

## **Parents' Influence on the Selection of Choice Schools for Their Children/Adolescents in Sub-Sahara African Countries**

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**Abstract:** *“Education is the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world.” Many families in African countries have taken solace in education as means of liberating and empowering members for better living. This investigative study explored the factors that influence parents in their choice of schools for their children using Nigerian contexts as a sub-Saharan country for others. The aim of this study was to investigate various factors that determine choice of schools by parents for their children, and to determine whether parents' influence on the choice of school affect the academic performance of these adolescents. The theoretical framework of rational choice theory, market theory and choice theory provided empirical evidence. 100 senior secondary school students and 100 parents from Lagos were the participants for this study using the stratified sampling procedure. A descriptive cross sectional survey design with self-constructed questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The validity of the instrument was tested using the expert opinion method while the reliability was tested with a test re-test method which indicated a co-efficient of 0.71. The correlation co-efficient method was used to analyze the data collected from the*

*experiment at five percent level of significance, while five hypotheses were tested. The findings of the study revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship among parents' influence, socio-economic and educational background, parents' educational aspirations for their children, adolescents' academic performance, parents' expectation on quality of education and choice of schools as related to cost of education. Recommendations were made to attract parents to schools.*

**Keywords:** *Determinants, Adolescents, Quality Education, Criteria, Preferences*

## **1. Introduction**

Careful observation of current trends in Nigeria in terms of parents' preferred choice of schools for their adolescent children would reveal various yardsticks parents have used or are using to choose schools for their adolescents. Various determinants are responsible for their final discussions on which educational institutions their children would attend. Schooling is widely acknowledged as a major investment in human capital that enhances career opportunities and wages. It has been discovered by many parents today to have been an avenue for escaping poverty and to reduce income inequality in an economy. The importance of schooling to a child's social and economic status later in life cannot be overemphasized (Binder, 1998) children in Nigerian, are enrolled in various schools of questionable quality.

For individuals, education is a sound economic investment which raises not only the quality of life, but also increases the productivity in the market and non-market work and therefore future earnings (CBN, 1997) for both individuals and families, their perceptions of

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the benefits that would accrue from such investment is a major determinant of the decision to attend school.

The determinants of parents' preferences of schools for adolescents can differ with location of residence. Usually, urban areas are favoured because of higher access to basic amenities. Rural – urban disparities in schooling are well documented in the literature. This can be traced to the disparity in school quality in these areas. If the quality of schoolings an important factor in determining the decision to attend, quality differentials are likely to widen disparities in attendance rates between urban and rural areas.

FOS (1998) declares that the persistent of rural-urban disparities in access to schooling can prevent a large number of rural children from exploiting educational opportunities and their capacity to render a significant social contribution. Interestingly, there is evidence of disparities in rural urban education provision and uptake in Nigeria.

Research evidence shows that the choices of schools for adolescents by their parents are determined by a contribution of many determinants for such parents' preferences. This is why West (1992) suggested an investigation into determination such as:

- Quality of Education
- Family Tradition
- Academic ability of the child
- School's expectations
- Better facilities
- Resources
- Discipline
- Good examination results

Parents' preferences are determinants of choosing schools for their adolescents.

Mori (2001) identifies six determinants of parents' preferences to be:

- Smaller Classrooms
- Higher Standards
- Better Facilities
- Good Sports Facilities
- Wider Curriculum
- Better or more committed teachers

Determinants are factors, circumstances that influence or determine. It is a sum total of all social, physical, economic factors that affect adolescent schooling.

Erickson (1986) submitted that parents choose schools for their academic and curricular emphases, discipline and safety; while Buddin, Cordes and Kirby (1998) argued that, as family income and parents' level of education rise, so does the prosperity to choose a private school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria is rapidly developing her technological education, which has made the society more complex than it was in the past. Parents' concerns for quality education have increased. Every parent wants his/her child to acquire education that is affordable and quality to liberate the child or secure a bright future for the child. This is why the family influences the choice of school for its adolescents. The criteria on which schools are chosen or selected for adolescents are the bases for this study, determinants of parents' preferences of schools for their adolescents.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to:

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1. Find out the determinants of parents' preferences of school for their adolescents.
2. Find out determinants of schooling among many families.
3. Find out the differential determinants of educating group of adolescent viz-a-viz males/females.
4. Contribute to the scarce literature on factors responsible for choice of schools for adolescents by their parents.
5. Identify different determinants of parents' preference of choice of schools and provide useful implications for policy interventions on ways of improving schooling in Nigeria at large.
6. This research will also help in designing appropriate policies for encouraging and sustaining adolescent enrolment in various schools.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the key factors that these parents use in making the decision about where to send their children to school?
2. What are the sources of information that these parents use in making that decision?
3. What are the educational aspirations of these parents for their children? Do they value education and do they think it is important for their children?
4. How do the schools that these parents choose for their children perform in the areas for which they are chosen?
5. How does quality of education, as measured by reading ability relates to the choices and cost of education?

**Research Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between parents' influence and choice of schools for adolescent.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between socio-economic and educational background of parents and their choice of school for their adolescents.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between parents' educational aspiration for their children and their choice of schools for their children.

Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between parents' choice of schools and adolescents' performance in those schools.

Ho<sub>5</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between parents' expectation or quality of education and choice of school as related to cost of education.

## **2. Literature Review**

A careful observation of current trends in Nigeria especially Lagos State in terms of parents' preferred choice of schools for their adolescents would reveal so many factors or determinants that affect parents' choice of schools for their adolescents in Ojo Local Government area of the state. Choice of schools varies between private and public schools, and also among private schools or public schools.

