



## Factors Affecting Career Aspirations of Female Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Kaduna State

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the factors influencing career aspirations among female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The research aims to explore the relationship between parental expectations, societal stereotypes, and gender roles on these aspirations. Data was collected via a comprehensive questionnaire distributed among female students from various schools in the state. The study posits two objectives: firstly, to examine how parental expectations impact career aspirations, and secondly, to assess the influence of societal stereotypes and gender roles. Two hypotheses were formulated accordingly. A descriptive survey design was employed, with a sample of 397 students selected randomly from the population. Findings suggest that traditional gender stereotypes, limited exposure to diverse career options, and societal expectations significantly affect students' career choices. The study utilized the Questionnaire on Factors Affecting Career Aspirations of Female Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Kaduna State (QFACAFS-KSSSS), consisting of 17 items. Data analysis involved mean and standard deviation for research questions, and t-tests for hypotheses. Results revealed significant mean differences between variables. The null hypotheses were rejected, indicating that parental expectations and societal stereotypes/gender roles do influence career aspirations among female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State. Recommendations include implementing career counseling services tailored to gender-specific needs, promoting early exposure to diverse professions, and fostering mentorship programs. Collaborative efforts involving parents, communities, and educational institutions are crucial in dismantling gender-related barriers. A multi-pronged strategy is proposed, encompassing curriculum enrichment, professional development for educators, and creating supportive learning environments. Policy advocacy, gender-inclusive initiatives, and industry partnerships are also recommended. The importance of recognizing and celebrating female role models is underscored to inspire confidence and ambition among students.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Education represents a crucial tool for empowering women as it boosts their capacity to acquire knowledge, and skills and adapt to changes in their environment. (Lin, 2016). Furthermore, education opens up employment opportunities for women. Numerous empirical studies have confirmed that educated women are better equipped to provide for the health,

nutritional, and care needs of their children, have fewer children and tend to delay marriage. However, women and girls are typically expected to fulfil multiple roles that often hinder their access, participation, retention, and achievement in education (Lin, 2016)

The years spent in school are designed to provide students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to meet their

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future needs as citizens and participants in socio-political and economic realms, including employment and career options (OECD, 2020). Therefore, career choices are a product of the teaching and learning process. It is noteworthy to hear young people and adolescents express their career aspirations and explain the reasons for their choices. Career selection is one of the significant decisions that students must make when determining their plans, and these decisions will have lasting effects on their lives. (Tang et al., 1999).

Career aspirations are the goals and expectations that individuals have regarding their future occupations and professions. They are influenced by various factors, such as personal interests, abilities, values, socio-economic status, gender roles, cultural norms, parental expectations, teacher attitudes, and school environment. For female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria, these factors may have different effects on their career aspirations, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This article aims to explore the factors affecting the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State and to suggest ways to enhance their participation and achievement in STEM fields.

Career aspirations reflect learners' orientation towards specific occupational goals, and they can be influenced by various factors such as gender, socio-economic status, family support, as well as individual, school, and societal-related factors. During adolescence, career preparation is a vital precursor for successful career development across the lifespan, and it is closely related to adolescent adjustment and well-being (Mun-gara, 2012).

During adolescence, aspirations play a pivotal role as they provide female pupils with the opportunity to assess the extent to which different options facilitate or impede their prospects of achieving their desired objectives. In this phase of life, career preparation constitutes a fundamental precursor to successful career advancement throughout the life course and is closely associated with adolescent adjustment and well-being (Tsui et al. 2019).

As per Ukaegbu (2014), aspirations denote an individual's articulated career-related

goals or intentions and also incorporate motivational elements that are not merely restricted to interests. The career aspirations of female learners have been considered significant determinants of both short-term education and long-term occupational choices. Additionally, they are also deemed crucial career motivational variables that are indicative of future career attainment levels (Dufty-Jones, 2018).

### Statement of Problem

The career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State are influenced by various factors, yet an understanding of these factors and their impacts remains limited. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is to identify and explore the factors that significantly affect the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State, to provide valuable insights to educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to enhance career development opportunities and support for female students in their pursuit of diverse career paths.

