



Influence of Vocational Guidance on Natural Skill Development among Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of vocational guidance on natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by increasing concerns that many secondary school students are unable to identify and develop their natural abilities due to inadequate vocational guidance services in schools. Specifically, the study examined career information services and vocational interest assessment as dimensions of vocational guidance that influence students' natural skill development. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted because the study sought to obtain information directly from students regarding their experiences and perceptions of vocational guidance services without manipulating any variable. The population comprised 18,624 Senior Secondary II students in the 247 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, as reported by the Rivers State Ministry of Education (2026). Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 392 students was obtained. The sample comprised 176 male students and 216 female students, and selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across the three senatorial districts. Data were collected using one structured instrument titled Vocational Guidance and Natural Skill Development Questionnaire (VGNSDQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a coefficient of 0.81, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using the z-test at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that career information services and vocational interest assessment significantly influence students' natural skill development. The study concluded that effective vocational guidance enhances students' ability to identify and develop their natural skills and recommended strengthening vocational guidance programmes in public senior secondary schools.

Keywords: Career Information Services, Natural Skill Development, Public Senior Secondary Schools, Vocational Guidance, Vocational Interest Assessment

Introduction

The quality of any nation's educational system depends not only on the knowledge transmitted to learners but also on its capacity to discover, nurture, and develop the unique talents embedded in every student. Modern education increasingly recognizes that students possess different natural abilities, interests, aptitudes, and creative potentials that require deliberate guidance if

they are to be fully developed. Consequently, secondary education has gradually shifted from focusing solely on academic achievement to promoting holistic learner development through programmes that prepare students for lifelong learning, productive employment, entrepreneurship, and responsible citizenship. Within this context, guidance and counselling has become an indispensable component of school programmes because it provides learners with professional assistance in understanding themselves, making appropriate educational decisions, and developing their individual potentials (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

The global demand for employable skills, innovation, and sustainable human capital development has further increased the importance of vocational guidance in secondary schools. This aligns closely with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates inclusive and equitable quality education capable of equipping learners with relevant knowledge, practical competencies, and lifelong skills necessary for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). UNESCO (2023) maintains that educational systems should provide career education and counselling services that help learners recognize their strengths and prepare for future occupational opportunities. Likewise, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) emphasizes that effective career guidance contributes significantly to students' career readiness, informed decision-making, and successful transition from school to employment. These global perspectives highlight the growing expectation that schools should not merely educate students academically but should also assist them in discovering and developing their natural abilities.

Vocational guidance is one of the major services provided through school guidance and counselling programmes. It refers to the systematic process through which trained counsellors assist learners to understand their interests, abilities, values, personalities, and occupational opportunities in order to make realistic educational and career decisions. Rather than directing students toward particular occupations, vocational guidance enables them to evaluate available opportunities in relation to their personal characteristics and future aspirations. Brown and Lent (2023) explained that vocational guidance integrates career education, counselling interventions, occupational information, and assessment activities to help individuals achieve career satisfaction and personal fulfilment. Similarly, Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2021) observed that effective vocational guidance enhances career maturity, self-awareness, educational planning, and occupational preparedness among adolescents. In the Nigerian context, guidance services have become increasingly important because many students

complete secondary education without clearly understanding their strengths, career interests, or occupational prospects.

An important dimension of vocational guidance is career information services. Career information services involve providing students with accurate, current, and comprehensive information about occupations, educational pathways, labour market requirements, admission opportunities, professional qualifications, entrepreneurship prospects, and emerging career fields. Access to reliable career information broadens students' awareness of available opportunities and enables them to make informed educational and vocational choices. Zunker (2021) argued that career information constitutes the foundation of effective career planning because students cannot make appropriate occupational decisions without adequate knowledge of existing opportunities. Similarly, Okeke, Chukwu, and Nwafor (2025) found that students who regularly receive career information demonstrate greater confidence in career decision-making and exhibit higher motivation toward developing their talents. Sota and Ukoima (2025) further observed that adolescents are increasingly exposed to diverse information sources through digital media, making professionally guided career information more necessary than ever to prevent misinformation and unrealistic career expectations.

