

## Gender, Identity Status and Career Maturity of Adolescents in Southwest Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** This study investigated the relationship between identity status and career maturity of secondary school adolescents. Five hundred and eighty-one (male = 275; female = 306) senior secondary school adolescents completed the Career Maturity Inventory and the Ego Identity Status Scale. The results showed that the identity statuses significantly predicted career maturity of the adolescents but gender did not. Diffused identity status made the highest (negative) contribution to the prediction of career maturity followed by achieved and moratorium identity statuses in that order. Foreclosure identity status did not make significant contribution to the prediction of career maturity. No significant differences were found between the males and females in their career maturity and identity statuses. Implications for career counselling interventions were discussed.

### INTRODUCTION

Important career decisions, such as whether to attend university, polytechnic, college of education, or a technical school or enter the job force directly after secondary school are made during adolescence. These decisions affect the rest of person's life; therefore it is important to understand the individual and the social factors that influence the process of adolescent career development. In a developing country like Nigeria where rapid social economic changes, stress, political uncertainties and the variety of jobs available to persons is limited, economic crunch/depression is a regular phenomenon. Consequently, career counselling is a vital tool for developing the youths. The choice of a career especially among diverse options is usually a herculean task and is very important to life (Osipow, 1983). This therefore underscores the need to guide the adolescents in planning for careers and making mature decisions. The school system has the responsibility of assisting the youths in making competent career decisions that are appropriate to their abilities, aptitudes, interests and other personality characteristics.

Many studies have indicated that most secondary school leavers in Nigeria made poor vocational decisions because of unrealistic vocational aspirations. It had been reported that students select occupations mainly because of the salaries, positions, glamour and prestige attached to them (Ikeme, 1991; Salami, 1997). For instance, most young people prefer medicine,

engineering, law, banking, architecture, and pharmacy as professions they intend to enter into upon graduation from school without adequate knowledge of what it takes to succeed and achieve in those occupations (Ekoja and Egbochuku, 1999; Ogunsanwo, 2000; Salami, 2000).

In support of the above findings Okafor (2004) in a recent study found that most secondary school students selected Law, Medicine, Accountancy, Engineering, Business Administration, Teaching, Nursing, Secretarial work and Military service in that order. On the factors responsible for the students' choice of careers 80% of the students cited material gains in terms of salaries and emoluments; parental pressure (60%), peer groups (50%), interest (50%), career information (45%), prestige (40%), relatives and significant others (30%). The problems of making unrealistic occupational choices and subsequent maladjustment on the job have been identified largely among the people already in the labour force by policy maker (Ogunsanwo, 2000). Despite the activities of the guidance counsellors posted to the secondary schools by both the Federal and State governments in Nigeria, to carry out vocational, educational and personal-social counselling, most secondary school students were usually not vocationally mature by the time they leave school (Salami, 2004).

There are evidences that most of the students leave secondary schools quite deficient in occupational information (Ekoja and Egbochuku, 1999; Onyejiaku, 1985). This had been attributed

to a conspicuous absence of career education either at the elementary or the secondary school level. This omission of careers education or career preparation such as technical preparation and apprenticeship programmes in the school curriculum limits the occupational experience of the youth. Related to this is the fact that students rarely go on field trips for career exploration. There are no career conferences or observational learning which would expose students to different kinds of work and situations that could aid students in their choice of occupations. Rather, choice of occupation is determined by students' best school subjects which is in no way an index of maturity in terms of vocational development (Onyejiaku, 1985; Salami, 2005).

Lack of career maturity of the Nigerian secondary school students might be related to the roles that discrimination, societal attitudes, cultural expectations and stereotyping play in their career development. Several researchers have noted that career development appears to be strongly influenced by social factors (Blustein et al., 1995; Hotchkiss and Borow, 1990; Mitchell and Krumboltz, 1990). Conte (1983) noted that negative cultural perceptions and social expectations can impose lower status and a devalued role on individuals which, in turn, can result in limited job or career choices, restricted opportunities and access to training programmes and narrow stereotypical employment possibilities. In the Nigerian situation, the tradition or cultural practice is that the family or the parents or the elders know the best and as such family or the parents dictate the type of occupation that the children will choose regardless of the children's abilities and interests (Bojuwoye, 1987). The cultural belief and social expectations are that the females don't need to be too serious about occupational choice. They are expected to go into traditional, female sex-stereotyped lower occupational levels where salary levels are relatively low because they are expected to be helpers to their husbands who are expected to be the breadwinners for the family (Bojuwoye and Imouokhome, 1986; Salami, 2001). For this, the females may be less career mature than the males.

Lower career maturity among Nigerian secondary school students might result from perceptions of restrictive post-graduation vocational options. Where to go next after graduation might pose problems to the students.

A sense of limited career options may be magnified because of lack of meaningful employment options found in contemporary Nigerian economy. There is mass unemployment (Oyebade, 2003). When secondary school students think of mass unemployment of the graduates, they might not be motivated to take the matter of career decision making seriously. Delay in the career maturity of the secondary school students in Nigeria might also be due to age and lack of immediacy to identify potential careers. Most secondary school students are young and as such they may not see the need to take the matter of career decision making seriously.

This scenario has engaged the attention of most researchers in the career development of Africans (Nigerians inclusive) (Naidoo et al., 1998). As reported by Super (1990), there is need to study the applicability of the career maturity construct to the Africans and other culturally different groups despite over four decades of research on career maturity as a central aspect of career development. One way of expanding our understanding of the nature of career maturity may be found in the investigation of its relationship with identity status and gender using Crite's career maturity and Marcia's identity theories.