### Research Questions

1. What are the factors influencing the career aspirations of students?
2. What is the level of importance do parents expected to influence the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State?
3. To what extent do societal stereotypes and gender roles have impact on the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State?
4. To what extent do you consider career guidance and counselling services are helpful in shaping the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State?

### Hypotheses

1. Parental expectations significantly influence the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State.
2. Societal stereotypes and gender roles have a significant impact on the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State

## METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design is a design of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. The population of the study comprises all Basic education three students who are planning to go to senior secondary schools in the following academic session who are 61271 (Kaduna State School Report, 2020) In number. To select the secondary schools for the study, six junior secondary schools were randomly selected from six local governments in the state. Each state senatorial zone was represented by two local governments. To determine the sample size for the study, the total population of the study was divided by 100 and multiplied by the approximate sample. According to Mesa et al. (2014), if a population is in a few thousand, 10% or less could be used. Therefore, 397 were used as a sample of the study representing the population of the study which is 61271 (Kaduna State School Report, 2020). The instrument for data collection in this study was the Questionnaire on Factors

Affecting Career Aspirations of Female Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Kaduna State (QFACAFS-KSSSS) is a 17 items questionnaire developed by the researchers, QFACAFS-KSSSS is made up of three sections tagged sections A, B, C, D and E. A is on the general information of the respondents, it seeks to find the background information of the respondents. Section B is on the Factors influencing career aspirations, section C is on career aspirations, section D is recommendations and E is on additional comments. The instrument was face-validated by a panel of experts that included two senior lecturers in the Department of Guidance and Counselling Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. After the validation of the instrument, it was administered to the respondent therein. All the 397 questionnaires distributed by the researchers were returned and used for analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Research Question One:** What are the factors influencing the career aspirations of students?

**Table 1: Table 1: Analysis of key factors influencing the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State**

Statement	Not Influential	Small Influential	Moderate Influential	Large Influential	Highly Influential	Mean	SD
Parental expectations	4	6	23	121	243	4.49	0.50
Peer influence	8	12	29	111	237	4.40	0.49
Teacher influence	3	20	39	97	238	4.38	0.49
Personal interests and passions	0	5	40	163	189	4.35	0.48
Socioeconomic status	45	29	34	112	177	3.87	0.43
Gender stereotypes	56	142	15	87	97	3.07	0.34
Availability of career guidance and counselling services	23	45	11	120	98	3.76	0.42
Access to role models in desired career fields	11	54	12	145	175	4.06	0.45
Educational opportunities	23	46	9	147	172	4.01	0.45

Table 1 shows that parental expectation is one of the highly key factors influencing the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State with a mean rate of 4.49 and standard deviation of 0.50 followed by peer group influence with a mean rate of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.49 the third rated key factor is the Availability of career guidance and counselling services with a mean rate of 4.06

and a standard deviation of 0.45. Educational opportunities Ha mean rate of 4, 01 and standard deviation of 0.45. The last key factor is Gender stereotypes with a mean rate of 3.07 and standard deviation of 0.34.

**Research Question Two:** What is the level of importance do parents expected to influence the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State?

**Table 2:** Analysis of Parental Expectations influence the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency of acceptance	% of acceptance
Not important at all	23	5.79	68	17.13
Somewhat important	45	11.34		
Moderately important	18	4.53		
Very important	98	24.69	311	78.34
Extremely important	213	53.65		
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100.00</b>		
<b>Ground mean</b>	<b>4.09</b>			
<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>0.31</b>			

From Table 2, the result shows that twenty-three (23) of the respondents representing 5.79% and forty-five (45) of the respondents representing 11.34% thought that parental expectations are not important influence the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State while ninety-eight (98) of the respondents representing 24.67% and two hundred and thirteen (213) of the respondents representing 53.65% thought that parental expectations are very important in influencing the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools

in Kaduna. Table 4.6 shows that most of the respondents believed that parental support was extremely important in shaping children's career aspirations in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State with a mean rate of 4.09 and standard deviation of 0.31. The view represents 78.34 % of the respondents.

**Research Question Three:** To what extent do societal stereotypes and gender roles have impact on the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State?