Some parents prefer public owned schools for their children, while others go for private schools. Many reasons have made some parents to choose private schools against public schools. Ajayi (2000) noted, it is still observed; final education today has been faced with various challenges ranging from mismanagement of allocated resources to falling academic standards. This calamitous situation has further caused greater concern to most; Nigerians in the educational system seem to have overlooked the primary purpose of schooling and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to achieve them. This nagging challenge faced by the education sector leads to inevitable consequences as observed by Okafor et al

(2003), "falling standards leading to pushing the goal excellence to the back burner as public confidence in our educational system is eroded."

Other important reasons for loss of confidence in our public school system include poor planning and consistent lack of investment in the education system. This has led to a near collapse of the system learning the educational infrastructures in an appalling and dilapidated state. A casual visit to any public school in Nigeria would reveal the extent to which these educational institutions have decayed. Educational facilities at all levels are in a terrible shape; schools are littered with battered structures, worn out equipment, raggedy classroom buildings, over-crowded classrooms, inadequate manpower in quantity and quality; instability in the academic calendar owing to incessant strikes, very low teacher morale due to poor remuneration and working conditions.

Many parents seem to be looking for quality education at whatever cost, economically and otherwise and regardless of who is providing it. It must be pointed out that education (Western Education) has come to occupy a strong position in Nigerian daily life, as quite a lot depends on the quality of that education that an individual receives. The type of extent of one's education, many a time, determines the difference between success and failure in life, poverty and affluence and generally the opportunities and quality of life of an individual. This critical point, many parents and guardians have come to understand, and this is the reason they will not handle carelessly matters that have to do with the education of their children.

Therefore, given the level of decay and the pervasive conditions of ineptitude and lack of professionalism in some public schools, many parents feel let down, but they cannot give up their dream of giving their children the best in terms of education. This is where the

choice for private educational institutions comes in. It is appropriate at this point to make clear of one fact; government alone cannot provide all that the citizenry requires in term of educational needs. As it has been experienced in other sectors, beyond education, other social infrastructural facilities have not fulfilled peoples' expectations. Let it also be affirmed here, that despite all the shortcomings pointed out in public schools, many parents still prefer public educational institutions as choices of schools for their adolescents.

Private educational institutions in Nigerian have really grown in profile over the past years, such that they have gained acceptance and huge popularity among parents. This has brought about staff competitions between public schools and private schools, and also among private schools. Various determinants have been established by experts who have worked on related topics on choice of schools for children by their parents or guardians. Knudson (2005) said that private schools implement curriculum document to letter and print. In public schools, some students never really, fully understand the basic components of various core subjects and would be allowed to promote to next class.

Cost effective is also a determinant for parents' preference for choice of school for their adolescents. The Human Development Network of the World Bank (2001) agreed that private schools are probably more cost effective than public schools in providing student achievement, while fees for private schools exceed that of public schools, the operating costs of private schools are relatively low, despite relatively higher teacher – public ratio due to lower salary structures (Alderman et al. 2001). Outputs from schools is another important factor, output from schools describe how better and of a higher quality than others.

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Knudson (2005) opined that private schools teach students to be respectful to elders and other people around them. They also teach basic skills for learners to know how to behave properly in society. However, Rothstem et al (1999) contrarily reported that private schools do not necessarily aim to produce higher non-achievement outputs – behaviours and values. Consequently graduates from private schools do not necessarily have to be of higher quality than their counterparts from public schools.

Adejuyigbe (1980) claimed that locational patterns or attributes of schools especially their accessibility in relation to distance travelled to and from these facilities are usually considered by parents before making their choice. Arabshebani (1988) in his own submission said the family background in terms of the parents' level of education plays prominent role in selecting schools for their adolescent. The level of education, a parent has affects his decision for his/her choice of schools for his/her children for schooling.

Worpole (2000) said that child's gender is a determinant some parents use in choosing schools for their adolescents. Some parents are comfortable sending their girl-adolescents to girls' only schools while boys are preferred in boys' only schools by some parents. West and Hind (2003) significantly stressed that presence of siblings in the schools determine the choice of schools for adolescents. Furthermore, parents are comfortable sending their adolescents to schools their other siblings attend to ensure they keep eyes on one another and care for each other. Parents behave that older ones can take care or monitor their younger siblings in same schools.

Bagley (1995) explained that race of the child is a factor to consider by parents in selecting schools for their parents. In Nigeria context, some parents are tribalistic. They send their children to schools where majority of their tribe children attend, i.e. Igbo

dominated schools, enjoys patronage from Igbo people while Yoruba dominated schools enjoy same. Ownership of schools is also considered, schools owned by Igbo tribe, enjoy patronage from fellow Igbo people.

Mori (2001) aptly described that schools with better or more committed teachers enjoy more patronage from parents. Parents' preferences for schools are influenced by better or more committed teachers schools have. They compared schools on this basic before they decide for schools for their adolescents. The quality of education schools offer differentiates schools from one another. West (1992) said that quality of education offer by schools affect the enrolling figures of students in their schools. Schools with high quality education will be more populated than schools with low quality education.

Child education in Nigeria, especially in Lagos has been taken serious by all parents, both literate and illiterate parents; it is the dream of every parent in this modern day, to see their children educated and achieving success in academic pursuits. It is this passion for education that determines their choice of schools for their children. Choices of schools are polarized into either public or private schools. Various factors influence their choice. Sometime schools are changed for their children when their expectations or factors that attracted them to that particular school are not met or below their ratings.

Moral education takes paramount priorities among parents; every parent wants his/her child to be morally relevant to the society he/she belongs. Society can only accommodate children who are morally upright so as to enable peace in the locality. Religion is an agent of instilling morals in children, this is the core reason why many religious bodes set up education institutions. These schools enjoy

patronage from parents that belong to these bodies or believe in the tenets of these religious owned schools. As part of their academic programmes, moral education remains part of academic programmes, students are exposed to.

