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**IMPACT OF CAREER COUNSELLING ON THE CAREER CHOICE OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF
CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of career counselling on career choice of secondary school students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. With a focus on whether career choice differed between counselled and uncounselled secondary school students. Literature related to the sub variables under study were reviewed. The experimental research design was used. Two hundred students drawn from five secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area were used in the study. A questionnaire titled "Impact of counselling on career aspiration preference (ICCP) was administered on the students. Data analysis involved using t-test. The results show that there is a significant difference between the career choice of counselled and uncounselled secondary school students. The main conclusion drawn from this study is that career counselling significantly influences the career choice of secondary school students. The study recommends that schools need to provide career guidance and counselling services to learners during their secondary school education.

1.0 Introduction

Career is one of those terms that are not amendable to an easy definition. In some context, it is used to mean "work". In most other cases it is conceived as a subset of the umbrella term "work". Asuquo (2017) acknowledged that the conceptions of the word "career" are many and varied representing economic, psychological, sociological and administrative perspectives. Career refers to a variety of work and non-work situations which usually span through the entire life of an individual. They opined that career is generally referred to a pattern of decision transaction and adjustments which affects one's role in work, education, family, community development and leisure. The national Career Development Association (NCDA 2003), stated that career is the totality of work, paid and unpaid, one does in his or her life time. In the same vein, Aluta (2014), is of the view that career is a sequence of positions, jobs, or occupations which a person engages in during his working years.

Career choice is an informed selection of career direction upon which subsequent career development are built, Ajaero (2020). He viewed this selection as a developmental sequence in which the crystallization of a choice represents a series of decisions made over a period of time rather than a single episode. The thoughts involved when processing information about oneself and particular career options in relation to personal goals are complex and dynamic. Career choice and development can thus be view as a process by which individuals chose a career path or occupation, continue to develop in it throughout their lives and have several major career changes as personal

needs and interest changes, Obiunu and Ebunu (2020).

Career choice and development is one of the most important aspects in a person's life because it affects the entire life of an individual. Change is "constant" in life and choice is central in the concept of change. From birth, we experience changes, circumstances and unplanned events will force us to make informed decision about our career choices. Hence, the researcher emphasizes on the necessity for adolescents to have a clear sense of the direction they would like to head with their careers. Career plays a very fundamental and significant role in the life of an individual, not only because it determines the pattern of income but also because it affects the individual's personality and concepts in life. But deciding which career to opt for is always a daunting task for many, especially young teenagers, who are faced with numerous career options and are constantly bombarded with unsought, frivolous advice from virtually every one they meet. This is because each individual undergoing the process of making a career choice is influence by a variety of factors which in themselves may not be the real indices of success in occupation. Among the factors that influence students when making a career choice are: psychological factors, physiological factors, sociological factors, economic factors and chance factors.

In view of this, Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2022), observed that in a situation where they are options to choose from, one is likely to face the problem of choice and this is common in the choice of career. This has been a very serious problem for most people especially students who are faced with the

task, of choosing a life career. Most of the students that are found in the secondary schools fall within the age of eleven to twenty (11-20) years. This period of time is tagged adolescence. Because of the demand of this stage adolescents are concerned about their future, particularly in terms of selecting a vocation and majority of them are observed to have ended up with vocational and emotional maladjustments, dissatisfaction in work, frustration, conflicts and failure in life, unable to self—actualize, because of wrong choice of career, Agunlarle *et al.*, (2011).

The quest for solving the difficulties involved in career choice led to the developments of an approach to formal vocational counselling by Frank Parson in 1909, when he became interested in unemployed school leavers in Boston Civic House. He viewed vocational counselling in three perspectives; (1) self-analysis, (2) occupational analysis, (3) true reasoning or counselling to relate personal and occupational information, Oye (2012). According to Ebochuku, (2018), career counselling can be defined as the process of helping and enabling people in their career development which may involve face to face help or may be mediated through telephone, letter, text or even the internet. Career counselling is an educational process used in solving problems of the learner.

There is a general conception that education is a means to an end for a better living. With this view in mind, the school is a suitable agent for creating awareness of one's personal goals, values, interests, abilities, attitudes, aptitudes etc. through continuous learning and applying new knowledge in order to enhance each individual current performance which will enable them to take advantage of future job opportunities and

fulfill their employer's goals for a dynamic and effective work force, Patton et al. (2012).

