

Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice for Personal Development of Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO

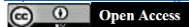
Keywords:

Akwa Ibom State,
career choice,
guidance and counselling
services,
secondary school.

Vol.01, No.04, 2026

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ABSTRACT

The study's main purpose was to examine the influence of guidance and counselling services on career choice for personal development of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted to obtain data using a self-constructed questionnaire titled Guidance-Counselling Services and Career Choice for Personal Development of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (GCSCCPDSSQ). The target population consisted of 42,762 individuals, including 6,225 teachers/counsellors and 36,537 senior secondary students. A sample size of 380 was determined using the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) table. The study used Simple random and purposive sampling methods. The instrument's validity was carried out by 3 experts through review, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.73. Data analysis made use of frequency counts, percentages, tables, and opinion poll for the research questions, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the hypotheses. Findings indicated that; Personal counselling plays a meaningful role in supporting informed career decisions. Additionally, other components of guidance and counselling services have a notable impact on students' career development. It was recommended that there is need to integrate career counselling into the secondary school curriculum to enhance vocational and technical education, more awareness campaign should be done for parents and stakeholders about the value of these services, and enhancing support from government through policies that promote personal capacity building through vocational and technical education; improved counsellors' salaries, provide essential facilities, and promote continuous training for counsellors and teachers in effective guidance practices.

1. Introduction

Assessing guidance and counselling services is essential to evaluate their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term sustainability in shaping students' career decisions. Such assessment establishes accountability, ensures proper use of resources, and supports learning that can inform policy and practice. It also provides a structured way to draw conclusions about student development by defining, collecting, analyzing, and applying data to enhance learning outcomes (WHO, 2022). In recent years, this area has attracted growing research interest, particularly in improving teaching and learning processes, including guidance services. These assessments allow educators and students to interpret findings and take action—whether to refine service delivery or to assess student progress resulting from their engagement with counselling programmes (Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023).

Today, career counselling is increasingly recognized as a vital part of education. Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025) outline three key stages: self-assessment, occupational exploration, and informed decision-making through counselling. UNESCO (2011), as cited by Baji & Muhammad (2020), describes guidance and counselling as organized professional efforts to help individuals maximize their potential. These programmes support personal, social, academic, and career development at both individual and community levels. They are designed to help people understand themselves, their environment, and their capabilities, enabling them to make thoughtful decisions and manage challenges, particularly within educational contexts.

As Moser & Moser (cited in Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023:8) observed:

“Students face personal challenges that require support. Every student benefits from help in shaping a practical life philosophy and setting goals beyond education and employment. Personal development is crucial at the secondary level, and counsellors can play a vital role in helping students build personality traits and attitudes that support a fulfilling and satisfying life” (Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023:8).

Umar, Sani & Umar (2025) and the Federal Republic of Nigeria’s National Policy on Education (2026) recognize guidance and counselling as a key educational service aimed at “facilitating policy implementation, achieving educational objectives, and improving the efficiency of the education system.” A core objective is to make learning more relevant and meaningful for students. When counsellors actively engage with students, they contribute significantly to academic success. Therefore, there is a pressing need for structured counselling services in secondary schools across Akwa Ibom State. The findings of this study may contribute to shaping youth development by promoting career counselling as a factor that enhances self-realization and future job satisfaction.

According to Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025), guidance and counselling includes a range of services designed to help individuals—within and outside educational settings—reach their full potential in emotional, moral, social, academic, and vocational areas. This study focuses specifically on educational, vocational, and personal counselling and how these services support students in achieving their academic and career goals through effective programme implementation.

Bassey & Edet (2018) defines guidance and counselling as “an educational service that provides students with opportunities for holistic development, preparing them for productive living.” From an educational standpoint, such experiences enable learners to understand and accept themselves while functioning effectively in society. The primary goal is to help individuals recognize their strengths, grow in independence, and develop the ability to make decisions and adjustments on their own. Career counselling, in particular, provides essential information to students who lack awareness about various professions, helping them align their career choices with personal interests and abilities (Bassey & Edet, 2018).

Wankasi & Adekunle (2023) outline four primary forms: personal, educational, vocational, and parental guidance, though this study focuses on the first three. Core services include; orientation programs for new or transferring students; individual assessments that help identify students’ strengths and needs; and information provision on academic, career, and personal-social topics, all aimed at promoting independence and informed life choices.

Additional support includes placement assistance, where educators guide students in matching their interests and abilities with appropriate academic or career paths; referral systems for specialized help; remedial interventions for learners facing specific difficulties such as hearing impairments or reading disorders; research initiatives enabling counsellors to track student progress; and follow-up activities to monitor development in education and employment. Evaluation is also integral, with ongoing data collection used to assess the impact of guidance programs on academic planning and student well-being (Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023; Josephat et al., 2024; Udoh et al., 2025; Umar et al., 2025).

