

PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ON CAREER CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENUGU NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

Political activities are very exciting to youths in Enugu State in general and in Enugu North Local Government Area (LGA) in particular. The paper presented a perception study of how political activities influence the career choice of secondary school students in Enugu North L.G.A. The study covered the social, economic and psychological influence of political activities on career choice of secondary school students. The study also presented the problems of political activities on career choice of secondary school students. Four research questions guided the study. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Mean statistic was used to answer the four research questions. The findings included among others – the way politicians spend money on supporters who carryout campaign for them captivates the interest of students. Political success makes one known in the society and this makes the students feel that politics is the best career. There were recommendations.

Introduction

Career services are among the social inputs that communities need to survive over the years. Hornby (2002) described choice as an act of choosing between two or more alternatives. In all social systems, every information given helps the youths to make career choice. Some of the information are not organized while a good percentage come under formal or guidance information. Oranu (2001) defined occupational information as a systematically organized data used by guidance personnel for the purpose of helping persons make vocational choice. Shertzer and Stone (1976) defined occupational information as a valid and usable data about positions, jobs and occupations including duties' requirements for entrance, condition of work, reward offered, advancement pattern, existing and predicted supply of and demand for workers and sources for further information.

Ojo (2004) pointed out that work or career is caused by maturation that sets the body organs, muscles, nerves, tissues and other components to reach the necessary stage of development before a specific type of motor skill can be acquired. Consequently the willingness to learn is a combination of maturation which is brought by age, motivation, experience, ability, perception aptitude etc.

Secondary school students have varying levels of maturation which determine their career choice. Choice is an individual affair, controlled by the social values on current needs. The need theory of Abraham Maslow revealed that the satisfaction of one need propels the individual to pursue higher needs (Alio, Obingene and Alio, 2008). In relation to career choice of students, the satisfaction of one basic needs leads to another. The essence of passing through a formal school to some students may be to acquire knowledge which helps them to acquire material things while to others, it may be regarded as a long process.

As a result of the characteristics of secondary school students, some youths may like to imitate and envy the affluent display of some politicians at the detriments of their academic endeavours. Apparently, it is a fact to state that societies survive through the social inputs generated from the labour force. Hooper (1978) noted that society is bound by the culture

which determines its belief, skills, ideas etc and the curriculum is a summation of what the society wants. Ojo (2004) identified three classes of people and that individuals from different background choose various levels of careers. First, are individuals who want to maintain their parents' profession as a way to keep the family name. Secondly, are some individuals who wish to be independent and discover their career according to their interests, aptitude, value, skill etc. while the third group often leave faith to chart their course. This last group of people are more prone to peer group influence.

Anagbogu (2002) noted that middle class individuals aspire to be teachers, ministry workers and occupy executive positions in business. However, there are no absolute consensus on the above assertion as even the children from low class parentage aspire to noble careers.

In Nigeria, the sex of student helps to determine the type of career choice. Males are known to make careers more in medicine, engineering, architecture as against females who outnumber males in nursing, teaching etc (Ezeji, 2001). Also male youths are known to be more active and interested in active politics than females because of the hazards of the profession. The above assertion is in line with the fact that female youths are in schools while their male counterparts are into one form of trade or another. Some male youths consider politics as business that guarantees quicker monetary return than other careers.

Marxian school of thought postulated that the economy is the superstructure on which all other sub-structures are built (Alio, Obingene and Alio, 2008). The school argued that material things control the mind set of the society, the individuals and the relationship therein. The economic life of any society always influence the system of education as reflected in the school curriculum. Mkpa (1987) posited that any society with poor economy is likely to realize an objective that calls for huge investment of resources. Therefore the underfunding of schools is not likely to produce students whole learning outcomes which are capable of generating the desired social inputs.

It is a particular kind of mind that makes people behave in certain ways. It affects the mind, influences behaviour meaningfully that whatever the mind captures at contact using the five sensory organs of the body is capable of influencing behaviour in a particular area of life. What we see, experience, feel, touch or hear form part of the mind subset which influences behaviour of the individuals.

Prestige is the respect and admiration that someone has because of some attributes. Prestige from a job can therefore emanate from the way those in that occupation carry themselves. A successful political office holder for example, a local government chairman or a ward counselor may be accorded some measure of respect or admiration because of the way he carries himself. The picture of public office holder stands to serve as a reference to youths who may wish to approximate themselves to such position.

The Enugu North Local Government area was created in 1991 under the military presidency of General Ibrahim Bababmusi Babangida out of the old Enugu Municipal Council. The local government area is located strategically to accommodate the seat of state government, the administrative headquarters of the army, police and prison. Educational institutions of various levels abound in the area.