Le and Miller (2003) examined the determinants of school choice (government, Catholic or other independent schools) as well as the success in completing years 12 for cohorts of students born in 1961 and 1970 in Australia. Their results show that those attending Catholic and other independent schools have favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Dustmann (2003) and Drnakova (2007) identified parental characteristics – education, preferences, confidence and tastes – as key factors determining choice of schools and the ultimate educational achievement. Some parents in Lagos, especially Ojo Local Government Area enrol their wards in schools owned and run by Christians or Muslims with key emphasis on religious doctrines and tenets. The most important determinant of patronage of Private Secondary Schools in Ojo town, Lagos is the previous results of the school. Quest for better results encourage parents to spurn tuition – free education when previous results of the school convinces them of the better quality of education available in the school.

Presence of older siblings in the school is also a major determinant of choice of school for their adolescents; possibility of older siblings taking care of their younger ones, both in the school and especially after school hours. Though, unlike in the earlier studies by West and Hind (2003) where this factor was the most highly rated among the determinants of patronage of secondary schools in England, its being a close second might be a subtle affirmation of the observations of the earlier research on the importance of this factors in the choice and patronage of secondary schools.

Ability to pay required fees is a major determinant of their choice of private schools for their children/wards, tuition fees public secondary schools are readily available in different locations, since these private schools charge different fees and the resources of the parents are relatively limited, decision to patronize private schools in the study area could be much influenced by considerations of the amount and ability to pay the required fees. Choice of schools also changes when the required fees are increased or parents are unable to pay within the stipulated periods.

Calibre of Academic staff is seen as a major determinant of choice of school for adolescents by parents. Here, specific mentions of excellent results recorded by students of specified members of academic staff in external terminal examinations are cited. Teachers make or mar schools, when the calibre of teachers in a school can produce and maintain high academic standard, parents who desire high and quality education for their children will choose to enrol their adolescents in such schools, likewise when there is short fall in calibre of academic staff of a school; parents withdraw and enrol their children in another school that can give them what they want in education. Facilities available in schools usually attract patronage of schools by parents. Parents assess facilities that are available in choice schools to determine enrolment of children in such schools. Facilities in schools differ. These are used to lure parents to enrol their children/wards into schools. Notable among the facilities is computer education. Parents are attracted to schools where students are exposed to intensive computer education.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Education plays a critical role in socio-economic development of a country. It improves human capabilities as not all the human capabilities are by birth. Education accelerates economic growth through knowledge and skills development. It makes individuals

confident, aware and active. Education is considered an economic good. Similarly, it is both consumer and as well as capital good as it offers utility to consumer and act as an input in production of goods (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). It develops human resources required for social and economic development. The utilitarian aspect of education provides incentive to both government and individuals to invest in education.

Government provides for education through expenditure on education and facilitation of the process of education while individual's expenditure on education is shared by the parents in terms of fee structure etc. Majority of the parents want to provide their children with the best possible educational environment. Their decision to invest in children in form of education depends on a number of social, economic and cultural factors. Education in Pakistan is offered both by public as well as private sector. It is free of cost in public schools whereas in private schools, the parents have to shoulder the finances. For the last three decades private sector is emerging as an important source of imparting education in Pakistan providing education at all levels. In recent years, the private schools have improved their quality, attracting good input through fee concession ranging from a percentage to full fee concession. These schools, on one hand are educating youth and on other hand, are emerging as an important sector for the investors interested in investment in this sector. Many aspects regarding the education system of Pakistan have been discussed in various studies so far. However, the factors which motivate the parents to make a decision about private sector are yet to be explored.

The parents usually decide to educate their youngsters in private school at the time when they are completely dissatisfied with public schools. Educational environment, teacher student ratio, parents' education, their profession and smaller size of classes at private

schools are among the few reasons which help parents in selection of school. The private schools are more effective than public schools with same students and parents composition mainly due to school environment (Dronkers and Peter, 2003). School choice is highly associated with parent's occupational status. The parents with higher occupational status prefer private school over public school for their children. The school choice of parents show their satisfaction with the institute they choose. The private education can produce higher per capita income and the societies choose public education if majority of its agents is earning income below average (Glomm and Ravikumar, 1992).

### **Rational Choice Theory of School Choice**

Parental involvement and community are idealized in the current conceptions of school improvement and school reform in North America (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). Proponents of school choice stress the revitalization of public education through the creation of private alternatives, thus enhancing parental involvement, satisfaction, empowerment, and sense of community, and resulting in improved student achievement (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Driscoll & Kerchner, 1999; Smrerkar & Goldring, 1999). Rational choice theory informs most school choice plans. This theory suggests that parents are utility maximizers who make decisions from clear value preferences based on calculations of the costs, benefits, and probabilities of success of various options; that they are able to demand action effectively from local schools and teachers; and that they can be relied upon to pursue the best interests of their children (Fuller *et al.*, 1996; Goldthorpe, 1996; Bosetti, 1998; Hatcher, 1998).

### **Market theory of School Choice**

Market theory suggests that a system of school choice will create competition among schools for student enrolment resulting in schools being more responsive to the needs and interests of parents

and students by providing different types of programmes for different types of families. Competition will result in improved school effectiveness, productivity, and service, leading to higher quality education (Levin, 2002). Others argue that school choice may result in the creation of value communities that reflect 'little fiefdoms' that cater to the needs, values, and interests of particular groups. This contributes to the further social fragmentation of society and a two-tier education system (Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Fuller *et al.*, 1996), and privileges the middle-classes who have the economic, social, and cultural capital to use the education market as a strategy to reproduce their social class and secure their relative advantage, social advancement, and mobility (Ball, 2003).