Ekanem & Asuquo (2024) investigated career decision-making among SSIII students in Obot Akara Local Government Area, finding showed that 86% were influenced by role models like parents and teachers. The study concluded that adolescents often lack the maturity to make independent, well-considered career decisions without adult support. Financial limitations were also significant as 90% of respondents agreed that poverty hinders proper career guidance, especially in low-income households relying on public education. This reveals systemic weaknesses in career support at the senior secondary level.

Akpabio (2025) explored how age and academic track affect entrepreneurial skill development in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Older students demonstrated higher levels of entrepreneurial competence than younger ones, and those in commercial or vocational streams showed more advanced skills compared to peers in science or arts. These findings suggest that both developmental maturity and curriculum choice play key roles in shaping abilities. This is consistent with Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025), who notes that modern career decisions have become more complex due to rapid technological change, shifts in the digital economy, and increasingly competitive job markets. In today’s global

context, long-term employment depends less on tradition and more on adaptability and relevant competencies (Lastad et al., 2025).

Similarly, Olaitan (2023) found that students aiming for business, vocational, or creative careers displayed stronger entrepreneurial inclinations, while those pursuing science-based fields showed less interest. Despite increasing attention to entrepreneurship education, there remains limited understanding of how age and career aspirations interact in developing these skills among senior secondary students.

Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025) also examined the relationship between career selection and job security in Akwa Ibom State, identifying a strong connection. They stressed the value of supportive—rather than controlling—parental engagement and recommended government-led efforts to establish structured career development frameworks that foster stable employment and national progress.

According to Ifemeje & Nwokoye (2024), the family and wider society form the foundation of child development by offering protection, emotional stability, and social direction. The home environment significantly shapes cognitive growth and cultural awareness, helping children make sense of their surroundings. In early stages, children are generally unaware of societal structures, but through family-based socialization, they acquire values, knowledge, and skills essential for personal growth and social participation. The family thus serves as a primary agent of socialization, influencing psychological adjustment, competence, and future achievement (Bornstein, 2019, cited in Udoh et al., 2025). However, homes marked by conflict or mismatched expectations between parents and children often lack unity, weakening a child's sense of safety and undermining confidence, stability, and coping strategies.

In Akwa Ibom State, many secondary schools do not have designated career masters responsible for guiding students according to their abilities. The absence of trained career counsellors contributes to uncertainty, often resulting in underemployment or placement in unsuitable professions. Without structured support, students are more likely to enter unstable or unfulfilling jobs, increasing vulnerability to job insecurity. High unemployment intensifies competition for limited positions, making poor career decisions even more impactful.

Some students internalize structural constraints—such as financial hardship, weak academic performance, or perceived limitations—and begin to question their eligibility for certain careers. This self-perception may lead them to ambitious or resource-intensive paths in favor of easier alternatives. Such thinking discourages personal growth and deepens inequality in opportunity access, ultimately reducing long-term employability and reinforcing social divides. Additionally, some students either dismiss or overly depend on parental advice, which can distort their professional judgment.

Many students in the state select careers based on external pressures rather than personal aptitude or introspection. Influences from parents and peers often overshadow self-awareness, leading graduates into roles they are unprepared for, where satisfaction and fulfillment remain low. Therefore, continuous self-assessment and resilience are essential for adapting to change and overcoming setbacks. Without these qualities, students risk professional misalignment and reduced performance. On the other hand, sustained interest in a subject supports academic success and enables rational career choices, improving the chances of achieving personal goals. Variations in access to opportunities and developmental experiences further complicate career planning, often resulting in mismatched ambitions, weak employability, and greater susceptibility to job insecurity.

Given these conditions, the lack of vocational mentoring and proper orientation leads many students to pursue careers based on trends or family expectations rather than personal strengths or economic realities. This misalignment undermines workforce readiness and threatens job stability. However, timely counselling, constructive parental involvement, and policy-driven educational reforms can steer youth toward sustainable careers that align with both individual potential and labor market demands—enhancing personal outcomes and contributing to broader economic resilience in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school counselling services encounter multiple challenges, such as limited funding, lack of essential materials and information and communication technology (ICT) tools, inadequate office facilities, unsupportive institutional policies, issues related to parental involvement, and the hiring of untrained counsellors. In today's educational landscape, additional challenges include a shortage of qualified teachers trained in career guidance and curricula that do not adequately prepare students for

viable, secure careers. High dropout rates are frequently linked to unsuitable career choices, unclear goals, financial difficulties, and broader socioeconomic conditions.

