

Career Choice in Secondary Schools and its Effects on Job Security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines career choice in secondary schools and its effects on job security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research was guided by Donald Super's Theory of Career Development (1957) and Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (1959). Three objectives and corresponding research questions were formulated to direct the study. A total of 300 Senior Secondary Three (SS3) students were randomly selected from three secondary schools in Abak Local Government Area. Data were collected through structured questionnaires designed using a Likert scale to capture respondents' opinions clearly and objectively. Out of the 300 questionnaires administered, 287 were correctly filled and returned, representing a high response rate. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage methods, while the chi-square (χ^2) statistical tool was employed to test the three hypotheses formulated. Findings revealed a significant relationship between career choice and job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. Based on the results, the study recommended that guidance and counseling units should be strengthened in

schools to help students make informed career decisions. It also emphasized the need for parents to play supportive rather than prescriptive roles and for government to create job opportunities and structured platforms that assist young people in choosing careers that promote professional stability and contribute to societal development.

Keywords: Career Choice, Career Guidance, Parental Roles, Professional Development, and Job Security.

Introduction

The concept of career choice has become increasingly complicated in the contemporary era, shaped by the exponential growth of information technology, the structural transformation of the digital economy, and heightened labor market competition. Unlike pre-industrial societies where occupational roles were typically inherited and provided a measure of stability and conformity, such as the blacksmith's son inheriting his father's trade or feudal heirs being prepared for leadership, modern career trajectories are less secure and more fluid (Calitz, Cullen, and Twani, 2024). Job security is no longer guaranteed by lineage or tradition but is instead contingent upon adaptability, skill acquisition, and responsiveness to the dynamics of a globalized economy. (Lastad, Pienaar, Naswall, Richter, Hellgren, and Sverke, 2025). The transition from industrialization to post-industrialization has fundamentally reshaped social and economic structures, enabling individuals to attain upward mobility through the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge. Through structured career development and extensive job market surveys, individuals are increasingly able to make informed career choices that respond to the fluid and continually evolving social milieu (Singh, 2024). Ekanem & Asuquo (2024) argued that a perfect career choice and making careful and well-thought-out decisions based on your good finances, values, etc., and toeing the path that corresponds to what you want your life to be like endowed potentialities increases the chances of a child's success/progress in life. Career choice/determination is a very complicated, sophisticated, baroque, and dynamic decision-making process that involves evaluating and assessing your talents, interests, skills, and goals in the future.

According to Ifemeje and Nwokoye (2024), the home and the wider society serve as foundational contexts for child development, offering essential resources such as protection, guidance, shelter, and psychosocial support. Within the process of socialization, the home functions as a critical institution that facilitates a child's

cognitive and socio-cultural development by mediating experiences and providing interpretive frameworks through which the external world is understood. During the formative years, children are often unaware of the structural, social, and cultural realities of life; however, through the processes of parental guidance and socialization, they acquire essential knowledge, values, and competencies that enable them to navigate developmental tasks and contribute meaningfully to society. The family thus functions as a central agent of socialization, shaping children's capacity for adjustment, usefulness, and future success (Bornstein, 2019). Homes characterized by persistent conflict and divergent aspirations between parents and children often lack a strong sense of family cohesion. In such environments, children's sense of personal security becomes fragile, which may result in feelings of inadequacy regarding their background and challenges in developing confidence, stability, and effective coping strategies.

A lack of adequate parental and guardian support, particularly in terms of creating a conducive home environment and sustaining active involvement in children's educational experiences, has been shown to negatively influence secondary school students' career aspirations and decision-making processes (Hayat, Kiazai, and Zakir, 2024). The role of parents constitutes a fundamental and persistent determinant of students' dispositions toward the study of different academic disciplines, thereby exerting a significant influence on their final career choices. Ajayi, Moosa, and Aloka (2023) argued that students' career choices are primarily shaped by their interests and abilities, which serve as key drivers of success. When either factor is lacking, students are more likely to experience incompetence and poor alignment in their professional development. Nevertheless, persistent interest in a subject fosters stronger academic performance and facilitates more rational decision-making, thereby increasing the likelihood of attaining professional aspirations.

According to Udoh (2023), the problem of career choice in the present Akwa Ibom State includes inadequate qualified teachers in our secondary schools to offer career guidance to the students. Schools are expected to structure curricula and subject offerings in ways that equip students with competencies leading to careers that guarantee both employability and job security. Empirical studies have shown that high dropout rates among students are often linked to inappropriate career selection, absence of clearly defined career objectives, financial constraints, and other socio-economic determinants. Within this framework, guidance and counselling services serve a critical function by assisting students in aligning their academic pursuits with labor market demands, thereby fostering career stability, minimizing the risk of unemployment, and enhancing prospects for long-term job satisfaction and security (Kennedy, 2025).

