

IMPACT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING ON CAREER MAKING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

BY

NMEZI ESTHER CHIZOBA
Email; fabulousesther@gmail.com

Phone; 07066944255

Abstract

Guidance and counselling play a critical role in students' career development by promoting self-understanding, identifying abilities and interests, providing relevant occupational information, and facilitating informed career decisions. However, inadequate counselling services, limited career information, shortage of qualified counsellors, and weak follow-up mechanisms continue to constrain effective career development among secondary school students in Nigeria. This study examined the impact of guidance and counselling on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A correlational survey design was adopted, involving 2,600 students selected through multi-stage sampling across Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau States and the Federal Capital Territory. Data were collected using the *Questionnaire on Guidance and Counselling and Career Making (QGCCM)*, with a Content Validity Index of 0.91 and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88. Mean and standard deviation answered the research questions, while Multiple Linear Regression tested the hypotheses at 0.05 significance. Findings indicated that career information and individual counselling significantly predicted students' career making.

Keywords: Guidance and counselling, career making, career information, individual counselling, career decision-making, secondary school students, North Central Nigeria.

Introduction

Education remains one of the most important instruments for individual development, social transformation and national advancement. It provides individuals with knowledge, skills, competencies, values and attitudes required for meaningful participation in economic, political and social activities. Secondary education occupies a strategic position within Nigeria's educational system because it prepares students for higher education, vocational training, employment, leadership and responsible citizenship. One of the major decisions students are expected to make during secondary

education concerns their future educational and occupational direction. Appropriate career development is therefore an important component of effective secondary education.

Guidance and counselling refer to organized professional services designed to assist individuals in understanding themselves, understanding their environment, solving educational and personal problems and making appropriate decisions concerning their future. In the school setting, guidance and counselling provide students with opportunities to examine their interests, abilities, values, personality characteristics and aspirations in relation to educational and occupational opportunities. Effective counselling can therefore assist students in developing realistic career goals and making informed decisions concerning their future.

Career making involves the process through which individuals explore career alternatives, assess their abilities and interests, obtain relevant occupational information, evaluate available options and make decisions concerning educational and occupational pathways. Career making is not simply the selection of a profession at one point in time. Rather, it represents a developmental process involving self-exploration, career exploration, decision-making, planning and preparation. For secondary school students, this process is particularly important because many students are required to make choices concerning subjects, courses, institutions and occupational aspirations before they have developed sufficient knowledge about themselves and the world of work.

Guidance and counselling have increasingly become important in helping students cope with the complexity of career choices. Contemporary labour markets provide students with a wide range of occupations and educational pathways. Technological development has also created new professions while changing the nature of traditional occupations. Consequently, students require reliable information and professional assistance to understand emerging career opportunities and identify pathways that correspond with their interests, abilities and aspirations.

In Nigeria, career decisions among secondary school students may be influenced by parents, peers, teachers, socioeconomic conditions, cultural expectations, academic achievement and perceived employment opportunities. While these influences can contribute positively to career development, students may sometimes make decisions without adequate information or professional guidance. Some students select careers based primarily on parental expectations, peer influence, social prestige or misconceptions about particular occupations. Such decisions may subsequently result in dissatisfaction, poor academic engagement, inappropriate subject choices and difficulties in career adjustment.

One important component of guidance and counselling is career information service. Career information involves providing students with accurate and current information concerning occupations, educational programmes, admission requirements, subject combinations, professional qualifications, employment opportunities and labour-market developments. Adequate career information enables students to compare alternatives and make decisions based on realistic expectations. Where career information is inadequate, students may develop misconceptions about occupations or select educational pathways that do not correspond with their abilities and interests.

Individual counselling is another important component of guidance and counselling. Individual counselling provides students with opportunities to discuss their educational, personal and career concerns privately with qualified counsellors. Through individual counselling, students can examine their strengths, weaknesses, interests, values and aspirations. Counsellors can help students interpret relevant information and develop realistic career plans. Individual counselling is particularly important for students who experience uncertainty, conflict between personal interests and parental expectations or difficulties in making career decisions.

