

PEER INFLUENCE ON CHOICE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined peer influence of peer on choice of business education students in higher Education in Delta State. The study adopted descriptive survey design guided by two research questions The population for the study comprised 90 business education students in Colleges of Education in Delta State, there was no sampling since the population is of manageable size. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire structured by the researcher. The instrument was validated by an expert in Business education in Federal college of education (Technical) Asaba., The reliability result yielded a coefficient of 0.75 which was established using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. This was considered adequate for the study. Data collected was analyzed using mean score. The findings revealed that social communication within peer groups significantly impacts the career choices of business education students, impact career preferences, and peer interactions play a pivotal role in guiding career paths and that peer group social communication significantly influences career choices and that networking within peer groups shapes career path. The study recommends among others that business education curriculum designers should include more courses on entrepreneurship training and development to give the graduates proper grounding on skills that will enhance their entrepreneurial success.

Keywords: *Influence, Learning, Choice, career, Business Education, Peer group*

Introduction

The choice of academic major is an important decision that students make during their higher education journey. This decision can have significant implication for their future career prospects, personal growth and overall well-being. Among the various factors that influence this decision, peer influence plays a pivotal role in shaping the choices of business education students in higher education. Business education is a popular and competitive field, and students often drawn to it because of its potential for career advancement and financial rewards. Business education refers to the process of teaching and learning about business principles, practices and operations to prepare individuals for careers in business entrepreneurship and management (Oxford Dictionary 2022). Business education is a field of study that focuses on developing knowledge skills and competencies in areas such as financial, accounting marketing, management, and entrepreneurship (Bloomberg 2020). Business education student in tertiary institution are exposed to various influence that shape their career choice. Peer group in particular have become decision making.

Business education plays a vital role in preparing students for diverse career opportunities in the dynamic landscape of commerce and industry. It encompasses a wide range of academic disciplines, including finance, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, economics and more. Through structured coursework, experiential learning, and mentorship, business education equip students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to thrive in the competitive global marketplace. The significance of business education is underscored by its ability to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world application. Academic programs in business provide students with a solid foundation in fundamental principles such as accounting, economics, and organizational behavior. These principles serve as the building blocks for understanding complex business dynamics and decision-making processes. As noted by Jones and Iredale (2019), business education

cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills essential for addressing contemporary challenges in diverse organizational settings.

Furthermore, business education fosters an entrepreneurial mindset characterized by innovation, risk-taking, and adaptability. Entrepreneurship courses and experiential learning opportunities empower students to identify opportunities, develop viable business models, and navigate the complexities of launching and scaling ventures. According to research by Neck and Greene (2018), entrepreneurship education enhances students' self-efficacy and intention to pursue entrepreneurial careers, thereby fostering a culture of innovation and economic growth.

Career choice is a critical decision that affects an individual future prospects, personal fulfilment and contribution to society. Business education students, in particular face numerous career options making informed decisions essential. Various factors including family teachers and personal interests, influence career choice. However, the peer group impact on career decision has gained significant attention in recent years. In Nigeria, tertiary institutions play a vital role in shaping student's career aspirations.

Career choice refers to the process of deciding on a particular profession or occupation to pursue, typically based on an individual's interests, abilities, and values. It is a complex and dynamic process that evolves over time, influenced by personal growth and external circumstances. Career choice is not merely about selecting a job; it encompasses the long-term commitment to a field or profession that provides satisfaction and a sense of purpose (Ginzberg, 2021). Making an informed and deliberate career choice is vital for personal and professional development. A well-suited career can lead to job satisfaction, personal fulfillment, and financial stability. Conversely, poor career choices can result in dissatisfaction, stress, and frequent job changes (Super, 2017). Moreover, a strategic career choice aligns individuals' talents and

passions with market opportunities, contributing to career success and progression (Holland, 2017).

Choosing a career path is a necessary decision for students, especially those pursuing business education. The field of business offers a vast array of opportunities, ranging from finance, economic and marketing to entrepreneurship and management. As students navigate their options, they often consider various factors such as personal interests, skills, market demand, and potential for growth. One significant influence on career choice among business students is their educational background and experiences. Business education programs provide students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills applicable across diverse industries. These programs often expose students to different specializations through coursework, internships, and extracurricular activities. For instance, a study by Lussier and Heilbronner (2019) found that internships significantly impact career choices among business students, allowing them to explore specific fields and gain relevant experience.