Another important dimension of vocational guidance is vocational interest assessment. Vocational interest assessment refers to the systematic process of identifying students' interests, preferences, talents, personalities, and potential career inclinations through standardized assessment techniques, interviews, observation, inventories, and counselling interactions. The purpose of vocational interest assessment is to enable students to gain deeper self-understanding and make educational and occupational choices that correspond with their natural abilities. According to Holland (1997), individuals experience greater satisfaction, stability, and productivity when their occupations are compatible with their interests and personality characteristics. Recent studies continue to affirm that interest assessment remains one of the most reliable approaches to career planning because it provides objective information that guides learners toward occupations consistent with their strengths (Brown & Lent, 2023). In Nigerian secondary schools, vocational interest assessment enables counsellors to identify students' hidden talents at an early stage and provide appropriate guidance for their development. Umukoro and Onukwufor (2019) equally reported that students who possess greater self-awareness and emotional understanding are more likely to achieve improved academic performance and make realistic educational decisions. Similarly, Umukoro, Echeonwu, and Ineye-Briggs (2025) found that counselling interventions that improve students'

self-understanding significantly enhance responsible decision-making and positive developmental outcomes among adolescents.

The ultimate goal of vocational guidance is the development of students' natural skills. Natural skill development refers to the process through which learners identify, strengthen, and effectively utilize their innate abilities, talents, creative capacities, and personal competencies through appropriate educational experiences and professional guidance. Every learner possesses unique potentials that may remain undiscovered without adequate counselling support and opportunities for exploration. These natural skills may include artistic creativity, scientific reasoning, entrepreneurial abilities, leadership qualities, communication skills, technical competence, problem-solving abilities, or practical vocational talents. When these abilities are properly identified and nurtured, students become more confident, academically motivated, occupationally prepared, and socially productive. Gysbers and Henderson (2022) emphasized that comprehensive school counselling programmes significantly contribute to students' personal, educational, and career development by creating opportunities for talent identification and continuous skill improvement. Bello and Adebisi (2024) similarly observed that educational institutions that intentionally support learners' competencies produce graduates who are better prepared for innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable economic participation.

The contemporary Nigerian labour market further underscores the necessity for effective vocational guidance. Rapid technological advancement, globalization, changing occupational structures, and increasing youth unemployment have created new expectations regarding the competencies students require after graduation. Employers increasingly demand practical skills, adaptability, creativity, digital competence, and entrepreneurial capacity in addition to academic qualifications. Consequently, schools are expected to provide guidance services capable of helping learners discover career opportunities that correspond with their individual abilities and future aspirations. Ekanem and Yusuf (2024) argued that educational institutions must deliberately prepare learners for emerging occupations by strengthening career counselling and skill development programmes. Likewise, Igbudu and Dede (2025) observed that effective knowledge creation, continuous learning, and human capacity development remain fundamental requirements for productivity and sustainable national development. Their findings demonstrate that educational institutions achieve better developmental outcomes when learners are supported in identifying and maximizing their individual potentials.

Despite the recognized importance of vocational guidance, evidence suggests that many public secondary schools in Nigeria continue to experience inadequate career guidance services, insufficient counselling personnel, limited assessment facilities, poor access to occupational information, and inadequate funding of counselling programmes. These challenges often prevent students from receiving professional assistance required to recognize their talents and make informed educational or vocational decisions. Anunobi and Ogbonna (2025) noted that educational institutions experience reduced goal attainment whenever student support services receive inadequate institutional attention. Similarly, Aleru (2025) emphasized that educational effectiveness depends considerably on the availability of institutional support systems that facilitate learners' academic and personal development. Where vocational guidance services are weak, many students may choose careers based on peer influence, parental pressure, or societal stereotypes rather than their actual interests and abilities.

