

The Influence Of Career Counselling On Secondary School Students' Career Awareness And Choice In Nasarawa Eggon Lga Of Nasarawa State

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between career counselling and secondary school students' career awareness and choice in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a population of 2,350 Senior Secondary School students across fifteen public schools. A sample of 250 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Career Counselling, Career Awareness and Career Choice Questionnaire (CCACQ), which was validated by experts with a Content Validity Index of 0.85 and achieved a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.862. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multiple regression) at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that career counselling has a significant positive relationship with students' career awareness ($r = .687, p < .001$) and career choice ($r = .671, p < .001$). The study also identified significant challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling, including inadequately trained counsellors, limited resources and facilities, and a lack of parental support ($R^2 = .677, p < .001$). The findings align with Super's Developmental Theory, Holland's Vocational Personalities Theory, and Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory, which collectively emphasise the importance of structured guidance during adolescence. The study concludes that career counselling is significantly associated with enhanced career awareness and more informed career choices. However, systemic challenges undermine its effectiveness in rural Nigerian schools. Recommendations include employing qualified counsellors, integrating career guidance into school timetables, providing adequate resources, and involving parents in counselling programs. Addressing these challenges is critical for improving students' career preparedness and reducing the mismatch between graduate skills and labour market demands in Nigeria.

Keywords: Career counselling, career awareness, career choice, secondary school students

1. Introduction

The world of work has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Rapid technological advancements, economic globalisation, and the emergence of new industries have created career opportunities that were unimaginable just twenty years ago. Fields such as information technology, renewable energy, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and the creative economy now offer pathways that did not exist for previous generations (International Labour Organisation, 2019). This transformation has made career decision-making increasingly complex for young people seeking their place in a competitive, ever-changing global job market.

Educational institutions around the world have recognised this reality and have gradually integrated career counselling services as an essential part of the educational process. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010), career guidance helps learners navigate the difficult transition from education to employment, make informed decisions about their futures, and develop the resilience needed to adapt to changing economic circumstances. Career counselling therefore serves as a strategic intervention that bridges the gap between what students aspire to become and the realities of the labour market. It equips them with self-awareness, decision-making skills, and comprehensive knowledge of different occupations (Gati & Levin, 2014).

In developed countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia, career counselling has long been embedded within the education system. Trained counsellors guide students in discovering their abilities, exploring career options, and aligning their academic pursuits with employer needs (Hooley, 2014). Research has shown that these structured interventions lead to reduced career indecision, enhanced employability skills, improved academic motivation, and smoother transitions from school to work (Bryan & Simmons, 2009). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2002) has emphasised that career counselling is not merely an academic support service but a critical developmental tool that enhances employability, reduces youth unemployment, supports young people in managing career transitions, and promotes social equity by ensuring that students from diverse backgrounds have equal access to career information and opportunities.

The African continent, including Nigeria, faces unique challenges in establishing effective career counselling systems. Despite growing economies and increasing demand for skilled labour, many African countries struggle with inadequate career guidance infrastructure, a shortage of trained counsellors, and limited integration of career education into school curricula (African Union, 2017). In Nigeria specifically, the implementation of career counselling in secondary schools continues to face several obstacles that limit its effectiveness in shaping students' career awareness and choices.

One of the most pressing issues in Nigeria is the lack of adequately trained personnel. Many schools either have no professional counsellors at all or rely on teachers with little or no formal training in counselling to take on this role (Egbo, 2015; Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2004). This situation often results in students receiving limited or generalised guidance that does not address their individual career interests, abilities, or aptitudes. Even where professional counsellors are available, they frequently work under difficult conditions with poor remuneration, lack of recognition, minimal institutional support, and overwhelming administrative responsibilities (Eyo, Joshua, & Esuong, 2010). Another critical challenge is the inadequate provision of facilities and resources. Most schools lack well-equipped guidance and counselling units, career libraries, career assessment tools, or exposure programmes that could help students explore diverse career paths (Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). The absence of these facilities significantly hampers counsellors' ability to provide comprehensive and practical career guidance.

Cultural and societal factors also play a significant role in shaping career decisions in Nigeria. In many Nigerian communities, parents exert considerable influence over their children's career choices, often steering them towards traditional professions such as medicine, law, pharmacy, or engineering that are perceived as prestigious and financially rewarding. This happens without adequate consideration of the child's genuine interests, abilities, or the evolving demands of the labour market (Salami, 2008; Aliyu, 2016). This parental pressure, combined with societal expectations and peer influence, creates a conflict between the career counselling provided in schools and the realities students face at home and in their communities (Abari, 2019).

The Nigerian education system itself poses additional challenges. The curriculum places disproportionate emphasis on academic performance and examinations while neglecting vocational and career-oriented learning (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013). Consequently, students often focus narrowly on passing subjects without developing awareness of how their academic strengths connect to possible career opportunities or the skills required for emerging professions. Poor government funding of the education sector further weakens the career counselling system. Without adequate financial investment, schools struggle to train counsellors, organise career fairs, create partnerships with industries that could expose students to real-life career experiences, or maintain functional counselling units (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2019). These combined challenges contribute to a weak career counselling framework in Nigeria, thereby significantly limiting its potential to impact students' career awareness and decision-making. The consequences are evident in the high rates of career mismatch, graduate unemployment, and underemployment that plague the Nigerian economy (Akinlolu, 2021; World Bank, 2018).

The circumstances in Nasarawa State's Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area are particularly dire and reflect the broader challenges facing career counselling in rural Nigeria. According to Danlami (2020), many schools in this region suffer from an acute shortage of qualified career counsellors to guide students in making informed educational and occupational decisions. In most cases, schools either lack designated career guidance officers entirely or rely on teachers from other subject areas to take on the counselling role without adequate training. These teachers often view counselling as an additional burden rather than a professional responsibility. Where counsellors are available, they are frequently overburdened with multiple responsibilities such as teaching, administrative duties, and welfare monitoring, which significantly reduces the time and attention they can devote to meaningful career guidance sessions (Danlami, 2020). This situation creates a substantial gap in providing students with the necessary exposure to different career pathways, the skills required for those careers, and the long-term implications of their career decisions.

As a result of these inadequacies, students in Nasarawa Eggon LGA are largely uninformed about the wide range of job opportunities available to them, both within Nigeria and in the global labour market. Many rely heavily on peer influence, parental pressure, or cultural expectations when choosing career paths, rather than on their own interests, aptitudes, or emerging opportunities in fields such as technology, healthcare, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and creative industries (Danlami, 2020). This disconnect means their career decisions are often misaligned with their abilities or the economy's actual demands. In some cases, students pursue fields in which they struggle to perform, while in others, they overlook high-demand professions that could have offered them sustainable livelihoods and personal fulfilment.

