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Influence Of Career Counselling On Senior Secondary School Student Choice Of Occupation

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the influence of career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation. This study was guided by three research questions which was derived from the objectives. A descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The population of the study was 422 from the selected public senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis. A purposive sampling technique was used to obtain from the population; 200 students was served as the study sample. A self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher was used to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was face-validation by two experts. The instrument reliability was ascertained via Cronbach's Alpha method in which a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. Mean and Standard were statistical tools used to analyze the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that career counselling is a crucial role in guiding senior secondary school students toward making informed occupational choices that align with students' interests, aptitudes, and societal needs. it fosters self- awareness, vocational clarity, and decision-making confidence on career choice in senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis. Based on the findings, it was recommended that school administrative should integrate structured and professional counselling programs into school curriculum and government should strengthen educational policies to mandate career counselling as a core component of secondary education.

Keywords: Influence, Career, Counselling, Occupation, and Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental pillar for any form of societal advancement (Jibrin et al., 2012). As broadly defined by Umar and Cyril (2012) education encompasses the entire spectrum of experiences and processes through which individuals cultivate and harness their potential by acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies which is essential for meaningful participation in society. From birth to death, education remains a continuous journey, serving as a catalyst for economic growth, political stability, and scientific innovation across nations (Jibrin et al., 2012). Secondary education, as highlighted by Umar and Haruna (2014), this represents a critical phase in the educational continuum. It is the stage where students encounter diverse subjects that shape their academic interests

and future career paths. Positioned between primary and tertiary education, its strategic role in shaping intellectual development is undeniable. According to National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) posit that education should instill curiosity and equip learners with the tools to thrive in a technologically driven world. This underscores the importance of integrating counselling programmes within schools. This programme is a developmental process where a counsellor facilitates self-awareness and environmental understanding, enabling individuals to adopt behaviors that foster personal, educational, and vocational growth (Ebizie, Enajedu, & Nkechi, 2016). It is a transformative experience that extends beyond the classroom, guiding learners through life's complexities. According to Mutic (2009) counseling is a learning- oriented process which occurs in an interactive approach with the aim to help individuals learn more about themselves.

The relevance of counselling services in educational institutions has grown significantly, especially in response to increasing student enrollment, evolving youth challenges, and frequent shifts in Nigeria's educational landscape (Bolu-Steve et al., 2017). These services are now indispensable and must be systematically embedded within the school structure to support students' holistic development. Counselling not only addresses academic concerns but also nurtures emotional resilience and personal growth. Umar (2013) defines counselling as an enabling process designed to help an individual come to terms with his or her life as it is, and ultimately reach a greater maturity through learning to take responsibility and to make informed decisions for self. According to Makinde (2017), counselling involves assisting an individual in analyzing oneself in light of any gaps in abilities, accomplishments, interests, or modes of adjusting to a new course of action. Agi (2014) also argues that counselling is a technique for helping individuals utilize their psychological resources by emphasizing positive developmental strengths and specific personality traits, behaviours, and emotional capacities. Gichinga (2008) affirm that counseling programme has had impact in secondary schools in Nigeria by helping individual student to choose and pursue available careers.

A career, as defined by Eremie et al., (2018), is one's professional journey a sequence of occupations and roles that reflect an individual's commitment to work and personal development. In earlier times, career decisions were relatively straightforward due to limited job options and the active involvement of parents, educators, and religious institutions in guiding youth (Umar et al., 2014). In the contemporary educational landscape, the transition from secondary school to occupational pursuits represents a pivotal juncture in the lives of adolescents. Senior secondary school students, typically aged 15 to 18 years, face the daunting task of selecting careers that align with their interests, abilities, and societal demands. This decision is not merely academic but profoundly influences long-term personal fulfillment, economic productivity, and societal development. In Nigeria, where youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge, with rates hovering above 40% among young adults (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023), misguided career choices exacerbate issues such as skill mismatches, underemployment, and social instability.

Career counselling emerges as a critical intervention and structured process of guidance provided by trained professionals to help individuals explore vocational options, assess personal strengths, and make informed decisions (Super, 1957; Holland, 1997), it equips students with the tools to navigate the complexities of the labor market. Career counselling plays a pivotal role in helping students navigate a broader and more complex occupational landscape. This offer career planning, informed decision-making, and vocational alignment, ensuring students find fulfillment in their chosen paths (Eremie et al., 2018). It addresses students' academic, emotional, and psychological needs, often in collaboration with other school personnel (Orewere, 2012). Eremie et al., (2018) also emphasize that career counselling empowers individuals to explore a wide range of possibilities. The core domains of counselling include educational guidance, which supports academic and career decisions; vocational guidance, which aligns career choices with personal interests and aptitudes; and personal-social guidance, which fosters appropriate social behavior. These services contribute to curriculum development, enhance teaching quality, and reduce educational costs (Ebizie et al., 2016). Despite its potential, access to effective career counselling in Nigerian senior secondary schools is often limited, fragmented, or absent, leading to choices driven by

parental pressure, peer influence, or superficial perceptions of prestige rather than aptitude or market viability.

