



Perceived Influence of Career Counselling on Career Development of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Makurdi, Benue State.

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Abstract

This study investigated the perceived influence of career counselling on the career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 7,856 senior secondary school students in public secondary schools within Makurdi Local Government Area, from which a sample of 380 was drawn using a multistage sampling technique. A researcher-developed instrument titled Career Counselling and Career Development Questionnaire (CCCDQ) was used for data collection. The instrument contained 10 items structured on a four-point Likert scale. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square (X^2) goodness-of-fit test at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that career counselling has a significant perceived influence on students' career choice and vocational readiness. It was concluded that effective career counselling enhances students' self-awareness, decision-making skills, and preparedness for the world of work. The study recommended, among others, that school administrators should strengthen counselling services in secondary schools, employ more qualified counsellors, and integrate career education into the school curriculum to promote purposeful career development among students.

Keywords: Career choice, Career counselling, Career development, Makurdi, Senior secondary school students, Vocational readiness

Introduction

Career development has become a central issue in the educational and personal growth of students across the world. In today's rapidly changing global economy, marked by technological innovation, automation, and shifting labour market demands, young people face increasing uncertainty about their future career paths. According to OECD (2021), many secondary school students globally experience confusion and indecision in making career

choices due to limited exposure to accurate career information and guidance. Watts and Sultana (2018) note that inadequate career development support at the school level often leads to poor decision-making, unemployment, and job dissatisfaction among young adults. This situation underscores the importance of structured career counselling programs in helping students understand themselves and align their interests, abilities, and aspirations with realistic career opportunities. While these concerns are evident across many countries of the world, the situation presents unique challenges within the Nigerian educational system where career guidance services remain largely inadequate.

In Nigeria, the challenge of career development among secondary school students has become particularly worrisome. Although the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) emphasizes the integration of guidance and counselling into the school system, implementation remains weak in many schools. Ezeani (2018) observes that a large proportion of Nigerian students make career choices based on parental pressure, peer influence, or social prestige rather than on personal aptitude or vocational interest. Similarly, Okon (2020) reports that many students leave secondary school without clear career direction, contributing to the growing rate of youth unemployment and job mismatch in the country. The disconnect between students' educational experiences and the realities of the labour market highlights the need for effective career counselling as a tool for promoting purposeful career development and vocational readiness. To better understand the role of career counselling in addressing these challenges, it is important to first examine the concept of career development, which represents the desired outcome of career guidance interventions.

Career development is the continuous process through which individuals explore, establish, and refine their career goals and paths over time. It involves gaining self-awareness, acquiring relevant skills, making career decisions, and managing one's professional growth and progress throughout life. According to Robert and Brown (2013), career development begins from childhood and progresses through adolescence, adulthood and even old age and lasts throughout the life of an individual. This process that covers diverse aspects of an individual's career journey like career aspiration, career choice, career decision-making, career exploration, career or vocational readiness among others. Since career development is a lifelong process that requires informed decision-making and continuous adjustment, professional support becomes necessary to guide individuals through this process, hence the need for career counselling.

Career counselling is a systematic process designed to help individuals understand themselves and the world of work, with the aim of making informed, realistic, and fulfilling career choices.

According to Herr, Cramer, and Niles (2004), career counselling involves professional guidance that assists individuals in exploring their interests, abilities, values, and personality traits to make appropriate educational and occupational decisions. Similarly, Nwoye (2015) defines career counselling as a personalized relationship between a counsellor and a client through which the individual gains self-understanding and career direction. It is both a preventive and developmental service that helps students prepare for life after school by aligning their academic pursuits with career goals. Makinde (2018) notes that effective career counselling enables students to develop career awareness, plan for future opportunities, and adapt to the changing demands of the labour market. Among the various outcomes of career counselling, one of the most important is its influence on students' career choices, as the decisions made during adolescence often shape future educational and occupational trajectories.

Career choice refers to the process by which an individual selects a particular occupation or professional path based on personal interests, abilities, values, and opportunities available within the environment. According to Super (1980), career choice is an expression of one's self-concept, reflecting how individuals see themselves and the roles they aspire to play in society. Holland (1997) explains that career choice is influenced by the interaction between a person's personality type and the characteristics of the work environment, suggesting that people seek careers that allow them to express their values and abilities most effectively. In the school context, career choice is one of the most significant decisions students must make, as it determines their educational direction, future satisfaction, and economic well-being. In Nigeria, making appropriate career choices has become a growing challenge for many secondary school students. Ezeani (2018) observed that students often base their choices on external influences such as parental expectations, peer pressure, or societal prestige rather than on self-awareness and realistic assessment of their potentials. Okeke (2019) further noted that poor access to career information and inadequate counselling services in schools contribute to students' indecision and career misalignment. Beyond assisting students in selecting suitable occupations, career counselling also prepares them to acquire the competencies and attitudes required for successful participation in the world of work, a concept commonly referred to as vocational readiness.