**Table 3:** Analysis of the impact of societal stereotypes and gender roles on the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency of acceptance	% of acceptance
Not at all	8	2.02	20	5.04
To a small extent	12	3.02		
To a moderate extent	29	7.30		
To a large extent	111	27.96	348	87.66
To a very large extent	237	59.70		
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>			
<b>Ground Mean</b>	<b>4.4</b>			
<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>0.49</b>			

Table 3 shows that eight (8) of the respondents representing 2.02% and twelve (12) of the respondents representing 3.002% thought that societal stereotypes have no impact on gender roles on the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State while one hundred and eleven (111) of the respondents representing 27.967% and two hundred and thirty-seven (237) of the respondents representing 59.70% thought that societal stereotypes have a positive impact on gender

roles on the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State. Table 3 shows that most of the respondents believed that societal stereotypes have a positive impact on gender roles on the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State with a mean rate of 4.4 and standard deviation of 0.49 this value represents 87.66% of the respondent's view.

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**Research Question Four:** To what extent do you consider career guidance and counselling services are helpful in shaping the career

aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State?

**Table 4:** Analysis of helping level which career guidance and counselling services provided by schools

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency of acceptance	% of acceptance
Not helpful at all	34	8.56	297	74.81
Somewhat helpful	34	8.56		
Moderately helpful	32	8.06		
Very helpful	143	36.02		
Extremely helpful	154	38.79		
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>			
<b>Ground mean</b>	<b>3.88</b>			
<b>Standards deviation</b>	<b>0.43</b>			

Table 4 shows that sixty-eight (68) of the respondents representing 17.13% thought that the career guidance and counselling services provided by their various schools were not helpful for their aspirations while two hundred ninety-seven (297) of the respondents representing 74.81% thought that the career guidance and counseling services provided by their various schools is much helpful for their aspiration. Table 4 shows that most of the respondents considered career guidance and counselling services provided by schools as

extremely helpful in children aspiration child career aspirations in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State with a mean rate of 3.09 and a standard deviation of 0.30 this value represents 74.81% of the respondents.

#### Test of Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Parental expectations significantly influence the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State.

**Table 5:** Analysis of Parental expectations significantly influence the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State.

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Mean diff.	df	T	P value	Remark
Agree	311	4.09	0.45	3.13	376	3.4	0.0001	Significant
Disagree	68	0.96						

Table 5 shows that the agreed respondents have a mean rate of 4.09 with a standard deviation of 0.45 while disagreed respondents have a mean rate of 0.96 with a standard deviation of 0.45. The mean difference between the variables is 3.13. Since the p-value is 0.0001 is less than 0.005 and the t-value is 3.4 the study rejected the null hypothesis that says parental expectations do not significantly influence the career aspirations of female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State and accepted that Parental expectations significantly influence the career aspirations of

female students in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State. This finding is in line with the findings of Ehigbor and Akinlosotu (2016) and Wambeti et al. (2019) who observed that there was a direct significant relationship between parents' expectations and students' careers in public secondary schools in Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Societal stereotypes and gender roles have a significant impact on the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State.



**Table 6:** Analysis of societal stereotypes and gender roles have a significant impact on the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State.

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Mean diff.	Df	T	P value	Remark
Agree	348	4.4	0.49	3.8	396	3.8	0.0000	Significant
Disagree	20	0.60	0.49					

Table 6 shows that the agreed respondents have a mean rate of 4.4 with a standard deviation of 0.49 while disagreed respondents have a mean rate of 0.60 with a standard deviation of 0.49. The mean difference between the variables is 3.8. Since the p-value is 0.0000 is less than 0.005 and the t-value is 3.8 the study rejected the null hypothesis that says Societal stereotypes and gender roles do not have a significant impact on the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State and accepted that Societal stereotypes and gender roles have a significant impact on the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State. This finding is in line with the findings of Steele (1997), Igbo et al. (2015) and Vescio et al. (2005) who observed that societal stereotypes and gender roles have significant impact on the career aspirations of girls in senior secondary schools.

#### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Parental expectation emerged as the most influential factor, followed by peer group influence.
2. Availability of career guidance and counseling services and educational opportunities were also significant factors.
3. Gender stereotypes were rated the lowest among key factors.
4. Majority of respondents considered parental expectations as very important in shaping career aspirations, while only a small portion viewed it as unimportant.
5. Parental support was perceived as extremely important.