In this context, guidance and counseling services are essential in helping students connect their academic paths with labor market needs. Such support enhances career stability, lowers the risk of unemployment, and contributes to greater long-term job satisfaction and security. This may explain why the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education has increasingly prioritized integrating counseling into secondary education to strengthen students' career planning.

Despite these barriers, research consistently shows that effective guidance and counselling are closely linked to positive student outcomes, including improved attendance, stronger academic results, increased self-confidence, and better decision-making skills. This study aims to explore how personal counseling services affect career choices and long-term job security, moving beyond the commonly acknowledged effects of parental influence and the absence of formal counseling structures in secondary schools across Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to investigate influence of guidance and counselling on career choice for personal development among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Other specific objectives include:

1. Exploring how personal counseling supports informed decision-making in career selection among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Identifying other aspects that influence how guidance and counseling shape students' career development among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The study's research question include:

1. What ways does personal counseling impacted informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What other aspects influence the relationship between guidance and counseling services and career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The study's hypotheses were:

H₀₁: Personal counseling does not significantly influence informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

H₀₂: Other aspects of guidance and counseling services do not significantly affect students' career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Review of Literature

Concept of Career Choice

UNESCO (2026) advocates that the concept of career choices revolves around technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and integrating career guidance and counselling (CGC) into the schools programme to align individual skills to sustainable labour markets demands.

According to Migunde (2021), guidance and counseling are among the most effective strategies for helping students and their families overcome obstacles. A well-functioning program should integrate academic, vocational, and personal-psychological components. Such support enables students to gain self-insight, improve decision-making abilities, and manage personal challenges (Egenti, 2021; Migunde, 2021). Additionally, these services provide vital information on education and employment options, helping students create realistic plans for their future (Migunde, 2021). Career counseling—also known as career guidance—is specifically aimed at assisting individuals in choosing, changing, or leaving a career path.

World Bank Group (2026) viewed career development to mean a lifelong process involving managing learning to acquire suitable knowledge or skills, work and the capacity to move towards a personal visualize professional work goal in future. According to United Nations policy report (2025), it include formal career coaching, mentoring, cross training and job shadowing opportunities to help students and others attain personal aspiration in life.

World Bank Group (2025) added that education is the foundation to skills development and jobs, empowering generations to earn an income and drive economic growth, and the surest way out of poverty as often experiences in developing countries like Nigeria, and Akwa Ibom State in particular. Thus, personal counselling through education promotes employment, income earning, health, innovation, foster social cohesion and poverty reduction in the state.

In Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria focus is on youth unemployment reduction through technical/vocational education and entrepreneurial development as against the traditional and theoretical career mind set. Given these roles, guidance and counseling have become essential components of modern education systems. Bassey & Edet (2018), Migunde (2021), and Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025) identify key features of effective guidance and counseling programs:

- i. **Qualified Personnel:** Availability of trained and certified counselors.
- ii. **Service Infrastructure:** Dedicated counseling spaces, access to assessment tools (e.g., personality and IQ tests), and scheduled time for counseling activities.
- iii. **Proactive Initiatives:** Implementation of orientation sessions, career fairs, and workshops.

These programs typically include educational guidance (supporting subject selection and identifying learning difficulties), vocational guidance (using aptitude and skills assessments to guide career decisions), personal/social guidance (addressing emotional well-being and interpersonal challenges), and follow-up or referral services (monitoring student progress and connecting them with external specialists when necessary).

Concept of Guidance and Counselling Services

According to UNESCO (2002, cited in Sahabi et al., 2024) and Ekpo et al., (2025), guidance and counselling connotes a systematic, professional and well-structured program of services designed to assist individuals to understand their needs, abilities, ecological factors and the options that can make them to take wise personal, educational and career choices. Hence, counselling services are targeted at policy guides to support students' development, curb abnormal behaviours and steer impressive academic accomplishment.

Personal Counseling - addresses emotional or psychological challenges such as depression, grief, or relationship issues. Counselors must be equipped with crisis intervention skills to offer timely support during traumatic events (Egenti, 2021; Migunde, 2021).

In essence, guidance is preventative and educational, aiming to inform and direct, while counseling is curative and exploratory, promoting healing and self-discovery. Counseling is strictly confidential, whereas guidance may involve more open communication. Terminology also differs: guidance is associated with terms like advising, mentoring, instruction, and consultation, while counseling is linked to therapy, psychotherapy, clinical intervention, and remedial support.

