

## Counselling for Occupational Development

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to ascertain the general attitude which senior secondary school students display towards counselling for occupational development while determining gender difference in students' attitude towards occupational information. It is also aimed at discovering whether these students seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation. Three research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. One hundred and twenty (120) students comprising sixty (60) males and sixty (60) females were selected out of six hundred (600) students using a stratified random sampling technique. A twenty-four (24) item-questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect relevant data. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts in vocational guidance in the Department of Educational Psychology/Guidance and Counselling of Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri. Copies of the questionnaire were then administered to the subjects of study and were retrieved on the spot. Simple percentages were used to analyse the three research questions. Findings of the study revealed that senior secondary school students had a positive attitude towards counselling for occupational development; gender had no significant influence on the attitude of students towards occupational information, and senior secondary school students do not seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation. Among others, it was recommended that the school authority encourages counsellors who should emphasise the relationship between school subjects and future career of the students to enable them make appropriate choice while providing students with job analysis and occupational information in newspapers, magazines, and other publications.

**Keywords:** Counselling, Occupational development, Vocational guidance, Occupational information

### INTRODUCTION

Nigerians right from time lacked career education and as a result looked down on certain occupations. They generally held this negative concept that there is little or no dignity in labour. This generally held view is contrary to the basic assumption of career education strongly supported by Iwu (1980) where he stated that all works needed by the society are honourable and that any worker who performs such work creditably is also honourable. Unfortunately, the desirable value orientation of the dignity of labour has not been inculcated in the minds of some people.

According to Denga (2008), "looking for a job is increasingly becoming a job in Nigeria. The dwindling job opportunities imply that the educational system should develop employable skills among the youths so that they can be self-employed." This statement implies that students need to be provided with the necessary vocational skills which can be honed by occupational counselling.

In view of the above, counselling becomes a necessity in all aspects of human life and endeavour. Guidance and Counselling is an integral part of educational system. Counselling seeks to prevent crisis from occurring in an individual's life. Guidance programmes for secondary school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, academic, and vocational difficulties of the students (Denga, 1983).

Guidance and Counselling helps individuals to become aware of themselves and the way in which they react to the behavioural influence in their environment (Ubom, 2001). Through counselling, individuals are aided in establishment of some personal meaning for overall development and clarification of a set of occupational goals (Edet, 2008). In other words, 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. Nweke (1987) in his study equated career choice to individual's choice of a spouse. This decision determines to a very large extent the entire life style of an individual. It is therefore very necessary that young ones should critically examine the concept right from childhood.

Abiri (1986) in his study comments that people are capable of entering a number of occupations by virtue of their abilities. Callaway (1986) spells out clearly the factors influencing occupational 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). 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. He concludes by stating that 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. This is the period adolescents need vocational counselling most.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The research problem focuses on the attitude of senior secondary school students towards occupational counselling for vocational development. The importance of vocational counselling for occupational development cannot be overemphasised.

According to Isiugo-Abanihe and Odeniyi (2010), even after the introduction of Guidance and Counselling programmes in secondary schools, many students choose wrong subject combinations while many do not know which course to study and where to study. Inability of students to decipher what is required for any vocation of their choice raises the need to discover whether this is as a result of the overall attitude of senior secondary school students towards counselling for occupational development while discovering whether they seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the general attitude which senior secondary school students display towards counselling for occupational development while determining gender difference in students' attitude towards occupational information. It is also aimed at discovering whether these students seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. Do senior secondary school students have positive attitude towards counselling for occupational development?
2. Is there any significant difference in the attitude of female and male students towards occupational information?
3. Do senior secondary school students seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation?

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. This design is non-experimental and is used to study people's opinion or attitude towards something or issues. Descriptive survey designs are economical in that they make use of a representative sample from a large population that would have been very expensive to study.

The study was carried out in Orsu West Municipal region in the South Eastern geographical zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The population of the study was made up of six hundred (600) senior secondary school three (SSS3) students. Through simple balloting, three (3) schools; one (1) all-girls, one (1) all-boys and one (1) co-educational were selected. Afterwards, forty (40) students from each of the schools were randomly selected giving a total sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) students.

As regards the instrument, a twenty-four (24) item-questionnaire was used to collect relevant data for answering the three research questions. The respondents were to rate how they feel about occupational counselling. The twenty-four statements were highlighted and scored on a scale ranging from positive to negative responses.

The content validity of the items was established by two senior colleagues of the Department of Educational Psychology, Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri who examined the contents and ascertained their relevance to the study.

The reliability of the instrument was established using a test retest method. Ten (10) copies of the questionnaire were administered on a face-to-face basis to ten (10) senior secondary students outside the Local Government Area of study. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained indicating that the instrument was reliable. Two weeks later, one hundred and twenty (120) fresh copies of the same questionnaire were administered by the researchers and retrieved on the spot.

#### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

**Research Question One:** Do senior secondary school students have a positive attitude towards counselling for occupational development?