Recent research, however, indicates that the context of parental decision-making is far more complex than the result of individual rational calculations of the economic return of their investment in particular education options (Hatcher, 1998). Parental choice is part of a social process influenced by salient properties of social class and networks of social relationships (Coleman, 1988; Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Reay & Ball, 1998; Bosetti, 2000, 2001; Reay & Lucey, 2000; Ball, 2003). Coleman (1988, p. 238) explains that when an individual is faced with important decisions, 'a rationale actor will engage in a search for information before deciding'. However, parents appear to employ a 'mixture of rationalities' involving an element of 'the fortuitous and haphazard' (Ball, 2003, p. 23). To make decisions regarding their children's education, parents will rely on their personal values and subjective desired goals of education, as well as others within their social and professional networks to collect information.

Parents, whose network does not provide access to relevant and valuable information regarding options of school choice, are limited in their capacity to make informed choices (Smrekar & Goldring,

1999). Much of the research on school choice is based on assumptions at the theoretical level with little empirical evidence. The focus tends to be on the relationship between school governance (more autonomy) and organizational efficiency (increased productivity) (Greene, 2001). Empirical studies tend to focus on whether students who attend private schools show higher achievement than those who attend public schools. These comparisons are typically limited to the apparent impact on test scores in reading and mathematics at the elementary level (Levin, 2000). There is an increasing body of research examining the longer-term impacts of market reforms on education in terms of school effectiveness, social class, race, and ethnicity (Smreker & Goldring, 1999; Gorard *et al.*, 2001; Gewirtz, 2002; Ball, 2003).

There are, however, many unobserved factors that are difficult to measure. These factors account for differences among families that select private, public, and alternative schools, and might also account for differences in student achievement scores (Greene, 2001, p. 122). They include the level of education of parents, particularly mothers since they are the key decision makers, level of family income, parental involvement in their child's learning, time spent with their children in school-related activities, and their values and beliefs about the goals and purpose of schooling.

### **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

This theory which was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and further developed by Ajzen (1991) postulates that human behaviour in school selection is affected by three independent constructs: attitudes (which reflect an individual's evaluation in terms of performing a particular behaviour), subjective norms (which reflect an individual's perception as to how others who are important to them think they should or should not perform a particular behaviour, a form of social pressure) and perceived behavioural

control (which reflects an individual's perceived ease or difficulty in performing a particular behaviour). The TPB has been shown to predict human behaviour of different nature well (Armitage and Conner, 2001; Sutton, 1998).

Australian parents have a choice of sending their child to a Government, Catholic or Independent school (Kelley and Evans, 2004). Government schools have the largest market share (68%) of total student enrolments. However, over the past 25 years (1979 – 2004), Government schools have suffered a loss of 11% market share (83000 students) and Independent schools have seen a large increase in student enrolment figures of 9% (459000 students, ABS, 2004). These developments illustrate that schooling has developed to become a service industry with parents becoming customers in selecting a school for their child. This parental power of choice requires schools to adopt marketing strategies to protect or acquire market share. In order to compete for market share, schools need to understand reasons of parents for choosing or not choosing a particular school or school type. Elicitation studies aim at revealing which the main reasons are for parents to send their child to a particular school.

Numerous such studies have been conducted in the past. These studies differ not only in the geographical region studies, but also in the methodologies applied. The first group of studies elicits reasons for school choice to construct items for a quantitative (typically survey phase) of the project by literature review or secondary data (e.g. Government reports). Such studies were conducted by Bagley (1996), Goldring and Hausman (1999) and Denessen et al. (2005). Bagley's study (1996) resulted in 29 reasons leading to the key finding that the ethnic / racial composition of a school was not a significant factor influencing parents' choice of school. The elicitation stage of Goldring and Hausman led to 16 items, which

were subsequently classified into four main reasons (academic, convenience, discipline and value community). The study results indicate that convenience guided most Government school choosers whereas academic reasons were more important for non government school choosers. Denessen et al. (2005) elicited 17 items; the main factors of school choice emerging from the study were religion, social milieu and ethnicity.

A second group of studies uses one single primary fieldwork method at the actual elicitation stage. For instance, Elacqua et al. (2005) asked 530 parents one single opened ended question using a questionnaire. Eight reasons (academic environment / curriculum, location / cost, morals / values, discipline / safety, class or school size, facilities, student demographics and others) emerged as most important factors. Bussell (1998) conducted 20 interviews with parents leading to 31 items. The child's happiness was the most frequently mentioned reason. West et al. (1995) conducted 70 interviews and identified 22 different reasons for school choice with the school's academic record ranking first. Schneider and Buckley (2002) observed parents' search behaviour on an education website. A total of nine items (student composition, location, test scores, basic programs, staff, facilities, after school programs and special programs) were identified. Finally, a third group makes use of a dual method approach in which – typically - a literature review as well as primary fieldwork of some kind are used to elicit reasons from parents. Kleitz et al. (2000) used a literature review and interviews in which 1100 parents were asked five questions about the reasons for sending their child to a particular school. Five main reasons emerged: education quality, class size, safety, location and friends.

Based on the findings by Kleitz et al. educational preferences do not differ by race or class. Jackson and Bisset (2005) took a dual method approach with two primary data collection tools: they elicited

school choice reasons by asking 225 respondents to complete a questionnaire and by interviewing 15 parents. 13 reasons of school choice resulted. Their study showed exam results and school reputation as key reasons in influencing parents' school choices. As can be seen from the brief review above, most elicitation studies of school choice reasons have the following limitations: (1) they do not use a theoretical framework to ensure that reasons of different nature are accounted for (such as personal attitudes, social pressures and factors that are entirely out of their control, and (2) they typically use one or two sources of information for collecting these reasons. Both of the above limitations can lead to the omission of important school choice reasons due to weaknesses of the one of two elicitation procedures chosen (Churchill, 1998).