Bassey and Edet (2018) outline several benefits of effective guidance and counseling:

- i. **Career and Subject Alignment:** Vocational guidance helps students select subjects and careers suited to their aptitudes and interests, increasing the likelihood of future job satisfaction.
- ii. **Enhanced Academic Performance:** By building confidence and promoting better study techniques, guidance contributes to improved results, especially in core areas like mathematics (Udoh et al., 2025).
- iii. **Reducing External Pressures:** Counseling empowers students to resist excessive influence from parents or peers, encouraging decisions based on personal suitability.
- iv. **Psychosocial Development:** These services assist students in managing emotional and social challenges during adolescence, leading to improved behavior and reduced dropout rates.

Studies in Akwa Ibom State also show that secondary schools with strong counseling systems—offering orientation, assessments, and referrals—tend to produce students who perform better academically and make more informed career choices. Researchers therefore recommend that every secondary school employ qualified counselors to fully realize these advantages (Bassey & Edet, 2018; Udoh et al., 2025; Akpabio, 2025).

Research by Udoh et al. (2025), Abubakar et al. (2025), and Akpabio (2025) identifies key career decision challenges among students in Akwa Ibom State:

Influencing Factors: Students frequently face pressure from parents, peer influence, and limited access to accurate career information—factors that highlight the importance of professional guidance



(Bassey & Edet, 2018; Udoh et al., 2025). **Effective Guidance** - high-quality counseling is essential for helping adolescents manage developmental pressures and make sound educational and vocational choices (Akpabio, 2025). **Role of Counselors**- rather than being an optional support, counselors are integral to shaping students' academic paths and career outcomes.

In summary, while guidance and counseling services exist in Akwa Ibom State, they need strengthening to ensure all students receive timely and effective career support (Bassey & Edet, 2018; Udoh et al., 2025; Akpabio, 2025). Well-executed counseling has been linked to improved academic performance, better career decisions, and enhanced personal development. It enables students to match their abilities with suitable careers, minimize mismatches, develop effective study habits, and acquire strategies to overcome academic hurdles (Bassey & Edet, 2018; Udoh et al., 2025; Akpabio, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted three theoretical exposition to explain the phenomenon as follows:

a. Person-Centered Theory

This approach centers on the relationship between counselor and client. Originally called Client-Centered Therapy by Rogers (1980), it was later expanded into Person-Centered Theory to reflect its broader relevance to human interactions. Today, it is seen as a process that helps individuals gain deeper understanding of themselves and their world. The theory assumes that people are naturally oriented toward growth, health, and self-improvement (Akpabio, 2025). Productive counseling depends on specific conditions within the counselor-client relationship.

As noted by Omulema and cited by Akpabio (2025), key conditions include empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuine warmth from the counselor. Growth is most likely in an environment that is accepting, supportive, and non-judgmental—where students feel safe to express themselves and explore solutions. Counseling programs lacking these elements may yield poor outcomes. When counselors demonstrate these qualities, students become less defensive, more self-aware, and better equipped for positive change.

Additionally, many students face academic setbacks and low self-esteem. Counselors can help by fostering hope and reinforcing students' belief in their ability to overcome obstacles and reach their potential. A nurturing environment, supported by engaged educators, is crucial for student success.

Teachers and counsellors can foster students' self-actualization by showing warmth, empathy, professionalism, and accountability. They play a vital role in helping students define meaningful objectives and acknowledge their progress, using these milestones to boost motivation and academic engagement. To support this, counsellors should create an atmosphere that is both nurturing and motivating. This approach is consistent with person-centered theory, which emphasizes the value of empathetic counselling in enhancing educational outcomes. While this theory directly supports the first research objective and question, it does not fully address the others. Therefore, it is supplemented by social learning theory to form a more complete conceptual foundation.

b. Super's Theory of Career Development

This study also incorporates Super's Theory of Career Development (1953, 1980), which provides insight into how individuals make career decisions and how these choices influence job satisfaction, stability, and long-term security. Super viewed career selection not as a single event but as a lifelong process involving five stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement (Super, 1953; Super, 1980, cited in Udo et al., 2025). This process is influenced by personal traits, psychological factors, and environmental conditions. Applying this theory to secondary students in Akwa Ibom State helps explain how early educational and vocational choices can affect future employment prospects and job stability.

The theory suggests that individuals develop a "self-concept" based on their experiences, values, and perceived abilities, which guides their career preferences. At the secondary level, students are typically in the exploration stage, beginning to assess their interests and capabilities while forming initial career plans. Super emphasized that successful career development depends on how closely a person's self-concept aligns with their chosen occupation.