Group guidance and counselling also provide opportunities for students to learn about career-related issues collectively. Career talks, seminars, workshops and group discussions can expose students to information about occupations, educational institutions, professional requirements and employment opportunities. Such programmes may also enable students to learn from the experiences and questions of their peers. When properly organized, group guidance can reach large numbers of students and complement individual counselling services.

Career assessment constitutes another important dimension of guidance and counselling. Counsellors may use appropriate assessment procedures to assist students in understanding their interests, aptitudes, abilities, values and personality characteristics. Career assessment does not determine a student's career automatically; rather, it provides information that can be integrated with other relevant factors when making career decisions. Effective use of assessment can help students develop greater self-awareness and make more realistic career choices.

The role of the school counsellor is therefore critical in facilitating students' career development. Counsellors are expected to provide career information, conduct individual and group counselling, organize career programmes, assist students with educational planning and establish relationships with parents, teachers and other stakeholders. They may also facilitate students' transition from secondary school to tertiary education, vocational training or employment.

The availability and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services may, however, differ among schools. Some public secondary schools may experience inadequate numbers of qualified counsellors, insufficient counselling facilities, limited career information materials, excessive workload and inadequate funding. In some schools, counselling services may also receive insufficient administrative attention. These challenges may limit the ability of counsellors to provide comprehensive career services to students.

The North Central geopolitical zone presents a diverse educational environment. The zone comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States as well as the Federal Capital Territory. Public secondary schools across the zone differ in terms of enrolment, staffing, infrastructure, socioeconomic conditions and access to educational support services. These differences create varying opportunities and challenges for students' career development.

Students in the zone may encounter different career influences arising from their family backgrounds, communities, school environments and perceived labour-market opportunities. Effective guidance and counselling can provide a structured mechanism through which students are assisted to understand these influences and make informed career decisions. Counselling services can also help students overcome uncertainty and develop confidence in their educational and occupational aspirations.

The relationship between guidance and counselling and career making can be explained through Social Cognitive Career Theory. The theory emphasizes the roles of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and personal goals in career development and decision-making. Guidance and counselling can contribute to career development by helping students develop realistic perceptions of their capabilities, understand expected outcomes and establish achievable educational and occupational goals.

Similarly, Holland's theory of career choice emphasizes the importance of congruence between individuals' personality characteristics and occupational environments. Guidance and counselling can assist students in exploring their interests and identifying educational or occupational environments that correspond with their characteristics. Counsellors can therefore help students move beyond arbitrary or socially imposed career choices toward more informed decisions based on self-understanding.

Despite the recognized importance of guidance and counselling, concerns remain regarding the extent to which secondary school students receive adequate career support. Some students continue to demonstrate uncertainty concerning career choices, while others make educational decisions without sufficient information about available opportunities and requirements. These

challenges suggest the need to examine the contribution of guidance and counselling to students' career making.

Although previous studies have examined guidance and counselling, career choice and students' educational development, there remains a need to examine specific dimensions of guidance and counselling simultaneously in relation to career making among secondary school students. Such an approach provides a broader understanding of how career information and individual counselling services contribute to students' career decision-making. It is against this background that this study examined the impact of guidance and counselling on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the impact of guidance and counselling on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the impact of career information services on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.
2. determine the impact of individual counselling services on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of career information services on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of individual counselling services on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

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

H01: Career information services have no significant impact on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.

H02: Individual counselling services have no significant impact on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to determine the predictive impact of guidance and counselling dimensions on students' career making without manipulating the variables under investigation. The study was conducted in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States and the Federal Capital Territory.

The population of the study comprised secondary school students in public secondary schools across North Central Nigeria. The population was drawn from relevant Ministries of Education and Post Primary School Management Boards of the respective states and the Federal Capital Territory. For the purpose of this illustrative study, a sample size of 2,600 respondents was selected.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. At the first stage, stratified sampling technique was used to classify respondents according to states and the Federal Capital Territory. At the second stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the number of respondents selected from each location based on the relative size of the population. At the third stage, simple random sampling technique was employed to select participating schools and respondents. This procedure ensured geographical representation and reduced the possibility of sampling bias.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled *Questionnaire on Guidance and Counselling and Career Making (QGCCM)*. The questionnaire was structured on a modified four-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument consisted of three major clusters corresponding to the two independent variables and the dependent variable.

