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COUNSELLING FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT AMONG SCHOOL LEAVERS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The present study investigated counseling for career development among secondary school students in Okigwe Education Zone I. The researcher raised two research questions and formulated a hypothesis to guide the study. The population of the study was 1,150 students in SS2. The sample of the study was 400 male and female students in senior secondary schools in Okigwe Education Zone I. Instruments used in data collection were Students Attitude toward Career Counselling Questionnaire (SACCQ); Career Counselling Questionnaire (CCQ) and Gender Perception Career Questionnaire (GPCQ). The three instruments were constructed by the researcher and through test-retest pilot study the reliability coefficient of the instrument was determined to be: 0.69; 0.72 and 0.75 respectively. The instruments were validated by five experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The finding of the study was that students considered other social factors such as socio-economic status of parents, prevailing economic climate, parents' considerations before selecting careers. There isn't much consideration for career guidance. The implication of these findings is that career counselors are ignored on career selection, igniting poor job satisfaction and unemployment. The researcher recommended that counselors should be made relevant through proper sensitization among parents.

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Introduction

Education is the highest instrument man has developed to improve both human capital and infrastructure in the world over. Emphasizing on the benefits of education to man, Bloom (1956) cited in Ubom (2001) identified three main aspects of educational objectives; these are cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. They are the objectives which learning processes are expected to achieve. An individual is considered useful to the society, when he/she possesses cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills. The three domains are inseparable and a person is not regarded as fully developed if any of the domains is missing. The three domains are like the three legs of a tripod; if any of them is defective, the tripod cannot stand.

According to Edet (2008), cognitive domain comprises knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Affective domain involves receiving, responding, valuing, organising and characterising, while psychomotor domain is made up of reflex movement, fundamental movements, perceptual movements, perceptual abilities, physical abilities, skilled movements and non-discursive communication (Bloom, 1956). If cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of students are well developed through proper counseling, they will make good career choice. Put differently, if proper counselling services are offered to students especially at the secondary school level, they will go for suitable career choice.

Career development is the decision of what one wants to do for a living and the ways to improve on that specific career choice (Iyoke, 2019; Makinde, 2017, Okirigwe, 2020; Nwamuo & Ugonna, 2015). Finding a fulfilling career and not just a job is crucial because the average person spends 45 to 50 years working. As a result, choosing a profession has grown more complex. However, most secondary school students lack the accurate information necessary to make wise career development decisions about the range of employment or skill opportunities available. For that, there is need for counselling for career development among school leavers in Imo State in particular and Nigeria in general.

Counselling can be described as a face-to-face interpersonal relationship in which a qualified counsellor assists a client or a group of clients to make appropriate decisions. According to Akinade (2005), counselling is a professional practice which strives to assist individuals (counselees) to resolve their peculiar challenges, concerns, difficulties, worries or doubts in diverse areas of their lives such as academic, careers and socio-personal matters. Student support services such as counselling assist in the production of graduates with the attributes of a complete individual, in the sense of forthrightness, acquisition of useful skills and inculcation of the right values for the survival of individuals in particular and advancement of the society in general (Ibijola, 2017; Idogho, 2011;

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Nwamuo & Ugonna, 2015). More so, majority of the students who complete secondary school education are between the ages of 16 and 19 years; thus most of them have no clear vision of career choice in the society and in tertiary institutions if they are furthering their studies.

They therefore need support services such as school counselling in order to cope with varying challenges that the unfolding life presents. At this stage of life for school leavers, there is need for counselling for career development. This is because counselling helps individuals to develop maximal intellectual, social, as well as vocational potentials. Career choice that leads to occupation as viewed by (Uba, 1983) is a developmental process throughout a person's life time. It is one of the most important decisions one has to make in life. People are capable of entering a number of career or occupation by virtue of their abilities. Callaway (1986) spells out clearly the factors influencing career development as intellectual ability of an individual, opportunity of educational and vocational guidance, availability of occupational information and the health of the individual.