### Literature Review

Career development/self-concept theory proposed by Super (1990) describes five stages of development including growth (childhood), exploration (adolescence), establishment (young adulthood), maintenance and withdrawal. Super postulated that certain vocational tasks are accomplished during each of the distinct stages according to identifiable and predictable sequences. Career maturity provides a means of measuring the degree of affective and cognitive career development an individual has attained (Rojewski et al., 1995).

Crites (1978, 1995) defined career maturity as the extent to which the individual has mastered the vocational development task including both knowledge and attitudinal components, appropriate to his or her state of career development. Maturity is assumed to be an underlying psychological construct reflecting this developmental level just as intellectual, moral and social development are assumed to be psychological constructs (Betz, 1988).

Career maturity describes one's ability to successfully cope with vocational development tasks (e.g. crystallizing, specifying and implementing career choice) that are encountered across the development continuum from exploration stage through withdrawal. As a construct, it represents a repertoire of coping behaviours and one's readiness to employ these behaviours toward career-related events encountered at various life stages.

Career maturity is influenced by age, race, ethnicity, locus of control, socio-economic status, work salience and gender (Naidoo, 1998). The complex interaction of these factors affects individuals' readiness to succeed in mastering the tasks appropriate to various stages of career development.

Crites (1978) proposed a model that helps in understanding the factors and variables affecting a person's degree of career development. It included the following factors namely: consistency of career choice, career choice content, realism of career choice, career choice competencies, career choice process, and career choice attitudes.

In the present study, Crites' (1978) five dimensions of vocational maturity are of interest namely: involvement in the choice process, independence in decision making, orientation toward work, preference for vocational choice factors, and conceptions of the vocational choice process. Crites' dimensions of vocational maturity were chosen because they are very realistic in terms of vocational development. Involvement in the choice process measures the extent to which the student is personally involved in the choice of occupation. It involves the student's personal knowledge of himself and intelligent thought about the preferred occupation.

Independence in decision making examines the extent to which the occupation chosen by the student was influenced by himself or herself or decided by external factors or the extent to which the student knows himself or herself in relation to the occupation chosen. Orientation toward work is the awareness one possesses on the steps involved in making an appropriate career choice. Preference for vocational choice factors is the extent to which the student knows that the chosen occupation would lead to his or her self-fulfillment.

From the definitions cited above, career maturity could be conceptualized as an indivi-

dual's readiness to make well-informed, age-appropriate career decisions, and to shape one's career carefully in the face of existing societal opportunities and constraints.

Most secondary school students in Nigeria are not vocationally mature by the time they are leaving school. The reason being that the technical aspects of the secondary school curriculum could not be fully implemented due to lack of qualified personnel and equipment (Ogunsanwo, 2000; Salami, 2000). From the foregoing, it could be inferred that most of the adolescents are not yet at the achieved identity status. They have to depend on their parents' wishes and significant others, traditions and cultural practices but are struggling to compromise between them, the societal demands and available jobs demand and their own capabilities (Adegoke, 2003).

This study examined the relationships among gender, identity status and career maturity of adolescents in southwest Nigeria. Also the interaction effects of gender on the relationship between identity status and career maturity were examined.

One rationale for investigating the relationship between ego identity status and career maturity is that the information to be derived from such an investigation would assist counsellors in designing interventions to improve the career maturity level of the Nigerian adolescents. Secondly, the results to be obtained from this study could help Nigerian counsellors in designing interventions for assisting the adolescents in developing self-authorship and capacity for autonomy which are required for meeting modern work demands and making internally rather than externally defined commitments. A third reason is that our understanding of the problems of career maturity of the Nigerian adolescents could be expanded by relating ego identity status to their career maturity. Lastly, researchers have not paid attention to the investigations of the relationship between identity status and career maturity of Nigerian adolescents. Therefore, there is need to investigate this relationship.

Aside from the lack of vocational maturity of most secondary school leavers in Nigeria, there are gender imbalances in science, technology and mathematics education (Ogunkoya and Olatoye, 2005). For instance, there are evidences to show that there are more male undergraduate students in non-person centred (science, mathematics,

engineering and technology) vocational training programmes and a significant number of female undergraduate students in person-centred (Arts/Humanity) based vocational training programmes in Nigeria (Ologun, 2002; Ogunkoya and Olatoye, 2005; Yolooye, 2004). The result of this is low percentage of women in science, math and engineering and technology-related professions (FME, 2003). Generally, women are found in low-paying, traditionally female careers and jobs such as social work, teaching, nursing, sales and administrative support position (Rainey and Borders, 1997). It is very likely that the differences in the career patterns of the female and male adolescents would impact on their career maturity levels. Given these conditions it seems very likely that gender is a variable that may affect the career maturity of the Nigerian adolescents.

A reason for including gender in the examination of career maturity of the adolescents in this study is that the females are often constrained by traditional expectations. The females are expected in almost all cultures in Nigeria, to be helpers to their husbands and as such their careers may not be all that important to them as they are to the males. These traditional expectations may impact on the career maturity level of the adolescents. Another reason is that previous researches on the relationship between gender and career maturity have produced inconsistent results. For instance, some researchers have found significant gender-related differences in career maturity (Rojewski et al., 1995) others found no such differences (Crites, 1978). Hence, there is need to investigate the relationship between gender and career maturity of Nigerian adolescents.

In this study, Marcia's (1966 and 1980) model of ego identity development was adopted as the theoretical framework. Marcia (1966 cited in Adams, 1998) propounded four distinct ways of resolving the identity development task which are defined by a different ego identity status. The diffusion status characterizes individuals who have not engaged in exploration of ideological (i.e. political and vocational domains) and interpersonal issues (i.e. friendship and dating domains) and have not committed themselves to personal values, beliefs and goals (Lucas, 1997). The foreclosure status refers to persons who are committed by adopting the attitudes of their parents without deliberation or exploration. The moratorium status stands for people who are

actively seeking various political, religious and vocational perspectives and are yet to make a choice or arrive at commitment. The achieved status describes persons who have undergone the period of exploration as in the moratorium status and have emerged with a clear commitment to their ego identity (Lucas, 1997).