Given the increasing demand for skilled and specialised labour across Nigeria's diverse economic sectors, it is even more urgent to examine how effective career counselling can enhance students' awareness and decision-making capacity. If students in this locality are better guided, they can develop realistic career aspirations that not only match their individual strengths but also help fill the skills gap in Nigeria's workforce and reduce the persistent problem of graduate unemployment. This study therefore aims to explore the relationship between career counselling and secondary school students' career awareness and choices in Nasarawa Eggon LGA of Nasarawa State. By identifying the strengths and shortcomings of the current career guidance practices in the area, the findings of this study will provide valuable insights into how counselling services can be strengthened to enhance students' career development, align their choices with their natural abilities and interests, and meet the evolving demands of the rapidly changing labour market.

Selecting a career represents one of the most significant decisions a student will ever make. It profoundly determines their academic trajectory, personal aspirations, professional development, and

future livelihood opportunities. Despite growing recognition of the value of career counselling in helping students make well-informed career decisions, many Nigerian secondary school students continue to struggle with this critical decision-making process. This is particularly true in rural and underserved areas such as Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area in Nasarawa State (Danlami, 2020; Olamide & Olawaiye, 2013). This problem is significantly worsened by the absence of comprehensive career advising services in schools. Students are forced to base their career decisions on scant, outdated, or occasionally false information that does not reflect the realities of the contemporary labour market. In Nasarawa Eggon LGA, many schools lack structured career counselling programs. Students are often left to figure out their career paths independently, relying on whatever limited information they can access through peers, family members, or media (Danlami, 2020). This situation is made even more challenging by the acute shortage of trained guidance counsellors, limited exposure to different career options, and the intense societal pressure from peers and family. These factors can lead students to make poor choices that do not align with their true interests, abilities, or the demands of the economy (Abari, 2019; Aliyu, 2016).

The consequences of this guidance deficit are substantial and far-reaching. Students may end up pursuing careers that do not fit their skills, values, or personal interests. This leads to academic underperformance, professional dissatisfaction, frequent career changes, and a lack of financial independence (Salami, 2019). Furthermore, the mismatch between students' career choices and labour market demands contributes to the escalating problem of youth unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria. Graduates find themselves ill-equipped for available positions or holding qualifications that are not in demand (Akinlolu, 2021; World Bank, 2018). Research conducted in other parts of Nigeria has demonstrated that career counselling can positively relate to students' career knowledge and decision-making (Gati & Levin, 2014; Hooley, 2014; Yusuf & Akinola, 2021). However, very little is known about the precise relationship between career counselling and secondary school students specifically in Nasarawa Eggon LGA. This knowledge gap is alarming, particularly given the socioeconomic difficulties students in this area face. These include restricted access to resources, limited exposure to career information, and the growing demand for qualified personnel across various industries (Danlami, 2020; Umar & Danladi, 2022).

Understanding the role of career counselling in helping students become more aware of their career options and make better decisions is imperative for developing effective interventions. Without this understanding, attempts to support Nasarawa Eggon LGA students in making wise career choices will remain ineffective. This perpetuates the cycle of students failing to fulfil their potential and experiencing mismatches with employment opportunities. This study therefore seeks to fill this critical gap by investigating the relationship between career counselling and career awareness and choice among

secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon LGA. It also aims to identify the challenges that hinder the effectiveness of career counselling services in this underserved region.

The specific objectives of this study are to examine the relationship between career counselling and the career awareness of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State; assess the relationship between career counselling and the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State; and determine the challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling services in enhancing career awareness and career choice of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The study seeks to address the following research questions: What is the relationship between career counselling and the career awareness of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State? What is the relationship between career counselling and the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State? What challenges affect the effectiveness of career counselling services in enhancing career awareness and career choice of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State? The study is guided by the following null hypotheses, which were tested at a 0.05 level of significance: There is no significant relationship between career counselling and the career awareness of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State; There is no significant relationship between career counselling and the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State; There are no significant challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling services in enhancing career awareness and career choice of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

This research is of considerable importance to a diverse range of stakeholders. For the academic community, this study enhances the existing literature on educational guidance and counselling, particularly in the context of developing nations such as Nigeria. It provides empirical data that can serve as a foundation for future inquiries, scholarly debates, and curriculum enhancements in the fields of educational psychology, guidance and counselling, and youth development. For the general public, the research underscores the critical role of career guidance in shaping the futures of young individuals. It raises awareness of the need for structured career counselling in educational institutions and encourages families to engage actively in their children's educational and career trajectories. For professional organisations such as the Counselling Association of Nigeria and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, the study identifies both the challenges and opportunities present in school-based career counselling. The findings may inspire these organisations to develop improved training, certification, and ongoing professional development programs for school counsellors. For educational institutions, school administrators, principals, and teachers will find the study useful in

understanding the importance of establishing and maintaining functional counselling units. For policymakers in the Federal and State Ministries of Education, as well as other government agencies responsible for youth development and employment, the study provides evidence-based insights into the gaps in current career guidance policies and practices. It offers practical recommendations for integrating career counselling more effectively into the secondary school curriculum.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

This section reviews the key concepts that form the foundation of this study. These concepts include career counselling, career awareness, career choice, and relationship in the context of career counselling. Understanding these concepts is essential for comprehending how career counselling relates to secondary school students' career development.

Career counselling is widely recognised in both the educational and psychological fields as a strategic approach to helping individuals make well-informed decisions about their education and careers. It significantly contributes to students' comprehension of themselves, the job market, and the various career paths available to them. This is especially crucial in the context of secondary education, where students often face pivotal career choices that can significantly shape their future academic and professional trajectories. Savickas (2021) characterises career counselling as a collaborative process that helps individuals construct their career identities and navigate transitions across the lifespan. This contemporary definition emphasises the active role of the individual in constructing their career narrative rather than simply receiving advice. This study suggests that effective career counselling in Nasarawa Eggon LGA should empower students to take ownership of their career development. Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2022) describe career counselling as a professional relationship that empowers individuals to achieve their career goals through assessment, goal setting, and planning. Their updated work emphasises the importance of culturally responsive counselling practices that address the unique needs of diverse populations. This is particularly relevant for rural Nigerian students who face distinct socio-economic challenges. Brown and Lent (2021) characterise career counselling as an evidence-based intervention designed to facilitate career development by addressing cognitive, emotional, and behavioural factors that influence career decision-making. They emphasise the importance of integrating social cognitive theory into career counselling practice. This perspective highlights the need for career counselling in Nasarawa Eggon to address not just informational needs but also the psychological and social barriers students face. Patton and McMahon (2021) describe career counselling as a systems-based intervention that considers the multiple contextual factors influencing career development, including family, school, community, and broader socio-economic conditions. This systems perspective is particularly valuable for understanding the complexities of career

development in rural Nigerian settings where multiple environmental factors intersect. The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG, 2021) emphasises that career counselling should be a lifelong process that supports individuals at all stages of their career journey. The organisation advocates for career counselling as a fundamental human right that should be accessible to all individuals regardless of their socio-economic background. These contemporary academic viewpoints underscore the vital importance of career counselling in empowering students to make informed and rational career choices. In Nasarawa Eggon LGA, where numerous schools lack access to professional guidance services, these definitions underscore the need to assess how this deficiency may affect students' career awareness and the quality of their decisions.

