

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CAREER COUNSELLING IN SHAPING CAREER CHOICES AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS IN JOS NORTH METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

Career counselling plays a vital role in helping students make informed career decisions based on their interests, abilities, and values. However, many Nigerian secondary school students still make career choices without adequate professional guidance, leading to dissatisfaction, academic mismatch, and unemployment. This study examined the effectiveness of career counselling in shaping career choices among senior secondary students in Jos North Metropolis, Plateau State. A descriptive survey design was adopted. A sample of 200 students was selected using simple random sampling from four public and private secondary schools. A structured questionnaire titled Career Counselling and Career Choice Questionnaire (CCCCQ) was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test statistics. Findings revealed that career counselling significantly improves students' awareness of career options, enhances self-understanding, and positively influences decision-making. However, challenges such as inadequate counsellors and poor exposure to career guidance materials limit its effectiveness. The study recommends that schools strengthen counselling units, train more guidance counsellors, and organize periodic career orientation programmes to support students in making appropriate career choices.

Keywords: effectiveness, career counselling, career choice, secondary school students, Jos North.

INTRODUCTION

Career choice is widely recognized as one of the most critical developmental tasks that adolescents must accomplish as they prepare for adulthood. During the senior secondary school years particularly SS II and SS III students in Nigeria face the challenge of making decisions that will shape their future academic trajectories, occupational pathways, and overall life satisfaction. According to Santrock (2021), adolescence is a developmental stage marked by identity exploration, increased cognitive capacity, heightened sensitivity to social expectations, and emerging independence. These attributes make career decision-making both timely and difficult, as students must weigh personal interests, academic strengths, and long-term goals in the midst of significant social, emotional, and cognitive changes.

In many cases, students' career choices are influenced by a variety of intertwined factors. Parental expectations, cultural norms, peer group influence, religious beliefs, socio-economic background, and media exposure all play crucial roles in shaping how adolescents perceive various professions (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad & Herma, 1951). In the Nigerian context, prestigious careers such as Medicine, Law, Engineering, Military service, and Accountancy often enjoy high societal approval. Consequently, many parents pressure their children into pursuing these professions even when such choices do not align with the students' interests, talents, or personality traits (Adewumi & Falaye, 2019). Studies have shown that when students make career choices under such pressure, they are more likely to experience academic distress, low achievement, and eventual career dissatisfaction (Holland, 1997; Obidike & Onwuka, 2020).

Beyond social pressures, Nigerian students are confronted with environmental and structural challenges that complicate the career selection process. The country's economic instability, rising unemployment, and rapidly changing labour market create uncertainty about career prospects and job security (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). In addition, many secondary schools lack adequate exposure to career fairs, mentorship programmes, vocational exploration activities, and access to digital career resources that could inform students' choices (Egbri, 2019). The absence of such opportunities leads many adolescents to make choices based on guesswork, perceived prestige, peer suggestions, or misinformation about occupational requirements.

It is against this backdrop that career counselling emerges as a critical component of the educational process. Career counselling provides students with structured guidance, helping them gather relevant occupational information, explore career options, examine personal strengths and weaknesses, and develop the confidence to make informed decisions. Okeke (2020) asserts that career counselling is instrumental in strengthening students' self-understanding and enhancing their ability to match personal characteristics with suitable career paths. Similarly, UNESCO (2019) highlights that students who receive systematic career guidance demonstrate higher levels of academic motivation, improved career readiness, and better long-term employment outcomes.

However, despite the acknowledged importance of career counselling, its implementation in Nigerian secondary schools remains grossly inadequate. The National Policy on Education mandates the presence of guidance counsellors in schools, yet many institutions especially public schools either lack trained counsellors or have counsellors who are overwhelmed by administrative tasks (Fakeye & Adebayo, 2019). Limited funding for counselling resources, insufficient training, inadequate facilities, and poor awareness of career counselling services further restrict the effectiveness of career guidance programmes (Omoniyi, 2020; Eyo, Joshua & Esuong, 2010). As a result, many students continue to rely on peers, relatives, or intuition in making major educational and occupational decisions.