Adaha and Ekweanib (2024) argued that career choice represents a complex decision-making process that requires individuals to reflect on questions such as 'What career path aligns with my aspirations and competencies?' and 'What strategies can secure both employability and job security?' The first stage involves cultivating self-awareness, particularly the recognition of personal values, interests, and abilities that serve as determinants of professional trajectory. The second stage entails transforming these aspirations into practical steps through planned action, resilience, and goal setting. Within this framework, career choice extends beyond immediate interests to encompass considerations of job security, sustainability, and alignment with evolving job market requirements. Hence, informed career decisions are integral not only to personal fulfillment but also to safeguarding long-term economic stability and job security. Most secondary school students do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities, thereby working out modalities and developing themselves toward these directions. It is in view of such a situation that this study intends to survey the relationship between career choice and job security in Akwa Ibom State.

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Statement of the problem

Career choice is a topical issue for most students since it seeks to determine the kind of profession that most of them intend to pursue in life. Empirical studies indicated that students who try to make career choices while in school usually face problems in the

process of trying to match their career choices with their school performance (Zaini, Md Rami, Mohamad Arsad, and Mohd Anuar, 2021; Pham, Lam, and Bui, 2024; Palvolgyi, 2024). In Akwa Ibom State, every year, students make career choices before they write senior secondary school final examinations. Udoh (2023) posited that most students enter into careers that are totally different from the ones they choose while in schools because choosing a career is not like choosing an orange from a basket. According to Nasir and Shiang (2012), successful career choices seldom happen by chance. With limited exceptions, individuals who secure stability and unbroken success in their careers are those who articulate clear professional objectives, establish structured plans and timelines for their attainment, and assume personal responsibility for executing these plans. Such individuals engage in continuous self-monitoring, make necessary adjustments when anticipated outcomes are not achieved, and demonstrate persistence in the face of setbacks. This proactive and resilient approach not only facilitates the realization of career aspirations but also enhances employability and safeguards job security in an increasingly competitive labor market.

Many students experience difficulties in making thoughtful career choices, primarily due to lack of guidance and counseling services. In the absence of adequate support from parents, teachers, or professional counsellors, it is obvious that many students select careers without a clear understanding of labor market demands or the long-term implications for job security. This lack of systematic career coaching not only limits their ability to align personal interests with career advancement but also increases the likelihood of employment instability in the future. Limited attention has been given to how children conceptualize career choice within their sociological development, even though these early orientations significantly shape future career paths and job security. Inadequate guidance during this stage often results in unrealistic aspirations, occupational mismatches, and long-term employment instability (Zhao, Dietrich, and Kracke, 2012).

However, many factors, including academic standards, personal characteristics (age, sex, strength), interest, personal influence, peer group influence, the dominant occupation in the community, the careers of significant others in society, job security in the career, job satisfaction, prestige, religion, culture, family background, socioeconomic status, learning experiences, parental influence, lack of career guidance and counseling units in secondary schools, job opportunity, and student intellectual ability, amongst other factors, militate against career choice and job security in Akwa Ibom State. In this study, the researcher explored additional determinants that constrain career choice and job security beyond the widely acknowledged factors of parental influence and the absence of structured career guidance and counselling services in

secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The unequal distribution of opportunities and the divergence in developmental processes among students underscore the complexity of career decision-making. Such disparities often result in mismatched aspirations, limited employability skills, and heightened vulnerability to job insecurity in later life.

Buah, Mustapha, and Abdullahi (2020) argued more on the relationship between parental influence and choice of career among senior secondary school students and focused more on parental influence and lack of career guidance and counselling units in secondary schools and forgot to understand other factors, which include self-assessment and personal ambitions or preferences in life. Some students engage in evaluative practices by assessing both the process and outcomes of their learning, often using criteria co-constructed with peers. Other students conduct self-appraisal by benchmarking their performance against personal or social standards, which may result in self-imposed limitations regarding their perceived capacity to pursue certain careers. This dynamic demonstrates that self-examination plays a double function, including not only informing students' judgments about the feasibility of specific job trajectories but also influencing their discernment on the stability and security associated with those careers. Thus, students' self-evaluations may either broaden or restrict their dream job, thereby shaping their long-term employment prospects and sense of job security.

Some students perceive themselves as inadequate for certain jobs when they reflect on structural and personal constraints, such as the financial capacity of their parents to sponsor tertiary education, their own academic performance, and their perceived ability to achieve career advancement. In this process, they often critique their intellectual competence and learning outcomes, which may lead them to attribute prestigious or financially demanding careers to students from rich backgrounds or those with consistently exceptional performance. This perception not only discourages personal investment in self-improvement but also perpetuates unequal access to job opportunities. In the long term, such self-limiting judgments compromise students' capacity to pursue and secure sustainable employment, thereby reinforcing broader patterns of social stratification and job insecurity.