In Akwa Ibom State, many students select careers without sufficient self-awareness or professional advice, often influenced by parental pressure, peer trends, or social prestige. Such uninformed choices can result in a mismatch between personal strengths and job demands, reducing long-term job

satisfaction and security. Therefore, Super's theory highlights the need for effective career counselling in secondary schools to help students make realistic and fulfilling career decisions that match their interests and local labor market needs.

c. **Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments**

Complementing Super's model, Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (Holland, 1997, cited in Udo et al., 2025) explores the connection between personality types and suitable work settings. Holland identified six personality categories—Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC)—and argued that individuals perform best and feel most satisfied in jobs that match their personality. Mismatches often lead to dissatisfaction, instability, or insecurity.

In Akwa Ibom State, where job opportunities are limited and competition is intense, aligning career choices with personality and skills is essential for long-term employment success. For instance, students with social or enterprising traits may excel in education, healthcare, or business, while those with realistic inclinations may thrive in technical or vocational fields. Overlooking this alignment may lead to frustration, unemployment, or frequent job changes, undermining job security. Together, Super's and Holland's theories provide a strong conceptual foundation for this study. While Super focuses on the developmental path of career decision-making, Holland emphasizes compatibility between person and environment. Integrating both views shows that career counselling, choice, and job security stem from personal growth and environmental fit.

Applying these models to secondary students in Akwa Ibom State offers deeper understanding of how early career decisions affect future employment stability and how targeted interventions—such as career guidance, counselling, and skill training—can enhance youth economic resilience.

In this context, parental influence plays a significant role in shaping children's educational and career paths, affecting their future job security. Parents who support self-exploration, entrepreneurship, skill-building, and independent decision-making help prepare their children for a rapidly changing job market (Udo et al., 2025). Research in Akwa Ibom State indicates that job retention and security are closely linked to motivation, discipline, and performance, particularly in education and civil service sectors (Udo et al., 2025; Ekpo et al., 2024; Umo-Udo et al., 2023). As noted by Super (1953) and Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg (1986), cited in Udo et al. (2025), career development is an ongoing process that requires self-awareness and adaptability. By fostering confidence, resilience, and flexibility—rather than imposing fixed career paths—parents can help their children secure meaningful and stable employment in Akwa Ibom's competitive labor market.

Counselling services in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State aim to support students in educational, vocational, and personal-social development, promoting informed decision-making. These services, overseen by the Ministry of Education, address career planning, behavioral issues, and academic performance. Schools employ one counsellor for every 300 students.

Empirical Studies

Personal Counselling Services and Career Choice of Secondary School Students

Akpabio & Modo, F. N. (2026) investigated the relationship between guidance services and the mental health of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District, Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 21,625 senior secondary two students in public secondary schools. A sample of 496 Senior Secondary Two students was selected for the study using a multistage sampling procedure to ensure adequate representation. A self-made instrument titled "Guidance Services and Mental Health of Secondary School Students' Questionnaire" (GSMHSSSQ) was used for data collection. The face validity of the instrument was done by experts in guidance and counseling and measurement and evaluation at the University of Uyo, while reliability of the instrument was determined using the internal consistency method, that showed reliability index of 0.76. The research questions and their corresponding hypotheses were answered and tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. The results revealed a significant relationship between orientation, counseling, placement services, and the mental health of secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was concluded that guidance services such as orientation, counseling, and placement services play a significant role in influencing the mental health of secondary school students. recommendations were made, among which is that guidance counselors

should be employed in public secondary schools in the Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District and should partner with the Counselling Association of Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State Chapter, to provide comprehensive information on mental health, coping strategies, and available support services to empower students to maintain and improve their mental health.

Daliko, Sumbizi, and Ngonyani (2025) highlighted the role of career aspirations in shaping personal identity and future societal contributions. However, tools for assessing these aspirations in Tanzanian higher education remain scarce. This study examined the psychometric properties of the revised Career Aspiration Scale (CAS-R, O'Brien & Gregor, 2016) among 231 undergraduates from Mbeya University of Science and Technology (129 males, 102 females; mean age 22, SD=1.84). A cross-sectional quantitative design was used. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in SPSS and AMOS v23. The CFA supported a three-factor model—achievement, leadership, and educational aspirations—comprising 24 items. Model fit indices were strong: $\chi^2/df = 1.89$, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.062, SRMR = 0.062. The scale demonstrated good convergent and discriminant validity, with internal consistency above acceptable levels ($\alpha > 0.7$). The study concluded that the adapted CAS-R is a valid and reliable tool for measuring career aspirations in Tanzanian higher education contexts.