The situation in Rivers State reflects many of the challenges observed nationally. Although public senior secondary schools are expected to prepare students for higher education, vocational training, and productive careers, vocational guidance services in many schools remain inadequate. In some schools, counselling units are poorly equipped, vocational interest inventories are unavailable, and students have limited opportunities to receive current career information from trained counsellors. Consequently, many learners complete secondary education without fully understanding their natural abilities or the educational pathways most suitable for them. This situation often contributes to poor career choices, reduced motivation for learning, underutilization of talents, and difficulties in adjusting to higher education or the labour market. Sota and Ukoima (2025) reported that adolescents are increasingly influenced by information obtained through the internet and social media, making professionally guided counselling services essential for helping them distinguish reliable career information from misleading online content. Similarly, Umukoro et al. (2025) emphasized that contemporary counselling services should respond to emerging social and technological realities affecting students' educational and career development.

The present study is anchored on the Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environment, developed by John L. Holland (1997). The theory proposes that individuals possess different personality characteristics, interests, and abilities which correspond to particular occupational environments. Holland identified six major personality types, Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC) and argued that individuals experience greater achievement, satisfaction, and productivity when their

educational and occupational choices correspond with their dominant personality characteristics. The theory further explains that effective vocational guidance should assist individuals in identifying their interests and matching them with suitable educational programmes and occupations. The relevance of the theory to this study lies in its emphasis on career information services and vocational interest assessment as essential counselling strategies for identifying students' natural abilities and facilitating their development. By helping learners understand themselves and explore appropriate occupational opportunities, vocational guidance promotes informed career choices and enhances the development of their natural skills.

Although several studies have examined counselling services, career development, academic achievement, emotional intelligence, internet safety, educational leadership, and students' adjustment in Nigerian schools (Sota & Ukoima, 2025; Umukoro & Onukwufor, 2019; Umukoro et al., 2025), relatively few empirical studies have specifically investigated how vocational guidance influences the development of students' natural skills in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Existing studies have focused largely on career choice, counselling effectiveness, academic performance, social adjustment, or psychological wellbeing, with limited attention given to career information services and vocational interest assessment as determinants of students' natural skill development. This creates an empirical gap that requires further investigation, particularly within the context of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State where effective vocational guidance has become increasingly important for promoting employability, entrepreneurship, and sustainable human capital development. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the influence of vocational guidance on natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Vocational guidance is expected to assist students in discovering their natural abilities, understanding their vocational interests, and making informed educational and career decisions. However, evidence suggests that many students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State continue to experience difficulties identifying and developing their inherent talents due to inadequate career guidance services, limited access to current career information, and insufficient vocational interest assessment. As a result, many learners make inappropriate subject and career choices, remain unaware of their natural strengths, and graduate from secondary school without acquiring the confidence and direction needed to maximize their potential. This situation undermines the objectives of secondary education and limits students'

preparedness for higher education, entrepreneurship, and the world of work (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2023). Scholars have emphasized that effective vocational guidance promotes career maturity, enhances self-awareness, and supports the development of learners' abilities and occupational aspirations (Brown & Lent, 2023; Gysbers & Henderson, 2022; Holland, 1997).

Furthermore, although studies have examined counselling, emotional intelligence, internet safety, and career development among secondary school students (Sota & Ukoima, 2025; Umukoro & Onukwufor, 2019; Umukoro et al., 2025), limited empirical attention has been given to how career information services and vocational interest assessment influence the natural skill development of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence to guide school counsellors, educational administrators, and policymakers in strengthening vocational guidance programmes that can effectively identify and nurture students' natural talents. It is this gap in knowledge and practice that necessitated this study on the influence of vocational guidance on natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of vocational guidance on natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the extent to which career information services influence natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. examine the extent to which vocational interest assessment influences natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do career information services influence natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does vocational interest assessment influence natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Senior Secondary II students on the extent to which career information services influence natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Senior Secondary II students on the extent to which vocational interest assessment influences natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the extent to which vocational guidance influences natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because the study sought to obtain firsthand information from Senior Secondary II students regarding their experiences, perceptions, and opinions on vocational guidance services and the extent to which these services contribute to the development of their natural skills. The design enabled the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of students without manipulating any of the study variables, thereby providing an accurate description of the existing situation in public senior secondary schools. The study was conducted in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The population comprised 18,624 Senior Secondary II (SS II) students drawn from 247 public senior secondary schools across the three senatorial districts of Rivers State, as reported by the Rivers State Ministry of Education (2026). Senior Secondary II students were considered appropriate for the study because they had been sufficiently exposed to school guidance and counselling programmes and were at the stage of making important educational and vocational decisions. Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination, a sample size of 392 students was obtained. The sample comprised 176 male students and 216 female students. The respondents were selected through a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The schools were first stratified according to the three senatorial districts Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers South-East to ensure equitable geographical representation. Thereafter, students were selected proportionately from the sampled schools using simple random sampling technique while ensuring equal representation of male and female students.