Denga (1983) in his research identified the important periods when adolescents need career counselling. He calls these periods the tentative period (11–18 years) and the realistic period (19-22 years) (Denga, 1983; Nwamuo & Ugonna, 2015). According to him, during the first period, a child begins to identify what he is interested in and what he likes to do. He is never sure of what he will want to be in future. The child keeps changing his mind till he experiences transition during which he integrates his interest, capacity, and value system and comes up with a more realistic choice at the realistic period. Based on the forgoing, this study focused on counselling for career development among school leavers in Imo State, Nigeria.

The present research study was anchored on Rational Emotive Behaviour Theory of Ellis of 1958. The rational Emotive therapy (REBT) is a cognitive behavioural approach to conceptualization and treatment. The theory is based on the premise that our cognitions, emotions and behaviours are integrated system and that when there are emotional challenges, it leads to dysfunctional behaviours in our environment. The theory further states that the remedy is to re-define our thinking, feelings and behavior to align with how we want to operate in the world.

The importance and relevance of Rational Emotive behavior theory is that what students consider to be within their ability are given priority before other careers. Example a student who is good in sciences will always like to select courses in line with his/her ability (medicine, nursing, medical laboratory, etc). Addressing our thought towards self-efficacy may help us select courses even when we think we cannot perform. Through hard work, effort, persistence, we can achieve success in any area of endeavour.

The unemployment rate is ever growing and directing students properly into selecting courses where opportunities abound can only be substantiated through counsellors' guidance in secondary schools in Imo State.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study focused on counselling for career development among school leavers in Imo State, Nigeria. The specific purposes are to:

1. ascertain the attitude of senior secondary school students towards counselling for career development.
2. determine if there is any difference in the attitude of female and male students towards occupational Information.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the attitude of senior secondary school students towards counselling for career development?
2. What is the gender difference in attitude of students towards career selection in secondary schools in Okigwe Education Zone I?

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards occupational information.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 1150 SS2 students. The sample of the study was 400 male and female students in SSII category of senior secondary schools in Okigwe Education Zone I. The desired number was selected by adopting a multistage random sampling method whereas Taro Yamans formula was adopted in selecting the sample size.

Three instruments were used in data collection namely: Students' Attitude toward career counseling questionnaire (SACCQ); Career counseling questionnaire (CCQ) and Gender perception career questionnaire (GPCQ). The three instruments were constructed by the researcher and adopting a test-retest pilot study. The reliability coefficient of the instruments were determined to be: 0.69; 0.72 and 0.75 respectively. The instruments were validated by five experts. Two of the experts studied measurement and evaluation; another two were career counseling experts. The fifth expert was a gender studies specialist. Their observations and recommendation were included in the final copy of the questionnaires administered to participants in the present study. School authorities were contacted for the study. Similarly, participants were informed on the day the instruments

were to be administered. They were given out to participants in different schools on days specified and the exercise lasted for 45 minutes in each day. The use of research assistants enabled the researcher to conclude the exercise under four days. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Mean (X) and standard deviation std. dev.). The mean score of 2.5 was accepted as meaning that students have poor attitude towards career counseling. The hypothesis was tested by adopting a statistical package tagged t-test of mean difference.

Results

Research Questions 1: What is the attitude of participants toward career counseling in secondary schools in Okigwe Education Zone I?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics analysis (X & std. dev.) on the attitude of participants towards career counseling in secondary schools.

S/N	Item Statement	N	X	Std.
1	I know the area I will fit into my future endeavour	400	2.43	1.07
2	I will need the advice of my parents in career selection	400	2.31	1.02
3	Availability of opportunities may determine what to select	400	2.56	0.92
4	Career selection is dependent on parents socio-economic status	400	2.72	0.81
5	I think my ability and choice of subject is more important than a counselor's guidance	400	2.61	1.04
6	Counseling can't replace talent	400	2.80	0.91
7	I prefer having a handcraft than going for the services of a counselor	400	2.71	0.86
8	Time will tell what I will choose as a career	400	2.68	0.99
9	I will select any science profession	400	2.63	0.94
10	My faith detest some professions in medical domain (Faith Tabernacle)	400	2.67	1.06
	Pooled Mean		**2.56**	**0.84**

In table 1, students in SS2 selected for the study have poor attitude (negative) towards career counseling as many had developed likeness for some particular profession based on parents advice, perception, ability in school and prevailing economic climate. The professional skills of the counselor in career selection was hardly sought for. This opinion was deduced because of pooled mean of 2.56 and standard deviation of 0.84 was obtained from the responses expressed in Mean (X) and standard deviation.