### **Choice Theory of School Choice**

Children are often defiant and parents find it very frustrating and difficult to get children to obey without resorting to a battle of the wills. Choice Theory allows for parents to completely eliminate arguments with children about compliance, while encouraging children to develop important skills. Children do not like to be told what to do... actually, none of us do. It is very easy to tell children to "Eat your vegetables" or "Clean your room", and then get angry and yell when it is not completed. Giving children a choice gives you more control than you might think, because you are the one who decides what the choices will be. For example, it would be foolish to give most children a choice between doing their homework and watching television, but how about letting them decide whether they'll do spelling and then math, or the other way around? There could be other choices after homework is completed. I'm not suggesting unlimited choices, just the ones you think are appropriate for the occasion. While it leaves you in control, it also gives the child the feeling that he has some rights.

Expanding this into discipline, children respond well when they are given a choice of appropriate, expected behaviour or a punishment. If children are allowed to continue with behaviour until it is out of control and then are forced to stop by a parent, they will never learn to self-regulate. The child learns that someone will intervene when something gets out of control relinquishing them from the responsibility. By threatening, “If you talk back again, I am going to make you go to bed”, for example, the parent communicates that the child is under their control. Choice Theory requires that the child makes the decision; in “If you choose to talk back to me, then you choose to go to bed”. The child learns to accept responsibility for his actions. The key component of this being effective is following through with the consequence no matter what.

You can also implement Choice Theory for deciding what a punishment will be after a child chooses to be punished. Would the child rather miss TV for a night or two, be grounded, or go to bed early? As before, the options are up to you, but the child gets to choose. However, be ready to accept the child’s choice as final, assuming that it is appropriate. In other words, don’t give a choice if there really is no choice and you’re going to force the child to do what you want anyway. Obviously, it is not necessary or practical to follow this procedure every time, but it can make a big difference in your relationship with the child and also help his/her self-esteem if you let them choose on a regular basis. Certainly there will be times when your child will not be able to choose, when your judgment as a parent will have to suffice, but these times should be balanced with choices the child can make. Life involves decision-making. Many children grow up unable to make decisions intelligently simply because they have had so little experience doing so. Parents and teachers told them what to do and when to do it. Try giving your children choices instead of orders. You may be in for a pleasant surprise.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

##### **Research Design**

This research adopted the survey research design. This is justified in its ability to make it possible for the researcher to cover a larger percentage of the subjects within a short period. It was employed because of its flexibility ability to give room for having direct relationship with the subjects. Furthermore, the survey research design elicits data directly from the field through the respondents within a relatively short time frame.

##### **Population of the Study**

The targeted population for this study is the entire parents and students of public and private secondary schools in Ojo local government area of Lagos State.

##### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

Participants were drawn from among parents in Ojo and students from ten senior secondary schools, leading to five public secondary schools and five private secondary schools within Ojo Local Government Area. In each school, ten students/ten parents were selected using convenience sampling technique, thus a total of one hundred parents and one hundred students constituted the participants for the study, giving a sample size of 200.

##### **4.5 Data Collection Instruments**

The instrument used for the study is the self-constructed questionnaire. The design of the questionnaire was based on the formulated hypotheses. The questionnaire was divided into two (2) parts; section A and section B. Part A contains questions on the bio-data of the respondents while Part B contained twenty (20) items on the subject matter of the study. Besides, a four (4) point-Likert scale - Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD); were provided for the respondents as options. The statements

are close-ended for ease of response. Respondents were expected to show the degree of agreement and disagreement with what the questionnaire sought. The respondents were required to truly respond to the scale as much as it is appropriate. The four options stated above will be ranked 4, 3, 2, and 1 for ease of analysis.

Furthermore, another instrument was used for the collection of data on choice of school and academic performance. This was the results of the last academic year. This will be compared in relation to the choice of school.

#### **4.6 Validity of Instrument**

The instrument was validated by firstly consulting with the colleagues of the researcher, examining samples of relevant questionnaires used in the past and the questionnaire constructed in line with the research hypotheses. Then, the constructed instrument was submitted to the project supervisor for checking, and for the necessary corrections and modifications before final approval is given for it. Thus, construct, face and content validity of the questionnaire were assured.

#### **4.7 Reliability of Instrument**

To ensure the reliability of instrument, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher vis-à-vis the expected outcome based on the hypotheses. The researcher carried out a pilot study on five respondents. The copies of the questionnaire were marked X<sub>1</sub>, X<sub>2</sub>, X<sub>3</sub>, X<sub>4</sub>, and X<sub>5</sub>; and administered to five respondents. The questionnaires were retrieved. At an interval of two weeks later, the researcher, armed with the same questionnaire blank marked Y<sub>1</sub>, Y<sub>2</sub>, Y<sub>3</sub>, Y<sub>4</sub>, and Y<sub>5</sub> administered to the same set of respondents and retrieved after completion. This was to test the consistency of the instrument in relation to the expected result. The test-re-test method was used for the reliability; the result was subjected to the Pearson

Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient for further analysis. The reliability co-efficient was 0.82.

#### **4.8 Data Collection Procedure**

The major instrument was administered on the subjects with the help of the school inspectorate where permission was sought. Parents were also sought through their various homes and business point. They were given a short orientation on how to respond to the items of the instruments. Respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaire at their own pace. The questionnaire was administered during the students' free period so as not to disrupt the school timetable, while parents were also given time to respond to the instrument.