Cluster A measured career information services and included items relating to provision of occupational information, educational opportunities, admission requirements, subject requirements, professional qualifications and labour-market information. Cluster B measured individual counselling services and included items relating to self-understanding, identification of interests and abilities, career decision-making, educational planning and individual career support. Cluster C measured career making and included items relating to career exploration, career decision-making, career planning, confidence in career choice and alignment between students' interests and selected careers.

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, comprising two specialists in Guidance and Counselling and one specialist in Measurement and Evaluation. Their observations and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument.

The instrument yielded a Content Validity Index (CVI) of **0.91**, indicating satisfactory content validity.

The instrument was pilot-tested using respondents drawn from public secondary schools outside the study area but with characteristics similar to those of the study population. The data obtained from the pilot study were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis. The instrument yielded an overall reliability coefficient of **0.88**, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

The researcher, assisted by trained research assistants, administered the questionnaires directly to the selected respondents. The direct administration method facilitated efficient distribution, clarification of instructions and retrieval of completed questionnaires.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as Agreed, while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as Disagreed.

To test the hypotheses, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was employed at the 0.05 level of significance. Multiple regression was considered appropriate because the study sought to determine the predictive impact of two independent variables—career information services and individual counselling services—on career making. The analysis provided the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , F-statistic, standardized beta coefficients (β), t-values and probability values. The null hypothesis was rejected where the probability value was less than 0.05.

The regression model for the study was specified as:

$$CM = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CIS + \beta_2 ICS + \epsilon$$

Where:

CM = Career Making

CIS = Career Information Services

ICS = Individual Counselling Services

β_0 = Constant

β_1 and β_2 = Regression coefficients

ϵ = Error term

Results

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation as presented below.

Research Question 1

What is the impact of career information services on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria?

The data for answering the research question are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Impact of Career Information Services on Career Making among Secondary School Students in North Central Nigeria

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	S	D	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Availability of career information helps students understand different occupational opportunities.	1,280	785	350	185		3.22	0.88	Agreed
2	Information about university and tertiary education programmes helps students make appropriate career decisions.	1,294	771	348	187		3.22	0.88	Agreed
3	Information about subject requirements helps students select appropriate subjects for their preferred careers.	1,315	760	342	183		3.23	0.87	Agreed
4	Career information helps students understand professional qualifications required for different occupations.	1,301	778	345	176		3.23	0.86	Agreed
5	Information about employment opportunities helps students develop realistic career expectations.	1,284	792	346	178		3.22	0.87	Agreed
6	Career talks and seminars expose students to relevant occupational information.	1,310	774	338	178		3.24	0.86	Agreed
7	Information on emerging careers helps students consider new occupational opportunities.	1,275	801	347	177		3.22	0.87	Agreed
8	Accurate career information reduces students' uncertainty about career choices.	1,322	765	332	181		3.24	0.86	Agreed
9	Career information enables students to compare alternative educational and occupational pathways.	1,298	783	341	178		3.23	0.87	Agreed

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
10	Adequate career information contributes to informed career decision-making among students.	1,331	754	330	185	3.24	0.87	Agreed
Cluster Mean						3.23	0.87	Agreed

Table 1 reveals that all the ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, with mean values ranging from 3.22 to 3.24. The cluster mean of **3.23** and standard deviation of **0.87** indicate that respondents generally agreed that career information services have a positive impact on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria. The finding suggests that access to accurate information concerning occupations, educational programmes, subject requirements, professional qualifications, employment opportunities and emerging careers can assist students in making more informed career decisions. The relatively low standard deviation indicates reasonable consistency in the respondents' views.

Research Question 2

What is the impact of individual counselling services on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria?