The economy of the local government area comes from two sources. First, is the monthly allocation from the federal government. This allocation takes care of the local government's capital and recurrent expenditure. The allocation takes care of salaries of workers and some well planned prioritized capital projects which after some month's allocations are completed. The second sources of local government revenue comes from the statutory functions such as collecting rates and rents, from markets, lorry parks etc. The local governments also invests on revenue collection ventures which boost the financial base of the government. The money generated is used to maintain local roads, construct culverts, maintain

local schools and hospital. The beneficiaries of the contracts most of the times are the supporters of the party in the local area because of their roles during the political activities.

Political activities in Enugu north local government area are tension packed due to its strategic location in the state capital. Politically, the area is full of opportunities to make a decent living as all activities associated with electioneering campaigns are translated into monetary rewards. The more the individual participate actively, the higher is the remunerations. The adolescent youths often copy the behaviour of affluent models within and outside, and this seems to make them to be interested in emulating the political behaviours of politicians.

Students constitute the bulk of the elite youths, they form themselves into groups and cult affinity to make tremendous impacts during political activities. Very often, due to over zealousness or personal ambition, the students play dirty and unconventional roles to achieve greater rewards and patronages. This ambition seems to account for the incidence and lack of interest to continue with their education under a formal setting. When students' careers are not successfully pursued and concluded, they seem to join the restive team of social miscreants thereby creating an atmosphere of social insecurity. The study, therefore, is interested in determining the perceived influence of political activities on career choice of secondary school students in Enugu north local government area of Enugu state.

Purpose of the Study

The study determined the perceived influence of political activities on the career choice of secondary school students in Enugu secondary school students in Enugu North L.G.A. of Enugu state specifically, the study aimed at determining:

- (1) the economic influence of political activities of career choice of secondary school students;
- (2) the social influence of political activities on the career choice of secondary school students;
- (3) the psychological influence of political activities on career choice of secondary school students and
- (4) the problems of political activities on career choice of secondary school students in Enugu north local government area of Enugu state.

Research Method

Design of the Study

The design of the study is survey research design. A survey research is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to a representative of the entire population/group (Nworgu, 1991).

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 4000 senior secondary school students in the 15 secondary schools in Enugu North LGA of Enugu state.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sample of 200 teachers and students were randomly sampled. (50 teachers and 150 students).

Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire was the data collection instrument used for the study. The questionnaire was constructed based on the four research questions which guided the study. A four point rating scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) was used. The questionnaire contained 12 items which were structured to elicit information on

social, economic and psychological influences of political activities on students' career choice and six items on problems of political activities on students' career choice. The instrument was made up of 18 items altogether.

Validation of Instrument

The instrument was face validated by an expert from the Department of Educational Foundation, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Enugu Nigeria and two experts from the Department of Political Science ESUT Enugu. The input of the experts were used to modify the instrument.

Method of Data Analysis

The four research questions were answered using mean statistic.

Results

The results of the study are presented in tables one, two, three and four.

Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Perceived Economic Influence of Political Activities on Career Choice of Secondary School Students

S/NO	ITEMS OF QUESTIONNAIRE	SA	A	D	SD	X	D
1	The way politicians spend much money on supporters who carryout campaign functions for them captivates the interest of students	342	198	36	18	3.13	Agree
2	The way politicians employ some of their supporters into gainful jobs attracts the career interest of students	240	234	24	30	2.9	Agree
3	Political activists are known to possess a lot of landed proprieties in choice area of the local government and they makes the students to wish to become like politicians	180	72	12	552	3.06	Agree
4	Political activities are the quickest means of making money to buy cars and display wealth and this makes the students to like to become politicians when they grow	360	144	46	18	3.16	Agree

Table 1 above shows that the mean responses of the item 1- 4 are 3.13, 2.9, 3.06 and 3.16 respectively. This shows that all the respondents perceived the respective items to have economic influence on career choice of students.

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Social Influence of Political Activities on Career Choice Students

S/NO	ITEMS OF QUESTIONNAIRE	SA	A	D	SD	X	D
5	Active supporters of politicians are socially recognized due to their lifestyle and this attracts students interest in politics	312	180	60	12	3.13	Agree
6	Active supporters have high recognition in the corridors of power which accords them much regards from the public and this makes the students think that politics is the surest way to get connected and hence become interested in politics	336	180	72	0	3.26	Agree

7	Political supporters associate with the higher class of the society and this motivates students interest in politics	240	270	48	6	3.11	Agree
8	Political success makes one to be well known in the society and this makes the students feel that politics is the best career.	408	162	36	6	3.4	Agree

Table 2 above shows that items 5 – 8 indicated the mean responses of 3.13, 3.26, 3.11 and 3.4 respectively.