#### **4.9 Method of Data Analysis**

For the purpose of data analysis, the results obtained from the demographic analysis were organized on frequency tables using simple percentage and on the basis of the analysis, interpretations and conclusions were drawn. Furthermore, the hypotheses were tested using t-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation co-efficient methods.

### **5. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### **RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS**

In this section, the biographic data of the respondents such as sex, age, educational qualifications etc are presented and analysed

**TABLE 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents**

| <b>Sex</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Male         | 130              | 65                    |
| Female       | 70               | 35                    |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>200</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

Table 1 shows that male respondents accounted for 65 percent while the female respondents were 35 percent. This gives a 2.1 ratio for male to female respondents

**TABLE 2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

| <b>Age (years)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| ≤ 20               | 12               | 6                     |
| 21-30              | 48               | 24                    |
| 31-40              | 90               | 45                    |
| 41-50              | 20               | 10                    |
| Above 50           | 30               | 15                    |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>200</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

Table 2 shows that 45% of the respondents belonged in the 31-40 age range, 24 percent was recorded for age range 21-30 years, 15 percent for the above the age of 50 years, 10 percent for 41-50 years of age and only 6% of them belonged to the <20 age range. The implication of this study is that majority of the respondents are active and young.

**TABLE 3: Marital Status of Respondents**

| <b>Marital Status</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Married               | 122              | 61                    |
| Single                | 52               | 26                    |
| Divorced              | 4                | 2                     |
| Widowed               | 22               | 11                    |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>200</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

Table 3 shows that 62 percent of the respondents are married, 26 percent are single, 20 percent are divorced while 10 percent are either

widow or widower. It was therefore concluded that majority of the respondents are married and mature.

**TABLE 4: Educational Qualifications**

| <b>Variable</b>       | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| O'level               | 20               | 10                    |
| NCE/OND               | 122              | 61                    |
| Degree/Higher diploma | 50               | 25                    |
| Other                 | 8                | 4                     |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>200</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

Table 5 shows that 61% of the respondents possess NCE/OND certificate, 25% have degree/higher diploma, 10% have o'level certificate while 5% others have second degree or more. One can therefore conclude that majority of the respondents are well educated and in better position to respond to the items.

**TABLE 5: Working Experience of the Respondents**

| <b>Variable (yrs)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| ≤ - 5                 | 58               | 29                    |
| 6-15                  | 26               | 13                    |
| 16 – 25               | 76               | 38                    |
| 26 – 35               | 40               | 20                    |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>200</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

Table 5 shows that the experience of the respondents varies from low to high. 38 percent of them have 16-25 years of experience, 30 percent of them had between 0 and 5 years of experience, 19 percent were of experience range of 25-35 years, while 13 percent had between 6-15 years of job experience. This implies that majority of the respondents are experienced and versed in their job.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

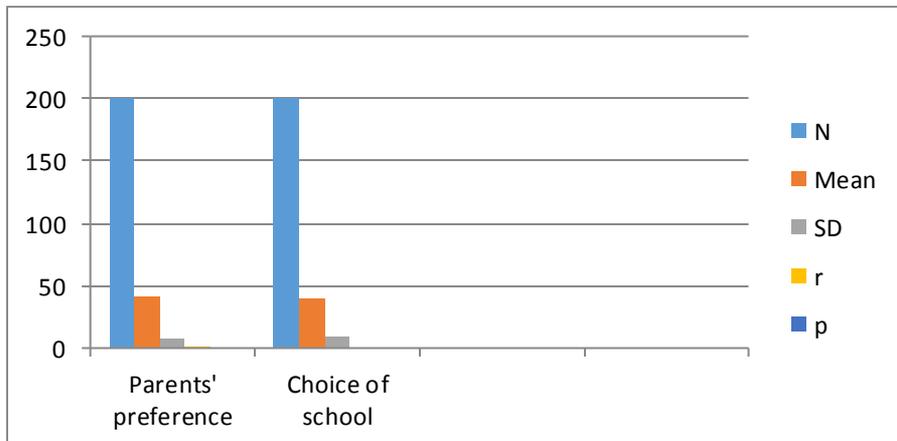
### Hypothesis One

There is no statistically significant relationship between parents' preference and choice of schools for adolescent.

**Table 6: Correlation between Parents' Preference and Choice of Schools for adolescent**

| Variables           | N   | Mean  | SD   | R    | P    |
|---------------------|-----|-------|------|------|------|
| Parents' Preference | 200 | 41.29 | 7.05 | .794 | .000 |
| Choice of school    | 200 | 39.39 | 9.98 |      |      |

The table is represented graphically as thus:



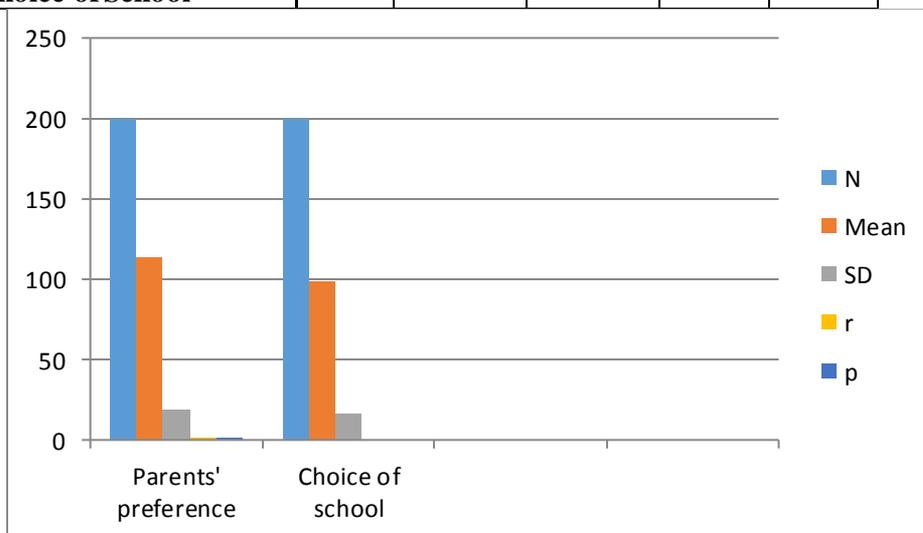
The computed correlation coefficient shows that  $r$  is .794. The observed probability level of significance is .000, [ $p < .05$ ]. It means that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' preference and choice of schools for adolescent. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis Two**

There is no statistically significant relationship between socio-economic background of parents and their choice of school for their adolescents.