This study investigates the influence of career counselling on senior secondary school students' choice of occupation. It seeks to examine how exposure to systematic counselling programs affects students' awareness of career pathways, self-efficacy in decision-making, and alignment between chosen occupations and personal attributes. By employing a mixed-methods approach in selected schools within Port Harcourt, the research aims to provide empirical insights that can inform policy reforms, enhance counselling frameworks, and ultimately empower the next generation of workforce entrants. The significance of this inquiry lies in its potential to bridge the gap between education and employment, fostering a more competent and satisfied cadre of professionals. As Nigeria strives toward sustainable development goals, understanding and strengthening career counselling mechanisms could yield transformative outcomes for individual students and the nation at large.

Statement of the Problem

The selection of an occupation by senior secondary school students in Nigeria is fraught with challenges that often lead to suboptimal life outcomes. A significant proportion of students make career choices without adequate information or self-awareness, resulting in high rates of course abandonment in tertiary institutions, occupational dissatisfaction, and persistent youth unemployment. According to the National Universities Commission (2022), over 35% of undergraduates in Nigerian universities switch programs within the first two years, largely due to initial mismatches between chosen fields and personal interests or abilities. This misalignment contributes to a national unemployment rate exceeding 42% among graduates aged 15-24 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023), underscoring a systemic failure in the transition from education to employment. Despite the recognized importance of informed career decision-making, career counselling services in most Nigerian senior secondary schools remain underdeveloped, understaffed, or entirely unavailable. Where they exist, such programs are often cursory, delivered by untrained teachers, or limited to generic sensitization talks rather than individualized, evidence-based guidance. Consequently, students frequently rely on extraneous factors such as parental expectations, peer influence, societal prestige of certain professions, or immediate financial incentives rather than systematic exploration of their aptitudes, values, and labor market realities.

This gap in structured career counselling perpetuates a cycle of poor occupational fit, reduced productivity, and socio-economic inefficiency. Without empirical evidence on the efficacy of counselling interventions in the Port Harcourt context, educational stakeholders lack the data needed to advocate for policy reforms, resource allocation, or curriculum integration of robust guidance programs. The present study addresses this critical void by examining the influence of career counselling on senior secondary school students' occupational choices, with the aim of identifying actionable pathways to enhance decision-making quality and long-term career success.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the influence of career counselling on students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices.
2. access the constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation.
3. determine strategies of remediating career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation.

Research Questions

1. what is the influence of career counselling on students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices?
2. what are the constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation?

3. what are the strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses was generated to support the study

1. There is no significant difference on the influence of career counselling on students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices.
2. There is no significant difference on the constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation.
3. There is no significant difference on the strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in the selected public senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 422 students from the selected public senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study adopted two sampling techniques; random sampling techniques was used to select three public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis and purposive sampling techniques was used to obtain from the population. The sample size of the study was 200 students in the selected public senior secondary school in Port Harcourt Metropolis. According to Mouton (2001), purposive sampling is used to select participants for a particular purposes and knowledge of the population. The choice of respondents is influenced by the category, position, knowledge and experiences of the respondents, particularly those with the ability to respond appropriately. Three research questions posed by the researcher guided the study. A self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher was used for data collection from the respondents. The instruments were constructed on a 4-point Likert's scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree which correspond to numerical value 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instruments were face-validation by two experts in Guidance and Counselling from Ignatius Ajuru University. The instruments' reliability was ascertain using Cronbach's Alpha correlation method in which a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. The questionnaire was distributed by the researchers and two research assistants who also help to retrieve the filled questionnaire from the students. Mean and Standard deviation were the statistical tools used to answer the research questions. Thus, it was decided that an item with a calculated mean value equal or greater than 2.50 (2.50-4.00) was accepted of career counselling as an influence on student choice of occupation in public senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis. While, any item whose mean value is below the criterion mean of 2.50 was rejected.