The secondary school is the best place where young teens can solicit reliable career advice. Undoubtedly, secondary school occupies an important place in a teenager's life as many facets of his/her life are associated with it. His or her personality ideology of life begin evolving there; he/she starts developing social skills and most importantly, a student's knowledge bank expands at school.

Emphasizing on the need for career counselling in secondary schools, the Federal Government in the national policy on education (2014), stated that; Inter alia, in view of the apparent ignorance of young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustments among secondary school children, guidance counsellors will be appointed in the post primary institutions.

In the same vein, Nwachuku (2017), commend on the need for career counselling in secondary school and pointed out that it is at secondary school that a student confronts his/her very first choice when in senior secondary one (SSI), he/she needs to decide among science, commercial and art subjects. She observed that a number of students select specific subjects simply because their friends are opting for them while some decides according to their parent's wishes. Only a few select subjects based on their interest and that also without knowing if their preferred subjects could lead them to their desired career. As teenagers, they have to know which subject combination is preferable to become what they want and which other options are available.

Secondary school students need career

counselling the most because they are introduced to a range of subjects they can select from, the colleges and universities they can attend, and the professions they can enter. Counsellors need to discuss their conjectures about different subject combinations and describe to them what the labour market looks like. They need to know which professions are in demand and which fields are saturated, Okobiah and Okordudu (2014). Nwachuku (2017), opined that in the millennium world of work with high technology, making the right career choice has become even more complex because new job dimensions have emerged requiring new measures of skills and higher level competencies.

In the same vein, Ogunlade, and Akeredolu (2012) confirms that youth in Nigeria are gearing up in an increasingly complicated and fast changing society and the resultant effect is a complex need for personal, social adjustment and career vocational awareness among many adolescents. This need can only be met by well -integrated counselling services in Nigerian schools. It is in view of this background that the researcher attempted to find out the positive impact of career counselling services on the choice of career of secondary school students.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Career Counselling and Career Choice of Secondary School Students

Several studies show that most students all over the world are usually faced with a dilemma in making a career choice decision in their lives, Baundura *et.al*, (2001); Issa and Nwalo (2008); Macgregor (2007); McMahan and Watson (2005); Issa and Nwalo (2008), also observed that in most

cases, the choice of career subjects and courses to study and the subsequent career paths to follow are a night-mare for adolescents. In the same vein, Almon and Matsidiso (2012), observed that most often, choosing the right subject's combination leading to the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and detesting the career in future.

In view of this, Lopez (2006), opine that career indecision is generally a serious problem among young people and it is likely to interfere with the educational and career planning which will in turn disrupt career development process. The amazingly complex and intricate nature of the selection process is predicted on the fact that the individual doing the selection is multi-potential and the environment through which he seeks career adaptation is multi-dimensional, Asuquo (2007). Similarly, Akerodolu (2012), observed that most students have been motivated by a variety of variables when choosing a career, and he noted that most of these variables may not be the real indices of success in occupation. In view of this, appropriateness of career selection, therefore, will involve not only approximation of a large number of possibilities into limited availabilities but also a compromise between the individual (that is his interest, values, abilities, desires and attitudes) and the jobs that are available and the opportunities they offer in a rapid changing world. Hence, the need for career counseling.

It has been discovered that most secondary school students in Nigeria are immature to make career decision when leaving school. There is evidence that they make unrealistic vocational choices Salami (2000). this

inadequacy has serious consequence on the adolescents as many of them usually dropout of school while pursuing courses they do not have the aptitude, some who could not secure admission into higher schools become frustrated after leaving secondary schools, Salami (2004).

At this crucial stage, the counsellor is supposed to provide a vocational basis that goes beyond personal experience or trial and error. As a matter of necessity, guidance and counselling is urgently needed to help the student to relate his interest, aptitude, ability etc to current and future educational and vocational opportunities in order to help him/her determine who he is, what he can do and what he would do.

Career counselling is the process in which one person endeavors to help another solve his/her career adjustment problems, Okobiah and Okorodudu (2004). This helping relationship emanated from the realization that adolescents need to be guided in their career decision-making process, (Egbochuku 2008). Okobian and Okorodudu (2004), view career counselling as a person to person relationship in which one person (the counsellor) helps another person (the counsellee) to develop increase in understanding and ability to solve his or her adjustment problems. They explained. Further, that career counselling requires work-dysfunction and integration of life roles. Career counselling can also be view as a process of helping and enabling people in their career choice and development. The process helps the students to select their careers according to their choices and interest, Obiunu and Ebunu, (2010).