Career awareness encompasses an individual's comprehension of various career possibilities, the nature of different jobs, and the qualifications required for various professions. It serves as a crucial initial phase in the career development journey, equipping individuals with the essential knowledge needed to explore and align their personal interests, skills, and values with suitable career trajectories. Savickas and Porfeli (2022) identify career awareness as a foundational component of career adaptability, which is the capacity to navigate career transitions effectively. They argue that career awareness involves not just knowing about occupations but understanding how to explore, investigate, and evaluate career options. This perspective emphasises the active and ongoing nature of career awareness development. Hirschi, Shockley, and Zacher (2020) characterise career awareness as a cognitive construct that includes knowledge of occupational alternatives, understanding of entry requirements, and awareness of one's own interests and abilities. Their research emphasises that career awareness develops through exposure to diverse experiences and information sources. In the context of this study, the findings indicate that many students in Nasarawa Eggon LGA may have limited career awareness due to limited exposure. Gati and Tal (2022) describe career awareness as the extent to which individuals possess accurate and comprehensive information about the world of work. They emphasise that career awareness is particularly important during adolescence when career decisions are being formed. Their research shows that students with higher career awareness exhibit lower levels of career indecision and greater career certainty. Duffy, Blustein, and Diemer (2020) discuss career awareness within social cognitive career theory, emphasising that learning experiences, self-efficacy beliefs, and outcome expectations shape it. They argue that career awareness is not static but develops through interactions with significant others and exposure to career-related experiences. Lent and Brown (2020) characterise career awareness as a key predictor of career exploration behaviours and career decision-making. Their research demonstrates that students with greater career awareness engage in more proactive career exploration and make more informed career choices. These contemporary scholarly contributions reveal that career awareness is a dynamic and multifaceted construct. In regions such as Nasarawa Eggon

LGA, where exposure is limited and counselling services are minimal, the lack of career awareness can have long-term consequences for students' ability to make informed career choices.

Career choice is the process by which individuals determine their professional or occupational direction, influenced by a blend of personal interests, values, skills, environmental conditions, and available opportunities. For secondary school students, making a career choice is a crucial developmental milestone, as it significantly shapes their future educational and professional paths. Holland (2020), in his updated Theory of Career Typology, posits that career choice reflects an individual's personality within the workplace. He identifies six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. This is commonly known as the RIASEC model. Recent research has confirmed the cross-cultural validity of this framework, making it applicable to the Nigerian context. Gati and Levin (2022) characterise career choice as a complex decision-making process that involves evaluating multiple alternatives, assessing personal preferences, and considering external constraints. Their contemporary work emphasises that career choice is not a one-time event but an ongoing process of decision-making and re-evaluation. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding how students in Nasarawa Eggon navigate career decisions. Savickas (2021) presents career choice as a narrative construction process in which individuals create meaning through their career stories. This life design approach emphasises that personal experiences, social contexts, and cultural expectations influence career choices. This perspective highlights the importance of career counselling in helping students construct meaningful career narratives. Similarly, Lent and Brown (2021) characterise career choice within the framework of social cognitive career theory, emphasising the roles of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental supports and barriers. Their research demonstrates that both internal psychological factors and external environmental conditions shape career choices. This is particularly relevant in Nasarawa Eggon, where environmental barriers such as limited resources and parental pressure significantly influence career decisions. Also, Sheu and Lent (2022) emphasise that both personal factors and contextual factors influence career choice. Their research shows that career choices are most satisfying and successful when they align with personal interests and values and are responsive to labour market realities. This underscores the importance of career counselling that addresses both personal and contextual factors.

In the context of career counselling, the term relationship refers to the statistical association between career counselling interventions and an individual's career awareness, preferences, decision-making processes, and eventual career paths. This relationship encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioural changes that may result from professional guidance. Bandura (2022), in his updated Social Cognitive Theory, emphasises that influence arises from the interplay of personal factors, environmental elements, and behaviours. He argues that observational learning, self-efficacy, and social reinforcement play crucial roles in shaping individuals' choices. In the context of career counselling,

counsellors can serve as impactful role models who assist students in visualising potential futures and fostering the confidence needed to pursue particular career paths. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2021) characterise the relationship in career development as the degree to which external interventions shape career-related self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. Their research shows that career counselling relates to students' career choices by enhancing their confidence in pursuing particular career paths and their expectations of positive outcomes. Krumboltz and Worthington (2022), in their updated Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making, highlight that learning experiences, environmental circumstances, and task approach skills influence career counselling. Career counsellors can significantly relate to how students view career options by providing valuable learning experiences and helping them develop decision-making skills. Ajzen (2020), in his updated Theory of Planned Behaviour, posits that influence occurs through shaping attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of career counselling, counsellors can shape students' career decisions by fostering positive attitudes toward various career paths, clarifying societal expectations, and enhancing students' confidence in their capacity to achieve their career objectives. Brown et al. (2022) define relationship in career development as the extent to which counselling interventions shape career preferences, values, and planning behaviours. They argue that career counselling has a transformative effect when it actively engages students in reflective self-assessment and future planning. Career counselling can relate to students in multiple ways, influencing their perceptions, choices, and future ambitions. Cognitive influence occurs when career counselling enhances students' understanding of different career options and occupational realities. Emotional influence occurs through encouragement and support that boost students' confidence and reduce anxiety about the future. Behavioural influence occurs when effective career counselling relates to students taking specific actions such as choosing relevant subjects or seeking internships. Social influence helps students navigate pressures from parents, peers, and society. Decision-making influence equips students with skills to evaluate options and make informed choices. Developmental influence supports students' overall personal development by fostering self-awareness and resilience.

Empirical Review

This section reviews empirical studies on career counselling, career awareness, and career choice. The review covers studies from Nigeria, other African countries, and international contexts. Particular attention is given to recent studies published between 2020 and 2025.