Vocational readiness is the degree to which an individual is prepared to enter, adapt to, and succeed in a chosen occupation or career. It encompasses the combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and personal qualities necessary for effective participation in the world of work. According to Okeke (2009), vocational readiness is the degree of preparedness that enables a

person to make informed career decisions and effectively perform tasks in a specific trade or profession. Similarly, Super (1980) describes it as a developmental stage in which individuals acquire the skills, attitudes, and competencies necessary for realistic career choice and occupational success. Eze (2015) emphasizes that vocational readiness involves more than technical proficiency; it includes the development of soft skills such as communication, responsibility, teamwork, and adaptability, which are vital for workplace success. In secondary education, vocational readiness is an essential outcome of career counselling and guidance programs. Makinde (2018) notes that students who receive proper vocational orientation tend to demonstrate greater confidence, clearer goals, and stronger motivation toward future employment or further training. Conversely, lack of vocational readiness often results in poor job performance, unemployment, and frustration among school leavers who are unable to meet the demands of the modern labour market. Given the importance of both career choice and vocational readiness in the overall career development process, it becomes necessary to examine how career counselling contributes to these outcomes among secondary school students.

Effective career counselling has the potential of equipping learners with the knowledge, self-understanding, and guidance needed to make informed career choices and to develop the competencies required for gainful employment. However, despite the inclusion of guidance and counselling in Nigeria's educational system, many secondary schools still lack trained counsellors and structured career development programmes. Consequently, it has been observed that a large number of students in Makurdi, continue to face uncertainty about their career paths and readiness for future work life. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to investigate the perceived influence of career counselling on the career development of senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, many senior secondary school students in Nigeria, including those in Makurdi, appear confused and uncertain about their future career paths despite years of schooling. A growing number of students make career choices based on parental pressure, peer influence, or mere imitation rather than genuine interest and ability. The result is a disturbing trend of career mismatch, low vocational readiness, and high unemployment among school leavers. Although career counselling is expected to guide students toward meaningful career decisions, it has been observed that in many schools, counselling services are irregular, poorly implemented, or completely absent. Consequently, many students leave secondary school without clear

direction, practical skills, or motivation to pursue suitable careers. This troubling situation calls for an investigation into the perceived influence of career counselling on the career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State with a view to providing valuable insights and recommendations that will help students make better career choices and also be vocationally ready for career development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived influence of career counselling on career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Assess the perceived influence of career counselling on career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State; and
2. Determine the perceived influence of career counselling on vocational readiness of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the perceived influence of career counselling on career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State?
2. What is the perceived influence of career counselling on vocational readiness of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Career counselling has no significant perceived influence on career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.
2. Career counselling has no significant perceived influence on vocational readiness on career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to the perceived influence of career counselling on the career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. The study specifically focused on two aspects of career development: career choice and vocational readiness. It examined public students' perceptions of how career counselling influences their ability to make appropriate career decisions and prepare for future occupations. The study was restricted to public senior secondary school students in Makurdi Local Government Area of

Benue State, and the findings were based on data collected from the selected respondents within the study area.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the perceived influence of career counselling on the career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. The population of the study comprised 7,856 senior secondary school students in public secondary schools within Makurdi Local Government Area. Using Glenn's (1994) formula for sample size determination, a sample of 380 students was selected through a multistage sampling technique to ensure fair representation. Data was collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled Career Counselling and Career Development Questionnaire (CCCDQ), which contained 10 items structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The reliability was established through a pilot study conducted on 30 students outside the sample area. The internal consistency, determined using Cronbach's Alpha, yielded a coefficient of 0.78, indicating satisfactory reliability. Data collected was analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the Chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness-of-fit was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. A benchmark mean of 2.50 was adopted for interpretation. Mean scores ranging from 3.50 to 4.00 were interpreted as Strongly Agree (SA), 2.50 to 3.49 as Agree (A), 1.50 to 2.49 as Disagree (D), and 1.00 to 1.49 as Strongly Disagree (SD). Consequently, mean scores of 2.50 and above indicated agreement or positive perception, while mean scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement or negative perception.

Results and Findings

Research Question 1

What is the perceived influence of career counselling on career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State?

Table 1: Analysis of Perceived Influence of Career Counselling on Career Choice of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Makurdi, Benue State.

S/N	Item description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Career counselling in my school helps me understand my interests and abilities before choosing a career.	113	124	74	69	2.74	1.074	Agree
2	I have been guided by my school counsellor to select a career that matches my strengths and academic performance.	154	108	54	64	2.93	1.104	Agree

3	Career counselling has helped me avoid choosing a career based on peer or parental pressure.	142	129	59	50	2.96	1.028	Agree
4	Through career counselling, I have gained better knowledge about different career options available after secondary school.	117	140	67	56	2.84	1.025	Agree
5	The advice and information I received from the school counsellor influenced my final decision on a career path.	122	112	76	70	2.75	1.095	Agree
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		$\bar{X}$ = 2.84		SD = 1.065		Agree		

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of respondents' responses for items 1 to 5. Respondents rated all items above the 2.50 cut-off point. The cluster mean of 2.84 is above the cut-off point of 2.50, which indicates that career counselling has perceived influence on the career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Research Question 2

What is the perceived influence of career counselling on vocational readiness of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State?

