variables of female and male students, it was concluded that there was a relationship between self-concept and career choice maturity of females 0.68% higher than male students. The self-concept component influences the maturity of career choices for both female and male students. The gaps in the study Iriani, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from SMA Negeri 2 Gowa, Indonesia were used as participants in the study of Iriani, et al. (2023) but the present used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the effects of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Iriani, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice maturity). However, this present study considered the influence of the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

Abdinoor and Ibrahim (2019) studied the impact of self-concept on career maturity. Participants included in this study were 552 senior secondary students [234 form threes, 258 form fours and 60 students did not identify their grade; 379 males and 173 females] from Wajir County in northern Kenya. Participants responded to four standardised inventories: Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1973), Career-Related Support Scale (Turner et al., 2003), Career Decision-Making/Self-Efficacy Scale (Taylor and Benz, 1983) and Piers Harris Children`s Self-Concept scale (Piers, 1984). In addition, they responded to a demographic section that provided information about gender, age, grade, stream of study, and socio-economic status. The result indicated a significant relationship between career maturity, career decision-making and self-concept. The gaps in the study Abdinoor et al. (2019) and this study are as follows: students used as participants in the study of Abdinoor et al. (2019) were from Wajir County in northern Kenya, but the study present used senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria as participants to examine the effects of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Abdinoor et al. (2019) did not include the big five personality types in the variables studied along with career decision making, whereas this present study infused the big five personality types with self-concept to investigate their effects on occupational preferences.

Archibong(2017) assessed the influence of self-concept on occupational preferences of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. The population of the study consisted of all 5,059 male and female senior secondary two

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students in the 14 public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area in the 2015/16 school year. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw 519 students at equal gender basis, from seven public secondary schools which were selected randomly for the study. The instrument used was a self-developed "Personality Variables and Occupational Preferences Questionnaire (PVOPQ)". Two research questions and hypotheses respectively, were raised and tested using inferential statistics (independent t-test and analysis of variance). The results revealed significant influences of self-concept on occupational preferences of secondary school students. The gaps in the study Archibong (2017) and this study are as follows: students used as participants in the study of Archibong (2017) were students from public senior secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, but the study present used public final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. Archibong (2017) also adopted the ex-post facto research design while the present study adopted descriptive survey design.

Onyekpe, Mezieobi, and Ukor (2021) investigated the influence of self-concept on occupational choices of secondary school students in Imo state. Survey method was adopted and seven (7) hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A sample size of four hundred (400) students was drawn from ten (10) secondary schools in SSI and SSII classes in Imo state. A questionnaire was used to collect data information from the respondents. Test re-test method was used to obtain the reliability of 0.88. The data collected was analyzed using chi-square and they showed that all the seven (7) hypotheses were rejected. Based on this, the researchers made the following findings, first, that there is a significant relationship between self-concept and occupational choices of secondary school students: second that the occupational choices of secondary school students are related to gender, location, and class attachment in school. The gaps in the study Onyekpe, et al. (2021) and this study are as follows: students used as participants in the study of Onyekpe, et al. (2021) were in SSI and SSII classes in Imo state but the study present used final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. The study of Onyekpe, et al. (2021) tested the hypotheses using chi-square statistical tools, but this present used t-test to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

Okafor, and Akpochafo (2022) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and career decision-making difficulties among secondary school students. The population included 16,473 Senior Secondary two (SS 2) students from public secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The sample size comprised 378 senior secondary school students. The students were sampled using a multistage sampling procedure. A questionnaire was used to gather data in this study. Expert judgment was used to determine the instrument's face validity. Cronbach's alpha reliability index was used to determine the internal consistency of the items in the instrument. Self-Esteem Rating Scale = 0.71, and Career Decision-Making Difficulties Rating Scale = 0.82 are the reliability coefficients found. The hypotheses were tested and answered using regression statistics of F-ratio at 0.05 level of significance, while the research questions were answered using Pearson's coefficient of determination. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and career decision-making difficulties among secondary school students. The gaps in the study Okafor, et al. (2022) and this study are as follows: students used as participants in the study of Okafor, et al. (2022) were SS 2 students from public secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District, and correlational research design was adopted, but the present study used descriptive survey design and public final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State as research participants. The study of Okafor, et al. (2022) also answered the research questions using Pearson's coefficient of determination but this present study used descriptive statistics of mean scores and standard deviations to answer the research questions.