Socialization theory stated that a child would see how adults have learned distinctive patterns of behavior and adapt to learning, which, according to this theory, could lead to personality and professional formation. Socialization theorists also believe that human characteristics are seen as partly driven by biology and are gender specific. Socialization theory fails to understand that young people spend a considerable amount of their time in schools and, indeed, become defined in relation to their schoolmates' characteristics and in accordance with the status of their schools' friends. Within school, children meet a wider circle of people and learn not just formal subjects, but also the

importance of competition and reward; they value professions that will set them apart in a wider society. Some secondary school students choose their future career without seeking the knowledge or advice from their parents, teachers, or other professionals. Other students whose parents are not educated think that their parents have no idea about careers, professional development, or job security and, therefore, have nothing to offer in this direction. Study has it that parenting remains one of the few arenas of modern life where advice persists for all ages irrespective of educational status (Swanson and Gore, 2015).

This theory also neglects the professional preferences of most secondary school students. Some students, like, prefer or choose a career when they do not have requisite knowledge about it. It is common that some infants will say, “I want to be a lawyer”, “I want to be a doctor”, “I want to be an engineer”, and so on. Most of them grow up with the mind-set of becoming what they may have no ability to develop professionally.

The theory of parental influence on students' career choices fails to understand that some students do not need advice from their parents either because they think their parents would not be able to fix any problem associated with academics with their illiterate mentality. Some children underestimate and some overestimate parenting advice that could aid their professional choices and a stable job.

Research Objectives

The core objective of this study is to examine career choice in secondary school and its effects on job security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, while the specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the factors influencing career choice among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, with particular attention to parental influence.
- ii. investigate the relationship between career choices and perceptions of future job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- iii. assess the extent to which effective career guidance and informed decision-making among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State contribute to job security.

Research Questions

- i. What factors influence career choice among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, particularly with respect to parental influence?
- ii. What is the relationship between students' career choices and their perceptions of future job security in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. To what extent do effective career guidance and informed decision-making contribute to enhanced job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypothesis

- i. Ho: Parental influence has no significant effect on the career choice of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Ho: There is no significant relationship between students' career choices and their perceptions of future job security in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Ho: Effective career guidance and informed decision-making do not significantly contribute to job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it highlights the vital link between career choices made in secondary school and future job security among graduates in Akwa Ibom State. This is because choices made in secondary school constantly regulate students' educational paths and professional opportunities, directly influencing long-term job security. The findings will help policymakers and educational agencies to energize career guidance programs in schools to guarantee informed decision-making among students. It will also reinforce parents and teachers in comprehending their functions in fashioning students' work trajectories. Moreover, the study will contribute to reducing graduate joblessness and underemployment by promoting early career planning that corresponds with labor market needs. Finally, the study will serve as an essential resource for future researchers interested in education, career development, and job security in Nigeria.

Literature Review

According to Taylor (2004), a career is understood to relate to a range of aspects of an individual's life, learning, and work. It is the sequence and variety of occupations undertaken for a lifetime. This therefore portrays that a career is a sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with the service of a job and work (People and Culture of Kenya, 2011). Career choice can also be seen as the planning done by an individual in terms of making a career choice, advancing/growing in the career chosen, or making a career shift. Bloch (2005) put it to mean "the progress and action taken by a person throughout a lifetime, especially those related to that person's occupations." A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned, and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one position (Wattle, 2009). Career choice or planning involves a very important step of self-assessment. Self-assessment is necessary to understand one's capabilities and drawbacks. In carrying out career planning, the various career options should be expected in detail to find a fit between one's ability and the opportunities provided by a career option (Natalle, 2006). This involves contributions, learning, and improvement to build and grow in choosing a

career path (Kohlberg, 2009), asserting that "career" simply refers to a way of making a living or a profession. By this statement, therefore, a career can be seen as having to do with profession or occupation, and especially occupation that requires advanced education and special training (Brown and Rector, 2008).

In Akwa Ibom State, where employment opportunities remain limited and competition for available positions is high, parental influence on children's educational and career choices plays a crucial role in shaping future job security. Parents who encourage self-discovery, skill diversification, and informed decision-making equip their children to navigate the challenges of an uncertain labor market (Midkent College, 2020). Studies conducted in Akwa Ibom reveal that job security and retention are strongly associated with motivation, discipline, and performance, particularly within the education and civil service sectors (Online science publishing, 2021; KIU, 2022). As Super (1953) and Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) emphasize, career development is an evolving process that requires self-awareness and adaptability. Therefore, by fostering self-belief, resilience, and flexibility, rather than imposing rigid career expectations, parents can help their children attain not only meaningful employment but also long-term job stability and satisfaction within Akwa Ibom's competitive labor environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Super's Theory of Career Development (1953, 1980) and Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (1959, 1997). These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how individuals make career decisions and how such decisions influence their job satisfaction, stability, and long-term security. Both theories emphasize that career choice is not a random event but a process shaped by personal, psychological, and environmental factors. Applying these theories to the context of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State helps to explain how early educational and vocational decisions can affect employability and job security in later life.

