

Perceived Influence of Guidance and Counselling Services on Career Choice among Students in Secondary Schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' career choice in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The study was guided by three research questions. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 7,472 students in 22 secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area. The sample of the study was 380 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a researchers-developed structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Guidance and Counselling Services on Students' Career Choice Questionnaire (IGCSCCQ)". Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings revealed the influence of orientation service, career talk and career seminar on students' career choice in secondary schools. It was therefore recommended, among others, that schools should organize orientation programme in such a way that can offer to students the desired requirement for career choice through proper funding, professionals and standard arrangement for the programme.

Keywords: guidance, counselling, services, career, choice

Introduction

The main goal of education is to provide opportunities for students to reach their full potentials in the area of educational, vocational, social and emotional development. According to Lubawa et al. (2021), Guidance Services assist students in planning for their future career, choosing their subject combinations and getting information on available career opportunities. They also help them in understanding the world of work and assist them in becoming aware of their personal abilities, skills and interests. They also contribute to informing them of training courses and employment opportunities.

It is obvious that the general state of unemployment in Benue State and Makurdi Local Government Area in particular as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics by Household and Micro Enterprise (2010) could be as a result of insufficient or lack of

career awareness. It seems that lack of awareness about skills, values and interests can cause problems when trying to choose a career. Another major problem faced by students in secondary schools with respect to making career choice is lack of orientation and guidance from instructors in the school setting. Confusion of choosing a related course due to their incapability to successfully scale through the preferred course can affect students' aspiration of career.

Career aspiration is one of the biggest dilemmas and challenges in any student's life. It involves interplay of many factors which are complicatedly tangled. This implies that it is not a straightforward task and involves a difficult process of decision-making. The influence of career choice has a lasting impact on an individual. Thus, one wrong decision can change the fate of a student. It is difficult for everyone to make a decision regarding their career. Secondary school education is a stage at which students determine the field of study they will likely pursue in higher education, it is a level after the primary education and before higher education. Its position in educational system is thus very important. The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2012) stated that the aim of education is to inculcate in the child, the spirit of inquiry; and secondly, education should equip students to live effectively in the modern age of science and technology. Furthermore, attention was drawn to the need for counselling programmes in schools.

The place of guidance and counselling programmes in schools cannot be overemphasized especially with the daily expansion in the enrolment of students in schools, growing needs of youths in Nigeria, the continual unrest in schools and the repeated changes in the educational system. Guidance and counselling is the assistance given to the students or individuals through group techniques to help them function more effectively in their school programmes and workplace (Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2014). The UNESCO module on guidance and counselling (2010) also stated that guidance is a programme of service to individuals based on their needs and influence of environmental factors. Guidance and counselling is a professional field which has a broad range of activities, programmes and services geared towards assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment and their world and also to develop adequate capacity for making wise choice on their career. There is agreement among experts that there are three major components of guidance and counselling. These are: educational guidance, vocational guidance and personal social guidance (UNESCO, 2010). Under these three major areas, there are several guidance and counselling services such as appraisal, information, placement, orientation, evaluation, and follow-up. Each of these major components of guidance and counselling along with their services addresses students' needs, challenges and problems. Career choices seem to be one of these challenges (Denga, 2011).

Career is used to describe the total composite of ones' activity throughout life. Alike and Egbochuku (2019) defined career as the sequence of occupation, job and positions occupied during a person's working life. Career choice is a process in which one not only chooses, but also eliminates among possible options of job in order to consequently hold

one as a means of livelihood. Cavus et al. (2015) maintained that career choice refers to someone deciding what he wants to do to make a living. According to Powers (2013), a career choice is the process of determining a field of learning that requires certain knowledge and skills, acquired through a specific educational programme which results in a certificate or degree attesting to one's accomplishment. Powers added that career choice represents incipient task in the course of career development and could be predictive of later vocational attainment.

Career aspiration has therefore become a complex task today as one has not only make the career planning but also has to do an exhaustive career research before making career aspiration so as to adjust with the evolving social-economic conditions (Wattles, 2009 as cited in Orewere et al., 2020). The researchers observed that most students who are in secondary schools do not have accurate information about occupational opportunities to help them make appropriate career choice for future opportunities.

The place of guidance programmes in schools cannot be overemphasized especially with the daily expansion in the enrolment of students in schools, growing needs of youths in Nigeria, the continual unrest in schools and the repeated changes in the educational system (Bolu-Steve & Oredugba, 2017). Guidance services have become an essential programme in schools and this cannot be done in isolation. Contextual to this research, guidance has been defined by Umar and Haruna (2014) as the total programme of a number of highly specialized activities implemented by specialists to help individuals make wise and intelligent choice and decisions. Eyo et al. (2010) averred that guidance is a programme of service to individuals based on their needs and the influence of environmental factors. Eyo et al. went ahead to state that guidance and counselling is a professional field which has a broad range of activities, programmes and services geared toward assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment and their world and also to develop adequate capacity for making wise choices and decisions.