Sahabi, Aliyu, Ibrahim, Ibrahim & Abubakar (2024) evaluates factors influencing guidance and counselling programmes and possible strategies to address them in some selected Secondary schools in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was used to obtain descriptive and self-reported data/information from the participants in the study. The sample size was 400 participant comprising a total of 200 students, 150 teachers, 30 school counsellors and 20 school administrators. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result showed that lack of professional counsellors, lack of formal training for counsellors, lack of support from school administrators/government, lack of materials/facilities, lack of parental support, and inadequate public awareness were some factors influencing guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools. The result also indicated that, strategies such as employing professional counsellors, allocation of sufficient time to counselling services, and provision of adequate support by the school administrators/government among other will significantly curb the problem facing guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools. Many factors significantly influenced guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools. For effective guidance and counselling in secondary schools, strategies should be applied to curb major factors that influenced guidance and counselling programmes.

Josephat, Timothy, and Semali (2024) explored how individual career guidance affects the choice of science subjects in public secondary schools in Karagwe District. Grounded in Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), the study used a mixed-methods convergent design. The target population included 31 headteachers, 1,225 students, 31 teacher-counsellors, and one District Education Officer. A sample of 120 students, 10 teacher-counsellors, 10 headteachers, and the DSEO was selected using simple random, total population, and stratified sampling methods. Quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires, while interviews and focus group discussions provided qualitative insights. Instrument validity was confirmed by education experts, and the student questionnaire showed high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.894$). Peer debriefing was used to ensure the rigor of qualitative findings.

Qualitative data were examined using triangulation, while quantitative data were analyzed descriptively with SPSS version 22. Thematic analysis guided the qualitative interpretation, following steps such as deep engagement with the data, coding, generating preliminary themes, refining and clearly defining them, and compiling a coherent written summary. The research followed established ethical standards, including obtaining institutional authorization, securing informed consent from participants, protecting confidentiality and anonymity, properly referencing sources, and recognizing relevant scholarly contributions. Results showed that students in Karagwe District made more thoughtful decisions about science subjects after receiving personalized career guidance. They appreciated the individual sessions for helping them better understand their personal interests and academic objectives in science. The study also found that tailored counseling helps students connect their aspirations with suitable support systems. It concluded that one-on-one career counseling is an effective approach, with teacher counselors playing a key role in nurturing student motivation and ambitions in science education.

To strengthen this impact, the report suggests enhancing training for teacher counselors so they can identify students uncertain about their future paths and offer timely, focused assistance.

Umo-Udo, Ekpo, Udoaka, and Udo (2023) investigated Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which seeks to build knowledge, skills, values, and behavioral shifts in both formal and informal learning environments to boost workforce productivity, encourage job creation, and promote economic independence. Their findings revealed a continuing issue: many government leaders do not treat education as a central pillar of national progress. Corruption within the education system was highlighted as a major barrier in developing economies. The study used a descriptive survey approach, focusing on 40,266 education personnel across 2,826 schools under SUBEB. A sample of 380 was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, applying simple random and stratified sampling methods. Data were gathered through a 12-item questionnaire and analyzed using percentages, Pearson correlation coefficients, and tables. Findings indicated a strong positive relationship between political leadership and ESD implementation in Akwa Ibom State. Recommendations included reforming education policies, increasing funding to meet UNESCO's recommended 26% budget allocation, hiring more qualified teachers, providing ongoing training in entrepreneurship education, and equipping schools with libraries, laboratories, and modern research tools.

Wankasi and Adekunle (2023) assessed the status of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools, focusing on their advantages, limitations, and overall effectiveness. Two hypotheses were tested: whether students' attitudes affect their use of counseling services, and whether access to counseling influences academic performance. The study reviewed theoretical and empirical literature relevant to its goals. A quantitative, descriptive design was employed, with a sample of 192 drawn from a total population of 368 using Taro Yamane's formula and simple random sampling. Data were collected via a researcher-constructed questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, bar charts, and Chi-Square tests at a 0.05 significance level. Results identified several challenges, including limited funding, lack of counseling resources, weak ICT infrastructure, insufficient office space, restrictive school regulations, low parental involvement, and the appointment of unqualified counselors. Despite these issues, many students reported benefits such as improved grades, higher attendance, increased confidence, and better decision-making skills. The study confirmed a significant link between effective counseling and academic success. The researchers recommended that counselors adopt more responsive strategies to serve students, teachers, and themselves, and that government increase its support to improve service delivery.

Nonetheless, a gap remains between policy and implementation. Essential counseling services are often missing or difficult to access in secondary schools. This study aims to assess the current state of guidance and counseling services and their impact on career decisions among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Moreover, much of the existing research has been conducted outside Nigeria, and local studies often focus on university students or broader youth populations, leaving a gap in understanding how counseling influences career development specifically at the secondary level. No known study has addressed this issue among secondary students in Akwa Ibom State.