**Table 8: Correlation between socio-economic background of parents and their choice of school for their Adolescents**

| Variables                 | N   | Mean   | SD    | R    | P    |
|---------------------------|-----|--------|-------|------|------|
| Socio-economic background | 200 | 113.06 | 19.05 | .019 | .005 |
|                           | 200 | 98.11  | 15.98 |      |      |
| Choice of School          |     |        |       |      |      |



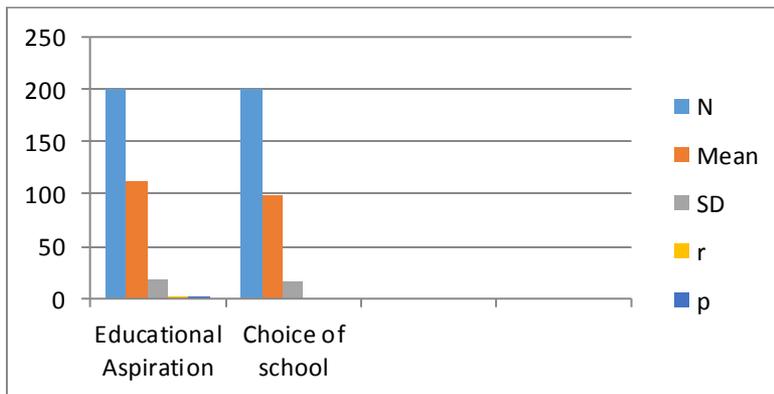
The computed correlation coefficient shows that  $r$  is .019. The observed probability level of significance is .005, [ $p < .05$ ]. It means that there is a statistically significant relationship between socio-economic background of parents and their choice of school for their adolescents. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

### Hypothesis Three

There is no statistically significant relationship between parents' educational aspiration for their children and their choice of schools for their children.

**Table 9: Correlation between parents' educational aspiration for their children and their choice of schools for their children**

| Variables              | N   | Mean   | SD    | R    | P    |
|------------------------|-----|--------|-------|------|------|
| Educational Aspiration | 120 | 130.00 | 50.52 | .089 | .002 |
| Choice of schools      | 120 | 118.92 | 43.61 |      |      |



The computed correlation coefficient shows that  $r$  is .089. The observed probability level of significance is .002. It means that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' educational aspiration for their children and their choice of schools for their children. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis Four**

There is no statistically significant relationship between parents' choice of schools and adolescents' performance in those schools.

**Table 10: Difference in the choice of schools and adolescents' performance**

| Sex             | N   | Mean   | SD    | Df  | t    | P    |
|-----------------|-----|--------|-------|-----|------|------|
| Public Schools  | 100 | 142.37 | 15.12 | 198 | 5.69 | .008 |
| Private Schools | 100 | 132.17 | 23.56 |     |      |      |

