



Determinants of Career Choice among Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) Students in Katsina State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study analyzed the determinants of career choice among final-year Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE III) students within tertiary institutions in Katsina State, Nigeria. Prompted by regional teacher shortages and widespread career dissatisfaction among pre-service teachers, the research assessed the impacts of internal motivation, parental background, peer networks, academic exposure, and gender roles. Using a descriptive survey research design with stratified random sampling, primary data were gathered via a structured questionnaire from 60 final-year students across three conventional tertiary institutions spanning the state's three senatorial zones. Data were processed using simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, and independent samples t-tests. The statistical findings indicate that parental influence is the strongest predictor, accounting for 51.1% of the variance in career choice ($R^2 = .511$, $F(1, 58) = 60.59$, $p < .05$), followed by internal personal drivers ($R^2 = .412$, $p < .05$). While the joint effect of peer groups and academic exposure was statistically significant ($R^2 = .354$, $p < .05$), stepwise regression proved that peer influence alone was non-significant ($\beta = .09$, $p = .303$), whereas institutional academic exposure significantly guided student paths ($\beta = .541$, $p = .001$). Additionally, a significant gender disparity emerged $t(58) = 2.45$, $p = .017$, with male students experiencing higher socio-economic pressure regarding vocational decisions. The study concludes that local cultural expectations and formal training frameworks override informal peer dynamics. It recommends the institutionalization of gender-sensitive, proactive career counseling interventions within northern Nigerian teacher education structures to enhance retention.

Keywords: Career Choice, NCE Students, Parental Influence, Academic Exposure, Gender Disparities, Katsina State.

1. Introduction

Selecting a career path is a foundational life milestone that permanently dictates an individual's professional trajectory, economic mobility, and personal fulfillment. For undergraduates enrolled in the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) pathway, making an intentional, well-informed vocational choice is particularly critical. This decision directly governs their psychological readiness for the classroom and influences their long-term capacity to adapt to alternative professional fields. Extant educational literature indicates that vocational decisions are rarely solitary acts of free will; rather, they are shaped by a complex, interconnected matrix of intrinsic passions, familial expectations, socioeconomic prospects, peer networks, and prior academic socialization (Anyanwu, 2017; Oladipo, 2013).

In Katsina State, the higher education ecosystem is expanding concurrently with a rising institutional demand for highly qualified, pedagogically competent primary and junior secondary school teachers. Consequently, identifying the precise empirical variables guiding student career choices is vital for policymakers, institutional administrators, and guidance counselors aiming to improve student retention and curb professional attrition. Despite this structural urgency, localized empirical data targeting this specific geographic and institutional demographic remain sparse. This study fills this gap by investigating the primary drivers of career selection within this sub-region.

To analyze these factors systematically, this study synthesizes John Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice (1997) with Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT, 1994). Holland's framework posits that vocational satisfaction and

stability occur when an individual's personality type congruent matches their work environment. For NCE students, an internal alignment with a "social" personality type is ideal for a sustained career in pedagogy. However, SCCT extends this paradigm by introducing contextual and environmental mediators, arguing that self-efficacy and career goals are continuously shaped—and frequently constrained—by external systemic factors, such as parental expectations, socioeconomic pressures, and regional socio-cultural gender roles.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

A substantial number of NCE III students in Katsina State's tertiary institutions exhibit pronounced career confusion, vocational mismatch, and professional apathy regarding their teaching tracks. This misalignment frequently manifests as low academic motivation, poor classroom commitment, and accelerating attrition rates across various subject combinations. While general educational literature extensively documents the macroeconomic factors influencing vocational pathways, localized micro-data remain severely restricted.

Specifically, there is a shortage of empirical research examining how regional cultural norms, northern Nigerian gender expectations, and institutional teacher-training programs interact to shape the vocational trajectories of NCE students within Katsina State. Without targeted, geographically specific, data-driven insights, institutional counseling interventions risk remaining superficial. Such approaches fail to address the deeply entrenched socio-cultural and environmental factors governing pre-service teachers' career trajectories.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the determinants of career choices among NCE III students in higher education institutions within Katsina State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

To achieve this main goal, the study addresses the following specific objectives:

- To evaluate the impact of internal personal factors on the career pathways of NCE III students.

- To measure how family background and parental expectations influence student career decisions.
- To determine the degrees to which peer groups and institutional academic exposure shape students' vocational choices.
- To analyze how gender differences affect career choices among NCE III students in Katsina State.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the empirical analysis and will be tested at a .05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Internal personal factors do not significantly predict the vocational paths chosen by NCE III students in Katsina State's teacher training institutions.

H₀₂: Family dynamics and parental expectations have no statistically significant impact on the career pathways selected by final-year NCE students.

H₀₃: The combined influence of peer groups and formal educational exposure does not significantly shape student career choices.