Data were collected using one structured instrument titled Vocational Guidance and Natural Skill Development Questionnaire (VGNSDQ). The questionnaire consisted of two sections.

Section A elicited demographic information such as gender and school location, while Section B contained items designed to measure the two dimensions of vocational guidance, career information services and vocational interest assessment, and the extent to which they influence students' natural skill development. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE), weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation from recognized universities. Their observations and recommendations regarding the clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and adequacy of the questionnaire items were carefully considered and incorporated before the final version of the instrument was produced. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and confirming that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire with the assistance of trained research assistants who were adequately briefed on the purpose and procedures of the study. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant educational authorities and principals of the selected schools before the administration of the instrument. The respondents were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high retrieval rate and minimize data loss. The data collected were coded and analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions by determining the extent to which vocational guidance influences natural skill development among students. The null hypotheses were tested using the z-test at the 0.05 level of significance to determine whether significant differences existed between the mean responses of male and female Senior Secondary II students regarding the extent to which career information services and vocational interest assessment influence natural skill development. The decision rule was that where the calculated probability value (p-value) was less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected; however, where the calculated probability value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Result Presentation

Research Question 1: To what extent do career information services influence natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Extent Career Information Services Influence Natural Skill Development Among Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

		Male		Female				
		Students		Students				
		N= 176		N= 216				
S/N	Questionnaire Items	$\bar{X}_1$	Std ₁	$\bar{X}_2$	Std ₂	Average mean	Std	RMK
1.	Career information services help me to identify my natural talents and abilities for future career choices.	3.71	0.89	3.69	0.87	3.70	0.88	HE
2.	Information on different occupations motivates students to develop their natural skills.	3.32	0.76	3.48	0.79	3.40	0.78	HE
3.	Career guidance information exposes me to opportunities for developing my hidden skills and talents.	3.30	0.68	3.34	0.77	3.32	0.73	HE
4.	Information on career options received from counsellors encourages me to improve my abilities through learning and practice.	3.40	0.78	3.44	0.88	3.42	0.83	HE
5.	Career information services assist me in selecting school subjects that match my natural skills and career interests.	3.19	1.35	3.12	1.12	3.16	1.24	VHE
Aggregate Mean/SD for Male and Female SSII Students		3.38	0.89	3.41	0.89	3.40	0.89	HE

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The results in Table 1 show that both male and female Senior Secondary II students agreed that career information services influence natural skill development to a high extent in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The aggregate mean scores of 3.38 for male students and 3.41 for female students, with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.89, indicate a close similarity in the opinions of the respondents. This suggests that students generally perceive career information services as useful in identifying their abilities, understanding career opportunities, and developing their natural talents. The highest-rated item was that career information services help students identify their natural talents and abilities for future career choices with an aggregate mean score of 3.70 and standard deviation of 0.88, indicating that career information plays an important role in self-discovery and career decision-making. The least-rated item, which stated that career information services assist students in selecting school subjects that match their natural skills and career interests, recorded an aggregate mean score of 3.16 and standard deviation of 1.24, although it was still rated at a high extent. Overall, the grand mean of 3.40 confirms that career information services contribute significantly to students' natural skill development by improving awareness of career options, encouraging skill exploration, and supporting informed educational and vocational choices among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does vocational interest assessment influence natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Extent Vocational Interest Assessment Influence Natural Skill Development Among Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