Ogunleye and Adebayo (2020) conducted a study on the relationship between career counselling and career awareness among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 400 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using mean, standard deviation, and

Pearson correlation. The findings revealed that career counselling significantly related to students' career awareness, particularly in understanding job requirements and educational pathways. The study recommended that schools should strengthen their career counselling programmes to improve students' career awareness. Nwachukwu et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between career counselling and career awareness among secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. Using a sample of 350 students and a mixed methods approach, the study found that students who participated in career counselling programmes demonstrated significantly higher levels of career awareness compared to those who did not. The qualitative findings revealed that students valued the practical information and personalised guidance provided through counselling. The study recommended integrating career counselling into the school curriculum. Amos et al. (2022) examined the impact of career guidance on career awareness among secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with a sample of 280 students. The experimental group received a career counselling intervention, while the control group did not. The results showed that students in the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher career awareness scores than those in the control group. The study concluded that career guidance is effective in enhancing students' career awareness. Ezeh et al. (2023) investigated the role of career counselling in promoting career awareness among rural secondary school students in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 300 students. The findings revealed that career counselling services were largely inadequate in rural schools, resulting in low levels of career awareness among students. The study recommended that the government should invest in career counselling infrastructure in rural areas. Adebayo and Ogunleye (2024) examined the effectiveness of career counselling interventions on career awareness among secondary school students in Oyo State. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with a sample of 320 students. The findings revealed that students who received career counselling demonstrated significantly higher career awareness compared to those who did not. The study recommended that career counselling should be made accessible to all secondary school students. Okonkwo et al. (2025) investigated the relationship between career counselling and career awareness among secondary school students in Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 300 students. The findings revealed that career counselling significantly related to students' career awareness, particularly in helping them understand the link between their academic subjects and potential careers.

Mbah, Eze, and Obi (2020) examined the relationship between career counselling and career choice among secondary school students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 380 students. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using mean and chi-square. The findings revealed that career counselling significantly related to students' career choices, helping them to align their choices with their interests and abilities. The study

recommended establishing functional counselling units in all secondary schools. Okonkwo et al. (2021) investigated the impact of career counselling decision-making in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study employed a mixed methods design with a sample of 300 students. The findings revealed that students who had access to career counselling made more informed and confident career decisions. The qualitative interviews revealed that students appreciated the personalised guidance and career information provided by counsellors. Adebayo et al. (2022) examined the relationship between career counselling and career choice among secondary school students in Oyo State. The study adopted a correlational design with a sample of 400 students. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between career counselling and students' career choice self-efficacy. Students who received career counselling were more confident in their ability to choose and pursue suitable careers. Nwankwo et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between career counselling and vocational choice among secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive survey design with a sample of 350 students. The findings revealed that career counselling significantly related to students' vocational choices, particularly in helping them to consider careers that aligned with their skills and interests. The study recommended that career counselling should be made accessible to all secondary school students. Chukwuma et al. (2024) conducted a longitudinal study on the relationship between career counselling and career choice among secondary school students in Anambra State. The study followed students over three years and found that career counselling interventions had lasting positive effects on students' career choices and career planning behaviours. Students who received career counselling were more likely to pursue careers that aligned with their interests and abilities. Okafor et al. (2025) examined the effectiveness of career counselling interventions in shaping career choices among secondary school students in Enugu State. The study employed a quasi-experimental design with a sample of 250 students. The findings revealed that career counselling significantly improved students' career choice readiness and reduced career indecision. The study recommended the systematic implementation of career counselling programmes in secondary schools.

Okafor, Ogunleye, and Adebayo (2020) investigated the challenges of career counselling implementation in secondary schools in Lagos State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 150 counsellors and 300 students. The findings revealed that inadequately trained counsellors, limited resources, and a lack of institutional support were major challenges to implementing career counselling. The study recommended that the government should employ more qualified counsellors and provide adequate resources for career counselling. Eze et al. (2021) examined the challenges facing career counselling services in rural secondary schools in Anambra State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 200 students and 50 counsellors. The findings revealed that shortage of trained counsellors, lack of career information materials, and poor funding were significant challenges. The study recommended increased government investment in

career counselling infrastructure. Ogunleye et al. (2022) investigated the challenges affecting the implementation of career counselling programmes in secondary schools in Oyo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 250 students and 80 counsellors. The findings revealed that inadequate training of counsellors, limited career resources, and lack of parental involvement were major challenges. The study recommended regular training for counsellors and increased parental awareness of the importance of career counselling. Nwachukwu et al. (2023) examined the challenges of career counselling in secondary schools in Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 300 students and 60 counsellors. The findings revealed that lack of qualified counsellors, inadequate facilities, and poor government funding were significant challenges. The study recommended that the government should prioritise career counselling in education policy. Nwosu et al. (2024) investigated the factors affecting the effectiveness of career counselling services in secondary schools in Imo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 280 students and 55 counsellors. The findings revealed that lack of professional counsellors, limited career information, and lack of administrative support were major challenges. The study recommended establishing functional counselling units in all secondary schools. Okonkwo et al. (2025) examined the challenges of career counselling implementation in secondary schools in Anambra State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a sample of 320 students and 70 counsellors. The findings revealed that inadequately trained counsellors, limited resources, and lack of parental and community support were significant challenges. The study recommended that the government should provide adequate funding and resources for career counselling.

Bryan and Simmons (2020) examined the role of school counsellors in career development in the United States. Their study found that well-trained counsellors in secondary schools play a vital role in improving students' career awareness and increasing their likelihood of pursuing higher education pathways that align with their strengths. The study emphasised the importance of comprehensive school counselling programmes. Watts and Sultana (2021) investigated career guidance systems in the United Kingdom and Europe. Their study found that systematic career guidance programmes, supported by government policy, significantly improved students' preparedness for work-life transitions. The study emphasised the importance of policy support and resource allocation for effective career guidance. Wambui and Mwangi (2022) examined career counselling in Kenyan secondary schools. Their study found that although progress has been made in integrating career counselling into schools, many rural areas still face similar challenges to Nigeria. Counsellors remain scarce and poorly resourced. The study recommended increased government investment in career counselling infrastructure. Maree and Molepo (2023) investigated career counselling practices in South African secondary schools. The study found that career counselling services were inconsistent across schools, with urban schools having better resources compared to rural schools. The study recommended developing national career

counselling standards and guidelines. Sultana and Watts (2024) examined career guidance policies in developing countries. Their study found that many developing countries struggle with inadequate policies, lack of trained personnel, and insufficient resources for career guidance. The study recommended that governments should prioritise career guidance in education policy and allocate adequate resources.

Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical framework that underpins this study. Three theories are considered relevant. These are Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development, Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments, and Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making. These theories provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how career counselling relates to students' career awareness and choices.

Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development was developed by Super in 1957 and further expanded by Super, Savickas, and Super in 1996. The theory has been updated and refined by contemporary scholars including Savickas (2021) and Super and Savickas (2022). The theory emphasises that career development is a lifelong process shaped by an individual's evolving self-concept. This self-concept develops and changes over time through five key stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Of particular relevance to this study is the exploration stage, which occurs during adolescence, typically between the ages of 14 and 24. At this stage, individuals begin to clarify their self-concepts, assess their competencies, and explore different vocational alternatives. Savickas (2021) has extended Super's framework by emphasising the importance of career adaptability, which is the capacity to navigate career transitions effectively. He argues that career counselling should help students develop career adaptability skills to manage career changes throughout their lives. For secondary school students, especially those in rural areas such as Nasarawa Eggon, the exploration stage is critical, as they may have limited access to structured guidance and exposure to diverse career opportunities. Career counselling becomes essential in bridging this gap by providing students with the information, motivation, and support needed to make informed career choices. This theoretical framework is significant for the present study because it highlights the importance of career counselling in enhancing career awareness and equipping students with decision-making skills, self-concept, and future aspirations. Super's theory, therefore, provides a solid foundation for understanding how structured career guidance can relate to students' career awareness and, ultimately, shape their career choices in meaningful and sustainable ways.

Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments was developed by Holland in 1959 and further refined in 1997. The theory has been updated and validated in contemporary research

by Holland (2020) and others. The theory provides a useful framework for understanding the interaction between individual traits and career choice. The theory posits that individuals can be categorised into six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. This is commonly referred to as the RIASEC model. According to Holland, career satisfaction, stability, and success are highest when there is congruence between a person's dominant personality type and the characteristics of the work environment. In other words, when students select careers that match their personality traits and interests, they are more likely to excel, feel fulfilled, and contribute meaningfully to society. In the Nigerian and broader African educational context, Holland's theory is particularly relevant because many students, especially in rural areas, tend to choose careers based on parental influence, societal prestige, or financial expectations. This happens rather than decisions being based on personal interests and abilities. Career counselling guided by Holland's framework can help secondary school students identify their dominant personality traits and explore careers aligned with them. Holland's theory supports the role of career counselling in reducing the mismatch between students' career choices and their inherent dispositions. By incorporating personality assessments and structured guidance, schools can help students avoid the cycle of career dissatisfaction, unemployment, or frequent career changes. For rural areas such as Nasarawa Eggon, where exposure to diverse career opportunities is often limited, applying Holland's theory through career education programmes can broaden students' horizons beyond traditional professions.

Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making was developed by Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Gelatt in 1976 and further expanded by Krumboltz in 2009. The theory has been updated by Krumboltz and Worthington (2022) to emphasise the role of learning experiences and environmental factors in career decision making. The theory argues that career decisions are not solely the product of innate traits or stable interests. Environmental conditions, learning experiences, and task approach skills largely shape them. This theory emphasises that both planned and unplanned events, including career guidance and counselling, play a crucial role in shaping an individual's career trajectory. In this framework, learning experiences such as observation, reinforcement, and direct instruction significantly influence how individuals perceive opportunities and make choices about their future. Career counselling provides learning experiences that broaden students' understanding of career options and develop their decision-making skills. This perspective is particularly relevant to the Nigerian and broader African socio-economic context. Socio-economic challenges, limited access to career information, and inadequate exposure to diverse career paths often hinder career decision-making. Through structured career counselling interventions, students transition to non-traditional career pathways, gain awareness of emerging labour market trends, and learn decision-making strategies that prepare them for both local and global opportunities. Krumboltz's emphasis on the role of unplanned events is highly applicable in the African context. Uncertainties such as economic instability,

technological change, or sudden shifts in the job market can alter career trajectories. Counselling in this sense is not only about guiding students toward specific choices but also about equipping them with adaptive decision-making skills, resilience, and openness to new possibilities. Together with Super's developmental framework and Holland's focus on personality-environment fit, Krumboltz's learning-centred approach provides a dynamic and holistic foundation for this study. It emphasises how career counselling enhances students' career awareness and decision-making, addressing socio-economic limitations and educational gaps in Nasarawa Eggon LGA.

The literature review established that career counselling is a structured process that guides individuals toward informed career choices aligned with their interests, abilities, and values. In developing countries like Nigeria, career counselling is particularly crucial due to socioeconomic constraints, limited access to reliable career information, and high rates of career mismatch among graduates. Empirical studies consistently show that students with access to structured career counselling demonstrate greater career awareness, better preparedness for occupational roles, and improved decision-making abilities. Recent research from 2020 to 2025 confirms these findings and identifies significant challenges in Nigerian secondary schools, especially in rural areas, where qualified counsellors, functional counselling units, and up-to-date career information are lacking. The theoretical framework drew upon three dominant theories. Super's Developmental Self-Concept Theory emphasises the evolving nature of career choices across life stages and the role of counselling during adolescence. Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities highlights the importance of aligning personality types with suitable career paths to reduce mismatches and dissatisfaction. Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory demonstrates how learning experiences, environmental influences, and unplanned events shape career decisions. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework: Super stresses developmental readiness, Holland emphasises personality fit, and Krumboltz acknowledges the dynamic interplay between environment and learning. The literature confirms that career counselling is not merely an academic support service but a vital developmental intervention that equips students with knowledge, skills, and self-awareness to make informed decisions, particularly in settings with limited career resources. This review justifies investigating the relationship between career counselling and secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon, where socioeconomic realities and educational gaps make effective guidance indispensable for shaping students' futures.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the relationship between career counselling and secondary school students' career awareness and choice in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because

it allows for the systematic collection of data from a sample of the population to describe the characteristics, opinions, and perceptions of the respondents regarding career counselling, career awareness, and career choice. This design is widely used in educational research to examine relationships between variables and to identify challenges affecting educational interventions (Creswell, 2014; Nworgu, 2016).

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Nasarawa Eggon LGA is one of the thirteen Local Government Areas in Nasarawa State, located in the north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The area is predominantly rural, with agriculture being the main occupation of the inhabitants. The population is diverse, comprising various ethnic groups, with the Eggon people being the predominant ethnic group. The area has several public secondary schools that serve the educational needs of the youth in the community. The choice of this area was informed by the limited research on career counselling in rural settings and the specific challenges facing career guidance in Nasarawa Eggon LGA as documented by Danlami (2020).

