

# Influence of Guidance and Counselling Services on Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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**Abstract:** *The study investigated influence of guidance and counselling services on career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. The research adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 66,164 respondents. A sample size of 399 was drawn using the Taro Yamen formula. The study implied the simple random sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled "Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice/Academic Achievement Questionnaire (GCSCCAAQ) with a four point rating scale designed to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was content and face validated by experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement and Evaluation, while a reliability coefficient value of 0.74 was obtained using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. Means and Standard Deviations were used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. It was found that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational, vocational and personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. The study concluded that guidance and counselling services such as educational, vocational and personal social counselling programme in school assist students to harmonize their abilities, interests and values and thereby help them to develop their full potential. The study recommended that schools should be supplied with sufficient manpower in terms of trained counsellors who will be able to guide, direct and assist the students towards achieving their ultimate goal in life.*

**Keywords:** *Guidance and Counselling, Services, Career Choice, Academic Achievement, Secondary School, Students.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, secondary school education has been the engine room for acquiring knowledge. This is a time when students are made to understand or learn about other subjects that determine the course of study which one would want to engage in higher education after primary school as opined by Melvin (2015). Where it is placed today in the educational system depicts its relevance. Schwarzeller (2016) stated that a school is regarded as that which gives an outside view of what needs to happen in order for change to occur and also an equal opportunity for building up ones strengths and talents. In Nigeria, educational reforms always place secondary schools in the fore front. To be precise, it is seen as a strong avenue for the acquisition of skill,

experience and knowledge cum wide range of vocational prospects for youths (Ezekwesili, 2006). This is a system that is geared towards strengthening secondary school education and providing students with more practical knowledge that can make them strong and stand on their own after graduation. Individual differences exist among people which invariably has an effect on the personality of the individuals and what they are capable of doing (Kutara, 2017). Differences in the individual growth rate, intellect, school achievement, sex usually set the pace where students look at themselves in career or vocations orientation. The home, school, mosque, church and the community are very vital factors in the students' environment, thereby, having an effect or impact in their choice of career or vocation (Olawanle & Obayemi, 2010) Factors such as parental expectation, big salary, societal prestige, personal security, cordial relationship with friends, changes for advancement as well as the nature of the work itself have directly or indirectly caused or made most students who are almost graduating from secondary schools into making unrealistic career choice.

Career cum vocation as used in the field of counselling has a broad and technical meaning (Gonzalez, 2012). Technically, career refers to sequence of role or a position including works, leisure and educational pursuit that may encompass a number of occupations, vocations or jobs one engages in during his working life (Seligman, 2010). It is a job for which it is possible to advance during ones working life, so that he or she may get greater responsibility and earn more money. Career can also be said to be the total life long experience of work that has come to serve as his means of earning a livelihood (Kolo, 2011). The career choice previously was not as difficult as it is today. There were fewer job opportunities and more importantly, parents, teachers and religious bodies were aware of the existing opportunities as well as requirements for entry into them. Today, the situation is that secondary school students hardly have full knowledge of the requirement for each job and can no longer keep track with the numerous career opportunities (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). It is against this background that the guidance and counseling services was introduced in order to assist the secondary students in choosing a good career.

Counselling simply means to give advice to (a person) on social or personal problems, especially professionally and the process of assisting and guiding clients, especially by a trained person on a professional basis, to resolve especially personal, social, or psychological problems and difficulties. Counseling is a collaborative process that involves the development of a confidential professional relationship that focuses on personal problems. The objective of counselling is to help you clarify issues, gain insight into your feelings and thoughts and deal effectively with problems. The major aim of guidance counselling service is to encourage students' academic, social, emotional and personal development. To reach this aim, it helps students get to know themselves better and find effective solutions to their daily problems. The guidance and counselling services in the school refers to the range of interventions provided to students to enable them to make choices in the key areas of their personal/social lives, education and career. Gesinde (2011) opined that the school guidance services also include educational development services. Many people will at some point in their lives, find themselves in the role of a counsellor without having a true understanding of the concept of counselling or what the role of the professional counsellor entails. There is a big difference between a professional counsellor and a person who uses some counselling skills as part of their role (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). A professional counsellor is a highly-trained individual who is able to use a different range of counselling approaches with their clients. First and foremost, counsellors need to be aware that no two people are alike. No two people understand the same language in the same way; their understanding will always be linked to their personal experience of the world. The role of the counsellor, therefore, is to help