Wistone (2003), is of the view that there are elements in career counselling process that assist the client in knowing his or her self, gaining knowledge of the world of work and integrating the information about self and occupations. Career counselling is now being increasingly stressed as an integral part of education. In view of this, Obiunu and Ebunu (2010) view career counselling as a field of counselling which gives relevant information regarding several careers. Similarly, Francis (2010), in Obiun and Ebunu (2010) identified three steps involved in career counselling process to include: self-analysis, occupational analysis and true reasoning or counselling to correlate educational, personal and occupational information.

On the other hand, career guidance is broader in scope and encompasses career counselling as well as other related services like information advancement, appraisal and job placement. Asquo (2007), is of the view that, essentially, career guidance personalizes information to suit individuals with their career management and the information provided focuses on relevant knowledge or options pertaining to the persons' concerns or goals with the final decision residing with the individual. Furthermore, the maintained that career guidance is a process in which "people are helped. to reflect on their aspirations, interest, competencies, personal attributes, qualifications and abilities with the view of matching them with jobs training openings". Ogunlade and Akeredulu (2012), explain vocational guidance as a fact of education and vocational tactics for assisting students to identify future occupations for themselves and at the same time, make effective use of present educational experiences connected with such future choice.

One of the major concerns of career guidance and counselling is that of assisting an individual who possesses certain assets, liabilities and possibilities, to select from these major occupations, one that is suited to him/her, and then aid him/her in preparing for it, entering upon it and progressing in it. Career guidance and counselling is a lifelong process, since the individual chooses an occupation, prepare for it and make progress in it. This involves studying and knowing their interest, selection of their subjects and formation of their study habit and make them excel in those subjects and activities and attain the ultimate aim of getting good career as per their aspirations, Aluedo (2002).

Similarly, Egbochuku and Iyamu, (2000), opined that career guidance and counselling is concerned primarily with helping individuals to make decisions and choices involving in planning for future and to form career decision and choice necessary in affecting career adjustments. Career guidance and counselling is also view as a personalized process that combines with intuitive and cognitive techniques to help understand oneself, explain career options and clarity and attain desired goals.

Career development intervention programmes are also vital functions of the school counsellor. In view of this, the researcher observed that career development interventions refer to any activity that empowers students to cope effectively with career development task. It is intended at enhancing students' career development through self-awareness, occupational awareness, learn career decision making skills job search skills, cope with job stress, adjust and implement after deciding on a choice,

problem solving skills and others. In the same vein, Watson and Mcmhon, (2005), suggest that counselors should focused strong interest on critical importance of understanding career development, in later stages of their decision making. In view of this, the school counsellor is expected to always organized career day, career week, field trips and excursions in favour of career choice and development.

The process of deciding future career options can be challenging and involves careful considerations. This makes career guidance and counselling at the secondary school level a very crucial necessity. The researcher equally noted that the need for career guidance and counselling arises as a result of the in ability of most secondary school students to make any meaningful connections between school activities and their career development. In the same vein, Kunnen (2013) emphasized on the need for career guidance and counselling by observing that it had significantly increased commitment strength in the vocational and personal domains and in global identity.

Obium and Ebunu (2010), conducted a research on factors affecting career development of secondary school students in Ethopia East Local Government Area, Delta State Nigeria. They made use of 100 students in 5 secondary schools. A questionnaire was distributed for them to respond to and simple percentage was used to analyse the response to the instrument. The findings from the study indicated that some of the factors that were observed to affect career development include; psychological factors, sociological, educational, hereditary, and economic factors. The result also shows that career

counselling is required for appropriate career choice and development. This is because it helps the individuals to come to the true knowledge of themselves.

Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2012), carried out a research on the influence of counselling on career preference among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria, they correlated career counseling with career preference of 200 students in ten (10) secondary schools. A questionnaire was administered on the students to tap information on the influence of career counselling. Independent t- test statistics was used to analyzed the response from the respondents. Result showed that vocational guidance significantly influences vocational aspirations of the students. The findings also revealed that there is a significant relationship between career counselling and prestige, economic, social, values and gender parity in the choice of career of secondary school students.

2.2 Self Concept and Career Choice of Secondary School Students

Self-concept is a major factor in the career choice and development of secondary school students. Self-concept is defined as an individuals' perception or image of his/her abilities and uniqueness. According to Otta and Williams (2012), self-concept described how a person views himself (self-image) and how one will like others to view him (described self). Kelly (2004), cited in Otta and Williams (2012), is also of the view that self-concept is the awareness of one's attributes, judgement, and values in relation to one's behavior, abilities and capabilities. He maintained that this will help the adolescent to feel capable, likable, adaptable and strong.