Given that the senior secondary stage is a critical period for career exploration and personal development, addressing this gap is vital. This study therefore aims to determine how counseling services shape career choices and development among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, with the goal of providing evidence-based recommendations to improve educational outcomes and prepare students for independent and productive futures.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted to obtain data using a self-constructed questionnaire titled Guidance-Counselling Services and Career Choice for Personal Development of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (GCSCCPDSSQ). The target population consisted of 42,762 individuals, including 6,225 teachers/counsellors and 36,537 senior secondary students. A sample size of 380 was determined using the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) table. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were applied. The instrument's validity was established through expert review, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.73. Data analysis involved frequency counts, percentages, tables, and opinion summaries for the research questions, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the hypotheses.

Response to Research Question one

What ways does personal counseling impacted informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

According to Table 4.4, 57.80% of respondents agreed that school-based counselling strengthens self-confidence and supports well-informed future decisions, while 41.67% disagreed. A larger share (59.41%) believed that career guidance fosters entrepreneurial skills, encouraging self-reliance and job creation, compared to 39.78% who did not. On financial influence, 47.31% said parents' financial status significantly shapes students' career goals aimed at future success, while 51.88% disagreed. Regarding social exclusion, 40.05% felt that being marginalized by counsellors or school authorities affects students' ability to make sound career decisions, while 59.12% disagreed. In terms of peer pressure, 58.60% agreed that it often leads to poor career choices and future failure, whereas 40.86% disagreed.

Response to Research Question two

What other aspects influence the relationship between guidance and counseling services and career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4.5 reveals that 58.87% of respondents agreed that inadequate counselling negatively affects academic performance—including attendance and test scores—while 40.32% disagreed. Only 33.60% believed that teachers, peers, and social media exert a strong negative influence on career decisions, while 64.52% disagreed. A majority (53.76%) stated that family poverty contributes to poor career choices by increasing dropout rates and pushing students toward vocational training instead of higher education, whereas 45.70% disagreed. Additionally, 58.07% agreed that students' economic instability and emotional or psychological challenges significantly hinder proper career planning, while 40.32% disagreed. On professional support, 54.03% believed that low salaries and limited training opportunities for counsellors lead to neglect of counselling duties, while 45.70% disagreed. Similarly, 59.68% argued that insufficient funding, lack of materials, and negative attitudes among counsellors impair career guidance services, while 40.86% disagreed. Lastly, only 30.91% identified understaffing and lack of facilities as major causes of ineffective counselling, whereas 67.20% did not consider them primary issues.

Testing Hypothesis one

H₀₁: Personal counseling does not significantly influence informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Rephrased as:

H₀: Personal counseling does not significantly influence informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

H₁: Personal counseling significantly influence informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Applying the Pearson correlation:

$$\begin{aligned}
 r &= \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum(x)^2 - (\sum x)^2][N\sum(y)^2 - (\sum y)^2]}} \\
 &= \frac{5(165917) - (979)(868)}{\sqrt{[5(195767) - (979)^2][5(154682) - (868)^2]}} \\
 &= \frac{829585 - 849772}{\sqrt{[978835 - 958441][773410 - 753424]}} \\
 &= \frac{-20187}{\sqrt{[20394][19986]}} \\
 &= \frac{-20187}{\sqrt{407594484}} \\
 &= \frac{-20187}{20188.97} \\
 &= 0.999 \sim 0.99 \\
 \therefore r &= 0.99
 \end{aligned}$$

(a) The correlation ($r = 0.99$) reflects an extremely strong positive relationship, indicating that personal counselling plays a direct role in improving students' ability to make well-informed career decisions. With $r^2 = 0.9801$, nearly 98.01% of the variation in decision quality is accounted for by personal counselling.

(b) For significance testing:

the t- test given as thus:

$$t = r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}} \quad (\text{Ekpo, 2023})$$

Ho: the correlation is not significant.

Hi: the correlation is significant.

} Two tailed Test.

$$\begin{aligned}
 t &= r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}} \\
 &= 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{5-2}{1-0.99^2}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{3}{1-0.98}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{3}{0.02}} \\
 &= 0.99 \sqrt{150} = 0.99 \times 12.25 = 12.128 \sim 12.13
 \end{aligned}$$

Calculated value = 12.13

D/F = $N - 2 = 5 - 2 = 3$

Critical Table value = 3.18 at 0.05 two tailed test.

Given that $12.13 > 3.18$, H_0 is rejected. The findings support H_1 , confirming that Personal counseling significantly influence informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The outcome is robust and likely reproducible in similar contexts.