the client to develop their own understanding of their situation. They will enable the client to explore aspects of their life and feelings, by talking openly and freely (Nikweze, 2005). Talking like this is rarely possible with family or friends, who are likely to be emotionally involved and have opinions and biases that may affect the discussion. Talking to a counsellor give clients the opportunity to express difficult feelings such as anger, resentment, guilt and fear in a confidential environment .The counsellor may encourage the client to examine parts of their lives that they may have found difficult or impossible to face before. There may be some exploration of early childhood experiences to throw some light on why an individual reacts or responds in certain ways in given situations. This is often followed by considering ways in which the client may change such behaviours. Good counselling should reduce the client's confusion, allowing them to make effective decisions leading to positive changes in their attitude and/or behaviour. The ultimate aim of counselling is to enable the client to make their own choices, reach their own decisions and act upon them. There are a number of skills that are required by counsellors. Perhaps the most important are good communication skills (Navin, 2009). Counsellors therefore, need to be particularly be able to listen effectively, giving their full attention to the client. They need to be aware of body language and other non-verbal communication. Clients will often communicate far more non-verbally than verbally, so this is an important area of skill. Questioning is an important skill for counsellors, just as it is in coaching. Counsellors use questioning both to improve their understanding (as a form of clarification), and also as an active way to help expose the clients feelings and emotions. They will also use reflection to show that they have heard the client, and to validate the client's feelings and words. Counsellors also need to be able to build a certain amount of rapport with their client, but not to an extent that would allow them to become emotionally involved (Mashige & Oduntan, 2011). They also need to be empathetic. This means that they are aware of their client's feelings and emotions. Empathy goes beyond being sympathetic (which is basically feeling sorry for someone), because the root of the word means to 'feel with'. Empathy therefore means that the counsellor understands how the client feels and can therefore ask appropriate questions and lead the client to positive conclusions. The nature of empathy is rooted in helping others, and particularly in empowering them to help themselves, so this is an essential skill area for counselling is suitable to the student based on their skills and interest. Educational counselling is a field focused on the preparation of students to professionally apply the theory and principles of guidance and counselling for the personal, social, educational, and vocational development of others. As in coaching Egbochukwu (1997) opined that counselling is rooted in the principle that individuals can help themselves, provided that they receive the right kind of support. A counsellor is not there to tell their clients what to do, or how to do it, but to help them work out for themselves what they are going to do, and the best approach to take. It is, therefore, very important that individuals, person-centered, and those who provide counselling need to remember that above all. Educational counselling help students to know the value of education, educate students and parents about the various courses in education. Educational counsellors suggest the stream of course or subject, and assist students at all levels, from elementary school to college, listen to students' concerns about academic, emotional or social problems. Help students process their problems and plan goals and action, and finally, mediate conflict between students and teachers.

Vocational counselling is a set of services designed to develop the skills and ability to practice a vocation in a productive way (Seligman, 2010). Those born with physical or cognitive impairments are taught how to perform in the workplace taking into consideration their abilities

and challenges. It is a process during which a vocational counsellor helps their clients decide, in an aware and independent way, which profession or occupation they want (Issa & Nwalo, 2008). In personal social counselling, individual counseling (sometimes called psychotherapy, talk therapy, or treatment) is a process through which clients work one-on-one with a trained mental health clinician in a safe, caring, and confidential environment. Individual counseling is counseling focused on the individual's immediate or near future concerns.

Academic achievement according to Ipaye (2004) is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals. It is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessments but there is no general agreement on how it is best evaluated or which aspects are most important whether via procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts. Furthermore, there are inconclusive results over which individual factors successfully predict academic achievement, elements such as test anxiety, environment, motivation, and emotions require consideration when developing models of school achievement. Individual differences in academic achievement have been linked to differences in intelligence and personality. Students with higher mental ability as demonstrated by IQ tests and those who are higher in conscientiousness (linked to effort and achievement motivation) tend to achieve highly in academic settings. A recent meta-analysis suggested that mental curiosity (as measured by typical intellectual engagement) has an important influence on academic achievement in addition to intelligence and conscientiousness (Anyanwu, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

When considering the educational stage at which choice is to be made, secondary school is the best option. The tertiary level of education is the level of education at which students limit themselves to a specific area of proficiency based on the foundation level while in the secondary school level. It is on this premises that this study seeks to address the problem of wrong career choices which deeply and highly influences the choice of career and academic achievement of students in secondary schools. This is because most of these students choose jobs without relating them to their interests, satisfaction and capacity to cope with the nature of the job. It is against the backdrop that the study was carried out to investigate the influence of guidance and counselling services on career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of guidance counselling services on career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent to which educational counselling services influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent to which vocational counselling services influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. Determine the extent to which personal social counselling services influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does educational counselling services influence and career choice academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 significance level.