RESULTS

This result of the study was presented in line with the research question that guided the study:

Research Question 1: *What is influence of career counselling on students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices?*

Table 1: **Influence of career counselling on students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices**

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	SD	Remark
1	Career counselling increase students' confidence in making occupational choices	78	90	21	11	200	3.18	0.83	Agreed
2	It provides students information on different career options.	67	101	24	8	200	3.14	0.77	Agreed
3	It promotes the reduction of student's anxiety in choosing of career.	56	98	26	20	200	2.95	0.90	Agreed
4	Enhance employment after students' graduation	32	66	70	32	200	2.49	0.94	Disagreed

5	Career counselling improved students' ability to make informed career decisions.	43	77	60	20	200	2.72	0.91	Agreed
6	It enhances students' ability to make realistic plan on career objectives.	59	59	60	22	200	2.78	0.99	Agreed
7	Promotes self-awareness and labor market knowledge.	56	52	61	31	200	2.67	1.05	Agreed
	Grand Mean/SD						**2.85**	**0.91**	**Agreed**

Source: Field survey (2025)

The result according to table I revealed that career counselling influence students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices by increasing students' confidence in making occupational choices, providing students information on different career options, promoting the reduction of student's anxiety in choosing of career, improving students' ability to make informed career decisions, promoting self-awareness and labor market knowledge, and enhancing students' ability to make realistic plan on career objectives in senior secondary school, Port Harcourt Metropolis. As seen in the mean value of the item which were all above the criterion mean of 2.50. However, item 4; enhancing employment after students' graduation is below the criterion mean 2.50. This result shows that career counselling has an influence on senior secondary school students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Research Question 2: *What are the constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation?*

Table 2: **Constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation**

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	SD	Remark
1	Lack of career counselor	85	59	45	11	200	3.09	0.93	Agreed
2	Students have limited opportunities with career counsellors	77	99	14	10	200	3.22	0.78	Agreed
3	Career counselling does not provide sufficient information about diverse occupations.	43	54	54	49	200	2.46	1.08	Disagreed
4	Parent counsel students rather than professionals.	43	77	60	20	200	2.72	0.91	Agreed
5	Career counselling does not adequately address financial challenges in career choice	56	54	45	45	200	2.61	1.12	Agreed
6	Peer pressure.	77	99	14	10	200	3.22	0.78	Agreed
7	Academic workload limits participation in career counselling activities.	56	98	26	20	200	2.95	0.90	Agreed
	Grand Mean/SD						**2.90**	**0.93**	**Agreed**

Source: Field survey (2025)

The result according to table 2 shows that there are constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation which are: lack of career counsellor, students have limited opportunities with career counsellors, parent counsel students rather than professionals, career counselling does not adequately address financial challenges in career choice, peer pressure, and academic workload limits participation in career counselling activities in senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis. As seen in the mean value of the item which were all above the criterion mean of 2.50. However, the students are in dispute of career counselling not providing sufficient information about diverse occupation

with a mean score of 2.46. This result posit that career counselling faced constraints on senior secondary school students' choice of occupation in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Research Question 3: *What are the strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation?*

Table 3: Strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	X	SD	Remark
1	Schools should employ more qualified career counsellors	78	90	21	11	200	3.18	0.83	Agreed
2	Access to career resource centers and materials would enhance students career choices	50	56	50	44	200	2.56	1.09	Agreed
3	Career counselling should address peer influence in career decision-making	67	101	24	8	200	3.14	0.77	Agreed
4	Career counselling should include updated information about diverse occupations.	85	59	45	11	200	3.09	0.93	Agreed
5	Adequate teaching aids and materials should be provided for effective career counselling.	95	65	32	8	200	3.24	0.86	Agreed
6	Career counselling should consider cultural beliefs when guiding students.	50	56	50	44	200	2.56	1.09	Agreed
7	Career counselling should be scheduled regularly within the school timetable.	56	54	45	45	200	2.61	1.12	Agreed
8	Visits to industries and higher institution would improve students career awareness.	56	52	61	31	200	2.67	1.05	Agreed
	Grand Mean/SD						**2.88**	**0.97**	**Agreed**

Source: Field survey (2025)

The result according to table 3 revealed are strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation which are; schools should employ more qualified career counsellors, access to career resource centers and materials would enhance students career choices, career counselling should address peer influence in career decision-making, career counselling should include updated information about diverse occupations, adequate teaching aids and materials should be provided for effective career counselling, career counselling should consider cultural beliefs when guiding students, career counselling should be scheduled regularly within the school timetable, and visits to industries and higher institutions would improve students career awareness in senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis. As seen in the mean value of the items (1-8) were all above the criterion mean of 2.50. The result shows that the responds of the respondents are in homogeneous on the strategies of remediating the constraints faced in career counselling of senior secondary students in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference on the influence of career counselling on students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices.