H₀₄: There is no significant demographic difference between male and female NCE III students regarding the factors driving their career choices.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Sample Allocation

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design utilizing a quantitative empirical methodology. The target population comprised final-year Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE III) students within public teacher-training institutions across Katsina State, Nigeria. To ensure structural representation across the state's geo-political subdivisions, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to select twenty (n = 20) participants from each of the two premier state and federal tertiary institutions, culminating in a total sample size of sixty students (N = 60). The institutional stratification was distributed as follows:

- Federal College of Education (FCE), Katsina (Katsina Central Senatorial District)
- Isa Kaita College of Education (IKCOE), Dutsin-Ma (Katsina Central/South axis catchment)
- Yusif Bala Usman College of Education and Legal Studies (YBUCELS), Daura (Katsina North Senatorial District)

2.2 Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire instrument designed by the researcher, titled "Determinants of Career Choice Questionnaire (DCCQ)". The instrument comprised distinct, compartmentalized thematic sections:

Section A (Demographic Variables): Captured institutional affiliation, age, and respondent gender.

Section B (Intrinsic/Personal Factors): Measured internal motivation, occupational passion, and expected job satisfaction (e.g., *"My choice of career is driven by my personal talents"*).

Section C (Familial/Parental Factors): Assessed household socio-economic status, financial dependency, and paternal/maternal expectations (e.g., *"My parents expect me to pursue a career that aligns with family status"*).

Section D (Extrinsic/Environmental Influence): Evaluated peer group dynamics and structured institutional interventions (e.g., *"My field Teaching Practice experience reshaped my vocational goals"*).

Psychometric items were rated on a modified 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The criterion baseline for acceptance of item means was established at a mean score of 2.50. Section or item means at or above the (ge 2.50) threshold denoted a confirmed influential factor, whereas scores below (<2.50) indicated negligible impact.

2.3 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The DCCQ underwent face and content validation by three experts from the Departments of Educational Foundations and Guidance and Counselling within the sampled institutions. To establish internal consistency, a pilot study was conducted on twenty ($n = 20$) NCE III students outside the main sample group. The reliability coefficients were computed using the Cronbach's Alpha (α) method, yielding values ranging from .78 to .84 across the thematic sub-scales, thereby indicating high statistical reliability.

2.4 Data Analysis Technique

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were utilized to summarize demographic data. Inferential statistical tools—specifically simple linear regression, multiple linear regression, and independent samples (t)-tests—were executed at a (.05) level of significance using statistical software.

3. Analysis and Testing of Hypotheses

3.1 Hypothesis One

H_{01} : Internal personal factors do not significantly predict the vocational paths chosen by NCE III students in Katsina State's teacher training institutions. An independent linear regression model was executed to examine how intrinsic motivation, personal ambitions, and expected job satisfaction predict student career selection.

Table 1

Model Summary of Linear Regression for Intrinsic/Personal Career Drivers

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error	F	p	Decision
1	.642	.412	.402	.314	40.63	.001	Reject H_{01}

Predictor: (Constant), Intrinsic Personal Factors. **Dependent Variable:** Career Choice.

The empirical data presented in Table 1 reveals a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of .412. This indicates that intrinsic personal factors account for 41.2% of the total variance observed in the career choices of NCE III students. Because the calculated probability value ($p = .001$) is strictly below the standard alpha level of (.05), the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected. Consequently, individual drive and intrinsic occupational alignment are established as significant predictors of student vocational pathways.

3.2 Hypothesis Two

H_{02} : Family dynamics and parental expectations have no statistically significant impact on the career pathways selected by final-year NCE students.

A simple linear regression model was processed to compute the predictive influence of family economic profiles, parents' occupations, and familial cultural demands.

Table 2

Model Summary of Linear Regression for Household and Parental Influence

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error	F	p	Decision
1	.715	.511	.503	.285	60.54	.000	Reject H_{02}

Predictor: (Constant), Parental Influence. Dependent Variable: Career Choice.

The regression diagnostics in Table 2 outlines a prominent empirical trend. The (R²) value of .511 proves that 51.1% of the total variations within the vocational selections of pre-service teachers are predicted by parental inputs. Given that the corresponding significance level ($p = .000$) is less than the (.05) threshold of significance, (H_{02}) is rejected. Within the socio-cultural context of Katsina State, parental guidance exerts the highest predictive weight on student career trajectories.

3.3 Hypothesis Three

H_{03} : The combined influence of peer groups and formal educational exposure does not significantly shape student career choices.

A multiple linear regression model was deployed to isolate the composite and independent contributions of peer cohorts versus structured institutional exposure (e.g., Teaching Practice exercises).

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analysis for Peer Dynamics and Institutional Academic Exposure

Predictor Variables	β	t	p	Composite R ²	Composite F	Composite p
Peer Dynamics	.112	1.04	.303	.354	15.62	.002
Academic Exposure	.541	4.89	.001			

Dependent Variable: Career Choice. Statistical Verdict: Reject (H_{03}).

The composite multi-variable model exhibits high statistical significance ($R^2 = .354$, $F = 15.62$, $p = .002$), prompting the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{03}). However, a critical inspection of individual standardized coefficients (beta) reveals that peer group dynamics alone are non-significant ($\beta = .112$, $t = 1.04$, $p = .303$). Conversely, academic exposure—attained via field practicums and formalized departmental curriculum counseling—is highly significant ($\beta = .541$, $t = 4.89$, $p = .001$), identifying it as the primary functional component of the composite model.