A peer group refers to a social network of individuals who share similar characteristics, interest, or experiences, and interact with each other on a regular basis.(Oxford Dictionary 2022) Peer groups provide a sense of belonging, identity and support and can significantly influence individuals attitude, behaviours and decisions A peer group is a dynamic social system characterized by shared experiences, interest and social interactions, shaping attitude and behaviours. Peer groups encompass individuals of similar age, background, and academic pursuits who share common experiences and interests. Within the context of business education, peer groups serve as a source of social support, validation, and feedback, influencing students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to career choice. Through informal discussions, shared experiences, and collaborative projects, peers provide insights, perspectives, and role models that shape students' perceptions of different industries, job roles, and career paths. Additionally, peer networks facilitate the exchange of information about internships, job opportunities, and

industry trends, guiding students' decision-making processes and influencing their career trajectories. Peer groups exert various effects on the career choices of business education students, influencing their preferences, motivations, and confidence in pursuing specific paths. Social comparison processes within peer groups lead students to evaluate their own interests, skills, and aspirations in relation to those of their peers, shaping their perceptions of desirable career options and professional identities. According to a study by Higgins et al. (2020), peer influence significantly impacts career decision-making among college students, with peers serving as important reference points for assessing the feasibility and desirability of different career paths. Moreover, peer interactions foster a sense of belonging and community among students, creating shared norms and expectations regarding career choices and success criteria. Positive reinforcement from peers can bolster students' confidence and self-efficacy in pursuing ambitious career goals, while negative feedback or social pressure may deter them from exploring unconventional paths or taking risks. Research by Diprete and Eirich (2018) highlights the role of peer networks in shaping educational and career aspirations, with peer effects extending beyond academic achievement to include occupational choices and outcomes.

Furthermore, peer networks provide opportunities for mentorship, networking, and social capital accumulation, enhancing students' access to job opportunities, industry insights, and professional development resources. By leveraging peer connections, students can expand their social circles, build relationships with alumni and industry professionals, and gain valuable advice and support for navigating the job market. A study by Rivera (2022) emphasizes the role of social networks in facilitating job referrals and career advancement, underscoring the importance of peer relationships in shaping career trajectories and outcomes. Peer groups exert a profound influence on the career

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choices of business education students, shaping their perceptions, motivations, and opportunities in the job market. Through social comparison, information exchange, and social support, peers play a crucial role in guiding students' decision-making processes and shaping their career aspirations, thereby improving the learning interest in business Education. By understanding the mechanisms through which peer interactions influence career choices, educators, career counselors, and employers can better support students in navigating the complexities of career decision-making and fostering positive career outcomes.

Social communication refers to the exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages within interpersonal relationships. Within the context of peer groups among business education students, social communication encompasses conversations, discussions, networking, and collaborative activities that occur both in-person and through digital platforms. Social communication within peer groups exerts a profound effect on the career choices of business education students, influencing their preferences, motivations, and decision-making processes. Through informal discussions and information sharing, peers provide valuable insights and firsthand experiences that shape students' perceptions of different industries, job roles, and career paths. According to a study by Brown and Krager (2018), peer influence significantly impacts career decision-making among college students, with social communication playing a central role in shaping students' career aspirations and goals. Moreover, social communication fosters a sense of community and belonging among peers, creating shared norms and expectations regarding career choices and success criteria. Positive feedback and encouragement from peers can reinforce students' confidence and self-efficacy in pursuing specific career paths, while negative feedback or social pressure may lead to conformity or reluctance to explore alternative options. Research by O'Brien et al. (2019) highlights the role of peer networks in shaping career-related attitudes and behaviors, with social communication serving as a

mechanism for normative influence and social support.

Learning interests refer to the topics, subjects, and areas of study that individuals find intellectually stimulating, engaging, and personally meaningful. Within peer groups among business education students, learning interests manifest through shared academic passions, curiosity, and enthusiasm for exploring different facets of business, management, and entrepreneurship. Learning interests within peer groups shape students' perceptions of different career paths and industry sectors (Holland, 2017). By immersing themselves in shared learning experiences related to specific fields or industries, students develop a deeper understanding of the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for success in those areas. As noted by Moran and Dweck (2019), exposure to diverse learning interests within peer groups broadens students' horizons and expands their career possibilities, enabling them to make more informed and meaningful career choices. Furthermore, peer groups provide opportunities for mentorship, role modeling, and peer-to-peer support, enhancing students' professional development and career readiness. By collaborating with peers who share similar learning interests, students can leverage each other's strengths, expertise, and experiences to enhance their skills, build professional networks, and explore career pathways. A study by Duffy et al. (2018) emphasizes the importance of peer mentoring in supporting students' career development, with shared learning interests fostering a sense of belonging and community that enhances students' confidence and self-efficacy in pursuing their career goals. It is against this backdrop that this study will determine the influence of peer group on the career choice of business education students in Colleges of Education in Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing importance of informed career choices, business education student's often face significant challenges in selecting suitable career paths due to the profound of peer groups.