Table 2: Analysis of Perceived Influence of Career Counselling on Vocational Readiness of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Makurdi, Benue State.

S/N	Item description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
6	Career counselling in my school has prepared me with the skills needed to succeed in my chosen career.	229	64	54	33	3.29	1.006	Agree
7	I feel more confident about entering the world of work because of the guidance received from my counsellor.	139	127	61	53	2.93	1.040	Agree
8	Career counselling has helped me set realistic goals for my future career.	132	88	87	73	2.73	1.130	Agree
9	The career talks and seminars organized in my school have improved my readiness for vocational and employment opportunities.	129	159	52	40	2.99	.949	Agree
10	I now understand the importance of developing both academic and practical skills for my future career due to career counselling.	139	115	70	56	2.89	1.063	Agree
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		$\bar{X}$ = 2.96		SD = 1.037		Agree		

Table 2 shows the mean ratings of respondents' responses for items 6 to 10. Respondents rated all items above the 2.50 cut-off point. The cluster mean of 2.96 is above the cut-off point of 2.50 which indicates that career counselling has perceived influence on vocational readiness of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Hypotheses Testing

In testing the hypotheses of this study, Chi-square (X^2) was used to test the responses of respondents at .05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1

Career counselling has no significant perceived influence on career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Table 3: Chi-square Test of Perceived Influence of Career Counselling on Career Choice of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Response	O	E	df.	Level of sign.	X^2_{cal}	P-value	Decision
			3	.05	24.021	.000	Sig. H_0 rejected
SA	113	95.0					
A	124	95.0					
D	74	95.0					
SD	69	95.0					
Total	380						

Table 3 revealed that $\chi^2 = 24.021$, $df = 3$ and $p = 0.00$. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the set alpha-value of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) at 3 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis, which states that career counselling has no significant perceived influence on career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State, is therefore rejected. This implies that career counselling has significant perceived influence on career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Hypothesis 2

Career counselling has no significant perceived influence on vocational readiness on career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Table 4: Chi-square Test of Perceived Influence of Career Counselling on Vocational Readiness of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Response	O	E	df.	Level of sign.	X^2_{cal}	P-value	Decision
			3	.05	257.284	.000	Sig. H_0 rejected
SA	229	95.0					
A	64	95.0					
D	54	95.0					
SD	33	95.0					

Total	380
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Table 4 revealed that $\chi^2 = 257.284$, $df = 3$ and $p = 0.00$. Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the set alpha-value of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) at 3 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis, which states that career counselling has no significant perceived influence on vocational readiness of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State, is therefore rejected. This implies that career counselling has significant perceived influence on vocational readiness of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State.

Discussion of findings

The first finding of the study revealed that career counselling has a significant perceived influence on the career choice of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. This suggests that when students are properly guided through counselling services, they are more likely to make informed and realistic career decisions that align with their interests, abilities, and aspirations. This finding agrees with Super's (1980) theory of career development, which posits that career choice is an expression of one's self-concept shaped by experience, guidance, and social environment. Similarly, Herr, Cramer, and Niles (2004) emphasized that effective career counselling provides students with self-understanding, occupational information, and decision-making skills necessary for appropriate career selection. Ezeani (2018) also reported that students who receive adequate career guidance tend to show higher levels of career awareness and confidence in choosing suitable career paths. Therefore, the present study supports earlier evidence that career counselling helps students make purposeful career choices and reduces the likelihood of career frustration and unemployment later in life.

The second finding revealed that career counselling has a significant perceived influence on the vocational readiness and career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. This implies that counselling services not only assist students in making career choices but also prepare them psychologically, socially, and technically for entry into the world of work. Eze (2015) similarly observed that career guidance enhances students' motivation, self-confidence, and employability by exposing them to practical knowledge about career demands and workplace expectations. In support of this, Makinde (2018) noted that career counselling programmes help students develop realistic career goals, foster decision-making competence, and cultivate work ethics essential for success in chosen occupations. The finding thus highlights the crucial role of school counsellors in promoting students' vocational maturity and readiness for lifelong career development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that career counselling plays a crucial role in shaping the career development of public senior secondary school students in Makurdi, Benue State. Specifically, it significantly influences students' career choices and enhances their vocational readiness, helping them to make informed decisions and prepare adequately for future employment. Effective career counselling provides students with self-awareness, goal orientation, and the skills necessary to adapt to the dynamic world of work. However, inadequate counselling services, poor access to occupational information, and lack of trained counsellors remain challenges that hinder the full realization of these benefits in many schools. Based on the findings it was recommended that:

School counsellors and educational authorities should strengthen the provision of career counselling services in secondary schools through regular career guidance programmes, career talks, and individual counselling sessions to help students make informed and appropriate career choices based on their interests, abilities, and aspirations.

School administrators, counsellors, and relevant stakeholders should organize vocational guidance activities such as career workshops, skill acquisition programmes, industry visits, and mentorship initiatives to enhance students' vocational readiness and prepare them effectively for future educational and occupational opportunities.

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