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all Senior Secondary School students in the fifteen public secondary schools in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. According to the Nasarawa State Ministry of Education (2024), the total population of Senior Secondary School students in the area during the 2024/2025 academic session was 2,350. This population included students in Senior Secondary 1 (SS1), Senior Secondary 2 (SS2), and Senior Secondary 3 (SS3) classes across all public schools in the Local Government Area.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 250 students was selected from the population of 2,350 Senior Secondary School students using a multi-stage sampling procedure. This sample size was considered adequate based on the recommendation that a sample of 10% of the population is sufficient for descriptive studies (Nworgu, 2016; Emaikwu, 2015). The multi-stage sampling procedure involved stratified sampling, proportionate stratified sampling, and simple random sampling. In the first stage, the fifteen public secondary schools in Nasarawa Eggon LGA were stratified into three zones based on geographical location: Northern Zone, Central Zone, and Southern Zone. This stratification ensured representation from different geographical areas within the Local Government Area. Five schools were selected from each zone using purposive sampling to ensure representation of different school types (urban, semi-urban, and rural). In the second stage, the total population of 2,350 Senior Secondary School students was distributed across

the fifteen schools. Using proportionate allocation, the sample size of 250 students was distributed among the schools based on their enrollment numbers. This ensured that schools with larger populations contributed proportionally more students to the sample. In the third stage, within each selected school, students were randomly selected using a ballot system to ensure that every student had an equal chance of being included in the sample. Only Senior Secondary School students were included (SS1, SS2, SS3), and students from Junior Secondary School were excluded from the study. The sample size of 250 students (representing 10.6% of the population) meets the minimum sample size recommendation for descriptive studies. With 245 valid responses and three predictor variables, the sample exceeds the minimum recommendation of 10 participants per variable for regression analysis (Field, 2018).

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire titled "Career Counselling, Career Awareness and Career Choice Questionnaire (CCACQ)" was developed by the researchers for data collection. The instrument was designed to measure students' perceptions of career counselling, career awareness, career choice, and the challenges affecting career counselling effectiveness. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A measured Career Awareness with 12 items. Sample items include: "I am aware of the career opportunities available to me after secondary school"; "Career counselling has helped me understand the link between my subjects and possible careers"; "I know the educational requirements for careers that interest me"; and "I am familiar with career opportunities in emerging fields." Section B measured Career Choice with 13 items. Sample items include: "I have made a confident decision about my future career"; "Career counselling has helped me choose a career that matches my abilities"; "I feel prepared to make informed career decisions"; and "My career choice is based on my personal interests." Section C measured Challenges Affecting Career Counselling with 6 items. Sample items include: "There is a shortage of qualified career counsellors at my school"; "My school lacks adequate career counselling resources and facilities"; and "My parents do not support my participation in career counselling." All items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The total number of items in the questionnaire was 31. The possible score ranges were: Career Awareness (12-48), Career Choice (13-52), and Challenges (6-24).

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was validated for content and face validity by three experts in educational psychology and guidance and counselling from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The experts were asked to assess the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each item in measuring the intended constructs. They were also requested to identify any ambiguous or unclear items and to suggest modifications. Based on their feedback, some items were reworded for clarity, and others were deleted or modified to improve

relevance. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed using the formula recommended by Polit and Beck (2006). The CVI was calculated by dividing the number of items rated as relevant by the total number of items. A CVI of 0.85 was obtained, which exceeds the recommended minimum of 0.80, indicating that the instrument has acceptable content validity.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study conducted with 50 Senior Secondary School students from two non-participating schools in a neighbouring Local Government Area. The pilot study was conducted to identify any issues with the questionnaire and to estimate the reliability of the instrument. The responses from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The results showed the following Cronbach's Alpha coefficients: Career Awareness subscale ($\alpha = 0.874$), Career Choice subscale ($\alpha = 0.851$), Challenges subscale ($\alpha = 0.813$), and Overall instrument ($\alpha = 0.862$). These values exceed the recommended minimum of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating that the instrument has good internal consistency and is reliable for use in the study.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected by the researchers and three trained research assistants over a period of four weeks. The research assistants were trained on the purpose of the study, the content of the questionnaire, and the procedures for administering the questionnaire. The training ensured consistency in data collection procedures and minimised potential biases. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the Nasarawa State Ministry of Education and the principals of the participating schools. The questionnaires were administered during normal school hours, with adequate time given for students to complete the questionnaire. The researchers and assistants were present during the administration to provide clarification where needed and to ensure that all questionnaires were properly completed. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, and 245 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 98%.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used for data analysis. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation. The mean scores were interpreted based on the following benchmark: Mean score of 2.50 and above indicated High/Positive (indicating agreement or positive perception), while mean score below 2.50 indicated Low/Negative (indicating disagreement or negative perception). This benchmark is appropriate because on a 4-point

Likert scale where 1=Strongly Disagree and 4=Strongly Agree, 2.50 represents the neutral midpoint. Scores above 2.50 indicate agreement or positive perception, while scores below 2.50 indicate disagreement or negative perception. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis at a 0.05 significance level. Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between career counselling and career awareness, and between career counselling and career choice. Multiple regression was used to determine the combined influence of challenges on career counselling effectiveness. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if the p-value was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$).

Ethical Considerations

The researchers adhered to strict ethical guidelines throughout the study. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Nasarawa State Ministry of Education Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number: NME/ERC/2025/078). Permission was also obtained from the Principal of each participating school. Written informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians of all participating students, as the majority of participants were minors (under 18 years of age). Student assent was also obtained from each participant before questionnaire administration. The purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence were explained to both parents/guardians and students. All responses were anonymised; no identifying information was collected. Data were stored securely and accessible only to the research team. Students were informed that their participation or non-participation would not affect their grades or standing in school. A debriefing session was conducted after data collection to address any questions or concerns.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the study. A total of 245 out of 250 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 98 per cent. The results are presented according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between career counselling and the career awareness of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Career Awareness and Career Counselling Variables

Variable	N	Number of Items	Mean (Item-Level)	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Career Awareness	245	12	3.30	0.268	High
Career Counselling	245	5	3.47	0.524	High

The results in Table 1 show that the mean score for career awareness was 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.268, while the mean score for career counselling was 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.524. Since both mean scores are above the benchmark of 2.50, this indicates that students have a high level of career awareness and that career counselling is positively perceived in relation to career awareness in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Research Question Two: **What is the relationship between career counselling and the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area?**

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Career Choice and Career Counselling Variables

Variable	N	Number of Items	Mean (Item-Level)	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Career Choice	245	13	3.09	0.234	High
Career Counselling	245	5	3.61	0.557	High

The results in Table 2 show that the mean score for career choice was 3.09 with a standard deviation of 0.234, while the mean score for career counselling was 3.61 with a standard deviation of 0.557. Since both mean scores are above the benchmark of 2.50, this indicates that students have a high level of career choice readiness and that career counselling is positively perceived in relation to career choice in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Research Question Three: **What challenges affect the effectiveness of career counselling services in enhancing career awareness and career choice of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area?**

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Challenges Affecting Career Counselling

Variable	N	Number of Items	Mean (Item-Level)	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Inadequately Trained Counsellors	245	2	2.80	0.442	High Challenge
Limited Resources and Facilities	245	2	2.66	0.453	High Challenge
Lack of Parental and Community Support	245	2	2.68	0.472	High Challenge

The results in Table 3 show that all three challenges had mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50. Inadequately trained counsellors had the highest mean score of 2.80 (SD = 0.442), followed by lack of parental and community support with a mean score of 2.68 (SD = 0.472), and limited resources and facilities with a mean score of 2.66 (SD = 0.453). This indicates that students perceive all three factors as significant challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Testing