Furthermore, guidance programmes for secondary school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational and academic difficulties of adolescent students. Career counsellors offer a wide range of career related programmes to students which are aimed at assisting students to plan their career, make informed decisions and choose a career which will lead him or her to the right vocation so as to make students enjoy their work (Eremie & Ibifari, 2018). The strategic position of counsellors in secondary schools helps to mould students, and help them to resolve their educational, emotional, behavioural and psychological challenges. These counselling services such as orientation, career talk and career seminar are rendered in tandem with other school personnel.

Orientation service entails acquainting new students with the academic environment in the school. An orientation activity helps the students to adjust to the new environment. At this point, students are exposed to the rules and regulation guiding behaviour and interpersonal relationship within the school. Students need career guidance to explore and

plan for future career endeavours based on their individual interests, skills and values. Participation in career guidance enhances linkage of academic and career experiences and thus, improves career preparation and management. Career orientation is a crucial factor for first-rate career decision making. Career orientation services include relevant information about education and training opportunities, occupations and their characteristics; labour market supply and demand. Similarly, it contains occupational implications of educational decisions, and on the learning pathways that lead to particular occupational destinations (Abubakar, 2011).

Iyoke (2019) studied impact of guidance services on the career choice of secondary school students in public secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The study revealed among others that orientation, appraisal, information, educational placement, referral and follow-up services impact on the career choice of secondary school students in public secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area to a great extent. Similarly, Bambang and Suryadi (2018) studied career orientation of senior secondary school students. The findings of the study reveal that majority of the secondary school students wanted to further their study to university and only small number of them wanted to find jobs or run their own business. The findings also show that school counsellors play a very important role in providing vocational guidance services for senior secondary students. Therefore, in order for students to have a bright career in future, school counsellors should improve the quality of vocational guidance services and plan comprehensive vocational guidance programmes.

Career talk is guidance and counselling programme that provides information on various occupations within an industry (Roth, 2010). It introduces students to the nature and scope of the work and educates them on the skills necessary to perform certain job functions. Roth (2010) maintained that in career talks, local business leaders visit school and speak about their unique experiences. They share insights, career guidance, lessons and tips to motivate and inspire students to make informed decisions about their future. Roth and Middleton (2016) added that in career talks, speakers are not asked to prepare slides or come with demonstrations rather, they are briefed to 'speak from the heart' about their career choices, what inspired them to choose their career path, subjects they studied and how these are relevant now, their failures, as well as successes, what their company does and why this is important, what they enjoy most about their career and skills currently relevant in the jobs they are doing now.

For Davidson (2016), career talks allow students to hear from real-life role models who can demonstrate the relevance and connection of what is taught in the classroom; they also allow students to gain an understanding of what different careers actually entail, while bringing the curriculum to life. The goal of career talks is to equip students with the inspiration and information to make better-informed decisions about their future career paths. Kuruku and Ibrahim (2013) studied impact of guidance and counselling on career choice among secondary school students in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State. Four hypotheses were tested using independent sample t-test and the result shows

that guidance and counselling services have a statistically significant effect on career choice of male and female students among secondary schools in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

A seminar is a form of academic instruction, either at an academic institution or offered by a commercial or professional organization. It has the function of bringing together small groups for recurring meetings, focusing each time on some particular subject in which everyone present is requested to participate. This is often accomplished through an ongoing socratic dialogue with a seminar leader or instructor, or through a more formal presentation of research. It is essentially a place where assigned readings are discussed, questions can be raised and debates can be conducted. Career seminar encompasses formal organization of guidance and counselling services with a predetermined objective of involving students in an active dialogue concerning their career aspiration. Career seminar thus provides avenue for participation in career guidance activities in school which provide students with necessary awareness, knowledge and skills required in the world of work. It is a strategy for providing occupational orientation to students to become aware of what is contained and required in the career of one's choice which matches interest and abilities. In career seminar, occupational orientation is viewed as an important aspect of the career development process; adolescents must identify their interests and abilities, balance them with labour market opportunities and gradually develop an occupational preference (Super et al., 2016).

The importance of providing transition enhancement assistance has been emphasized in the further education, training or employment of students. Career seminar helps students acquire the knowledge, skills and awareness necessary for effective career development (Amininiye & Patrick, 2009). Orewere et al. (2020) studied the effect of guidance and counselling services on students' career choice in selected secondary schools in Jos metropolis. The findings showed that there was no significant difference on the basis of gender in the guidance and counselling services offered to students and how it influence their career choices. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that more guidance and counselling centres should be set up with more professional counsellors employed in the schools and also Government should support guidance and counselling practically by providing funds.