1. There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 66,164 which comprised of all the secondary school students in Rivers State as at the period of this study. A sample size of 399 was drawn from the population using the Taro Yamen formula. The study implied the simple random sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled “Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice/Academic Achievement Questionnaire” (GCSCCAAQ) with a four point rating scale designed to elicit information from the respondents. The instrument was content and face validated by experts in the fields of Guidance and Counselling and Educational Measurement and Evaluation, while a reliability coefficient value of 0.74 was obtained using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation. Means and Standard Deviations were used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

### **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Educational Counseling Services Influence Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

S/No.	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Educational counseling helps students to maintain good study habit.	2.59	1.99	High Extent
2	It prepares students for academic challenges by relating educational agendas to their success in the future.	2.78	1.40	High Extent
3	It provide support to teachers by serving an important part of the complete team that addresses the educational	2.99	1.55	High Extent

	goals and needs of their students.			
4	Educational counsellors gather and share resources with teachers to help the staff develop their skills in classroom management and teaching effectiveness.	2.54	1.39	High Extent
5	It makes teaching and learning easy.	3.51	1.50	Very High Extent
<b>Grand Scores</b>		<b>2.88</b>	<b>1.57</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

From table 1 above, the mean score of 2.59 and standard deviation score of 1.99 implies that educational counseling helps students to maintain good study habit, the mean score of 2.78 and standard deviation score of 1.40 entails that it prepares students for academic challenges by relating educational agendas to their success in the future, the mean score of 2.99 and standard deviation score of 1.55 provides that it provide support to teachers by serving an important part of the complete team that addresses the educational goals and needs of their students, the mean score of 2.54 and standard deviation score of 1.39 implies that educational counsellors gather and share resources with teachers to help the staff develop their skills in classroom management and teaching effectiveness, the mean score of 3.51 and standard deviation score of 1.50 implies that it makes teaching and learning easy, while the grand mean score of 2.88 and standard deviation score of 1.57 provides that educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Vocational Counselling Services Influence Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

S/No.	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
6	Vocational counselling makes students motivated learners and facilitate their exploration of careers.	3.55	1.41	Very High Extent
7	It prepares students for career challenges by relating vocational agenda as to their success in the future	3.50	1.72	Very High Extent
8	It identifies strengths and weaknesses of the students.	2.50	1.50	High Extent
9	It explores options for the students.	2.50	1.41	High Extent
10	It identifies the individual set goals.	3.20	1.91	High Extent
<b>Grand Scores</b>		<b>3.05</b>	<b>1.59</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

From table 2 above, the mean score of 3.55 and standard deviation score of 1.41 implies that vocational counselling makes students motivated learners and facilitate their exploration of careers., the mean score of 3.50 and standard deviation score of 1.72 entails that it prepares students for career challenges by relating vocational agenda as to their success in the future, the mean score of 2.50 and standard deviation score of 1.50, provides that it identifies strengths and weaknesses of the students, the mean score of 2.50 and standard deviation score of 1.41 implies that it explores options for the students, the mean score of 3.20 and standard deviation score of 1.91 implies that it explores options for the students, while the grand mean score of 3.05 and

standard deviation score of 1.59 provides that vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which Personal Social Counselling Services Influence Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

S/No.	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
11	Personal social counselling brings about better expression and management of emotions, including anger.	3.61	1.53	High Extent
12	Increased confidence and decision-making skills.	2.65	1.30	High Extent
13	It gives the ability to change self-defeating behaviours/habit.	2.54	1.46	High Extent
14	Provides better expression and management of emotions, including anger	2.60	2.01	High Extent
15	It relieves individuals from depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions.	3.05	0.94	High Extent
<b>Grand Scores</b>		<b>2.89</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>High Extent</b>