Javed and Tariq (2016) determined the association between career decisions and self-esteem in 100 male

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and 100 female students of government and private educational institutions in Lahore. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, 1996) and the Career Decision Making Difficulties Questionnaire (Gati, Krausz, &Osipow, 1996) were used to measure the study variables. A 2(Gender) X 2(Educational Institution) completely randomized design revealed that students of government academic institutions had greater career-decision making difficulties than students from private institutions and that female students had greater career-decision making difficulties compared to males. The study established that self-esteem showed significant correlation with career-decision making. The gaps in the study Javed, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from Pakistan were used as participants in the study of Javed, et al. (2023) but the present study used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the influence of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Javedi, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice maturity). However, this present study considered the influence of the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

Dangwal and Mitra (2024) examined the relationship between career aspirations and self-esteem of students studying in Neemrana, Rajasthan, India. A total of 118 students participated. 69 of these students were from 3rd year B Tech programme and 49 were from 1st year B Tech programme. The revised version of the Career Aspirations Scale (CAS) developed by Gregor and O'Brien which consists of three subscales, including achievement aspirations (8 items), leadership aspirations (8 items), and educational aspirations (8 items) was used to measure career aspirations. Rosenberg's self-esteem scale consisting of 10 self-report items was used to measure self-esteem. The literature reviewed by the researchers had mixed evidence of the relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations. The result of the study confirmed that there was no relationship between self-esteem and career aspirations, it highlighted various results for intervention programs in higher education institutions. The gaps in the study Dangwal, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from Neemrana, Rajasthan, India were used as participants in the study of Dangwal, et al. (2023) but the present used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the influence of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Dangwal, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice maturity). However, this study considered the influence of the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

Choveauxand Leng (2024) examined the impact of self-esteem on the career decision making self-efficacy (CDMSE) of students in Botswana. Data was collected from a sample of 120 participants from 5 different universities across Botswana. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale, Career decision self-efficacy Short form (CDSE-SF) and the Proactive Personality (PP) scales were administered to assess the variables under study. The data collected was analyzed using the Pearson's correlation, regression analysis and Hayes' mediation model. The results indicate that self-esteem had a significant positive correlation and impact with the career decision making self-efficacy of students. Further analysis reveals a significant positive correlation of student's age with their self-esteem levels but no gender disparities were found. In conclusion, students with high level of self-esteem are more likely to have higher levels of career decision making self-efficacy. The gaps in the study Choveaux l, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from Neemrana, Rajasthan, India were used as participants in the study of Choveaux, et al. (2023) but the present used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the influence of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Choveaux, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice maturity). However, this present study considered the influence of

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the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

Iriani et al (2023) examined the self-image and female students' career choice maturity. The study used quantitative research with a correlation design with a population of all class XII students at SMA Negeri 2 Gowa, Indonesia totaling 396 students and a sample of 100 students (50 female students and 50 male students), using cluster random sampling technique. Data was collected using the self-concept scale from Rogers' theory and career choice maturity from Donald E. Super's career theory. Data analysis used descriptive analysis, product moment correlation analysis, and analysis of linear regression equations. The results showed that female and male students knew their self-concept, including perceptions of physical appearance and behaviour, based on goals, inspiration and values to be achieved, assessment of achievement according to the ideal self, ability to behave according to the environment, ability to master, respect for oneself, likewise, with the career choice maturity of female students and male students who are in the high category. The findings showed that female students' career choice maturity was influenced by self-image and self-identity. The gaps in the study Iriani, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from SMA Negeri 2 Gowa, Indonesia were used as participants in the study of Iriani, et al. (2023) but the present used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the influence of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Iriani, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice maturity). However, this present study considered the influence of the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

Santi,and Gorghiu (2016) examined self-Image as a predictor of success in career. The research sample consisted of 529 upper secondary students, aged between 15 and 19 years old in Europe. The study was done based on the feedback offered by the secondary students to specific questionnaire applied after the implementation of inquire-based science teaching modules, developed in the frame of the European FP7 Project entitled: "PROFILES - Professional Reflection Oriented Focus on Inquiry-based Learning and Education through Science." The study confirmed a positive relationship between self-image and career among the students who participated in the study. The gaps in the study Santi, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from Europe were used as participants in the study of Santi, et al. (2023) but the present used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the influence of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Santi, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice maturity). However, this present study considered the influence of the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

Iriani et al (2023) examined ideal-self and male students' career choice maturity. The study used quantitative research with a correlation design with a population of all class XII students at SMA Negeri 2 Gowa, Indonesia totaling 396 students and a sample of 100 students (50 female students and 50 male students), and using cluster random sampling technique. Data was collected using the self-concept scale from Rogers' theory and career choice maturity from Donald E. Super's career theory. Data analysis used descriptive analysis, product moment correlation analysis, and analysis of linear regression equations. The results showed that female and male students knew their self-concept, including perceptions of physical appearance and behaviour, based on goals, inspiration and values to be achieved, assessment of achievement according to the ideal self, ability to behave according to the environment, ability to master, respect for oneself, likewise, with the career choice maturity of female students and male students who are in the high category. The findings showed that female students' career choice maturity was influenced by their ideal self and self-esteem. The gaps in the study Iriani, et al. (2023) and this study are as follows: students from SMA Negeri 2 Gowa, Indonesia were used as participants in the study of Iriani, et al.