The pressure is confirm to peer expectations, limited exposure to diverse career options and miss information or biased advice from peer can lead to unrealistic career expectation, miss aligned career choices and inadequate career preparation. The recognition of the importance of peer groups in shaping career choices among business education students, there remains a gap in understanding the specific effects of learning interests within these peer groups. While existing research acknowledges the influence of peer interactions on career decision-making processes, limited attention has been given to the role of shared learning interests in shaping students' perceptions, motivations, and aspirations regarding career paths in business and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, little is known about how peer group dynamics within the context of business education programme in Colleges of Education in Delta State influence students' career choices. Given the diverse academic backgrounds, interests, and aspirations of students within these programs, there is a need to explore the influence of peer groups on career decision-making processes among business education students.

Furthermore, understanding the mechanisms through which learning interests within peer groups' impact career choices can provide valuable insights for educators, career counselors, and policymakers in designing effective interventions and support systems to enhance students' career readiness and success. By identifying the factors that shape students' perceptions of different career paths and industries, this study seeks to address the gap in the literature and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on career development and education in business fields.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is investigate the influence of peer group on the career choices business education students in in Colleges of Education in Delta State. Specifically, the study sought is:

1. Identity the extent to which peer groups influence business education student's career aspiration.
2. Examine the extent to which learning interest among peer group affects career choice of business education students.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study.

1. To what extent do peer groups influence business education student's career aspiration in Colleges of Education in Delta State?
2. To what extent do learning interest among peer group affect career choice of business education students in Colleges of Education in Delta State?

Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in three tertiary institutions in Delta state. The population of the study comprised ninety (90) students of business education in Federal college of education (Technical) Asaba, College of physical and health education Mosogar, Delta State College of Education Warri. There was no sampling since the population of manageable size. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire by the researcher Titled Peer influence on Choice of Business Education Students in Higher Education (PICBESHE). The copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents with the help of two research assistants and collected after completion the instrument was validated by an expert in Business education in Federal college of Education (Technical) Asaba. The result yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.75 which was established using Pearson product moment correlation. This was considered adequate for the study. Observations and corrections were effected before arriving at the final instrument. The ratings of the respondents were obtained on a 4points rating scale of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed (A) Disagreed (D) Strongly Disagreed (SD). In order to determine the cut off point,

any item with a mean score above 2.50 is agreed while any mean value below 2.50 is disagreed, Mean score was used to analyze the data collected in relation to the research questions. S

Results

Research Question One: To what extent do peer groups influence business education students career aspiration in Colleges of Education in Delta State?

Table 1: *Respondents’ Mean ratings on the Extent to which Peer Groups Influence Business Education Student’s Career in Colleges of Education in Delta State*

S/N	Statement Items	V	H	E	L	E	V	Mean	Decision
1	Peer group influence that career choices for business education students.	42	28	15	5			3.1	Agreed
2	Networking within peer groups shapes the career paths of business education students.	45	30	10	5			3.2	Agreed
3	Discussions among peers impact the career preferences of students studying business.	38	33	13	6			3.1	Agreed
4	Peer interactions play a pivotal role in guiding business education students towards specific career paths.	41	30	12	7			3.1	Agreed
5	The extent of social communication within peer groups correlates with the career decisions of business students.	33	29	18	10			2.9	Agreed
6	Peer influence heavily affects the career aspirations of students in business education.	32	36	18	4			3.0	Agreed
7	Collaborative discussions among peers shape the professional trajectories of business education students.	48	25	10	7			3.2	Agreed
8	Peer advice and conversations contribute significantly to the career choices made by business students.	31	36	17	2			3.0	Agreed
9	Social interactions with peers can sway business education students towards particular career fields.	27	32	20	11			2.8	Agreed

10	The social dynamics within peer groups serve as a crucial determinant in the career selection process for business education students.	29	33	21	7	2.7	Agreed
Grand Mean Score		3.01 Agree					

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Using a mean of 2.50 as the decision rule, Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed that all the items are influence of peer group on career choice of business education students in college of education in Delta state.

Research Question Two: To what extent do learning interest among peer group affect career choice of business education students in Colleges of Education in Delta State.