From the table above, the mean score of 3.61 and standard deviation score of 1.53 implies that personal social counselling brings about better expression and management of emotions, including anger, the mean score of 2.65 and standard deviation score of 1.30 entails that personal social counselling brings about better expression and management of emotions, including anger, the mean score of 2.54 and standard deviation score of 1.46 provides that it gives the ability to change self-defeating behaviours/habit, the mean score of 2.60 and standard deviation score of 0.94 implies that it provides better expression and management of emotions, including anger, the mean score of 3.05 and standard deviation score of 0.94 implies it relieves individuals from depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions, while the grand mean score of 2.89 and standard deviation score of 1.45 provides that personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 4:** Z-test of the Difference in the Opinion of Students on the Extent to which Educational Counselling Services Influences Career Choice and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	z-cal	z-crit
Educational Counselling Services	3.91	2.94	399	397	0.05	1.103	
Career Choice and Academic Achievement	3.87	2.65		1.96			

In table 4 above, the calculated z-value of 1.103 is less than the critical value of 1.96, it is imperative therefore to state here that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State is accepted, and the alternate is thus rejected.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 5:** Z-test of the difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	z-cal	z-crit
Vocational Counselling Services	3.75	2.61					
			399	397	0.05	0.93	
Career Choice and Academic Achievement	3.21	2.24			1.96		

Table 5 above entails that the calculated z-value of 0.93 is less than the critical value of 1.96, it is imperative therefore to state here that the null hypothesis which states that there is significant difference in the opinions of students on the extent to which vocational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State is accepted, and the alternate is thus rejected.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 6:** Z-test of the difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling influences academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State.

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	df	$\alpha$	z-cal	z-crit
Personal Social Counselling Services	3.20	2.14					
			399	397	0.05	1.20	
Career Choice and Academic Achievement	3.11	2.70			1.96		

In table 6 above, the calculated z-value of 1.20 is less than the critical value of 1.96, it is imperative therefore to state here that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State is accepted, and the alternate is thus rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It was also found that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which educational counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of

secondary school students in Rivers State. Egbochukwu (1997) supported this finding and asserted that when considering the educational stage at which choice is to be made, secondary school is the best option. The tertiary level of education is the level of education at which students limit themselves to a specific area of proficiency based on the foundation level while in the secondary school level. It is on this premises that this study conclusively maintains that great majority of the students are deeply and highly influenced early in their lives as to career choice and most of these students choose jobs without relating them to their interests, satisfaction and capacity to cope with the nature of the job.

Furthermore, Navin (2009) opined that educational counselling help students to know the value of education, educate students and parents about the various courses in education. Educational counsellors suggest the stream of course or subject, and assist students at all levels, from elementary school to college, listen to students' concerns about academic, emotional or social problems. Help students process their problems and plan goals and action, and finally, mediate conflict between students and teachers.

The study also revealed that vocational counselling services significantly influences career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. In line with this finding Seligman (2010) opined in his study that vocational counselling is a set of services designed to develop the skills and ability to practice a vocation in a productive way. Those born with physical or cognitive impairments are taught how to perform in the workplace taking into consideration their abilities and challenges. It is a process during which a vocational counsellor helps their clients decide, in an aware and independent way, which profession or occupation they want (Issa & Nwalo, 2008).

Finally, it was found in this study that there is no significant difference in the opinion of students on the extent to which personal social counselling services influence career choice and academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State. In personal social counselling, individual counseling (sometimes called psychotherapy, talk therapy, or treatment) is a process through which clients work one-on-one with a trained mental health clinician in a safe, caring, and confidential environment (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013), and that individual counseling is counseling focused on the individual's immediate or near future concerns.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concluded that the major aim of guidance counselling service is to encourage students' academic, social, emotional and personal development. To reach this aim, it helps students get to know themselves better and find effective solutions to their daily problems. The guidance and counselling services in the school refers to the range of interventions provided to students to enable them to make choices in the key areas of their personal/social lives, education and career. In other words, guidance and counselling services such as educational, vocational and personal social counselling in schools assist students to harmonize their abilities, interests and values and thereby helping them to develop their full potentials. Counselling is a collaborative process that involves the development of a confidential professional relationship that focuses on personal problems.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that;

1. Schools should be supplied with sufficient manpower in terms of trained educational counsellors who will be able to guide, direct and assist the students towards achieving their ultimate goal in life.
2. Schools should also provide vocational counselling sessions and career programme for the students, parents and guardians and giving them information regarding the capabilities, intellectual abilities and limitation of their children as well as the need to choose a particular vocation in life.
3. Career clubs should also be introduced in schools which would make available personal social counselling services, career literature and talks from employers of labour.

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