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(2023) but the present used all final year students among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria to examine the influence of self-concepts and on their occupational preferences. The study of Iriani, et al. (2023) concentrated on the relationship between one independent variable (self-concept) and a dependent variable (career choice maturity). However, this present study considered the interactional influence of the two independent variables (self-concept and personality) on occupational preferences.

METHODOLOGY

This researcher adopted descriptive cross sectional survey design. The study was quantitative in nature because it collected quantifiable information that was used to test hypotheses. The population of this study comprised of all final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. The Nasarawa State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2024) Lafia, statistic shows there are 472 Secondary Schools in 16 Area Inspectorate offices within the state, comprising: Awe, Akwanga, Assakio, Doma, Garaku, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Mararaba, Udege, Nasarawa, Nasarawa Eggon, Lafia, Obi, Uke, Wamba and Toto with 146,616 students.

The sample size for the study comprised of 379 SSS III students from the public senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The researcher relied on the position of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to select the sample. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select 3 Local Governments Areas in Nasarawa State. In the second stage, multi-stage sampling procedure wasused to select 52 secondary schools in three Local Government Areas. In third stage and last stage the Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 380 students as respondents for the study. From Akwanga Local Government Area 138 students was selected (85 boys and 53 girls) from 19 schools; 52 from Keffi (32 boys and 20 girls) from 7 schools; and from Lafia 190 (112 boys and 78 girls) from 26 schools.

The instruments used in this research were two open-ended questionnaires, one of which was researcher-constructed questionnaire called: "Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) and one adopted questionnaire called: "Akinade Vocational Interest Survey (AVIS)". The questionnaires comprised of two sections A and B. Section A deals with the bio-data of participants and Section B deals with test items and respondent items using the 4- point rating scale of strongly agree (SA) 4, agree (A) 3, disagree (D) 2 and strongly disagree (SD) 1. Respondents ticked (√) one option for each of the test items in the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were checked by the experts for clarity, appropriateness of the items, and relevance of the test items to the research objectives. They were subjected to both face value and content validity. The validity of Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) and Akinade Vocational Interest Survey (AVIS) yielded validity indices of 76%, and 83% respectively. These validity indices were considered adequate for the study. The instruments also underwent a reliability test to ensure that the test items are able to consistently measure what they are supposed to measure. After the pilot test, the responses of the participants were collated and measured using the Cronbach Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability of the instruments yielded 0.84 for SCQ and 0.84 for AVIS.

HYPHOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of self-image on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Table 1: t-test of influence of self-image on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	Sig

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Self-image	380	16.8789	2.57060	379	127.99	.000
Occupational Preferences	380	75.3737	11.44482			

It could be seen from table 1 that the value of t = 127.99 resulted as the influence of self -image. This value is significant because t = 127.99; df = 379; p = 0.00 < 0.05. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of self-image on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of self-esteem on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Table 2: t-test of influence of self-esteem on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	Sig
Self-esteem	380	16.6105	2.41825	379	133.89	.000
Occupational Preferences	380	75.3737	11.44482			

It could be seen from table 2 that the value of t = 133.89 resulted as the influence of self -esteem. This value is significant because t = 133.89; df = 379; p = 0.00 < 0.05. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of self-esteem on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of ideal self on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Table 3: t-test of influence of ideal self on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	Sig
Ideal self	380	17.1316	2.38919	379	139.77	.000
Occupational Preferences	380	75.3737	11.44482			

It could be seen from table 3 that the value of t = 139.778 resulted as the influence of ideal self. This value is significant because t = 139.778; df = 379; p = 0.00 < 0.05. Therefore, this hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is upheld that there is a significant influence of ideal-self on occupational preferences among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

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CONCLUSION

The study revealed a significant influence of self-concept on occupational preferences of the students who participated in the research. All the indices of self-concept (self-image, self-esteem, and ideal-self) showed statistically significant influence on occupational preferences.

In conclusion, there is a significant influence of self-concept on occupational preferences of final year senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Counsellors need to help students to acquire high level of self-knowledge awareness in order to help in their vocational choice.
2. Counsellors need to work closely with principals, teachers and parents to make career activities like Career Day or Career Week successful in order to help students learn more about occupations through engaging interactions with resource persons who may help as speaker during such periods.
3. Counsellors should work closely with parents to jointly help students achieve their occupational objectives.
4. Counselling services should involve field trips which can provide students with practical knowledge through interactions with professionals during such visits to broaden their occupational understanding that could helpful in occupational decisions.
5. Counselling services should be established in all secondary schools in Nasarawa State to help students in the state in terms of career decisions.

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