4.3.4 Testing Hypothesis two

H_{02} : Other aspects of guidance and counseling services do not significantly affect students' career

choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Restated as:

H₀: Other aspects of guidance and counseling services do not significantly affect students' career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

H₁: Other aspects of guidance and counseling services significantly affect students' career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Pearson correlation result:

$$\begin{aligned}
 r &= \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum(x)^2 - (\sum x)^2][N\sum(y)^2 - (\sum y)^2]}} \\
 &= \frac{7(225610) - (1296)(1282)}{\sqrt{[7(252268) - (1296)^2][7(246004) - (1282)^2]}} \\
 &= \frac{1579270 - 1661472}{\sqrt{[1765876 - 1679616][1722028 - 1643524]}} \\
 &= \frac{-82202}{\sqrt{[86260][78504]}} \\
 &= \frac{-82202}{\sqrt{6771755040}} \\
 &= \frac{-82202}{82290.67} \\
 &= 0.9989 \sim 0.99 \\
 \therefore r &= 0.99
 \end{aligned}$$

(a) Although intermediate calculations involved negative values, the final correlation ($r = 0.99$) indicates a very strong positive relationship. This suggests that additional components of guidance and counselling—beyond the main categories—exert a considerable influence on students' career decisions. The r^2 value of 0.9801 means that 98.01% of the variation in career choice is explained by these factors.

(b) Significance test by using the t- test given as thus:

$$t = r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}} \quad (\text{Ekpo, 2023})$$

H₀: the correlation is not significant.

H₁: the correlation is significant.

} Two tailed Test.

$$\begin{aligned}
 t &= r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}} \\
 &= 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{7-2}{1-0.99^2}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{5}{1-0.98}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{5}{0.02}}
 \end{aligned}$$

$$= 0.99 \sqrt{250} = 0.99 \times 15.81 = 15.652 \sim 15.65$$

Calculated value = 15.65

D/F = N - 2 = 7 - 2 = 5

Critical t value = 2.57 at 0.05 two tailed test.

With $15.65 > 2.57$, H_0 is rejected. The results confirm that various dimensions of guidance and counselling services collectively have a significant effect on students' career paths. Hence, H_1 is accepted that, other aspects of guidance and counseling services significantly affect students' career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The study's results showed:

- i. Personal counseling significantly influence informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Other aspects of guidance and counselling services significantly affect students' career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State

First finding shows that personal counseling significantly influence informed career decision-making of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This is consistent with Daliko, Sumbizi, and Ngonyani (2025), who emphasized the importance of career aspirations in shaping individual identity and preparing for societal roles. Their study validated a three-factor career aspiration scale suitable for assessing undergraduate students in Tanzanian institutions. Likewise, Josephat, Timothy, and Semali (2024) found that personalized career guidance helps public secondary school students in Karagwe District make better-informed choices about science subjects. The study concluded that individualized counselling, delivered by trained teacher-counsellors, enhances students' motivation and aspirations in science education.

Second finding highlights the significant influence of broader factors within guidance and counselling services on students' career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This corresponds with Wankasi and Adekunle (2023), and Akpabio & Modo (2026) who assessed the effectiveness of these services and identified several challenges: insufficient funding, lack of counselling materials and ICT tools, poorly equipped offices, unfavourable school policies, parental attitudes, and the appointment of unqualified counsellors—all of which hinder effective service delivery.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's findings revealed among other that; Personal counselling strongly supports informed decision-making, while other structural and systemic factors within counselling services also significantly impact career choices among secondary school students.

The study recommended that:

- i. Schools should organize workshops and seminars to inform students and counsellors about emerging career opportunities and labour market demands. Trained counsellors should help students evaluate their abilities, interests, and market trends to align career choices with employability and future job security. School management should also create opportunities for hands-on learning through projects, business clubs, and science exhibitions to connect classroom knowledge with real-world application.
- ii. To reduce youth unemployment and enhance job security, schools should establish vocational centres that emphasize practical skills development alongside academic instructions. The state government should partner with NGOs, private organizations, and other stakeholders to improve funding, resources, and working conditions for school counsellors, while ensuring proper monitoring and evaluation of counselling services in line with international best practices.

Contribution to Knowledge

The State Secondary Education Board can also use the findings to identify barriers affecting counselling effectiveness and academic outcomes, and to promote counselling strategies that lead to better career choices, improved academic performance, and long-term job security.

Educational authorities, school leaders, counsellors, teachers, parents, and the public may apply the study's evidence-based conclusions to improve guidance practices in public secondary schools. The



study emphasized adopting public-private partnerships to strengthen counselling services through increased funding, provision of materials, and continuous training for counsellors to meet global standards.

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