6. Societal stereotypes have a positive impact on gender roles in career aspirations.
7. Societal stereotypes positively influencing gender roles in career aspirations.
8. Career guidance and counseling services provided by schools are extremely helpful.
9. Parental expectations significantly influence the career aspirations of female students.
10. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that societal stereotypes and gender roles significantly impact the career aspirations of female students.

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study resonate with existing literature on factors influencing career aspirations among female students in secondary schools. Parental expectations have been consistently highlighted in literature as a significant factor influencing students' career decisions (Ehigbor & Akinlosotu, 2016; Wambeti et al., 2019). Parents often shape their children's career aspirations through their expectations, guidance, and encouragement, thereby significantly impacting their career trajectories.

Similarly, peer group influence has been extensively studied in relation to career aspirations. Research suggests that peers play a crucial role in shaping individuals' perceptions and aspirations regarding various career paths (Budge & Winter, 2013). Positive peer interactions can encourage exploration of diverse career options, while negative influences may reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

The perceived importance and effectiveness of career guidance and counseling services in shaping career aspirations align with previous studies (Patton & Creed, 2001). Access to such services provides students with valuable resources and support to explore their interests, skills, and goals, thereby empowering them to make informed career decisions.

Moreover, the acknowledgment of gender stereotypes as a factor influencing career aspirations corresponds with extensive literature documenting the impact of societal norms and expectations on individuals' career choices, particularly among females (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Diekman et al., 2011). Societal stereotypes often limit girls' perceptions of their abilities and potential career paths, contributing to gender disparities in certain fields.

## CONCLUSION

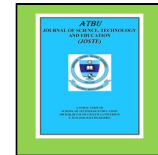
In conclusion, the investigation illuminates the multidimensional elements that impact the vocational ambitions of female learners in Senior Secondary Schools located in Kaduna State. The discoveries underscore the importance of addressing socio-cultural, educational, and environmental influences to enhance the process of career development for young women. Recognizing the role of family, educators, and societal expectations yields valuable insights for educational policymakers and institutions to implement targeted interventions. As we navigate the intricacies of fostering comprehensive vocational environments, it is crucial to consider these factors holistically. This study adds to the ongoing discussion on gender equality in education and provides practical implications for empowering female students to pursue and achieve their vocational aspirations. Further research and collaborative endeavours are justified to continually refine strategies and policies that promote a more inclusive and supportive educational landscape for all.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To enhance career counselling services, schools should implement a gender-sensitive approach. This entails the provision of information about a wide range of professions, the promotion of mentorship

programs, and the addressing of stereotypes that may have an impact on career choices.

2. The involvement of parents, communities, and schools through collaborative efforts is of utmost importance. The initiation of awareness programs that highlight the significance of supporting female students in their career decisions is essential. Additionally, engaging parents in career guidance sessions can have a positive effect on students' aspirations.
3. It is imperative to integrate diverse career options into the curriculum, with a particular emphasis on showcasing the accomplishments of women in various fields. This can serve to broaden students' perspectives and expose them to a wider range of career possibilities.
4. The development of teachers' professional skills and knowledge through workshops and training sessions is necessary to effectively guide students in their career choices. This includes understanding and mitigating any unconscious biases that may impact their guidance.
5. The creation of inclusive and supportive school environments where female students feel comfortable expressing their career aspirations is crucial. Initiatives such as women in leadership forums and motivational talks can inspire confidence and ambition.
6. Advocating for government policies that address gender disparities in career opportunities is essential. Encouraging the implementation of initiatives that support female students in pursuing non-traditional careers is of utmost importance.
7. The enforcement of strategies that stimulate female students to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields is necessary. This can involve extracurricular activities, workshops, and mentorship programs.
8. It is improbable to establish a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of career guidance programs. This includes gathering feedback from students, parents, and teachers to continuously improve support mechanisms.
9. Collaborating with industries and organizations to provide exposure and internship opportunities for female students is



crucial. Practical experiences can play a pivotal role in shaping career choices.

10. Recognizing and celebrating successful women in various professions is important. Organizing events that showcase the achievements of female role models who have overcome career challenges is vital.

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