Super's Theory of Career Development postulates that career choice is a lifelong process involving a sequence of developmental stages such as growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement (Super, 1953; Super, 1980). According to the theory, individuals develop a "self-concept" based on their experiences, values, and perceived abilities, which guides their career preferences and occupational choices. At the secondary school level, students are typically in the exploration stage, where they begin to assess their interests and abilities while making tentative career decisions. Super emphasizes that successful career development depends on the congruence

between an individual's self-concept and occupational roles. In the context of Akwa Ibom State, many secondary school students make career choices without sufficient self-awareness or professional guidance, often influenced by parental pressure or societal prestige. Such premature or misinformed decisions can result in a mismatch between one's skills and occupational demands, thereby reducing job satisfaction and security in adulthood. Thus, Super's theory underscores the need for effective career guidance and counseling programs in secondary schools to help students make informed and realistic career choices that align with their interests and the demands of the local labor market.

Complementing Super's perspective, Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments provides insight into the interaction between personality types and occupational environments (Holland, 1997). Holland identified six personality categories: *Realistic*, *Investigative*, *Artistic*, *Social*, *Enterprising*, and *Conventional* (RIASEC) and proposed that individuals are most satisfied and secure in careers that match their personality types. Job dissatisfaction, instability, or insecurity often arises when there is a poor fit between an individual's personality and their chosen work environment. In the Akwa Ibom context, where economic opportunities are limited and job competition is intense, aligning students' career choices with their personality types and competencies is vital for ensuring long-term job retention and satisfaction. For instance, students with *social* or *enterprising* traits may excel in fields such as education, health, or business, while *realistic* individuals may thrive in technical or vocational careers. Failure to recognize these personality-work environment congruencies can lead to career frustration, unemployment, or frequent job changes, which ultimately affect job security.

Taken together, Super's and Holland's theories provide a strong conceptual foundation for this study. While Super's theory highlights the developmental process of career decision-making, Holland's model focuses on the compatibility between personality and work environment. The integration of these theories suggests that career choice and job security are interconnected outcomes of both personal development and environmental fit. Applying these frameworks to secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State will enable a deeper understanding of how early career decisions shape future employment stability and how targeted interventions such as career guidance, counseling, and skill development can enhance job security and economic resilience among the youth population.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Abak Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, a historic administrative center known for its agricultural and socio-cultural significance. Abak covers approximately 304 square kilometers and is home to fifteen public and eleven private secondary schools, with a population of 139,090 (NPC, 2006). The people are predominantly Annang and are largely engaged in farming, trading, and artisanal work. The study population comprised Senior Secondary Three (SS3) students from three purposively selected schools: Saints Comprehensive Secondary School, Ikot Oku Mfang (136 students); The Church of Jesus Christ Secondary School, Atai Otoro (141 students); and Nigerian Christian Secondary School, Ukpom Abak (118 students), totaling 395 students. Using quota and stratified random sampling, a sample size of 300 respondents (100 from each school) was selected to ensure gender representation. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 287 valid responses were returned and used for analysis.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section A (demographic data) and Section B (career choice and job security variables), structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* (Preedy and Watson, 2010). Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, and official reports. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by experts in measurement and evaluation at the University of Uyo, while reliability was established through a pilot test involving 45 students, using Donald Super's formula to confirm internal consistency.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) for demographic data, while hypotheses were tested using the chi-square (χ^2) method to determine significant relationships between career choice and job security. Ethical considerations included obtaining consent from school authorities, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining confidentiality. Despite minor challenges such as administrative delays and incomplete questionnaires, the study was successfully executed, providing a reliable foundation for understanding how secondary school career choices influence job security in Akwa Ibom State.

Data Presentation**Table 1.0: Socio-Demographic characteristics of the Respondents (N = 287)**

Characteristics (%)	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Males	140	48.8
Females	147	51.2
Age Bracket		
13-15	98	34.1
16-18	121	42.2
19-21	68	23.7
School Attended		
Saints Comprehensive Secondary School, Ikot Oku Mfang.	95	33.1
The Church of Jesus Christ Secondary School, Atai Otoro.	95	33.1
Nigerian Christian Secondary School, Ukpom Abak.	97	33.8
Religion		
Christianity	281	97.9
Islam	0	0
Traditional	4	1.4
Others	2	0.7
Core Subject Area		
Arts	155	54.0
Sciences	132	46.0