In his own view, Shaffer (2005), in Otta and Williams (2012), observed that self-concept is logical attributes that are unique to each individual. Shaffer noted that the self and social development are intertwined. The self-develop through interactions and acquire information among people around the self to form the social self. The social self is the thinking that people display about the thoughts, feelings, motives and behaviours of themselves and others which in turn leads to self - recognition. Shaffer maintained that the ability to recognize oneself couple with the conscious awareness that "I" means my own is self- recognition. Otta et al (2012) posited that the self - recognition will help the adolescent to develop physical self - concept, psychological self-concept and academic self-concept, which in one way or the other, influence the career choice and development of secondary school students.

Otta, et al., (2012) observed that self-concept develops out of the individual's interaction within the environment and changes as a result of maturation and learning. Consequently, self-concept is influenced by the environment. This effect of the environment on individual may be positive or negative. Okereke, (2005) in Otta and Williams (2012), is of the view that when the environment is conducive for adolescents, they develop high positive and healthy self-concept which is a predictor of good choice of career.

In view of this, availability of career counselling services and programmes in schools, such as career talk, seminar, workshop and accurate career information, 'good teacher/students relationship, availability of guidance counsellors as well as good counsellor/client relationship in the

school will lead to the development of positive self-concept which in turn influences the career preference of students Bologun (2006, cited in Otta and Williams (2012). But in a case where they are lacking, will cause the students to remain in total darkness thereby developing low and negative self-concept which leads them to make uninformed career choices, Melgosa (2002), in Otta and Williams (2012).

According to the super theory of self-concept, an individual strike to implement the self-concept by choosing a career of interest. This is usually done by the expression of interest, feelings, needs, character etc as observed on that expected vocation. In view of this, Abam (2018) found in his study that there is a significant relationship between student's self-concept and their career aspiration. Similarly, Melgosa (2012), cited in Otta and Williams (2012), in a study on self-concept and vocational choice, revealed that proper career counselling will equip students to make better vocational choices. In like manner, Balogun (2016), opined that adequate career information, seminar, career talk and workshop will promote high career choice.

In contrast, in a study on self-concept as a motivation for choosing a vocation of interest, Zakaria (2015), in Otta and Williams (2012), revealed that there is no significant differences in the option of students in motivation for self-concept and career interest. The implication of this finding was that students education has to be enriched and nourished through counselling services to enable them make realistic career choices.

There are so many factors that affects secondary school students' self-concept. Otta

and Williams (2012), observed that societal influence plays social role on the adolescent's self-concept and vocational interest. Adolescents today are greatly influence in their career choice by the money people get in specific career, not minding the tools and the means they employed. For instance, many of the political opportunists today are without good career knowledge, but rather godfathers, contractors, whose brothers are in government and have made money without much effort. The society have high regards for such people and this help to influence the career choice of adolescents without assessing their self-concept.

In this context, adequate career counselling is needed to help the adolescent come to the knowledge of his/her self thereby developing a positive self-concept. This self-concept so far developed influences an individuals' perception with regards to their ability to perform different occupational tasks and roles. A person's preferences are a function of what he knows about himself and self-concept denotes the individual's awareness of his potentialities and limitations.

Ukoho (2021), believes that it is not ideal to encourage or force a student into courses and careers they are not gifted for. This is the central premise of career guidance and counselling in secondary schools.

3.0 Research methodology

This study adopted experimental research design, in the process; the experimental group had treatment while the control group had no treatment. The independent variables were manipulated during the counselling exercise organized by the researcher to bring about a better understanding of self, gender, socio-economic background and career

choice and development. The population of this research study comprises of all government approved public and private secondary schools and all the students in senior secondary school III (SS 3) in Abi Local Government Area, totaling forty-two (42) secondary schools.

The simple random sampling and the stratified random sampling techniques were adopted for the selection of the sample for this study. The main purpose for using these techniques was to compose a sample that will yield research data that can be generalized to a large population. The simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of the required number of schools for this study. Here, the researcher employed the "hat and draw" method for the Selection of the required number of schools from all the secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area. While the stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of the subjects.

The sample of this study is made of two hundred (200) senior secondary three (SSS 3) students randomly selected from five (5) secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area. A breakdown of this sample population

shows that forty (40) (twenty (20) male and twenty (20) female) students were randomly selected from each of the five (5) sampled schools. Among the two hundred (200) students, one hundred (100) students (fifty (50) male and fifty (50) female students) attended a career counseling programme organized by the researcher while the remaining one hundred (100) students, (fifty (50) male and fifty (50) female students) were not allow to attend the career counselling programme. The research instrument used for data collection was self-constructed questionnaire which was designed by the researcher to explore the impact of career counseling on the career choice of secondary school's students.