3.4 Hypothesis Four

H_{04} : There is no significant demographic difference between male and female NCE III students regarding the factors driving their career choices.

An independent sample (t)-test compared the mean perceptual scores of male and female cohorts to determine the presence of gender-based variances in career decision drivers.

Table 4

Independent Samples t-Test for Gender-Based Differences in Career Pressures

Gender Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p (2-tailed)	Decision
Male Students	28	2.89	0.42	58	2.45	.017	Reject H_{04}
Female Students	32	2.61	0.45				

The independent comparison reveals a statistically significant variance between demographics. Male NCE III students recorded a higher mean score

($\bar{X} = 2.89$, $SD = 0.42$) regarding the perception of external career pressures than their female counterparts ($\bar{X} = 2.61$, $SD = 0.45$). Because the

two-tailed probability value ($t = 2.45$, $p = .017$) falls below the standard alpha level ($\alpha = .05$), (H_0) is rejected. Traditional gender socialization produces distinct structural pressures on career priorities.

4. Discussion of Findings

The empirical findings of this study reflect deep socio-cultural and institutional realities when evaluated against the selected theoretical frameworks. While students display clear intrinsic preferences that align with John Holland's (1997) emphasis on vocational personality congruence ($R^2 = .412$), these internal preferences are highly bounded and constrained by systemic external predictors, as conceptualized by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994).

The finding that parental influence accounts for more than half (51.1%) of the variance in career selections mirrors deeply entrenched regional societal structures in northern Nigeria. Within Katsina State, parents maintain substantial structural, financial, and moral control over higher education funding, making their familial mandates highly persuasive. This finding demonstrates that in developing agrarian and transitioning societies, SCCT's "environmental/background affordances" frequently dominate Holland's individual trait-and-factor congruence objectives.

Crucially, the data refutes the standard sociological assumption that final-year undergraduates are highly susceptible to peer conformity. The multiple regression model isolates peer pressure as non-significant ($p = .303$). By the time students reach the NCE III threshold, they demonstrate a higher degree of vocational maturity. This development is largely catalyzed by their mandatory, credit-bearing Teaching Practice exercises. This direct academic exposure provides a realistic, unvarnished look at the pedagogical ecosystem. This structured experience enhances self-efficacy and reshapes professional objectives ($\beta = .541$, $p = .001$) far more effectively than informal peer cohorts.

Finally, the inferential (t)-test confirms that traditional gender expectations remain highly influential. Male students face pronounced socio-cultural pressure to secure high-status or financially lucrative employment paths due to their roles as prospective primary household providers. This dynamic results in a significantly higher mean perception score ($\bar{X} = 2.89$) regarding external socio-economic pressures compared to female students ($\bar{X} = 2.61$). This empirical pattern confirms that gender socialization

operates as a primary filter through which career goals are structured in Katsina State, validating SCCT's assertion that demographic background variables guide the operational formation of occupational actions.

5. Conclusion

This study establishes that career choice among NCE III students in Katsina State is a highly contextual process driven primarily by familial expectations and institutional exposure rather than peer dynamics. Parental influence serves as the primary socio-economic anchor for student paths, while structured academic training—specifically practical field Teaching Practice—serves as the most effective institutional mechanism to reinforce or correct professional trajectories. Furthermore, notable gender differences highlight that male and female teacher-trainees navigate external career pressures differently, necessitating distinct support configurations.

6. Recommendations

Based on the empirical results established in this study, the following policy and institutional recommendations are proposed:

Institutionalization of Early Career Counseling Interventions: Tertiary institutions within Katsina State should implement proactive, institutionalized career guidance frameworks during the foundational year (NCE I) rather than delaying interventions until the final year (NCE III). Early structural orientation will better align students' intrinsic passions with macroeconomic job market realities, thereby reducing academic apathy and professional attrition.

Integration of Family Stakeholders in Career Seminars: Given that parental influence accounts for over half of the variation in student vocational choices, Colleges of Education should host structured, joint institutional-parent stakeholder seminars. These forums should be designed to sensitize guardians to contemporary educational career paths, professional teaching upgrades, and the detrimental effects of imposing rigid occupational choices on their children.

Upgrading and Capitalizing on Teaching Practice Frameworks: Because structured academic exposure successfully overrides informal peer group conformity, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and institutional directorates should strengthen the mentorship and financial support mechanisms attached to practical field Teaching Practice. Enhancing this field experience will reinforce pre-service teachers' professional identities and long-term classroom retention.

Implementation of Gender-Responsive Guidance

Frameworks: Institutional guidance counselors must move away from generic counseling paradigms and adopt customized, gender-sensitive strategies. These interventions should specifically address the acute socio-cultural and economic provider pressures experienced by male students in northern Nigeria, while simultaneously fostering equitable professional growth pathways for female teacher-trainees.

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