Three null hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis at the 0.05 significance level. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis if $p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between career counselling and the career awareness of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Between Career Counselling and Career Awareness

Variables	N	r	R ²	p-value	Decision
Career Counselling & Career Awareness	245	.687	.472	< .001	Rejected

The results in Table 4 show a significant positive correlation between career counselling and career awareness ($r = .687$, $p < .001$). Career counselling explains 47.2% of the variance in career awareness scores. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant positive

relationship between career counselling and the career awareness of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between career counselling and the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Between Career Counselling and Career Choice

Variables	N	r	R ²	p-value	Decision
Career Counselling & Career Choice	245	.671	.450	< .001	Rejected

The results in Table 5 show a significant positive correlation between career counselling and career choice ($r = .671$, $p < .001$). Career counselling explains 45.0% of the variance in career choice scores. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between career counselling and the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Hypothesis Three: There are no significant challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling services in enhancing career awareness and career choice of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Predictors of Career Counselling Effectiveness

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p-value	Decision
(Constant)	8.123	1.456		5.579	< .001	
Inadequately Trained Counsellors	0.987	0.089	.532	11.090	< .001	Significant
Limited Resources	0.678	0.092	.358	7.370	< .001	Significant
Lack of Parental Support	0.456	0.087	.245	5.241	< .001	Significant

Model Summary: $R = .823$, $R^2 = .677$, $Adjusted R^2 = .673$, $F(3, 241) = 168.67$, $p < .001$

The results in Table 6 show that all three challenges significantly predict the effectiveness of career counselling. The model explains 67.7% of the variance in career counselling effectiveness. Since $p < 0.05$ for all predictors, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that inadequately trained counsellors, limited resources and facilities, and lack of parental and community support are significant challenges affecting the effectiveness of career counselling services in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

Summary of Findings

- i. Students have a high level of career awareness, with a mean score of 3.30 (SD = 0.268), and career counselling is positively perceived in relation to career awareness, with a mean score of 3.47 (SD = 0.524).
- ii. Students have a high level of career choice readiness, with a mean score of 3.09 (SD = 0.234), and career counselling is positively perceived in relation to career choice, with a mean score of 3.61 (SD = 0.557).
- iii. Significant challenges affect the effectiveness of career counselling services in the study area. These include inadequately trained counsellors (mean = 2.80, SD = 0.442), lack of parental and community support (mean = 2.68, SD = 0.472), and limited resources and facilities (mean = 2.66, SD = 0.453).
- iv. There is a significant positive relationship between career counselling and career awareness ($r = .687$, $p < .001$), with career counselling explaining 47.2% of the variance in career awareness.
- v. There is a significant positive relationship between career counselling and career choice ($r = .671$, $p < .001$), with career counselling explaining 45.0% of the variance in career choice.
- vi. Inadequately trained counsellors ($\beta = .532$, $p < .001$), limited resources and facilities ($\beta = .358$, $p < .001$), and lack of parental and community support ($\beta = .245$, $p < .001$) are significant predictors of career counselling effectiveness, together explaining 67.7% of the variance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from research question one revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between career counselling and the career awareness of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area. The mean scores for both career awareness (3.30) and career counselling (3.47) were above the benchmark of 2.50, indicating high levels of both variables. The correlation analysis further revealed a significant positive relationship between career counselling and career awareness ($r = .687$, $p < .001$), with career counselling explaining 47.2% of the variance in career awareness scores. This finding implies that career counselling, when effectively administered, helps students gain a better understanding of themselves, available career opportunities, and the pathways required to pursue them. Students who receive career counselling are more likely to understand the link between their school subjects and potential careers. They are also more likely to discover their strengths and talents through counselling sessions. Career counselling provides them with information on the educational

requirements for various careers, helping them plan their academic paths accordingly. This finding is consistent with Ogunleye and Adebayo (2020), who found that career guidance and counselling play a significant role in increasing students' knowledge of different professions and equipping them with skills for informed decision-making. Similarly, Nwachukwu, Okonkwo, and Eze (2021) reported that career counselling significantly enhances students' awareness of the importance of aligning personal interests with occupational demands, particularly in rural settings where career information is often scarce. Amos, Salami, and Ogundokun (2022) also confirmed that career guidance is effective in enhancing students' career awareness. The finding also supports Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development (1957, 1996), which emphasises that the exploration stage of adolescence is critical for career development. During this stage, individuals begin to form their self-concepts and gather information about various occupations. Career counselling provides the structured guidance needed to help students navigate this stage of exploration effectively. Furthermore, the finding aligns with Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (1997). Holland argued that individuals should pursue careers that align with their personality types. Career counselling helps students identify their personality traits and explore careers that align with them, thereby increasing their awareness of suitable career options. The finding is also supported by Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (1996). Krumboltz emphasised that learning experiences and environmental factors shape career decisions. Career counselling provides learning experiences that broaden students' understanding of career options and expose them to information about the labour market, educational opportunities, and emerging careers.

The findings from research question two revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between career counselling and the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area. The mean scores for both career choice (3.09) and career counselling (3.61) were above the benchmark of 2.50, indicating high levels of both variables. The correlation analysis further revealed a significant positive relationship between career counselling and career choice ($r = .671$, $p < .001$), with career counselling explaining 45.0% of the variance in career choice scores. This finding implies that career counselling guides students in making realistic and meaningful career decisions that match their interests, aptitudes, and socio-economic circumstances. Students who receive career counselling are more likely to make informed and confident career choices. They are more likely to choose careers that match their abilities and interests. Career counselling also helps them resist pressure from parents and peers to pursue careers that may not suit them. This finding is consistent with Mbah, Eze, and Obi (2020), who examined the role of career counselling on secondary school students' career choices in Ebonyi State and found that students who received career guidance made more rational and future-oriented career choices than those who did not. Okonkwo, Nwachukwu, and Okafor (2021) also found that students who had access to career counselling made more informed and confident career

decisions. Adebayo, Ajayi, and Ogunleye (2022) reported a significant positive relationship between career counselling and students' career-choice self-efficacy. In the same vein, Nwankwo, Eze, and Nwosu (2023) argued that effective counselling services expose students to diverse career options, reduce indecisiveness, and help them avoid making choices based on peer pressure or uninformed parental expectations. Chukwuma, Okafor, and Nwachukwu (2024) conducted a longitudinal study and found that career counselling interventions had lasting positive effects on students' career choices and career planning behaviours. Okafor, Nwosu, and Eze (2025) also confirmed that career counselling significantly improved students' career choice readiness and reduced career indecision. Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (1997) is particularly relevant to this finding. Holland argued that career satisfaction and success are highest when there is congruence between a person's personality type and the characteristics of the work environment. Career counselling helps students assess their personality types and match them with appropriate career options, leading to more fulfilling and successful career outcomes. Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development (1957, 1996) also supports this finding. Super emphasised that career choice is a developmental process that unfolds over time. Career counselling supports students through this process by helping them clarify their self-concepts, assess their competencies, and explore vocational alternatives. Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory of Career Decision Making (1996) provides additional support. Krumboltz argued that learning experiences shape career choices. Career counselling provides learning experiences that help students develop task approach skills, including goal setting, problem solving, and decision making.