It is commonly observed that many people found in different careers are not satisfied with what they are doing. This may be due to poor career choice. Career choice is one of the many important decisions students make while determining their future plans. This decision has impact on them throughout their lives. Career choice has been a serious problem among secondary school students in Nigeria. No matter what the student's age is, the choice of career is an important question for him or her. Consequently, a lot of students in secondary schools believe that their future is a glorious adventure in which they are bound to succeed. Many of them have the idea that they would be able to work in either the public or private establishments as soon as they complete secondary school education. Some have plans to become lawyers, engineers, medical doctors, accountants

and administrators. Most of the students in secondary schools are also worried about what they will do with their lives and the kind of adult they will become in future. They are also concerned about early entry into the occupational world and finding productive and rewarding place in and out of fast changing societies. Thus, how the students of today meet the problems of tomorrow will depend upon the amount of success they make in planning for their future. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the influence of guidance and counselling services on the career choice of students in secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. In this study guidance and counselling is considered in the areas of orientation services, career talk and career seminar.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' career choice in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the influence of orientation service on students' career choice in secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State.
2. Examine the influence of career talk on students' career choice in secondary schools.
3. Examine the influence of career seminar on students' career choice in secondary schools.

Research questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of orientation service on students' career choice in secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State?
2. What is the influence of career talk on students' career choice in secondary schools?
3. What is the influence of career seminar on students' career choice in secondary schools?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design explores and describes the opinions, feelings, views, preferences and attitudes of the selected sample of the population of the study (Shield, 2013). The population of this study consisted of 7,472 students in 22 secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area (Benue State Teaching Service Board, 2021). The sample of the study is 380 respondents (students) out of the population of 7,472 students in 22 public secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area. This is based on Taro Yamene (1964) in Emaikwu (2013) who states that for a study of known population "N" and error level, the minimum sample size requirement should be given by the formula,

$$\text{Formula: } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

The instrument used for data collection was researchers -developed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled “Influence of Guidance and Counselling Services on Students’ Career Choice Questionnaire (IGCSCCQ)”. The study employed a four point type modified rating scale with the response mode of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The arithmetic mean was used to determine the mean score on each item so as to accept or reject its influence based on the cut-off point of 2.50.

Presentation of results

Research question 1: What is the influence of orientation service on students’ career choice in secondary schools in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of orientation service on students’ career choice in secondary schools

S/N	Item description	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std.	Decision
1	Orientation services foster students’ awareness of tasks to be faced in different careers	380	190	133	38	19	3.30	.84	Accepted
2	Orientation services enable students to make wise decision on their career	380	133	152	38	57	2.95	1.03	Accepted
3	Orientation services present to students about concrete career competence which tends to help them in career choice	380	209	95	38	38	3.25	1.00	Accepted
4	Orientation services present an organized system of social and professional work for career choice	380	95	114	95	76	2.60	1.07	Accepted
5	Orientation services assist students to reflect on their ambition, interest and abilities about career choice	380	152	114	76	38	3.00	1.00	Accepted
Cluster		380					3.02	.99	Accepted

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation on the perceived influence of orientation service on students’ career choice in secondary schools as follows: 3.30, 2.95, 3.25, 2.60 and 3.00 with a corresponding standard deviation of .84, 1.03, 1.00, 1.07 and 1.00; and a cluster mean of 3.02 with a standard deviation of .99. This explains that orientation services foster students’ awareness of tasks to be faced in different careers, orientation

services present to students about concrete career competence which tends to help them in career choice, orientation services assist students to reflect on their ambition, interest and abilities about career choice, orientation services present an organized system of social and professional work for career choice, and orientation services enable students to make wise decision on their career. This result implies that orientation service is perceived to have influence on students' career choice in secondary schools.

Research question 2: What is the influence of career talk on students' career choice in secondary schools?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of career talk on students' career choice in secondary schools

S/No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std.	Decision
6	Career talk sustains students' interest in their chosen career	380	95	171	57	57	2.80	.98	Accepted
7	Career talk enables students to manage their career choice effectively	380	190	76	95	19	3.15	.96	Accepted
8	Career talk helps students to wisely choose their future career	380	152	133	19	76	2.95	1.12	Accepted
9	Career talk helps students to solve their conflicting career choice problems.	380	95	152	76	57	2.75	1.00	Accepted
10	Career talk helps students to discover their ability and interest in particular career	380	190	95	38	57	3.10	1.09	Accepted
	Cluster	380					2.95	1.03	Accepted

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation on the perceived influence of career talk on students' career choice in secondary schools as follows: 2.80, 3.15, 2.95, 2.75 and 3.10 with a corresponding standard deviation of .98, .96, 1.12, 1.00 and 1.09; and a cluster mean of 2.95 with a standard deviation of 1.03. This explains that career talk sustains students' interest in their chosen career, career talk enables students to manage their career choice effectively, career talk helps students to discover their ability and interest in particular career, career talk helps students to solve their conflicting career choice problems and that career talk helps students to wisely choose their future career. This result means that career talk is perceived to have positive influence on students' career choice in secondary schools.