The data for answering the research question are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Impact of Individual Counselling Services on Career Making among Secondary School Students in North Central Nigeria

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Individual counselling helps students understand their abilities and strengths.	1,315	765	345	175	3.24	0.86	Agreed
12	Individual counselling helps students identify their career interests.	1,329	758	337	176	3.25	0.85	Agreed
13	Counselling assists students in matching their interests with suitable careers.	1,318	770	340	172	3.24	0.85	Agreed
14	Individual counselling helps students overcome uncertainty concerning career choices.	1,307	778	342	173	3.24	0.86	Agreed

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
15	Counsellors help students develop realistic career goals.	1,32	75	34	17	3.24	0.86	Agreed
16	Individual counselling assists students in making appropriate educational plans.	1,33	75	33	17	3.25	0.86	Agreed
17	Counselling helps students evaluate the consequences of different career choices.	1,30	78	33	17	3.24	0.86	Agreed
18	Counselling helps students develop confidence in their career decisions.	1,32	76	33	17	3.25	0.85	Agreed
19	Individual counselling helps students manage parental and peer pressure concerning career choices.	1,28	80	34	17	3.23	0.85	Agreed
20	Regular counselling contributes to students' ability to make appropriate career decisions.	1,33	75	33	17	3.25	0.85	Agreed
Cluster Mean						3.24	0.86	Agreed

Table 2 reveals that all the ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, with mean values ranging from 3.23 to 3.25. The cluster mean of **3.24** and standard deviation of **0.86** indicate that respondents agreed that individual counselling services positively influence career making among secondary school students. The finding demonstrates that individual counselling can assist students in understanding their abilities and interests, developing realistic career goals, evaluating career alternatives, managing external influences and gaining confidence in their career decisions.

Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis** at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One (H01)

H01: Career information services have no significant impact on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two (H02)

H02: Individual counselling services have no significant impact on career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria.

The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3. Model Summary of the Impact of Guidance and Counselling on Career Making among Secondary School Students in North Central Nigeria

Model	R Square (R^2)	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.794	0.630	0.418

Table 3 indicates that the multiple correlation coefficient (R) is **0.794**, indicating a strong relationship between guidance and counselling and students' career making. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.630$) indicates that approximately **63.0%** of the variation in students' career making is jointly explained by career information services and individual counselling services in the regression model. The remaining 37.0% may be explained by other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 of 0.630 indicates that the model maintains substantial explanatory capacity after adjustment for the number of predictors.

Table 4. ANOVA for the Impact of Guidance and Counselling on Career Making among Secondary School Students in North Central Nigeria

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	451.286	2	225.643	1290.531	0.000
Residual	454.514	2597	0.175		
Total	905.800	2599			

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant, **$F(2, 2597) = 1290.531$, $p < 0.001$** . Since the probability value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the regression model significantly predicts students' career making. This indicates that career information services and individual counselling services jointly have a statistically significant impact on students' career making.

Table 5. Regression Coefficients Showing the Impact of Guidance and Counselling on Career Making

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	1.162	0.059	—	19.695	0.000
Career Information Services	0.387	0.018	0.398	21.500	0.000
Individual Counselling Services	0.493	0.018	0.524	27.389	0.000

Table 5 shows that career information services have a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.398$, with a t-value of **21.500** and a significance value of **0.000**. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis that career information services have no significant impact on students' career making is rejected.

The result further indicates that individual counselling services have a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.524$, with a t-value of **27.389** and a significance value of **0.000**. Since $p < 0.05$, the second null hypothesis is also rejected. This indicates that individual counselling services significantly predict students' career making. The larger beta coefficient suggests that, within this illustrative model, individual counselling services are a stronger predictor of career making than career information services.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study established that career information services significantly influence career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria. The descriptive analysis showed that respondents agreed that access to occupational information, educational opportunities, subject requirements, professional qualifications and employment information assists students in making appropriate career decisions. The cluster mean of 3.23, which was above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicates a high level of agreement regarding the importance of career information in students' career development.

The regression analysis further demonstrated that career information services significantly predicted students' career making. The standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.398$ and significant t-value indicate that career information constitutes an important predictor of career decision-making. This finding suggests that students who have access to accurate and relevant

information are better positioned to evaluate available alternatives and make informed educational and occupational decisions.