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 1.0 shows that out of 287 respondents, 48.8% were male, while the remaining 51.2% were female students. Though equal opportunities were given to both sexes to participate in the study, female students had more chances to be randomly selected for the study. On age levels, 34.1% of the respondents were between 13 and 15 years old, 42.1% were between the ages of 16 and 18 years, while 23.7% were in the range of 19 to 21 years of age. In the distribution of the respondents by school attended, 33.1% of the respondents were from both Comprehensive Secondary School, Ikot Oku Mfang, and The Church of Jesus Christ Secondary School, Atai Otoro, while 33.8% were from Nigerian Christian Secondary School, Ukpom Abak. This was a result of equal opportunities given to all the three selected secondary schools to avoid bias and prejudice. On religion, 97.9% of the respondents were Christians, there were no respondents from the Islamic religion, 1.4% of the respondents were African Traditional Religion (ATR), while 0.7% of the respondents belonged to neither religion. This made it clear that the study was conducted in the area where Christianity is the dominant religion. In the area of core subjects, 54.0% of the respondents were arts-oriented students, while 46.0% were science-oriented students. This is because more arts-oriented students were randomly selected than science students.

Table 1.1: Observed Frequency for Responses 1–4 on the Questionnaire

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	
Total						
1.	Parents have the greatest influence on Children' choice of career.	18	17	16	16	67
2.	Parents encourage children to choose a career based on their own preference rather than children interest.	20	21	16	14	71
3.	The level of my parents' education and occupation has influenced the type of career I wish to pursue.	24	21	20	19	84
4.	Apart from my parents, teachers, Friends/Peers, Career Counsellor or Media/Social Media provides guidance or information that helps you decide on your future career	8	14	19	24	65
	Total	70	73	71	73	287

Source: *Field survey, 2025.*

Computation for Expected Frequency (fe) on Statement of Hypothesis One

fe for SA	fe for A	fe for D	fe for SD
$\frac{70 \times 67}{287} = 16.34$	$\frac{73 \times 67}{287} = 17.04$	$\frac{71 \times 67}{287} = 16.57$	$\frac{73 \times 67}{287} = 17.04$
$\frac{70 \times 71}{287} = 17.32$	$\frac{73 \times 71}{287} = 18.06$	$\frac{71 \times 71}{287} = 17.24$	$\frac{73 \times 71}{287} = 18.06$
$\frac{70 \times 84}{287} = 20.49$	$\frac{73 \times 84}{287} = 21.37$	$\frac{71 \times 84}{287} = 20.78$	$\frac{73 \times 84}{287} = 21.37$
$\frac{70 \times 65}{287} = 15.85$	$\frac{73 \times 65}{287} = 16.53$	$\frac{71 \times 65}{287} = 16.08$	$\frac{73 \times 65}{287} = 16.53$

Table 1.2: Observed and Expected Frequencies for Responses on Hypothesis One

Statements	SA	A	D	SA	Total
1	18 (16.34)	17 (17.04)	16 (16.57)	16 (17.04)	67
2	20 (17.32)	21 (18.06)	16 (17.24)	14 (18.06)	71
3	24 (20.49)	21 (21.37)	20 (20.78)	19 (21.37)	84
4	8 (15.85)	14 (16.53)	19 (16.08)	24 (16.53)	65
Total	70	73	71	73	287

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Computation of chi-square test statistics for determining the correlation between career choice and parental influence.

The following formula for Chi-square (X^2) was applied in testing hypotheses.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Where: X^2 = Chi-square

fo = The observed frequency

fe = The expected frequency

\sum = The summation

Fo	Fe	fo - fe	(fo - fe) ²	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{Fe}$
18	16.34	1.66	2.7556	0.1686
20	17.32	2.68	7.1824	0.4147
24	20.49	3.51	12.3201	0.6013
8	15.85	-7.85	61.6225	3.8879
17	17.04	-0.04	0.0016	9.3897
21	18.06	2.94	8.6436	0.4786
21	21.37	-0.37	0.1369	6.4062
14	16.53	-2.53	6.4009	0.3872
16	16.57	-0.57	0.3249	0.0196
16	17.24	-1.24	1.5376	0.0892
20	20.78	-0.78	0.6084	0.0293
19	16.08	2.92	8.5264	0.5302
16	17.04	-1.92	1.0816	0.0635
14	18.06	-4.06	16.4836	0.9127
19	21.37	-2.37	5.6169	0.2628
24	16.53	7.47	55.8009	3.3757

$$\Sigma = 27.0172$$

Table value

$$(R - 1) \times (C - 1)$$

$$(4 - 1) \times (4 - 1)$$

$$3 \times 3 = 9$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom (D/f)} = 9$$

The X^2 distribution is entered at $v = 9$ at 0.05 degree of freedom

$$\text{Table value} = 16.92$$

Interpretation of Hypothesis One:

The calculated (X^2) value = 27.0172

The table value = $(R - 1) \times (C - 1) = (4 - 1) \times (4 - 1) = 3 \times 3 = 9$

Degree of freedom (D/f) = 9

Degree of freedom at the level of 0.05 significance = 16.92

Decision: Since the calculated X^2 value (27.0172) is greater than the table X^2 value (16.92), the Null Hypothesis (H_0) that parental influence has no significant effect on the career choice of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State is rejected at 0.05 in favor of the Alternate Hypothesis (H_1). We are 95% confident that a right decision has been made.