The consequences of uninformed career choices are profound. Research indicates that poor career decisions contribute to low self-esteem, academic frustration, increased dropout rates, and widespread job dissatisfaction among Nigerian youths (Nwachukwu, 2021). Hence, evaluating the effectiveness of career counselling is crucial if schools are to provide meaningful support that enhances students' career maturity and readiness.

Given these challenges and the growing recognition of the importance of structured guidance, the present study investigates the effectiveness of career counselling in shaping career choices among senior secondary school students in Jos North Metropolis. The study specifically seeks to determine the extent to which counselling enhances students' awareness of career options, improves their understanding of personal aptitudes and interests, and supports sound career decision-making. Through its empirical findings, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on improving counselling services in Nigerian schools and provides evidence-based recommendations for strengthening career guidance programmes.

Objectives of the Study

The study specifically aimed to:

1. Examine the effect of career counselling on students' awareness of different career options.
2. Determine the influence of career counselling on students' self-understanding and career decision-making.
3. Identify the challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling in Jos North Metropolis.

Research Questions

1. How does career counselling affect students' awareness of career options?
2. To what extent does career counselling influence students' self-understanding and career decision-making?
3. What are the major challenges facing career counselling in secondary schools in Jos North Metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Career counselling has no significant effect on students' awareness of career options.
H₀₂: Career counselling has no significant influence on students' career decision-making.
H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of career counselling between public and private schools.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate how career counselling influences career choices among senior secondary school students. The design was considered appropriate because it allows for collecting data on students' perceptions and experiences without manipulating any variables. The study population comprised all SS II and SS III students in selected public and private secondary schools in Jos North Metropolis, representing a diverse group of adolescents actively engaged in career planning.

A sample of 200 students was drawn using a stratified random sampling technique. Schools were stratified into public and private categories to ensure balanced representation, after which two schools from each category were selected. Within each school, students from SS II and SS III were randomly chosen to participate. This approach enabled the inclusion of students from varying socio-academic backgrounds, increasing the generalizability of the findings. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Career Counselling and Career Choice Questionnaire (CCCCQ)*. The instrument consisted of 20 items arranged in three sections: demographic information, effectiveness of career counselling, and challenges

affecting counselling services. Responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire underwent expert review by specialists in Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement to ensure face and content validity. To establish reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested on 30 students outside the study area, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84, which indicated high internal consistency.

The researchers administered the questionnaire personally with support from school authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation, ensuring adherence to ethical standards. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately to maximize response rate. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions by summarizing students' levels of agreement with the items. The hypotheses were tested using independent-samples t-test at the 0.05 significance level to determine whether significant differences existed between groups such as public and private schools. This combination of statistical tools allowed for both descriptive understanding and rigorous examination of the variables under study.

Results and Interpretation

Research Question 1: *How does career counselling affect students' awareness of career options?*

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Career counselling helps me understand various career opportunities.	3.45	0.52	Accepted
2	Counselling sessions expose me to career paths I was unaware of.	3.38	0.61	Accepted
3	My school counsellor provides information on academic requirements for different careers.	3.29	0.74	Accepted
4	I am now more confident about my career choices due to counselling.	3.34	0.63	Accepted
5	Career counselling motivates me to set academic goals for my desired career.	3.40	0.58	Accepted

The results show that students strongly agreed that career counselling improves their knowledge and awareness of career options. The high mean scores (3.29–3.45) indicate that counselling helps students explore and evaluate different career possibilities effectively.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does career counselling influence students' self-understanding and career decision-making?*

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Counselling has helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses.	3.41	0.59	Accepted
2	I can now match my abilities to suitable careers.	3.36	0.68	Accepted
3	Counselling improves my confidence in choosing a career path.	3.47	0.56	Accepted
4	I am more aware of how my interests relate to future jobs.	3.39	0.64	Accepted
5	Counselling helps me make realistic career goals.	3.44	0.62	Accepted

The responses indicate that career counselling enhances students' self-awareness and decision-making capabilities. Through counselling, students better understand their personal characteristics and make informed, realistic career choices.