		Male		Female				
		Students		Students				
		N= 176		N= 216				
S/N	Items	$\bar{X}_1$	Std ₁	$\bar{X}_2$	Std ₂	Average mean	Std	RMK
6.	Vocational interest assessment helps me identify my areas of strength and natural abilities.	3.84	0.98	3.92	0.94	3.88	0.96	HE

7.	Vocational interest assessment enables me to understand careers that are suitable for my interests and abilities.	3.35	0.78	3.43	0.75	3.39	0.77	HE
8.	Results from vocational interest assessment guide me in developing skills related to my personal interests and talents.	3.66	0.71	3.83	0.88	3.75	0.80	HE
9.	Vocational interest assessment assists me in choosing learning activities that support the development of my natural skills.	3.37	1.53	3.54	1.45	3.46	1.49	VHE
10.	Vocational interest assessment motivates me to improve and utilize my natural talents for future career success.	3.93	0.88	3.89	0.82	3.91	0.85	HE
Aggregate Mean/SD for Male and Female SSII Students		3.63	0.98	3.72	0.97	3.68	0.98	HE

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The findings in Table 2 indicate that both male and female Senior Secondary II students agreed that vocational interest assessment influences natural skill development to a high extent in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The aggregate mean scores of 3.63 for male students and 3.72 for female students, with a grand mean of 3.68 and standard deviation of 0.98, show a strong similarity in the perceptions of respondents. This implies that vocational interest assessment plays an important role in helping students identify their abilities, understand suitable career pathways, and develop skills that align with their interests and talents. The highest-rated item was that vocational interest assessment motivates students to improve and utilize their natural talents for future career success, with an aggregate mean score of 3.91 and standard deviation of 0.85, indicating that assessment activities encourage students to recognize and maximize their potentials. The least-rated item, which stated that vocational interest assessment enables students to understand careers suitable for their interests and abilities,

recorded an aggregate mean score of 3.39 and standard deviation of 0.77, although it was still rated at a high extent. Overall, the grand mean of 3.68 confirms that vocational interest assessment significantly contributes to students' natural skill development by promoting self-awareness, guiding career choices, supporting skill identification, and encouraging students to utilize their abilities effectively for future educational and occupational success.

Hypotheses Testing

1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Senior Secondary II students on the extent to which career information services influence natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: Z-test Analysis on the Extent Career Information Services Influence Natural Skill Development in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Respondents	N		Std	DF	z-cal	z-crit	LS	Decision
Male SSII Students	176	3.38	0.89					
				390	-0.33	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female SSII Students	216	3.41	0.89					

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 shows that the calculated z-value ($z\text{-cal} = -0.33$) is less than the critical z-value (± 1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance with 390 degrees of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male Senior Secondary II students ($\bar{X} = 3.38$, $SD = 0.89$) and female Senior Secondary II students ($\bar{X} = 3.41$, $SD = 0.89$) regarding the extent to which career information services influence natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, implying that both male and female students share similar perceptions that career information services play an important role in helping students identify their natural talents, make informed career decisions, and develop their inherent skills for future educational and occupational success.

2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Senior Secondary II students on the extent to which vocational interest assessment influences natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis on the Extent Vocational Interest Assessment Influences Natural Skill Development in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Respondents	N		Std	DF	z-cal	z-crit	LS	Decision
Male SSII Students	176	3.63	0.98					
				390	-0.91	±1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female SSII Students	216	3.72	0.97					

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 indicates that the calculated z-value ($z\text{-cal} = -0.91$) is less than the critical z-value (± 1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance with 390 degrees of freedom. This shows that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male Senior Secondary II students ($\bar{X} = 3.63$, $SD = 0.98$) and female Senior Secondary II students ($\bar{X} = 3.72$, $SD = 0.97$) on the extent to which vocational interest assessment influences natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, implying that both male and female students hold similar opinions that vocational interest assessment helps them recognize their strengths, understand careers that align with their interests and abilities, and develop their natural talents for future educational and career success.