Blustein et al. (1989) reported positive correlations between occupational commitment and clarity in ego identity and between career exploration and Moratorium (exploration without identity commitment yet) and Achieved (commitment to an identity after self exploration) stages.

Most empirical research linking ego identity development and career development variables has focused on the fifth stage, identity versus identity confusion (e.g. Blustein et al., 1989; Lucas, 1997). Only few studies have investigated links between the resolution of other psychosocial stages and career development variables (Weyhing et al., 1984; Valliant and Valliant, 1981). The literature thus reviewed suggests that there may be some underlying identity formation factors that influence career decision-making of both male and female adolescents. Therefore, an investigation of the relationship between career maturity and ego identity variables will provide more specific information about the nature of career maturity and identity development among Nigerian adolescents.

A number of previous studies have shown that gender have significant influence on career maturity (Gati et al., 1995; Luzzo, 1995). For instance, Meara (1997) provided a cogent example of the way in which gender permeates all aspects of career development – from daily work decisions, to permeability of work and family boundaries, to issues of work place justice – and therefore to be fully incorporated into career development theory. Several studies have suggested that men and women differed in their career patterns especially the occupational level attained, and the sequence, frequency and duration of trial and stable jobs (Asimugo-Ejiogu, 1991; Brown and Lent, 2000; Onivehu, 1991).

Previous investigations on the relationship between gender and career maturity have produced somewhat inconsistent results (Kerka, 1998; Luzzo, 1995; Naidoo, 1998; Rojewski et al., 1995). For example, some studies have found no significant differences (Alao, 1999; Crites, 1978; Salami, 2003). Still others have provided partial support for females having a slight advantage

over male counterparts in some aspects of affective or cognitive career maturity (Super and Nevill, 1984). Many reasons have been proposed to explain the gender-differences on career maturity including the fact that overall maturation rates favours females especially at lower grade levels and that female adolescents tend to possess higher verbal ability that is reflected in maturity scores (Super and Nevill, 1984). Another reason was most girls expect to marry and so occupation has a different meaning for them than it has for boys (Onyejiaku, 1985).

From the literature reviewed on the relationship between gender and career maturity, it could be concluded that the findings are inconclusive as some authors found significant relationship between gender and career maturity while others did not find significant relationship. This is an evidence of inconsistency which needs to be clarified and gaps that need to be filled.

The results obtained from this study may provide a clear picture about the influence of identity status and gender on the career development of the Nigerian youth.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this study were to (a) investigate the relationship between identity statuses and career maturity of Nigerian secondary school students (b) investigate the potentially moderating role of gender with regard to the relationship between identity statuses and career maturity.

### **Research Questions**

Answers will be found to the following research questions in order to achieve the purpose of the study.

1. To what extent will the four identity statuses (diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achieved identity) when combined together predict career maturity of Nigerian secondary school adolescents?
2. What is the relative contribution of each of the four identity statuses to the prediction of career maturity?
3. Will gender moderate the relationship between identity statuses and career maturity of the adolescents?
4. Will there be significant differences between the male and female adolescents on each of the identity statuses, and career maturity?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

- (1) Diffusion identity status will significantly predict career maturity of the Nigerian secondary school adolescents.
- (2) Foreclosure identity status will significantly predict career maturity of the Nigerian secondary school adolescents.
- (3) Moratorium identity status will significantly predict career maturity of Nigerian secondary school adolescents.
- (4) Achieved identity status will significantly predict career maturity of Nigerian secondary school adolescents.
- (5) Gender will significantly predict career maturity of Nigerian secondary school adolescents.
- (6) Gender will significantly interact with each of the four identity statuses to predict career maturity of Nigerian secondary school adolescents.
- (7) There will be significant differences between the male and female adolescents on each of the ego identity statuses.

### **METHOD**

**Research Design:** This study is an ex-post facto research type that adopted a descriptive survey research design in which questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents.

**Participants:** The sample consisted of 581 final year (SS3) students randomly selected from eighteen randomly selected secondary schools from six states in Southwest Nigeria which are predominantly inhabited by the Yorubas – one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Three co-educational schools were selected from each of the six state capitals involved in the study. The participants were 275 males (47.33%) and 306 females (52.67%). Initially, forty students were randomly selected from each of the eighteen schools, giving a total of seven hundred and twenty subjects. However, of this number, thirty-nine inventories were found to be incomplete hence they were discarded to give the final figure of 581 and a return rate of 80.69%. Of the 581 parents of the high school students who participated in the study, 249 (42.9%) were in the teaching profession, 85 (14.6%) were nurses, 30 (5.2%) each worked in the banking sector, and

were traders respectively; 24 (4.1%) were in journalism profession, 21 (3.6%) were in engineering profession, 20 (3.4) were in the law profession, 15 (2.6%) each were clergymen and drivers respectively, 14 (2.4%) were farmers, 13 (2.2%) were hoteliers, 12 (2.0%) were carpenters, 111 (1.9%) were social workers. Medicine, bricklaying and mechanic professions each shared 10 (1.7%) of the respondents' parents respectively. Pharmacy profession has 8 (1.4%) of the respondents' parents while architecture has 4 (0.7%). The parents' social class cut across low, middle and high socio-economic status.