Research question 3: What is the influence of career seminar on students' career choice in secondary schools?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of career seminar on students' career choice in secondary schools

S/No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std.	Decision
11	Career seminar provides students with knowledge and skills required in the world of work	380	152	95	95	38	2.95	1.03	Accepted
12	Career seminar helps students to be aware of career requirements.	380	114	152	19	95	2.75	1.14	Accepted
13	Career seminar helps students to explore range of occupation in the local, state and national levels	380	152	95	76	57	2.90	1.09	Accepted
14	Career seminar provides students with realistic decision about their future professional paths	380	76	171	76	57	2.70	.96	Accepted
15	Career seminar provides students with quality information, advice and guidance which help students to overcome career potential barriers	380	114	171	57	38	2.95	.92	Accepted
Cluster		380					2.85	1.03	Accepted

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation on the perceived influence of career seminar on students' career choice in secondary schools as follows: 2.95, 2.75, 2.90, 2.70 and 2.95 with a standard deviation of 1.03, 1.14, 1.09, .96 and .92. This explains that career seminar provides students with knowledge and skills required in the world of work, career seminar helps students to be aware of career requirements, career seminar helps students to explore range of occupation in the local, state and national levels, career seminar provides students with realistic decision about their future professional paths and that career seminar provides students with quality information, advice and guidance which help students to overcome career potential barriers. This result entails that career seminar is perceived to have positive influence on students' career choice in secondary schools.

Discussion of the findings

First finding revealed that orientation service is perceived to have influence on students' career choice in secondary schools. This means that orientation services foster students' awareness of tasks to be faced in different careers; enable students to make wise decision on their career, assist students to reflect on their ambition, interest and abilities about career choice, present an organized system of social and professional work for career choice and at the same time present to students about concrete career competence which tends to help them in career choice. This finding is in line with Iyoke (2019) whose study revealed among others that orientation, appraisal, information, educational, placement, referral and follow-up services impact on the career choice of secondary school students in public secondary schools to a great extent. Also, Bambang and Suryadi (2018) found that school counsellors play a very important role in providing vocational guidance

services for senior secondary students. Therefore, in order for students to have a bright career in future, school counsellors should improve the quality of vocational guidance services and plan comprehensive vocational guidance programmes.

The second finding revealed that career talk is perceived to have influence on students' career choice in secondary schools. This finding depicts that career talk sustains students interest in their chosen career, enables students to manage their career choice effectively, helps students to wisely choose their future career, helps students to solve their conflicting career choice problems and it also helps students to discover their ability and interest in particular career. This finding is consistent with Kuruku and Ibrahim (2013) who showed that guidance and counselling services have a statistically significant effect on career choice of male and female students among secondary schools.

The third finding revealed that career seminar is perceived to have influence on students' career choice in secondary schools. This finding implies that career seminar provides students with knowledge and skills required in the world of work; helps students to be aware of career requirements; helps students to explore range of occupation in the local, state and national levels; provides students with realistic decision about their future professional paths. It also provides students with quality information, advice and guidance which help students to overcome career potential barriers. This finding is inconsistent with Orewere et al. (2020) who showed that there was no significant difference on the basis of guidance and counselling services offered to students and the influence on career choice.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it has been established that guidance and counselling services such as orientation service, career talk and career seminar are perceived to have influence on students' career choice. This means that orientation services foster students' awareness of tasks to be faced in different careers and enable students to make wise decision on their career; career talk sustains students' interest in their chosen career, enables students to manage their career choice effectively. Career seminar provides students with knowledge and skills required in the world of work; helps students to be aware of career requirements; helps students to explore range of occupation in the local, state and national levels.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following are the recommendations:

- i. Schools should organize orientation programme in such a way that can offer students the desired opportunity to make appropriate career choice
- ii. Teachers and counsellors should be sensitized on career through workshops and seminars in order to equip them with the basic techniques of the service for effective result.
- iii. Ministry of Education, concerned Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and schools should frequently organize career seminars for students so as to update them with

the current trends in the labour market and its requirements, to enhance efficient career choice among students.

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