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Research Question 2: What is the gender difference in attitude of students towards career selection in secondary schools in Okigwe Education Zone I?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics analysis in the gender difference toward career counseling in secondary schools in Okigwe Education Zone I.

S/N	Item Statement	N	X	Std.
11	My ability is a determinant factor in career selection	400	2.63	1.04
12	I don't consider gender as a factor in my future career	400	2.72	1.07
13	The need of the family is my pre-disposing factor than gender	400	2.51	0.91
14	Parents socio-economic status is another predisposing factor to career selection	400	2.65	0.94
15	What a man can do, a woman can do even better	400	2.67	1.03
16	I can select any career irrespective of my gender	400	2.71	0.90
17	What matter most is one's ability, skills and pre-disposition, not gender in career selection	400	2.58	0.87
18	I will like to compete with men in their area (driving, plumbing)	400	2.51	0.94
19	Three of my male friends are nurses in United States	400	2.57	0.93
20	As a female student I will like to be a footballer	400	2.60	0.89
	Pooled Mean		**2.62**	**0.95**

In Table 2, students, male/female did not consider their gender in career counseling and selection. The participants revealed that their talent, parents' socio-economic status, family need and ability are more important factors than their gender. Participants equally scored counselors low in their career pursuit. These suggest that seeking the services of counselors for career selection was not a priority. This was determined because of the pooled mean response of 2.62 and standard deviation of 0.95 which represented an even distribution of scores.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards occupational information through counseling services.

Table 3: T-test analysis on the significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards occupational information through counselling services.

Variable	N	X	Std. Dev.	df	L.S.	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	Remark
Male	200	2.43	1.82					
				398	0.05	1.32	1.960	Reject Ho_1
Female	200	2.97	1.02					

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In table 3, the mean $\bar{X}$ score of responses received males and females were 2.43 (male and 2.47 (female). Standard deviation for male participants was 0.82 and female 1.02. Expressed degree of freedom was 398, level of confidence 0.05. The value of calculated 't' was 1.32 whereas the table 't' was 1.960. The decision to reject or accept the hypothesis is based on the two values of t_{cal} and t_{crit}. On the table the value of t_{cal} (1.32) is less than the value of t_{crit} (1.960). It therefore means that the hypothesis of no significant difference is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in attitude of students towards occupational information through counseling services by gender.

DISCUSSION

It was found in the research question one that the general attitude of senior secondary school students towards counselling for occupational development is positive but poor. In the view of Isiugo-Abanihe and Odeniyi (2010), most students pay attention to career development programmes if they are exposed to it but other factors such as employment climate precedes. This is corroborated by Ubani (2008); Nwamuo & Ugonna, 2015); and Denga (1983) in their studies on attitude of students towards vocational guidance which confirmed that students consider the economic climate and family needs most in career selection process.

For the research question two, it was found that sex (gender) has no significant influence on the attitude of students towards occupational information. According to Olayinka (1973), most students, notwithstanding their gender give attention to career choice. This finding is in line with Denga (1983), who concluded in his study that the attitude of male and female students towards vocational guidance is favourable to some extent and is not oriented toward gender.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that proper career counselling is very valuable to secondary schools students. This is because counselling aids students in making career decisions so they can compete for the right field in which they excel rather than imitating their peers and choosing the incorrect career field. This study therefore concludes that the extant of student career performance depends on the effectiveness of career development services offered in secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. The research recommends that the secondary school authorities should encourage and engage counsellors who should emphasise the relationship

between school subjects and future career of the students to enable them make appropriate career choice.

2. In secondary schools, Students should be encouraged to discuss career options with their guidance counsellors and be aware of how certain subjects relate to particular careers.
3. The counsellor should be required to attend professional conferences to learn about cutting-edge client therapies.

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