Table 1.3: Observed Frequency for Responses 5 – 8 on the Questionnaire

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total
5.	The main influencing factor of choice of career is Job security/stability.	17	20	17	16	70
6.	The career I have chosen will provide me with stable and secure employment in the future.	20	19	14	15	68
7.	Parents' occupation and level of education have influenced how students perceive job security in different careers.	22	21	19	10	72
8.	Students have confident that their chosen career will guarantee them employment after completing education	10	21	23	23	77
	Total	69	81	73	64	287

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Computation for Expected Frequency (fe) on Statement of Hypothesis Two

fe for SA	fe for A	fe for D	fe for SD
$\frac{69 \times 70}{287} = 16.83$	$\frac{81 \times 70}{287} = 19.76$	$\frac{73 \times 70}{287} = 17.80$	$\frac{64 \times 70}{287} = 15.61$
$\frac{69 \times 68}{287} = 16.35$	$\frac{81 \times 68}{287} = 19.19$	$\frac{73 \times 68}{287} = 17.30$	$\frac{64 \times 68}{287} = 15.16$
$\frac{69 \times 72}{287} = 17.31$	$\frac{81 \times 72}{287} = 20.32$	$\frac{73 \times 72}{287} = 18.31$	$\frac{64 \times 72}{287} = 16.06$
$\frac{69 \times 77}{287} = 18.51$	$\frac{81 \times 77}{287} = 21.73$	$\frac{73 \times 77}{287} = 19.59$	$\frac{64 \times 77}{287} = 17.17$

Table 1.4: Observed and Expected Frequencies for Responses 5 – 8 on Hypothesis Two

Statements	SA	A	D	SA	Total
5.	17 (16.83)	20 (19.76)	17 (17.80)	16 (15.61)	70
6.	20 (16.35)	19 (19.19)	14 (17.30)	15 (15.16)	68
7.	22 (17.31)	21 (20.32)	19 (18.31)	10 (16.06)	72
8.	10 (18.51)	21 (21.73)	23 (19.59)	23 (17.17)	77
Total	69	81	73	64	287

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Computation of chi-square test statistics for determining the relationship between students' career choices and their perceptions of future job security in Akwa Ibom State.

The following formula for Chi-square (X^2) was applied in testing hypotheses.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Where: X^2 = Chi-square

fo = The observed frequency

fe = The expected frequency

\sum = The summation

Fo	Fe	fo - fe	(fo - fe) ²	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{Fe}$
17	16.83	0.17	0.0289	1.7172
20	16.35	3.65	13.3225	0.8148
22	17.31	4.69	21.9961	1.2707
10	18.51	-8.51	72.4201	3.9125
20	19.76	0.24	0.0576	2.9150
19	19.19	-0.19	0.0361	1.8812
21	20.32	0.68	0.4624	0.0228
21	21.73	-0.73	0.5329	0.0245
17	17.80	-0.80	0.6400	0.0360
14	17.30	-3.30	10.8900	0.6295
19	18.31	0.69	0.4761	0.0260
23	19.59	3.41	11.6281	0.5936
16	15.61	0.39	0.1521	9.7438
15	15.16	-0.16	0.0256	1.6887
10	16.06	-6.06	36.7236	2.2867
23	17.17	5.83	33.9889	1.9796

$$\Sigma = 29.5426$$

Table value

$$(R - 1) \times (C - 1)$$

$$(4 - 1) \times (4 - 1)$$

$$3 \times 3 = 9$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom (D/f)} = 9$$

The X^2 distribution is entered at $v = 9$ at 0.05 degree of freedom

$$\text{Table value} = 16.92$$

Interpretation of Hypothesis Two:

The calculated (X^2) value = 29.5426

The table value = $(R - 1) \times (C - 1) = (4 - 1) \times (4 - 1) = 3 \times 3 = 9$

Degree of freedom (D/f) = 9

Degree of freedom at the level of 0.05 significance = 16.92

Decision: Since the calculated X^2 value (29.5426) is greater than the table X^2 value (16.92), the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that there is no significant relationship between students' career choices and their perceptions of future job security in Akwa Ibom State, is rejected at 0.05. We are 95% confident that a right decision has been taken.