4.0 Results and discussions

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant difference between the pattern of career choice of counselled and uncounselled secondary school students. The dependent variable in this hypothesis is pattern of career choice while the independent variable is counselling. The appropriate statistical tool adopted to test this hypothesis is the independent t-test statistics. The result of the analysis is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Differences in the pattern of career choice of counselled and uncounselled students

Group	N	X	SD	DF	t-(cal)	t-value
Counselled students	100	18.58	1.65			
				198	3.5946	1.9720
Uncounselled students	100	17.22	3.30			

Significant at 0.05

The result of the t-test analysis as presented in table 3 reveals that the calculated t-value

of 3.5946 is greater than the critical value of 1.9720 with 198 degree of freedom at 0.05

level of significance. This shows that there is a significant difference between the career choice of counselled and uncounselled secondary school students. In other words, career counselling significantly influences the choice of career of secondary school students. Hence, the null hypothesis, H_0 , which state that there is no significant difference between the pattern of career choice of counseled and uncounselled secondary school students is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, H_1 ; which states that there is a significant difference between the pattern of career choice of counselled and uncounselled secondary school students is accepted.

This finding is consisted with the empirical findings of so many studies. For example, in a study on influence of counselling on career preference among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2012), observed that vocational guidance significantly influence vocational aspirations of secondary school’s students. Akindutire and Olanipekun (2012), in their study on factors influencing the choice of

health science subject at the senior secondary school level in Ekiti State, pointed out that school counselling services rendered by school counsellors coupled with principals significantly influence the choice of the health science subject at senior secondary school level by ensuring that those students who have ability, interested in, and have the resources to study health science were discouraged from choosing another career. Career guidance and counselling therefore eliminates overwhelming ignorance of adolescents on their choice of career prospects and brings to them an increased understanding of self-educational, vocational and social information needed to make wise career choices.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant difference between self-concept and career choice of counselled and uncounselled secondary school students. The independent variable in this hypothesis is self-concept while the dependent variable is career choice.

Table 2: T-test summary of the difference between self-concept and career choice of counseled and uncounselled secondary school students

Group	N	X	SD	DF	t-(cal)	t-value
Self-concept of Counseled students	100	17.94	2.42			
				198	3.0732	1.9720
Self concept of Uncounselled students	100	16.68	3.33			

Significant at 0.05

The result indicates that the calculated t-value of 3.0732 is greater than the critical value of 1.9720 at 0.05 level of significance and 198 degree of freedom. This means that career counselling significantly influences the self-concept of counselled secondary school students which affected their choice of career. Base on this observation, the null, hypothesis, H_0 ; which states that there is no significant difference between self-concept and career choice of counselled and uncounseled secondary school students is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, H_1 ; which state that there is a significant difference between self-concept career choice of counselled and uncounseled secondary school students is accepted.

This finding is in harmony with the findings of Obiunu and Ebunu (2010), which stated that career guidance and counselling is a process which enhances a persons' ability to develop and become aware of concepts about his/herself, environment including occupations and make appropriate career choices.

5.0 Conclusion

From the entire study and findings, it becomes more glaring that career counselling significantly influenced the factors that determine the choice of career and decision making process leading to wise and informed choice of career among secondary school students. It is on this premise that this study conclusively maintains that career counseling services are urgently needed in the career choice of secondary school students. Furthermore, it was also concluded that career counselling has effective and significant influence in enhancing self-efficacy as well as shaping the career awareness scope of secondary

school adolescents.

6.0 Recommendations

Owing to the findings of this research study, it was recommended that;

1. Schools need to provide career guidance and counseling services to learners during their secondary school days. This is because the career counselling programmes guide learners in making their career choices and aspirations before entering university.
2. Schools should be supplied with sufficient manpower in terms of professional counselors who will be able to guide, direct and assist the students towards achieving their ultimate goals in life.
3. Counsellors should be encouraged to organize visits to various factories, industries, and ministries to enable students get firsthand information on their future careers.
4. Career clubs should be introduced in schools which make available career literature and tactics from employers of labour
5. Career programmes should be developed to educate or guide parent and adolescents to make them aware of the new avenues of emerging and untraditional career choices of the 21st century to surmount traditional career choices as per their educational qualification.

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