**Table 1: A general description of response based on attitude of senior secondary school students towards counselling for occupational development**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Positive Response (%)	Negative Response (%)	Total Response (%)
1.	I have special interest in vocational counselling.	90 (75)	30 (25)	120 (100)
2.	I am happy during occupational counselling sessions.	80 (67)	40 (33)	120 (100)
3.	I look forward to occupational counselling sessions.	40 (33)	80 (67)	120 (100)
4.	I am comfortable with my year tutor helping me select subject combinations.	110 (92)	10 (8)	120 (100)
5.	I am not confused when my year tutor is going through my cumulative result to help me select subjects.	100 (83)	20 (17)	120 (100)
6.	Vocational counsellors are necessary in secondary schools.	100 (83)	20 (17)	120 (100)
7.	I have special regard for students from schools with trained counsellors.	65 (54)	55 (46)	120 (100)
8.	Vocational counselling is important in my career choice	60 (50)	60 (50)	120 (100)
9.	Counselling helps me address vocational difficulties.	90 (75)	30 (25)	120 (100)
	<b>Total Score and Percentage</b>	<b>735 (72)</b>	<b>290 (28)</b>	

Based on the data in table one, it is obvious that despite the response in the third item, respondents seemed to give overall positive responses to the other eight items, thus answering the research question in the affirmative. In other words, senior secondary school students have a positive attitude towards counselling for occupational development.

**Research Question Two:** Is there any significant difference in the attitude of female and male students towards occupational information?

**Table 2: A description of response based on whether gender influences students' attitude towards occupational information**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Female		Male		Total (%)
		Positive (%)	Negative (%)	Positive (%)	Negative (%)	
1.	I look forward to career guidance.	15 (25)	45 (75)	20 (33)	40 (67)	120 (100)
2.	Career counselling is not confusing	50 (83)	10 (17)	40 (67)	20 (33)	120 (100)
3.	I am usually comfortable with a counsellor	35 (58)	25 (42)	45 (75)	15 (25)	120 (100)
4.	I participate in career week activities.	45 (75)	15 (25)	45 (75)	15 (25)	120 (100)
5.	Vocational counselling should be part and parcel of educational programmes.	40 (67)	20 (33)	30 (50)	30 (50)	120 (100)
	<b>Total Score and Percentage</b>	<b>185 (62)</b>	<b>115 (38)</b>	<b>180 (60)</b>	<b>120 (40)</b>	

Based on the total score and percentage, there is little difference between the responses of both female and male respondents; hence, there is no significant difference in the attitude of female and male students towards occupational information.

**Research Question Three:** Do senior secondary school students seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation?

**Table 3: A description of response based on whether senior secondary school students seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Positive Response (%)	Negative Response (%)	Total Response (%)
1.	Vocational alternatives are provided to help me make adequate choice.	20 (17)	100 (83)	120 (100)
2.	I am aware of my vocational capacities.	10 (8)	110 (92)	120 (100)
3.	The relationship between school subjects and vocation is well known to me.	45 (37)	75 (63)	120 (100)
4.	I seek vocational guidance from my year tutor.	15 (12)	105 (88)	120 (100)
5.	My class teacher gives me vocational counselling.	50 (40)	70 (60)	120 (100)
6.	Many teachers shy away from answering vocational questions.	70 (60)	50 (40)	120 (100)
7.	I rely on my friends for career guidance	80 (67)	40 (33)	120 (100)
8.	I prefer choosing my subjects without assistance.	95 (79)	25 (21)	120 (100)
9.	It is difficult for me to select my subjects without assistance.	90 (75)	30 (25)	120 (100)
10.	I keep changing my mind in the choice of career.	80 (67)	40 (33)	120 (100)
	Total Score and Percentage	555 (46)	645 (54)	

Based on data in table three, it is evident that the negative responses outweigh the positive responses, in that, majority of the respondents do not know what vocational alternatives there are and are not aware of their vocational capacities. It is also obvious that most of these students do not know that there is a relationship between school subjects and career choice. Rather than seek vocational guidance from year tutors, most of the respondents rely on friends for career guidance. Response from items five and six could be responsible for this as majority of the respondents divulge that class teachers do not give them vocational counselling and many teachers shy away from answering vocational questions. Most of these students prefer choosing their subjects without assistance even though it is difficult for them to select subjects without assistance, and they keep changing their mind in the choice of career. All of the above imply that senior secondary school students do not seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation.

#### DISCUSSION

In response to the first research question, the analysis revealed that the general attitude of senior secondary school students towards counselling for occupational development is positive. This outcome is corroborated by Ubani (2008) and Denga (1983) in their studies of attitude of students towards vocational guidance which confirmed that students develop this positive attitude because of inability to select subject combinations that will lead to appropriate occupation. In the same vein, Edet (2008), in his study, concluded that senior secondary students have positive attitudes towards guidance and counselling.

The next finding of this study, as revealed in table 2, is that sex (gender) has no significant influence on the attitude of students towards occupational information. 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.

Findings from table 3 showed that senior secondary school students do not seek vocational guidance in their choice of vocation. Similarly, Abiri (1986) confirmed that counsellors in schools where they exist, are ignored by the school authority. As a result they pay little or no attention to the students. There is no awareness created of their existence in the school to enable students go to them for vocational assistance.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

School authority should encourage counsellors by giving them full counselling status with confidential counselling offices to enable them perform professionally and help students attain maturity in their understanding, acceptance, and sense of vocational responsibilities in the society.

To sustain the interest of the students, guidance counsellors should realise that students are future human resources of the country, and they should therefore be well equipped with career knowledge. Counsellors should also emphasise the relationship between school subjects and future career of the students to enable them make appropriate choices. In addition, guidance counsellors should provide students career scores and interpret them to the students. It is also the duties of counsellors to provide students with job analysis, where jobs exist, provide occupational information in newspapers, magazines, and other publications, organise career day, week, or exhibitions where pamphlets and periodicals are displayed and/or distributed to students. Career information can

also be dispensed through audio-visual aids such as films, tapes, slides, television, and radio. Students should be given opportunity for direct contact with representatives of selected careers in which they indicate interest and have aptitude for.

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