Table 1.5: Observed Frequency for Responses 9 – 12 Responses to Questionnaire

S/N	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Total
9.	Secondary school have provided career guidance to help students understand different career options in a very great extent	20	18	16	18	72
10.	Career guidance has helped students make an informed decision about their future career path	18	19	16	15	68
11.	Students believe that making an informed career decision can improve their chances of having a secure job in the future	22	20	19	13	74
12.	There are sources that have been most helpful in guiding students career decision	16	20	21	16	73
	Total	76	77	72	62	287

Source: *Field survey, 2025.*

Computation for Expected Frequency (fe) on Statement of Hypothesis Three

fe for SA	fe for A	fe for D	fe for SD
$\frac{76 \times 72}{287} = 19.07$	$\frac{77 \times 72}{287} = 19.32$	$\frac{72 \times 72}{287} = 18.06$	$\frac{62 \times 72}{287} = 15.55$
$\frac{76 \times 68}{287} = 18.01$	$\frac{77 \times 68}{287} = 18.24$	$\frac{72 \times 68}{287} = 17.06$	$\frac{62 \times 68}{287} = 14.69$
$\frac{76 \times 74}{287} = 19.60$	$\frac{77 \times 74}{287} = 19.85$	$\frac{72 \times 74}{287} = 18.56$	$\frac{62 \times 74}{287} = 15.99$
$\frac{76 \times 73}{287} = 19.33$	$\frac{77 \times 73}{287} = 21.73$	$\frac{72 \times 73}{287} = 18.31$	$\frac{62 \times 73}{287} = 15.7$

Table 1.6: Observed and Expected Frequencies for Responses 14 – 17 on Hypothesis Three

Statements	SA	A	D	SA	Total
14.	20 (19.07)	18 (19.32)	16 (18.06)	18 (15.55)	72
15.	18 (18.01)	19 (18.24)	16 (17.06)	15 (14.69)	68
16.	22 (19.60)	20 (19.85)	19 (18.56)	13 (15.99)	74
17.	16 (19.33)	20 (19.59)	21 (18.31)	16 (15.77)	73
Total	76	77	72	62	287

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Computation of chi-square test statistics for assessing the extent to which effective career guidance and informed decision-making among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State contribute to job security.

The following formula for Chi-square (X^2) was applied in testing hypotheses.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Where: X^2 = Chi-square

fo = The observed frequency

fe = The expected frequency

\sum = The summation

Fo	Fe	fo - fe	(fo - fe) ²	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{Fe}$
20	19.07	0.93	0.8649	0.0454
18	18.01	-0.01	0.0001	5.5525
22	19.60	2.40	5.7600	0.2939
16	19.33	-3.33	11.0889	0.5737
18	19.32	-1.32	1.7424	0.0902
19	18.24	0.76	0.5776	0.0317
20	19.85	0.15	0.0225	1.1335
20	19.59	0.41	0.1681	0.5809
16	18.06	-2.06	4.2436	0.2350
16	17.06	-1.06	1.1236	0.0659
19	18.56	0.44	0.1936	0.0143
21	18.31	2.69	7.2361	0.9552
18	15.55	2.45	6.0025	0.3860
15	14.69	0.31	0.0961	6.5419
13	15.99	-2.99	8.9401	0.5519
16	15.77	0.23	0.0529	3.3545

$$\sum = 20.4137$$

Table value

$$(R - 1) \times (C - 1)$$

$$(4 - 1) \times (4 - 1)$$

$$3 \times 3 = 9$$

Degree of freedom (D/f) = 9

The X^2 distribution is entered at $v = 9$ at 0.05 degree of freedom

Table value = 16.92

Interpretation of Hypothesis Three:

The calculated (X^2) value = **20.4137**

The table value = $(R - 1) \times (C - 1) = (4 - 1) \times (4 - 1) = 3 \times 3 = 9$

Degree of Freedom (D/f) = 9

Degree of freedom at the level of 0.05 significance = 16.92

Decision: Since the calculated X^2 value (20.4137) is greater than the table X^2 value (16.92), the Null Hypothesis (H_0), which states that effective career guidance and informed decision-making do not significantly contribute to job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, is rejected at 0.05. We are 95% confident that a right decision has been taken.

Proportional Allocation method for selecting sampling in each stratum

N1 Stratum a = $100 \times (57/136) = 42$ boys in School 1

Stratum b = $100 \times (79/136) = 58$ girls in School 1

N2 Stratum a = $100 \times (63/141) = 45$ boys in School 2

Stratum b = $100 \times (78/141) = 55$ girls in School 2

N3 Stratum a = $100 \times (55/118) = 47$ boys in School 3

Stratum b = $100 \times (63/118) = 53$ girls in School 3

TOTAL = 300

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study indicate a significant relationship between career choice in secondary schools and future job security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, showing that early career decisions strongly influence long-term professional stability. Students who receive adequate career guidance and make informed choices are more likely to pursue careers aligned with labor market demands, thereby enhancing their chances of securing stable employment. Conversely, poor career awareness, inadequate counselling, and undue influence from parents or peers often lead to mismatched career choices, resulting in underemployment, job instability, or unemployment in adulthood. The study therefore underscores the importance of structured career education and guidance in secondary schools as a critical strategy for improving job security and workforce development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis one examined the significant relationship between parental influence in career choice and job security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria using questionnaire items 6, 7, 8, and 9. The chi-square (χ^2) analysis revealed that 25% of