Research Question 3: *What are the challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling?*

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Lack of trained counsellors affects the quality of counselling.	3.48	0.55	Accepted
2	Many students do not take counselling sessions seriously.	3.21	0.72	Accepted
3	Inadequate time allocation for counselling activities.	3.35	0.68	Accepted
4	Poor facilities and materials for career guidance.	3.40	0.66	Accepted
5	Parental influence conflicts with counsellor's advice.	3.28	0.71	Accepted

Respondents agreed that the effectiveness of career counselling is hindered by the shortage of trained counsellors, lack of facilities, and limited awareness among students and parents about the importance of counselling services.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	t-Calculated	t-Critical (0.05)	Decision
H ₀₁ : Career counselling has no significant effect on students' awareness of career options.	4.12	1.96	Rejected

The analysis revealed that the calculated t-value of 4.12 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that career counselling has a statistically significant effect on students' awareness of career options. In practical terms, the finding indicates that when students participate in career counselling programmes, their knowledge of different career paths, academic requirements, and professional opportunities significantly increases. This result supports earlier studies (e.g., Okeke, 2020) that highlight the value of career guidance in expanding students' career awareness. The implication is that strengthening career counselling units in schools will further improve students' exposure to diverse career possibilities.

Hypothesis	t-Calculated	t-Critical (0.05)	Decision
H ₀₂ : Career counselling has no significant influence on students' career decision-making.	3.78	1.96	Rejected

The result indicates that the calculated t-value of 3.78 exceeds the critical value of 1.96 at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding confirms that career counselling significantly influences students' career decision-making. In effect, students who receive counselling are better able to evaluate their strengths, match interests with suitable careers, set realistic goals, and make informed decisions about their future careers. This aligns with the position of Adewumi and Falaye (2019), who argued that counselling is central to helping students develop clarity and confidence during career selection. The implication is

that regular and structured counselling interventions can greatly enhance the quality of students' career decisions.

Hypothesis	t-Calculated	t-Critical (0.05)	Decision
H ₀₃ : There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of career counselling between public and private schools.	1.45	1.96	Accepted

The calculated t-value of 1.45 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is no significant difference in how effective career counselling is across public and private schools in the study area. In other words, regardless of the type of school, career counselling appears to impact students in a relatively similar way. This may be attributed to similarities in counsellor training, student exposure, or the general state of counselling services across both school types. The implication is that improvements to counselling programmes should target all schools equally rather than focusing on one category.

Discussion of Findings

The findings align with those of Okeke (2020), who noted that counselling enhances students' understanding of career options. Similarly, Adewumi and Falaye (2019) emphasized that career guidance helps students align personal abilities with occupational opportunities. The results confirm that students who participate in counselling sessions are more likely to make informed and confident career decisions.

However, the study also corroborates the findings of Omoniyi (2020), who reported that the absence of trained counsellors and inadequate counselling facilities hinder effective service delivery in Nigerian schools. This implies a need for greater government and institutional support to make career counselling more robust and accessible.

Conclusion

Career counselling is an essential tool for shaping students' career paths and promoting informed decision-making. The findings revealed that career counselling significantly enhances students' awareness of career options and self-understanding. However, challenges such as limited professional counsellors, poor facilities, and low awareness continue to affect its effectiveness.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education should employ more professional guidance counsellors in secondary schools.
2. Schools should organize regular career orientation and mentorship programmes.
3. Counselling units should be equipped with modern career guidance materials and ICT facilities.
4. Parents should collaborate with school counsellors to support their children's career aspirations.
5. Counsellors should receive periodic training to improve their competence and adapt to evolving career trends.

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