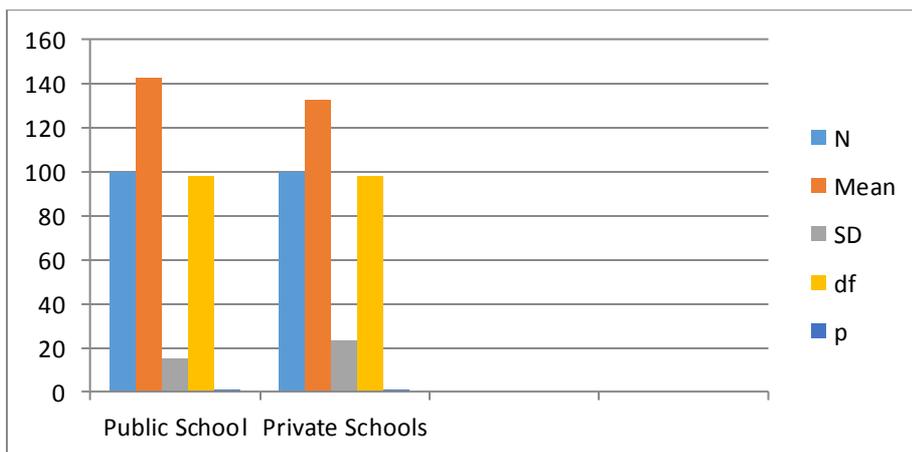


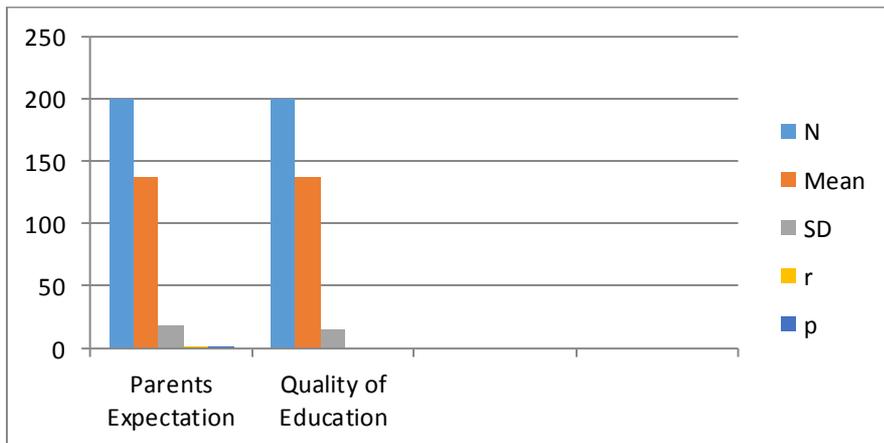
Table 4.9 shows that there is a significant difference in the reading habits of public and private schools [ $t(198) = 5.69; p < 0.05$ ]. This significant difference can be observed in the mean where public schools participants scored higher ( $\bar{X} = 142.37$ ) and private schools counterparts with lower score ( $\bar{X} = 132.17$ ). This implies that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' choice of schools and adolescents' performance in those schools. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis Five**

There is no statistically significant relationship between parents’ expectation or quality of education and choice of school as related to cost of education.

**Table 11: Correlation between parents’ expectation or quality of Education and choice of school**

| Variables            | N   | Mean   | SD    | r    | P    |
|----------------------|-----|--------|-------|------|------|
| Parents’ expectation | 200 | 138.35 | 19.05 | .056 | .002 |
| Quality of Education | 200 | 138.14 | 15.98 |      |      |



The computed correlation coefficient shows that r is .056. The observed probability level of significance is .002, [p < .05]. It means that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents’ expectation or quality of education and choice of school as related to cost of education. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

### **Summary of findings**

After an in-depth analysis of the study, the following findings came to the fore.

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between parents' influence and choice of schools for adolescent.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between socio-economic and educational background of parents and their choice of school for their adolescents.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between parents' educational aspiration for their children and their choice of schools for their children.
4. There is a statistically significant relationship between parents' choice of schools and adolescents' performance in those schools.
5. There is a statistically significant relationship between parents' expectation or quality of education and choice of school as related to cost of education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

According to the analysis of hypothesis one, it was found that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' influence and choice of schools for adolescent. This outcome is in tandem with the work of Falana (2010) who reported that the choice of schools of adolescents is mostly influenced by their parents. However, it was in contrast with the work of Bolade (2011) who reported a contrary finding. He noted that in some climes, the academic performance of students determine their choice of school.

In addition, the second hypothesis analysis revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between socio-economic and

educational background of parents and their choice of school for their adolescents. This finding is in agreement with that of Kolade (2011) who noted that the amount of fund available for families affect the choice of school of their adolescents. Hence, the economic status of parents affects their choice of school for their children. There is a statistically significant relationship between parents' educational aspiration for their children and their choice of schools for their children. This outcome as depicted by the analysis of hypothesis three is in agreement with the work of Kolade (2011). He reported further that the educational attainment of parents is a significant factor in determining the choice of school for their adolescents.

Another finding from this work revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' choice of schools and adolescents' performance in those schools. This outcome point to the fact reported in the work of Falade (2009) who emphasised that choice of schools affects adolescent academic performance. Finally, the expectation of parents is a significant factor in the placement of adolescents in schools (Bolade, 2011). This is in tandem with the finding of this study that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' expectation or quality of education and choice of school as related to cost of education.

## **Conclusion**

A careful observation of current trends in Nigeria especially Lagos State in terms of parents' preferred choice of schools for their adolescents would reveal the determinants that affect parents' choice of schools for their adolescents in Nigeria. This study has been able to establish that choice of schools varies between private and public schools, and also among private schools or public schools. Ajayi (2000) noted that secondary school education today has been faced with various challenges ranging from mismanagement of allocated

resources to falling academic standards. This calamitous situation has further caused greater concern to most Nigerians in the educational system seem to have overlooked the primary purpose of schooling and of the high expectations and disciplined effort needed to achieve them. This nagging challenge faced by the education sector leads to inevitable consequences as observed by Okafor et al (2003), "falling standards leading to pushing the goal excellence to the back burner as public confidence in our educational system is eroded."

Other important reasons for loss of confidence in our public school system include poor planning and consistent lack of investment in the education system. This has led to a near collapse of the system learning the educational infrastructures in an appalling and dilapidated state. A casual visit to any public school in Nigeria would reveal the extent to which these educational institutions have decayed. Educational facilities at all levels are in a terrible shape; schools are littered with battered structures, worn out equipment, raggedy classroom buildings, over-crowded classrooms, inadequate manpower in quantity and quality; instability in the academic calendar owing to incessant strikes, very low teacher morale due to poor remuneration and working conditions.

With some public educational infrastructures in appalling conditions (and very little is being done to remedy the situation) parents who are concerned about giving their adolescents the best available educational options will obviously be looking for viable alternatives and this, it seems, is manifestly the case in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Since it was discovered that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' preference and choice of schools for

adolescent, parents are therefore advised to know the needs of their adolescents and choose school based on these needs. When this is done, the educational aspirations and yearnings of the adolescents would be met. It is further suggested that parents preference should be set not clash with the interest of the adolescents.

It was also discovered that there is a statistically significant relationship between parents' educational aspiration for their children and their choice of schools for their children, therefore apart from school choice, parents should endeavour to prepare their adolescents for their desired academic aspirations in order to complete it with school choice when they grow up. Parents should endeavour to take the best samples of schools before settling for their choice. It is also recommended that since schools run different curriculum and are of different models, proper findings must be done by the parents in order to satisfy their aspirations. Government should maintain strict standard and proper regulations; improve on monitoring of public schools in order to provide a level plain ground for all adolescents to learn irrespective of family background and socio-economic status.

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