Data on the educational qualifications of the respondents' parents showed that 203 (25%) held Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), 70 (12%) had B.Sc., B.Ed., B.A., 70 (12%) held HND, 58 (10%) each had OND and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE)/West African Examination Council Ordinary Level General Certificate of Education respectively. 11 (2%) held Master in Education (M.Ed.), Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (M.Sc.), Ph.D. Degree while 163 (28%) had primary School Leaving Certificate.

**Instruments:** The two measures used in collecting data for the study were Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS) and Career Maturity Inventory Attitude Scale (CMI).

**Ego Identity Status:** Ego identity statuses of the adolescents were measured by means of the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS) by Bennion and Adams (1986 cited in Adams, 1998). This 64-item measure yields scores for each of the four ego identity statuses using a 6-point Likert scale: diffusion, moratorium, foreclosure and achieved statuses. Higher scores indicate a greater degree of prevalence of a given ego identity status. The instrument has adequate to excellent internal consistency (Diffusion  $\alpha = .68$ ; Foreclosure,  $\alpha = .90$ ; Moratorium,  $\alpha = .73$ ; and Identity Achievement,  $\alpha = .66$ ; Blustein et al, 1989), and 2-week interval test-retest reliability that ranged from .82 to .90 (Blustein et al 1989). Evidence for the content, construct and concurrent validity of the instrument is obtained from a factor structure that is consistent with theoretical predictions, discriminant validity with social desirability, and expected levels of convergent validity with related measures of identity and personality (Adams, 1998).

Some modifications done on 10 items on EOM-EIS included rewording some terms to make the instrument suitable for the Nigerian samples.

For instance, "date" was changed to "having appointment with" or "going out with some one", "folk" was changed to friends; mosque was added to church as an alternative place of worship. The internal consistency coefficient of the EOMEIS was found to be  $r = .85$  for the present study. Each of the participants' four scores on the EOMEIS – Diffusion, Moratorium, Foreclosure and Achieved Identity statuses were used in assign each one into one category based on the three rules (Pure, Low Profile and Transition Rules) using the addition of the mean of the subscale score and one standard deviation as cut off for each identity status for each participant. The cut off for the Moratorium = 58.0,  $N = 367$ ; Foreclosure = 52.00,  $N = 49$ ; Diffusion = 53.00,  $N = 84$ ; and Achieved = 67.20,  $N = 81$  (Adams, 1998).

**Career Maturity:** The Attitude Scale of the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) (Crites, 1978 revised by Crites and Savickas, 1995 cited in Zunker, 1997) was used to measure career maturity. It elicits the feelings, subjective reactions and disposition that one has toward making a career choice and entering the world of work. It consists of 50 true-false items assessing dispositional response tendencies related to dimensions of vocational or career maturity. Some modifications done on 5 items in the original Crites (1978) CMI included rephrasing or replacing unfamiliar terms with words that would be more familiar to Nigerian students. For instance (1), "The future is so uncertain, therefore there is no need to try to decide on a job". The internal consistency obtained with Kuder-Richardson formula 20 as reported by Crites and Savickas (1995) yielded reliabilities of between 0.65 and 0.84. The construct validity of the CMI had been established by correlating the construct of career maturity with intelligence, previous work experience, and personality traits. The criterion related validity of CMI has been reported by Naidoo (1998). For this study, internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.85 using Kuder-Richardson Formula 21. CMI could be used as a multidimensional or unidimensional scale according to Crites (1978) and Rojewski, Wicklein and Schell (1995). CMI was used as a unidimensional scale in this study. The CMI had been used successfully with Nigerian subjects

by researchers (Asimugo-Ejiogu, 1991; Ekoja and Egbochukwu, 1999; Onivehu, 1991; Salami, 1999).

**Procedure:** The participants were administered the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status and the Career Maturity Inventory Attitude Scale together with a demographic form that requested their age, sex, class, school and career choice in the fifteen schools randomly selected for the study. Some 400 level undergraduate students of B.Ed. (Guidance and Counselling) offering Psychological Testing in Counselling assisted in the administration of the instruments in all the schools involved in this study under the supervision of the author. The consent of the school authorities and the students involved in the study were sought before the distribution and collection of the two instruments.

**Method of Data Analysis:** The data collected from the respondents were analysed using the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Method and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). Hierarchical multiple regression was used to predict career maturity from gender and identity status, Pearson's Product moment correlation method was used to find the relationship between career maturity and identity status as well as gender. MANOVA was used in comparing the male and female adolescents on their identity status variables and career maturity.

## RESULTS

The results obtained in the analysis of the data collected from the respondents are presented on Tables 1 to 5.

**Preliminary Analyses:** Means and standard deviation of all variables including the results of multivariate analysis of variance are shown on Table 1. Gender differences on all dependent (career maturity) and independent variables (identity factors) were explored using a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and subsequent univariate analysis of variance (ANOVAS) were performed on each variable. The results of the MANOVA on Table 1 showed non-significant differences between the male and female adolescents on all the variables' means [ $F(5,576) = 1.015, P > .05$ ]. the pillai's value = 0.00881,  $F(5,576) = 1.015, P = 0.408$ .

The results of the univariate ANOVAS of group means on all the variables of interest in

this study indicated that there were no significant differences between the males and females on career maturity [ $F(1,580) = 3.13, P > .05$ ]; and each of the four ego identity statuses – diffusion [ $F(1,580) = 63, P > .05$ ], moratorium [ $F(1,580) = 0.53; P > .05$ ], Foreclosure [ $F(1,580) = .38; P > .05$ ], and achieved identity status [ $F(1,580) = .21; P > .05$ ]. Thus the data for the males and females were combined and further analyses conducted. The hypotheses 5 and 7 that proposed that there will significant gender differences in the career maturity, and the four identity statuses respectively were not supported. This is an indication that the male and female adolescents had similar levels of career maturity and identity statuses.