respondents strongly agreed and 26% agreed, while 24% disagreed and 25% strongly disagreed, indicating that 51% of the respondents supported the hypothesis against 49% who did not. Despite the close distribution of responses, the rejection of the null hypothesis confirms a statistically significant relationship between career choice and future job security. This finding highlights the critical role of parental influence in shaping career choices at the secondary school level in Akwa Ibom State, as parents often guide or determine the careers children pursue. Where parental guidance is informed and supportive of the child's interests and labor market realities, it enhances professional development and future job security; however, undue or misaligned parental pressure may lead to inappropriate career choices, skill mismatch, and eventual job insecurity in adulthood.

Hypothesis two focused on the relationship between students' career choices and their perceptions of future job security in Akwa Ibom State using responses from questionnaire items 10, 11, 12, and 13. Of the 287 respondents, 53% agreed that students' career choices influence future job security, while 47% disagreed. The chi-square (χ^2) analysis led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a statistically significant relationship. Respondents noted that informed career choices aligned with labor market demands enhance students' confidence in securing stable employment, whereas poor career guidance or limited awareness of emerging professions may create uncertainty about future job prospects. Overall, the findings suggest that effective career guidance in secondary schools positively shapes students' perceptions of job security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis three examined the relationship between effective career guidance, informed decision-making, and their contribution to job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. Responses from questionnaire items 14, 15, 16, and 17 were used for the analysis. The chi-square (χ^2) test revealed that 26% of respondents strongly agreed, 27% agreed, 25% disagreed, and 22% strongly disagreed with the statements. Despite the close distribution of opinions, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) accepted, indicating a statistically significant relationship between effective career guidance, informed decision-making, and job security among secondary school students. Respondents highlighted that proper career guidance equips students with the knowledge to make informed career choices, which enhances their preparedness for the labor market and improves prospects for stable employment in Akwa Ibom State.

After plotting the Likert scale ratings in percentages, it was revealed that 53% of respondents agreed with Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, indicating a significant relationship between career choice in secondary schools and its effects on job security in Akwa Ibom

State, Nigeria. The respondents emphasized that students should plan their future careers while in secondary school based on labor market demands, guided by career professionals rather than peers and parental influence. Additionally, the majority agreed on the need for career counselors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria to support informed decision-making. Conversely, 47% of respondents held differing views, highlighting the need for continued awareness and advocacy on the importance of effective career guidance for enhancing professional development and job security among students.

Conclusion

Choosing a career remains one of the most decisive stages in the life of every young person, yet in Akwa Ibom State, this process is often hindered by inadequate counseling, poor guidance systems, and limited employment opportunities. Many students leave secondary school without a clear understanding of their strengths, interests, or the realities of the labor market, leading to confusion and frustration in their career paths. This indecision frequently results in underemployment or misplacement in professions that do not match individuals' skills or aspirations. Consequently, the absence of structured career guidance not only affects personal fulfillment but also contributes to the growing issue of job insecurity in the state, as many young people find themselves in unstable or unsatisfying positions that offer little long-term stability.

In Akwa Ibom State, where unemployment rates remain high and competition for limited jobs is intense, the consequences of poor career choices are even more pronounced. Without proper vocational orientation and mentorship, students often pursue careers based on social trends or parental influence rather than their innate abilities or the demands of the economy. This mismatch between career selection and market needs weakens the workforce and undermines job security. However, with timely career counseling, effective parental guidance, and government-backed educational reforms, young people can be directed toward sustainable professions that align with both their potential and labor market realities. This will not only enhance individual satisfaction and productivity but also strengthen the overall economic stability and job security within Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- I. The Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education should integrate comprehensive career guidance and counselling services into the secondary school curriculum. Trained counsellors should be assigned to schools to help students assess their

abilities, interests, and labor market trends, ensuring that their career choices align with employable skills and future job security.

- ii. Parents and community stakeholders should be sensitized to the importance of allowing students to make informed career decisions based on aptitude rather than social status or personal preference. Workshops and seminars can be organized to educate parents on evolving career opportunities and the demands of the modern labor market.
- iii. Government and educational institutions should emphasize practical skill development alongside academic instruction. Establishing vocational centers within secondary schools will equip students with relevant technical and entrepreneurial skills that enhance employability, reduce youth unemployment, and improve job security in Akwa Ibom State.

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