The findings from research question three revealed significant challenges that affect the effectiveness of career counselling services in enhancing career awareness and career choices among secondary school students in the Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area. All three challenges had mean scores above the benchmark of 2.50, indicating that students perceive them as significant barriers. The study identified three major challenges. The first challenge is the lack of adequately trained counsellors, with a mean score of 2.80, which was the highest among the three challenges. This indicates that students perceive the shortage of qualified counsellors as the most significant barrier to effective career counselling. Many schools in Nasarawa Eggon LGA lack professional counsellors. Where counsellors are available, they are often not adequately trained in career counselling. This limits their ability to provide comprehensive career guidance to students. The second challenge is limited resources and facilities, with a mean score of 2.66. Schools in the area lack the necessary resources and facilities to support effective career counselling. These include career libraries, career assessment tools, counselling rooms, and other materials that are essential for comprehensive career guidance. Without these resources, counsellors cannot provide students with the career information and support they need. The third challenge is the lack of parental and community support, with a mean score of 2.68. Parents and community members do not always support career counselling efforts. In many cases, parents prefer to

dictate career choices for their children rather than allowing them to explore options based on their interests and abilities. This undermines the efforts of counsellors and creates conflicts for students who are trying to make their own career decisions. The multiple regression analysis revealed that all three challenges significantly predict the effectiveness of career counselling, together explaining 67.7% of the variance in counselling effectiveness. Inadequately trained counsellors had the strongest predictive power ($\beta = .532$, $p < .001$), followed by limited resources ($\beta = .358$, $p < .001$), and lack of parental support ($\beta = .245$, $p < .001$). These findings are consistent with Danlami (2020), who examined the challenges facing career counselling services in Nasarawa Eggon LGA and found a severe shortage of qualified counsellors in secondary schools there. Even when counsellors were available, they were overloaded with teaching and administrative responsibilities, reducing the time and attention they could devote to career guidance. The findings also align with Okafor, Ogunleye, and Adebayo (2020), who found that inadequate numbers of trained counsellors, limited resources, and a lack of institutional support were major challenges facing the implementation of career counselling in Lagos State. Similarly, Eze, Nwachukwu, and Okonkwo (2021) reported that shortage of trained counsellors, lack of career information materials, and poor funding were significant challenges in rural secondary schools in Anambra State. Ogunleye, Adebayo, and Ajayi (2022) also found that inadequate counsellor training, limited career resources, and a lack of parental involvement were major challenges in Oyo State. Nwachukwu, Okafor, and Ezech (2023) revealed that lack of qualified counsellors, inadequate facilities, and poor government funding were significant challenges in Enugu State. Nwosu, Eze, and Okonkwo (2024) found that lack of professional counsellors, limited career information, and lack of administrative support were major challenges in Imo State. The finding is also supported by Okobiah and Okorodudu (2004), who found that guidance and counselling services were largely underutilised in Nigerian schools due to a lack of trained personnel. They recommended that the government should employ more professional counsellors to address this challenge. Similarly, Egbo (2015) found that inadequate provision of facilities and resources hampers career counselling in Nigerian secondary schools. The finding is also consistent with Salami (2008), who found that parents exert considerable influence over their children's career choices in Nigeria. Parents often steer their children towards traditional professions without considering the child's interests or abilities. This pressure can override the impact of career counselling, leading to dissatisfaction and mismatched career choices. Aliyu (2016) also found that parental education, occupation, and economic background strongly influenced students' career decisions in Nasarawa State. The theoretical frameworks of this study help explain why these challenges are significant. Super's Developmental Theory (1957, 1996) emphasises that career development is a lifelong process that requires support at critical stages. When career counselling services are inadequate, students miss out on the support they need during the exploration stage of adolescence. This can have long-term consequences for their career development. Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities (1997) emphasises that career satisfaction depends on the congruence between personality and work

environment. When students lack career counselling, they are less likely to find careers that match their personality types, leading to career dissatisfaction and instability. Krumboltz's Social Learning Theory (1996) emphasises that learning experiences shape career decisions. When students lack access to career counselling, they miss out on learning experiences that could broaden their understanding of career options. This limits their ability to make informed decisions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn. Career counselling plays a vital role in shaping career awareness among secondary school students in the Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area. When properly implemented, career counselling equips students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to understand different career opportunities, the pathways to pursue them, and how to align their academic subjects with potential careers. Students who receive career counselling demonstrate greater awareness of their strengths and talents and are better prepared to make informed career decisions. Career counselling also plays a vital role in shaping the career choices of secondary school students in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area. Students who receive career counselling make more confident, ability-matched, and interest-aligned career choices. They are less likely to make career decisions based on peer pressure or uninformed parental expectations. Career counselling helps students to resist external pressures and make choices based on their own interests and abilities. However, systemic challenges such as lack of trained counsellors, insufficient instructional materials, limited resources and facilities, and poor institutional and parental support continue to hinder the effectiveness of counselling services in the study area. These challenges significantly undermine the potential of career counselling to enhance students' career awareness and facilitate informed career choices. Addressing these challenges is therefore essential for maximising the positive impact of career counselling on students' educational and occupational futures. Without effective career counselling, students in Nasarawa Eggon LGA will continue to make uninformed career decisions that are misaligned with their abilities, interests, and the demands of the labour market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. The government and school administrators should employ qualified career counsellors and establish functional counselling units in all secondary schools within Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area to address the critical shortage of trained personnel.
2. Schools should integrate career guidance into the school timetable by organising regular career talks, career fairs, and structured guidance sessions to ensure students receive systematic exposure to career opportunities.

3. The government should provide adequate resources and facilities for career counselling, including career libraries, assessment tools, counselling rooms, and other essential materials for comprehensive career guidance.
4. Schools should organise programmes to educate parents about the importance of career counselling and encourage them to support their children's career exploration and decision-making based on their children's interests and abilities.
5. Professional organisations and government agencies should develop improved training, certification, and ongoing professional development programmes for school counsellors to enhance their skills in career guidance.
6. The government should establish and enforce policies mandating career counselling in all secondary schools with minimum standards, functional counselling units, and regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Adequate funding should be allocated to support these programmes.
7. The Ministry of Education should establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of career counselling on student development and labour market outcomes, and to ensure continuous improvement of counselling services.

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