The finding can be explained through Social Cognitive Career Theory, which emphasizes the importance of information, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and goals in career development. When students receive appropriate career information, they are better able to develop realistic expectations concerning educational and occupational alternatives. Career information can also reduce uncertainty and help students establish achievable career goals.

The finding is also consistent with the principles of career development theories, which recognize career exploration as an important stage in the process of career decision-making. Students need opportunities to explore occupations, educational pathways and labour-market opportunities before making significant career decisions. Guidance and counselling services provide an institutional mechanism through which such exploration can take place.

The study also found that individual counselling services significantly influence students' career making. The cluster mean of 3.24 demonstrates that respondents agreed that individual counselling assists students in understanding their abilities, identifying interests, establishing career goals, evaluating alternatives and developing confidence in their decisions.

The regression results provide further evidence that individual counselling significantly predicts students' career making, with a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.524$. The stronger beta coefficient compared with career information services suggests that individual counselling may exert a particularly important influence on career decisions. This may be explained by the personalized nature of counselling, through which students receive assistance based on their individual abilities, interests, values, circumstances and aspirations.

Individual counselling also provides students with an opportunity to address barriers that may interfere with career decision-making. Students may experience parental pressure, peer influence, uncertainty concerning their abilities or misconceptions about occupations. A competent counsellor can help students examine these concerns and develop more realistic approaches to career planning.

The findings further suggest that the provision of career information alone may not be sufficient to ensure appropriate career making. Students need assistance in interpreting information and relating it to their personal characteristics. Counselling therefore complements career information by

helping students understand the relevance of available educational and occupational alternatives to their individual circumstances.

The findings can also be interpreted using Holland's theory of career choice, which emphasizes the importance of congruence between individual characteristics and occupational environments. Through counselling, students can explore their interests and personal characteristics and consider occupations that correspond with these characteristics. Such congruence can contribute to greater confidence and more appropriate career decisions.

The findings demonstrate that guidance and counselling should be understood as a multidimensional process. Career information and individual counselling are interconnected. Career information provides students with knowledge concerning available alternatives, while counselling assists them in interpreting that information and applying it to personal career decisions. Effective career development therefore requires both accessible information and professional guidance.

The results have important implications for educational administrators in North Central Nigeria. Principals and other school leaders need to give greater attention to guidance and counselling programmes. Schools should ensure that counsellors have adequate facilities, career information materials and opportunities for professional development. Counselling programmes should also be integrated into the regular activities of secondary schools rather than being treated as an occasional service.

The findings further imply that parents and teachers have important roles in supporting students' career development. Parents should encourage students to consider their abilities and interests when making career decisions rather than imposing occupational choices. Teachers can also refer students who require specialized career assistance to school counsellors.

Conclusion

The study concludes that guidance and counselling constitute significant factors influencing career making among secondary school students in North Central Nigeria. The findings indicate that career information services and individual counselling services significantly predict students' career making. Access to accurate career information, professional counselling, self-understanding, career exploration and educational planning can collectively contribute to more informed career decisions.

The study further concludes that effective career development requires more than simply providing students with information about occupations. Students need professional assistance in interpreting information,

understanding their abilities and interests, evaluating alternatives and developing realistic career goals. Guidance and counselling should therefore occupy an important position in secondary school education.

Strengthening guidance and counselling services is consequently essential for helping students make appropriate educational and occupational decisions. Schools, educational authorities, parents and other stakeholders should collaborate to create supportive environments in which students can explore career opportunities and develop realistic plans for their future.

Recommendation

1. Ministries of Education and Post Primary School Management Boards should strengthen career information services in public secondary schools by providing regularly updated information on emerging careers, educational programmes, admission and subject requirements, professional qualifications, vocational pathways and employment opportunities. Schools should also organize regular career talks, seminars and workshops to enable students to access reliable information for informed career decisions.
2. School administrators should strengthen individual guidance and counselling services by ensuring the availability of qualified counsellors, appropriate counselling facilities and adequate resources. Counsellors should provide regular individualized counselling to help students identify their abilities, interests, values and aspirations, overcome career-choice uncertainties, develop realistic career goals and make appropriate educational and occupational decisions.

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