Table 2: Respondents’ Mean ratings on the Extent to Which Learning Interest among Peer Group Affect Career Choice of Business Education Students in Colleges of Education in Delta State

S/N	Statement Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	Decision
11	Shared learning interests within peer groups impact career decisions of business education students.	33	35	18	4	3.0	Agree
12	Peer group interests influence career paths chosen by business students.	44	23	20	3	3.2	Agree
13	Mutual learning passions among peers shape the career trajectories of business education students.	39	30	18	3	3.1	Agree
14	The extent of alignment in learning interests within peer groups correlates with career choices in business education.	42	25	13	10	3.1	Agree
15	Peer discussions about shared learning topics play a significant role in career decision-making for business students.	35	29	24	2	3.0	Agree
16	Similar learning interests among peers can steer business education students towards specific career fields.	33	29	18	10	2.9	Agree

17	Peer influence based on learning interests affects the career aspirations of students in business education.	48	21	13	8	3.2	Agree
18	Collaborative exploration of learning topics among peers influences the career preferences of business education students.	27	32	20	11	2.8	Agree
19	Mutual learning enthusiasm within peer groups guides business students towards particular career paths.	40	35	12	20	2.9	Agree
20	The collective learning interests within peer groups serve as a vital factor in shaping the career choices of business education students.	37	28	20	5	3.0	Agree
Grand Mean Score						3.02	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 revealed that the respond agreed that all the items are ways shared learning interest among peer group affects career choice of business education student in colleges of education in delta state.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study in table 1 revealed that social interaction within peer groups significantly impacts the career choices of business education students. This aligns with previous research which underscores the influence of peer interactions on career decision-making processes. For instance, Higgins et al. (2020) highlighted that peers serve as important reference points in evaluating the feasibility and desirability of different career paths. The respondents indicated that peer group social interaction significantly influences career choices and that networking within peer groups shapes career paths. These findings are consistent with Brown and Krager (2018), who identified the central role of peer influence in shaping students' career aspirations through social communication.

Moreover, discussions among peers were found to impact career preferences, and peer interactions play a pivotal role in guiding career paths. This reinforces the assertion by O'Brien et al. (2019) that social communication within peer networks serves as a mechanism for normative influence and social support, thus guiding career-related attitudes and behaviors. Overall, there is a strong agreement among respondents regarding the significant role of social communication in influencing career choices. This aligns with Eirich (2018), who found that peer networks extend their influence beyond academic achievements to include occupational choices and outcomes.

In table 2, the study's findings indicate that shared learning interests within peer groups substantially influence the career decisions of business education students. This corroborates earlier studies which found that mutual academic interests among peers play a crucial role in shaping career trajectories. Holland (2017) pointed out that learning interests shape students' perceptions of different career paths and industry sectors, facilitating more informed career choices. Respondents agreed that shared learning interests and mutual academic passions among peers significantly impact career decisions and trajectories. Similarly, the alignment in learning interests within peer groups was found to correlate with career choices. These findings are supported by Moran and Dweck (2019), who noted that exposure to diverse learning interests within peer groups broadens career possibilities for students.

Furthermore, peer discussions about shared learning topics and collaborative exploration of learning topics play a significant role in career decision-making. This supports the view of Duffy et al. (2018) that peer mentoring and shared learning interests foster a sense of community, enhancing professional development and career readiness. Overall, there is a strong consensus among respondents on the positive impact of learning interests within peer groups on career choices. This aligns with the assertion by Neck and Greene (2018) that entrepreneurship education and shared learning

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experiences within peer groups enhance students' career intentions and self-efficacy.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of peer groups on the career choices of business education students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. It is evident that both social communication and shared learning interests within peer groups play pivotal roles in shaping students' career decisions. Social communication among peers significantly guides career paths, fostering an environment where networking, discussions, and peer interactions are crucial for career development. Similarly, shared learning interests within peer groups enhance career decision-making by aligning students' academic passions and professional aspirations. These findings underscore the importance of fostering positive peer interactions and shared learning experiences in educational settings to support informed career choices and professional growth. Therefore, educators and policymakers should consider strategies that leverage peer influence and shared learning interests to enhance career readiness and success among business education students.

Recommendations/Suggestions

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

1. Students should actively participate in peer networking opportunities such as study groups, clubs, and seminars to gain valuable insights into various career paths and make more informed career choices.
2. Business educators should design classroom activities and projects that encourage collaboration among students, as group work and peer reviews help students learn from each other and explore different career interests.
3. School management should foster a supportive environment that encourages peer interaction and collaboration, as this can positively influence students' career choices.

4. Guidance counselors should facilitate peer group counseling sessions where students can discuss their career aspirations and receive feedback and support from their peers.
5. Parents should support their children in attending networking events, career fairs, and industry-related workshops to expand their professional connections and opportunities.

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