Table 3: Mean Ratings on the Psychological Influence of Political Activities on Secondary School Students' Career Choice Students

S/NO	ITEMS OF QUESTIONNAIRE	SA	A	D	SD	X	D
9	A person who engages in politics feels on top of the world	280	162	60	6	2.6	Agree
10	The way a person assumes leadership role among his peers after a successful political outing makes students feel that politics is the fastest means of achieving success	240	252	60	6	3.1	Agree
11	The way security operatives guard the politicians makes the students feel that one's life is better secured as a politician and so would wish to become politicians when they grow up	240	180	96	12	2.9	Agree
12	The way politicians assert authority in the society positively attracts students in politics as a career	292	180	48	18	2.9	Agree

The mean responses of 2.6, 3.1, 2.9, 2.9 respectively show that the respondents agree that there is psychological influence of political activities on career choice of students.

Table 4: Mean Responses of Respondents on the Problems of Political Activities on Career Choice of Secondary School Students

S/NO	ITEMS OF QUESTIONNAIRE	SA	A	D	SD	X	D
13	Students involvement in political activities have caused them much in terms of health, life and academic success	240	90	108	36	2.6	Agree
14	Regular political activities in the local government by politicians makes the students to jettison their academic activities in pursuit of money	288	252	12	18	3.16	Agree
15	Regular political activities in Enugu north local government area increases the number of school dropout from schools	192	198	120	6	2.8	Agree
16	Unhealthy political activities by the politicians in Enugu north aids cultism among secondary school students	240	180	96	12	2.9	Agree

17	Empty political promises especially to students during electioneering campaigns gives rise to the increase in armed robbers and assassination	408	144	48	6	3.3	Agree
18	The over popularity of political activities make students pay less attention to personal aptitudes when making career choice	408	144	36	12	3.3	Agree

Table 4 items 13 – 18 showed mean responses of 2.6, 3.16, 2.8, 2.9, 3.3, 3.3 which agreed with the items of the questionnaire.

Major Findings of the Study

Based on the data analyzed, the following findings were made:

1. The way politicians spend money on supporters who carryout campaigns for them captivates the interest of students.
2. Political success makes one known in the society and this makes the students feel that politics is the best career.
3. The way a person assumes leadership role among his peers after a successful political outing makes students feel that politics is the fastest means of achieving success.
4. Over popularity of political activities makes students pay less attention to personal aptitudes when making career choice.

Discussion

The study revealed that economic influence of political activities on career choice of students capture their interests. What they see, experience and feel play enormous role in their formative stage in life. This is also in line with the Maxian school of thought what postulated that the economy is the superstructure on which all other sub-structure are built (Alio, Obingene and Alio, 2008). Ezeji (2001) also pointed out that some students have outstanding abilities and aptitudes for some occupation but may be restricted from choosing such occupations by reasons of their socio-economic background.

The study also revealed that political activities makes one to be known in the society and this makes students feel that politics is the best career. Obianyo (2003) noted that in Parry (1977) described the care of the elitist doctrine as a situation where minority of the population which takes the major decisions in the society. Because these decisions are of such wide scope, affecting the most general aspects of the society, they are usually regarded as political decisions even where the monitory taking them are not politicians in the usual sense of members of government of legislative. This type of activities can influences students' career choice to think that politics is the quickest means of achieving success in the society. Most of the time, the youths ignore the roles of occupational information.

The further revealed that over popularity of political activities influenced students to pay less attention to personal aptitudes when choosing a career. This is one of the problems resulting from political activities on career choice of the students. This in contrary to the view of Ezeji (2001) which stated that there are characteristics which individuals must possess that directly affect the choice of career. He outline them to include: interest, aptitude, ability, attitude, value, sex, occupation of parents, socio-economic background, physical quality, age state of origin, religion and motivation. Over popularity of political activities does not allow the students to consider the above characteristics.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are made: Political activities within Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State have diversionary influence on the career choice of secondary school students. What individuals see, touch, feel or experience greatly influence their career choice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendation are made:

1. The government should adopt an adequate campaign strategy against students' involvement in political activities while in school. Government should make a legislation to ban students participation in politics.
2. Parents should be given adequate information on the dangers of premature students' participation in political activities for material gains.

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