Table 4.4: t-test Analysis of Significant Difference of the influence of career counselling among students

Variable/status	No. of respondents	Mean Score	SD	DF	SL	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Students	200	2.85	0.91	199	0.05	-2.33	1.97	Rejected

Analysis of Table 4.4 reveals that the calculated t-value t-cal ($|-2.33| = 2.33$) is greater than the critical t-value (t-crit = 1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. The Null hypothesis (Ho: u 3.0) is rejected. This result indicates that there is significant difference of influence of career counselling on senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference on the constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation.

Table 4.5: t-test Analysis of Significant Difference of the constraints faced in career counselling among students

Variable/status	No. of respondents	Mean Score	SD	DF	SL	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Students	200	2.90	0.93	199	0.05	-2.52	1.97	Accepted

Analysis of Table 4.5 show that the calculated t-value t-cal ($|-1.52|=1.52$) is less than the critical t-value (t-crit = 1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. The Null hypothesis (Ho: u= 3.0) is Accepted. This result indicates that there is no significant difference on the responds of the respondents of the constraints faced in of career counselling of senior secondary school students in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference on the strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation.

Table 4.6: t-test Analysis of Significant Difference of the strategies to remediate career counselling constraints among students

Variable/status	No. of respondents	Mean Score	SD	DF	SL	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Students	200	2.88	0.97	199	0.05	-1.75	1.97	Accepted

Analysis of Table 4.6 show that the calculated t-value t-cal ($|-1.75| = 1.75$) is less than the critical t-value (t-crit = 1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. The Null hypothesis (Ho: u = 3.0) is Accepted. This result shows that there is no significant difference on the responds of the respondents on the strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation in Port Harcourt metropolis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result from Table 1 revealed the influence of career counselling on students' self-efficacy in making informed occupational choices. The influence of career counselling on students identified by the respondents includes: career counselling increase students' confidence in making occupational choices, provides students information, on different career options, promotes the reduction of student's anxiety in choosing of career, improves students' ability to make informed career decisions, promotes self-awareness and labor market knowledge, and enhances students' ability to make realistic plan on career objectives in senior secondary school, Port Harcourt Metropolis. The findings above are in-line with

Super (1957) and Holland (1997) affirm that career counselling emerges as a critical intervention and structured process of guidance provided by trained professionals to help individuals explore vocational options, assess personal strengths, and make informed decisions. it equips students with the tools to navigate the complexities of the labor market. The findings are also in consonance with Eremie et al. (2018) career counselling offers career planning, informed decision-making, and vocational alignment, ensuring students find fulfillment in their chosen paths.

Result from Table 2 revealed the constraints faced in career counselling on senior secondary school student choice of occupation. The constraints faced in career counselling identified by the respondents includes: lack of career counsellor, students have limited opportunities with career counsellors, parent counsel students rather than professionals, career counselling does not adequately address financial challenges in career choice, peer pressure, and academic workload limits participation in career counselling activities in senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis. The findings above are in consonance with National Bureau of Statistics (2023) posit that youth (students) unemployment remains a pressing challenge, with rates hovering above 40%, due to misguided career choices exacerbate issues such as skill mismatches, underemployment, and lack of career counselling.

Result from Table 3 revealed the strategies to remediate career counselling constraints on senior secondary school student choice of occupation. The strategies identified by the respondents include: schools should employ more qualified career counsellors, access to career resource centers and materials would enhance students career choices, career counselling should address peer influence in career decision-making, career counselling should include updated information about diverse occupations, adequate teaching aids and materials should be provided for effective career counselling, career counselling should consider cultural beliefs when guiding students, career counselling should be scheduled regularly within the school timetable, and visits to industries and higher institutions would improve students career awareness in senior secondary school in Port Harcourt metropolis. The findings above are in in-line with Sobczak (2014) who acknowledge the implementation of career counselling center in school to improve the performance and confidence of students on career path. Also, the finding is in line with Ghafti (2021) proper scheduling of career counselling in the school system improve better career choice among students.

CONCLUSION

The study establishes career counselling as a crucial role in guiding senior secondary school students toward making informed occupational choices that align with their interests, aptitudes, and societal needs. By fostering self-awareness, vocational clarity, and decision-making confidence, counselling reduces the risks of course abandonment, occupational dissatisfaction, and youth unemployment that often result from uninformed choices. Despite its proven benefits, counselling services in Port-Harcourt schools remain underdeveloped or inconsistently implemented, leaving many students vulnerable to external pressures and misaligned career paths. Therefore, integrating comprehensive, professional, and well-resourced counselling programs into the secondary school system is imperative, as it will not only empower students to pursue fulfilling careers but also contribute significantly to national productivity, socio-economic stability, and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. School administrative should integrate structured and professional counseling prograrns metropolis.
2. Government should strengthen educational policies to mandate career counselling as a core component of secondary education.
3. Parents and communities should reduce external pressures and misconceptions about career choices to secondary school students.

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