**Associations among Gender, Identity Statuses and Career Maturity:** The results on Table 2 showed the correlation matrix of the independent variables (gender and identity statuses) and dependent variable (career maturity) for all the participants (males and females combined). Significant correlations were found between career maturity and diffused identity statuses ( $r = -0.24, P < 0.05$ ), moratorium identity status ( $r = .20, P < 0.05$ ) and achieved identity status ( $r = .20, P < 0.05$ ). However, non-significant correlations were found between career maturity and gender ( $r = -0.06, P > 0.05$ ), and foreclosure identity status ( $r = .18, P > 0.05$ ) respectively.

**Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis:** To determine the predictability of career maturity from gender and the identity statuses, hierarchical multiple regression was performed on the data collected. In the analysis, gender was entered as step 1; followed by the four identity statuses as a block in step 3. the four two-way interactions of gender x achieved identity status, gender x foreclosure status, gender x moratorium, status and gender x diffused identity status were entered as step 4.

**Predicting Career Maturity from Gender:** Results on Table 3 indicated that gender which was entered in the first step in the regression equation did not significantly predict career maturity of the adolescents. ( $R^2$  change = 0.004,  $b = .067, P = .110$ ). This reveals that Hypothesis 5 that posited that gender will significantly predict career maturity of the adolescents was not supported. This means that gender has no significant influence on the career maturity level of the adolescents.

**Table 1: Comparison of males' and females' scores on career maturity and identity statuses using Multivariate Analysis of Variance**

| Variable            | Males (N = 275) |      |       | Females (N = 306) |          |       |
|---------------------|-----------------|------|-------|-------------------|----------|-------|
|                     | M               | S.D  | M     | S.D               | F(1,580) | SIG   |
| Career Maturity     | 30.45           | 5.56 | 29.69 | 5.92              | 3.13     | .077  |
| Ego Identity Status |                 |      |       |                   |          |       |
| Achieved            | 58.90           | 7.20 | 59.70 | 7.30              | .21      | .64   |
| Diffused            | 43.50           | 9.50 | 42.90 | 8.90              | .63      | .42   |
| Foreclosure         | 42.50           | 7.37 | 48.00 | 7.60              | .38      | .53   |
| Moratorium          | 51.20           | 8.38 | 46.84 | 9.50              | .53      | -.468 |

Pillai's trace value= .00881, F(5,571) = 1.015, P = .408

Hotelling's trace value= .00889, F(5,571) = 1.015, P = .408

Wilks' lambda value= .99119, F(5,571) = 1.015, P = .408

Roys Value = .00881.

**Table 2: Intercorrelation matrix of identity status, gender and career maturity (n = 581)**

| S.No. | Variable          | 1    | 2     | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6 |
|-------|-------------------|------|-------|------|------|------|---|
| 1     | Gender            | 1    |       |      |      |      |   |
| 2     | Diffused Identity | -.03 | 1     |      |      |      |   |
| 3     | Foreclosure       | -.02 | .49*  | 1    |      |      |   |
| 4     | Moratorium        | .04  | .35*  | .37* | 1    |      |   |
| 5     | Achieved          | .01  | -.05  | -.05 | .15  | 1    |   |
| 6     | Career Maturity   | -.06 | -.24* | .18  | .20* | .20* | 1 |

Note: \* P < .05

**Table 3: Hierarchical multiple regression results: Predicting career maturity from gender and identity statuses**

| Predictors             | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | R <sup>2</sup> change | df    | F change | B         | Beta | T    | P     |
|------------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------------|-------|----------|-----------|------|------|-------|
| Step 1 Gender          | .67   | .004           | .004                  | 1,577 | 2.56     | .741      | .067 | 1.60 | .110  |
| Step 2                 | .2272 | .074           | .070                  | 5,573 | 9.16     |           |      |      | .000  |
| Gender Identity Status |       |                |                       |       |          | .710      | .064 | 1.58 | .114  |
| Achieved               |       |                |                       |       |          | 1.572E-02 | .034 | 2.83 | .0408 |
| Foreclosure            |       |                |                       |       |          | 3.273E-02 | .073 | 1.53 | .127  |
| Moratorium             |       |                |                       |       |          | 4.534E-02 | .083 | 2.26 | .050  |
| Diffused               |       |                |                       |       |          | .103      | .172 | 3.65 | .000  |
| Step 3                 | .350  | .122           | -.048                 | 4,576 | 8.19     |           |      |      |       |
| Gender x Achieved      |       |                |                       |       |          | 2.605E-02 | .149 | 2.65 | .008  |
| Gender x Foreclosure   |       |                |                       |       |          | 1.059E-02 | .050 | 0.79 | .426  |
| Gender x Moratorium    |       |                |                       |       |          | 1.130E-02 | .105 | 2.07 | .05   |
| Gender x Diffused      |       |                |                       |       |          | 3.944E-02 | .161 | 2.33 | .000  |

**Tables 4: Multiple regression analyses for the prediction of career maturity for male and female adolescents.**

| Step and Variables    | df    | R   | R <sup>2</sup> | R <sup>2</sup> change | F      | B   | SEB | Beta | T     | P   |
|-----------------------|-------|-----|----------------|-----------------------|--------|-----|-----|------|-------|-----|
| MALES ONLY            |       |     |                |                       |        |     |     |      |       |     |
| Ego Identity Statuses | 4,270 | .45 | .20            | .12                   | 10.20* |     |     |      |       |     |
| 1. Moratorium         |       |     |                |                       |        | .15 | .03 | .18  | 5.00  | .05 |
| 2. Achieved           |       |     |                |                       |        | .12 | .02 | .20  | 6.00  | .05 |
| 3. Diffusion          |       |     |                |                       |        | .01 | .04 | .02  | .41   | NS  |
| 4. Foreclosure        |       |     |                |                       |        | .05 | .03 | .12  | 1.82  | NS  |
| FEMALES ONLY          |       |     |                |                       |        |     |     |      |       |     |
| Ego Identity Statuses | 4,301 | .40 | .16            | .19                   | 11.40* |     |     |      |       |     |
| 1. Moratorium         |       |     |                |                       |        | .20 | .03 | .13  | 6.66  | .05 |
| 2. Achieved           |       |     |                |                       |        | .24 | .02 | .17  | 12.00 | .05 |
| 3. Diffusion          |       |     |                |                       |        | .07 | .05 | .11  | 1.40  | NS  |
| 4. Foreclosure        |       |     |                |                       |        | .01 | .03 | .02  | .35   | NS  |