Discussion of Findings

The finding for Research Question 1 revealed that career information services influence natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State to a high extent, with a grand mean of 3.40. This suggests that the provision of relevant career information enables students to recognize their natural talents, understand available career opportunities, and make informed educational and vocational decisions that foster the development of their innate abilities. The result agrees with Brown and Lent (2023), who emphasized that access to comprehensive career information equips students with the knowledge required to identify their strengths and align them with appropriate career pathways. Similarly, Gysbers and Henderson (2022) maintained that effective school guidance programmes provide career information that enhances students' self-awareness, career maturity, and personal development. The finding also corroborates the work of Okeke, Chukwu, and Nwafor (2025), who reported that career counselling services significantly improve occupational aspirations and career preparedness among secondary school students. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Education (2021) recognizes career guidance as an

essential component of secondary education for helping learners discover their abilities and make realistic career choices.

The hypothesis 1, tested whether there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Senior Secondary II students on the extent to which career information services influence natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The result revealed that the calculated z-value ($z = -0.33$) was less than the critical z-value (± 1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This indicates that male and female students share similar views regarding the influence of career information services on the development of their natural skills. The finding supports Brown and Lent (2023), who observed that access to quality career information benefits learners irrespective of gender by promoting informed career decision-making and personal growth. It also agrees with Gysbers and Henderson (2022), who asserted that career information services are universally beneficial in helping students understand their abilities and educational opportunities. Likewise, Okeke et al. (2025) found no meaningful gender disparity in students' perception of career guidance services, indicating that both male and female students benefit equally from effective vocational guidance programmes.

The findings for Research Question 2 showed that vocational interest assessment influences natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State to a high extent, with a grand mean of 3.68. This implies that vocational interest assessment helps students recognize their areas of strength, understand careers that correspond with their interests, and develop skills that match their natural abilities. The finding is consistent with Holland (1997), whose theory explains that identifying an individual's vocational interests enhances appropriate career selection and talent development. Similarly, Zunker (2021) emphasized that vocational interest assessment is an effective counselling strategy for promoting self-understanding, career planning, and personal skill development among students. Brown and Lent (2023) also argued that interest assessment enables learners to make career choices that reflect their abilities and interests, thereby enhancing long-term career satisfaction and productivity. In the Nigerian context, Umukoro, Echeonwu, and Ineye-Briggs (2025) stressed that counselling interventions, including structured assessment programmes, significantly enhance students' personal development and educational decision-making.

The hypothesis 2, examined whether there is a significant difference between the mean responses of male and female Senior Secondary II students on the extent to which vocational interest assessment influences natural skill development in public senior secondary schools in

Rivers State. The result showed that the calculated z-value ($z = -0.91$) was less than the critical z-value (± 1.96) at the 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students. This finding supports Holland (1997), who maintained that vocational interest assessment provides equal opportunities for individuals to identify careers that correspond with their personalities and abilities regardless of gender. It also agrees with Zunker (2021), who explained that interest assessment enhances self-awareness and skill development for all learners. Furthermore, Sota and Ukoima (2025) observed that effective counselling programmes positively influence students' personal development irrespective of gender, while Umukoro et al. (2025) concluded that counselling interventions remain effective for both male and female students in promoting informed educational and career development.

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that vocational guidance significantly influences natural skill development among students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, career information services and vocational interest assessment were found to influence students' ability to identify, develop, and effectively utilize their natural talents and abilities. The study therefore concludes that effective vocational guidance programmes are indispensable for helping students make informed educational and career decisions, discover their potentials, and prepare for productive future careers.

Recommendations

1. School administrators, guidance counsellors, and the Rivers State Ministry of Education should strengthen career information services in public senior secondary schools by organizing regular career talks, career exhibitions, mentorship programmes, and providing up-to-date career information materials. This will enable students to gain adequate knowledge of available career opportunities, recognize their natural talents, and make informed educational and vocational decisions.
2. Guidance counsellors should regularly administer vocational interest assessment programmes using standardized assessment instruments to help students identify their interests, abilities, and natural strengths. The assessment results should be used to provide individualized career counselling and educational guidance that will promote the effective development of students' natural skills and enhance their future career success.

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