Note: NS = Not Significant at .05 level, \* P < .05

**Table 5: Correlations among measured variables – ego identity statuses and career maturity by gender**

| S.No. | Variable        | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    |
|-------|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1.    | Career Maturity | 1.00 | .40  | .11  | .18  | .20b |
|       | Ego Identity    |      |      |      |      |      |
| 2.    | Achieved        | .4   | 1.00 | -.03 | -.06 | .34  |
| 3.    | Diffusion       | .15  | -.05 | 1.00 | .49  | .12  |
| 4.    | Foreclosure     | .17  | -.01 | .43  | 1.00 | .18  |
| 5.    | Moratorium      | .38  | .20  | .29  | .23  | 1.00 |

Note: Correlations above the diagonal are for the females, those below the diagonal are for the males. Correlations higher than or equal to  $r = .1946$  are significant at .05 level.

**Predicting Career Maturity from Identity Statuses:** In testing the prediction of career maturity from ego identity statuses, the four ego identity statuses were entered as a block into the regression equation in step 2. With the addition of the four identity statuses to the regression equation, ( $R^2$  change = .070,  $F$  change (5,573) = 9.16,  $P = .000$ ), the  $R^2$  change obtained in Table 3 was .070 which accounted for 7.0% of variance in career maturity of the adolescents. This is an indication that the four identity statuses jointly predicted career maturity of the adolescents.

Considering the separate contributions of the identity statuses to the prediction of career maturity, results on Table 3 showed that Achieved ( $b = .84$ ,  $t = 2.83$ ,  $P = .040$ ), diffused ( $b = .172$ ,  $t = 3.65$ ,  $P = .00$ ) and moratorium ( $b = .083$ ,  $t = 2.26$ ,  $P = .05$ ) identity statuses made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity respectively. Higher scores on moratorium and achieved statuses were associated with higher career maturity scores. However, higher scores on diffused status were associated with lower scores on career maturity. With these results, Hypothesis 1, 3 and 4 that predicted significant contributions of diffused, moratorium and achieved identity statuses to the prediction of career maturity respectively were confirmed.

The results on Table 3 further revealed that foreclosure identity status ( $b = .073$ ,  $t = 1.53$ ,  $P = .121$ ) did not make significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity of the adolescents. By these results, hypothesis 2 that proposed the significant prediction of career maturity from foreclosure identity status was not supported.

When the adolescents' mean scores on the four identity statuses were used to categorise them into one of the identity status categories based on the pure, low profile, and transition rules (Adams, 1998), their career maturity scores in the four categories were compared using one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Fisher's

LSD post hoc comparison method. The results of the ANOVA for the categorical identity status variable were closely similar to those found in the regression analyses. For example, the ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of identity statuses on career maturity [ $F(3,577) = 7.50$ ,  $P < .05$ ]. Fishers' LSD post hoc comparison of the adolescents' career maturity means scores showed that moratorium Vs Foreclosure, Achieved Vs Diffusion, Moratorium Vs Diffusion, Achieved Vs Foreclosure groups were significant different while Moratorium Vs Achieved and Diffusion Vs Foreclosure groups were not significantly different. This is an indication that to some extent, ego identity status has some significant influence on the students' career maturity scores.

**Interaction Effects of Gender with Identity Statuses on Career Maturity:** After entering gender and identity statuses into the regression equation in steps 1 and 2, the interaction effects of gender x achieved, gender x foreclosure, gender x moratorium and gender x diffused identity statuses were entered into the regression as a block in step 3. The results on Table 3 showed that the four two-way interactions made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity of the adolescents ( $R^2$  change = .048,  $F$  change (4,576) = 8.19,  $P = .002$ ). although three interaction effects – gender x diffused status ( $b = .161$ ,  $t = 2.33$ ,  $P = .000$ ), gender x moratorium status ( $b = .105$ ,  $t = 2.07$ ,  $P < .05$ ) and gender x achieved status ( $b = .149$ ,  $t = 2.65$ ,  $P = .008$ ) – made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity, the interaction effect of gender x foreclosure status – did not.

With these results, Hypothesis 7 that predicted significant contributions of the four two-way interactions to the prediction of career maturity is supported because three of the four two-way interactions made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity. The results of the three two-way interactions indicate that gender

to some extent moderates the relationship between identity statuses and career maturity of the adolescents. Based on the significant contributions of the three interaction effects of gender x achieved status, gender x moratorium and gender x diffused identity status, further analyses were done separately for the males and females as shown on Tables 4 and 5.

**Results of Multiple Regression Analyses for Separate Male and Female Adolescents:** The separate results of multiple regression analyses are presented in Table 4 for the male and female adolescents. In the regression analyses by gender, the set of predictor variables (ego identity statuses) were entered in the following order; Moratorium, Achieved, Diffusion, and Foreclosure. The criterion variable was career maturity. For both gender, the four ego identity statuses when taken together significantly predicted some amount of variance in career maturity:  $F(4,270) = 10.20, P < .05$  and  $F(4,301) = 11.40, P < .05$ , for the males and females respectively. For the males, the identity statuses accounted for 20% of the variance in career maturity. For the females, however, the identity statuses accounted for 25% of the variance in career maturity.

For the males, two of the ego identity statuses (i.e. moratorium and achieved) separately made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity. For the females, two identity statuses (i.e. achieved and moratorium) separately made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity. The other identity statuses viz: diffusion and foreclosure did not contribute significantly to the prediction of career maturity. The results on the Table 4 are for the most part similar to those indicated on Table 3 with some slight gender differences.

Correlations among the measured variables for the two genders are presented separately on Table 5. For males and females, the relationships between career maturity and each of achieved and moratorium identity statuses were significant at 0.05 level. However, non-significant correlation were found between career maturity and each of diffusion and foreclosure identity statuses for the males and females. The correlation results on Table 5 are similar in trend to those indicated on Table 2 with some slight gender differences. The results on Table 4 and 5 further confirm the moderation roles of gender in the association between identity statuses and career maturity.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated the prediction of career maturity from identity status and gender among secondary school adolescents in the southwest Nigeria.

### Gender and Career Maturity

The Hypothesis 5 that states that gender will significantly predict career maturity was not supported. This means that gender has no significant influence on the career maturity of the adolescents and as such both male and female adolescents have similar level of career maturity. This result contradicts the findings of previous researchers who found that gender have significant influence on career maturity (Luzzo, 1995; Naidoo, 1998). For instance, Luzzo (1995) reported that women in his study had higher career maturity scores than men. The results from this study are also at variance with the findings previous researchers (Asimugo-Ejiogu, 1991; Onivehu, 1991 and Onyejiaku, 1985) who reported that male students in their sample had higher career maturity scores than the female students. The results however, support the work of Alao (1996); Crites (1978); Salami (2003) who reported no significant relationship between gender and career maturity of their samples.

One can explain the finding that no significant relationship existed between gender and career maturity of the adolescents on the ground that both the male and female adolescents have similar career maturity levels. Probably, they all have similar problems of career indecision, lack of independence in career decision making as they have to consider their parents' advice and socio-cultural stereotyping on what careers to choose and when to choose careers. Most of the students (males and females) probably are unrealistic in their career choices, they lack adequate career exploration, and vocational information. They are mostly not really involved in the career decision making process yet and as such are not independent in making career decisions.

### Predicting Career Maturity from Identity Statuses

The Hypothesis 1 which proposed that

diffused identity status will significantly predict career maturity of the adolescents was supported. The relationship between diffused identity status and career maturity was negative but significantly. Higher scores on diffused identity status were associated with lower career maturity scores. The result of hypothesis 1 supports the work of Blustein et al. (1989) who found significant relationship between diffusion status and intuitive career decision making style. The result also conforms with the positions of Marcia (1980) and Waterman (1985) who found that characteristics of persons in the diffusion status are absence of both exploration and commitment and manifestation of impulsivity and deficits in one's capacity to commit to important life decisions.

It is very likely that some of the students involved in this study exhibit the characteristics of persons in diffused status. The students have not taken engaged in career exploration or involved in the career decision making process. This might probably be due to the fact that the students are waiting to receive directives from their parents or some influential family members on what type of careers to take and when to make such choice without any career preparation.

The Hypothesis 2 which proposed that foreclosure identity status will significantly predict career maturity of the adolescents was not confirmed. Foreclosure identity status did not make significant contribution to the prediction of career maturity. This finding corroborates the results of previous researchers who reported that persons in foreclosure identity statuses usually adopt the attitudes of their parents and others seek out solutions to decision-making tasks without deliberation and exploration (Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1985).

Students involved in this study are likely to rely mainly on their parents in taking decisions on identity concerns and career choice without getting involved in the career decision-making process. They are likely to have the tendency to commit themselves to career decisions based on what their parents, significant others or peers said. Students with such characteristics do not show signs of career maturity, as they are generally dependent in their overall approaches to identity formation tasks and career development. They are likely to have endorsed the dependent decision-making style which is in lien with the socialization process cultural beliefs and social expectations in Nigeria that children

should consider advice or directives from their parents or family members in matters of religion, occupational choice, politics and social relationships. Many parents put pressure on their children to pursue careers that will ensure family unity and economic survival (Salami, 2004). In most cases, major decisions regarding occupational choice, religion, politics, and social relationships are not only based on individual's interests and abilities but on family interests, approval, support and wishes.

That moratorium identity status was found to significantly predict career maturity of the adolescents confirmed Hypothesis 3. This findings is in agreement with the work of previous researchers who found that persons in the moratorium status use planful strategies that are based on their internal locus of responsibility and are currently exploring but have not yet committed themselves to the various dimensions of identity (Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1985). The result for this hypothesis also support the findings from other previous researches which indicate that moratorium status was significantly correlated with career decision making self-efficacy, and career exploration aspects of career development (Lucas, 1997; Moore, 2003).

The students involved in this study are still exploring and as such have not yet reached identity status. This is common with most secondary school students in Nigeria. Generally, Nigerian students tend to wait to gather experiences and receive support, approval, advices or directives from their parents or significant family members or peers before deciding on issues dealing with career decision making and occupational choice. Such behaviours are invariably in line with societal expectations and cultural practice in Nigeria.

As proposed in Hypothesis 4 achieved identity status significantly predicted career maturity of the adolescents. This is an indication that adolescents who have attained achieved identity status also have high career maturity. These findings are consistent with research on identity status which indicates that persons in achieved identity status have completed exploration and are committed to their ego identity tasks (Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1985). The results are also consistent with the work of previous researchers who found that significant positive relationships between achieved identity status and career decidedness, career self-efficacy,

career exploration, comfort with decidedness and rational and systematic decision making styles (Blustein et. al 1989; Lucas, 1997; Moore, 2003).

The predictability of career maturity from achieved identity status could be attributed to the fact that persons in achieved identity status have gone through a period of exploration and have emerged with a clear commitment to their ego identity tasks. These characteristics or activities are also similar to the activities involved in attaining career maturity which included having carried out career exploration, as in field trips, getting involved in career choice process, developing the right orientation toward work and being independent in career decision making. Some of the adolescents involved in this study are likely to possess the characteristics of persons in achieved identity status and also moderately high career maturity. Probably the adolescents in this study might have balanced dependency on their parents with their independence and must have attained a moderately high level of career maturity.

#### **Interaction Effects of Gender With Identity Statuses on Career Maturity**

The findings that three two-way interactions of gender x diffused status, gender x moratorium status, and gender x achieved status made significant contributions to the prediction of career maturity but gender x foreclosure status did not make such contribution support Hypothesis 6. These results indicate that gender moderates, to some extent, the relationships between moratorium, achieved and diffused identity statuses and career maturity. These results mean that gender has to be considered when dealing with how identity statuses relate to the adolescents' career maturity. For example, the significant contribution of interaction effect of gender x diffused status to the prediction of career maturity means that whether an adolescent is a male or female affects the relationship of his or her diffused identity status with career maturity. Also the significant contribution of interaction effects of gender x moratorium identity status to the prediction of career maturity means that the gender of the adolescent who is in the moratorium identity status will likely dictate, to the same extent, the prediction of career maturity by moratorium identity status. Similarly, the significant contribution of interaction effects of

gender x achieved identity status in the prediction of career maturity indicates that being a male or female is instrumental to the prediction of career maturity by achieved identity status of the adolescents.

These results could be explained on the ground that the Nigerian society has different social and cultural expectations from the male and female adolescents in terms of achievement or performance of the identity status tasks. For example, the females are expected to be in feminine related occupations and males are expected to be in male dominated occupations such as outdoor occupations that involved fieldwork, energetic activities, science, mathematics and technology – based skills. Also, the adolescents generally have to wait, listen and take advice from their parents and significant others in the family but those of the females are more pronounced in matters of relationships and occupational choice. The female adolescents are expected by their parents and family members to start thinking about earlier after few years of education than the male adolescents (Salami, 2001). Definitely, these cultural or social expectations would influence their willingness to perform the identity development tasks and the career development task required of their stages of development. These results support the work of earlier researchers who found that gender influenced significantly the career development of their samples (Brown and Lent, 2000; Goldin, 1990; Gati, Osipow and Givon, 1995; Luzzo, 1995; Naidoo, 1998; Rojewski, Wicklein and Schell, 1995).

#### **Implications for Counselling Practice**

Findings from this study have implications for counselling practice in the secondary schools. There is evidence from the results of this study that ego identity statuses are significant predictors of career maturity of the adolescents. These results have implications for the type of career interventions that the counsellors could mount for assisting students who have career decisional problems. Since ego identity development is linked with career maturity it is probably advisable that before the counsellor decides on the career intervention strategies for the career clients, the ego identity statuses of the individuals should be known. This is because students having identity problems need to resolve them before they could benefit from more general, or specific career intervention programmes regardless of their gender.

For example, students who have problems of not being able to engage in exploration of ideological and interpersonal issues, who have not attained a firm level of commitment, are dependent mainly on their parents for decisions and are unable to arrive at any satisfying career choice may not necessarily benefit from vocational assessment and occupational information alone. Such students would need interventions that would cover personal and emotional areas to provide corrective emotional experiences for them. Some interventions that could be used by the counsellors include career planning, self-exploration, self-clarification, self-confidence building, problem-solving, identity commitment; use of role models, and cognitive restructuring to reduce anxiety. All these could assist the clients in clarifying their identities and in increasing their career decision-making self-efficacy which is the hallmark of career maturity.

It is suggested that when the relationship between ego identity statuses and career development is investigated, emphasis should be placed on cultural, social, familial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender and interpersonal factors. These factors no doubt play important roles in identifying the career decision difficulties arising from the difficulties inherent in resolving all psychosocial crises. The focus of counselling should therefore be on helping the clients gain a better sense of trust, autonomy, self-authorship, and industry. For instance, because the roles of parents are important in career decision making and identity development in the Nigerian society, the counsellors should mount workshops where the students and their parents could interact on matters regarding their career decision difficulties and their influence on their different life stage tasks. Within such a forum the students could be assisted in striking a balance between being dependent on and independent of their parents in matters dealing with careers and relationships.

The means and standard deviations of the samples on the modified versions of CMI and EO-MEIS instruments were similar to those in the authors' manuals. It is therefore recommended that future researchers in Nigeria should replicate the study in other parts of Nigeria to confirm the potential utility of the measures among different cultures and the generalizability of the findings to other parts of Nigeria.

This means that the two instruments used in data collection were suitable and valid for the

Nigerian samples. The degree of separation and attachment from parents experienced by the Nigerian adolescents vary according to gender and different cultures in Nigeria and these have influence on the identity development process and career development of the adolescents. This study had been limited to the southwestern part of Nigeria which is inhabited predominantly by the Yoruba tribe, one of the three biggest tribes in Nigeria.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides some additional evidence for the predictability of career maturity by identity status. The results suggest that identity status is a significant predictor of career maturity of the Nigerian adolescents. Gender did not significantly predict career maturity but moderates the relationship between identity status and career maturity of the adolescents. Given the relationship between identity status and career maturity, career planning interventions could be mounted for facilitating both occupational and general identity development of secondary school adolescents.

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