

Assessment of Occupational Information Services on Students Career Choice in Secondary Schools in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: One of the major reasons that have been attributed to wrong career seeking behavior is lack of access to information on career and labor market. Therefore, this research deals with the Assessment of Occupational Information services on Students Career Choice in Secondary Schools in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design, the study sampled five secondary school at random, out of which one hundred and fifty students and twenty counselors were randomly selected. A structured questionnaire titled students-counselor questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument had four point modified likert scale. The instrument was validated using spearman rank order correlation co-efficient which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation with an acceptable mean value of ≥ 2.50 otherwise rejected. Based on the analysis, it was revealed that school counselors help students to adjust in their academic performance, improve students' discipline, assist students to discover their potentials, help students to make informed career decision, It was also revealed that counselors are not inadequate in secondary schools in the study area, inadequate funding is the major hindrances to effective counseling services in secondary schools, sources and methods of occupational information are not adequate in secondary schools, It was also revealed that the major factors influencing career choice of students to include parent, peer group, prestige of the job and interest. Based on the findings it was recommended that school administrators should budget money for proper funding of occupational information unit in their various schools.

Key Words: Assessment, Occupational Information, Counselors, Career, Career Choice, Secondary Schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a process of gathering information to monitor progress and make educational decision if necessary. Assessment in education refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document their academic readiness, progress, skill acquisition or educational needs of students [1].

The author further stressed that assessment is a systematic basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. It is the process of defining, selecting, designing, collecting, analyzing, interpreting and using information to increase student learning and development.

In the early stage of life, young people in secondary schools were encountered with difficulties in one way or the other in making decisions and one of these decisions were majorly in the area of career choice, that is who they will become in future and the due process to follow, at this point if they are not properly informed might end up choosing a career out of peer influence or out of parents wish. This have become a major challenge as

so many people in all works of life are into one career or the other that they are not satisfied with thereby end up regretting resulting in unfulfilled goals [2].

In respect to these challenges, there is a need for giving detailed information to secondary School students on different occupations, a service is meant for it called” **Occupational Information service**”. Similarly occupational information services have been introduced in our secondary schools to help students in the area of choosing a career that will give him or her inner satisfaction. Occupational information is one of the major components needed to make effective career decisions.

Occupational information refers to the collection of details about occupational and educational opportunities, gathering and using occupational information is essential if an individual is to select options that fit his or her interest, values, aptitudes and skills. It can include details about the employment outlook, salary, related occupations, education and training, and job duties. Occupational information can be classified using three types of classification systems. Classification allows individuals to communicate more effectively with students about occupation that share common characteristics. The most widely used occupational classification systems include the standard occupational classification (SOC) system, Holland's Hexagon and world-of-work map (WWM), the SOC system classifies occupations based on the nature of the work performed and on the occupational skills, education and training requirements for the job [1].

Another important component of occupational information is the source from which the information can be obtained. The major source of occupational information include print materials and computerized information system. As noted by [3] as secondary school education comes to an end for many students, they are faced with the choice of the course to apply for when preparing to sit for the joint matriculated examination conducted by the joint admissions and matriculation board. Many of them make choices without proper understanding of their abilities, interests and attitude.

According to [4] young people are said to select occupations like medicine,

Engineering, accounting, mainly because of the positions and prestige attach to the job and not necessarily as a result of conscious assessment of the individual interest and abilities. Therefore occupational information may be a veritable means of providing career awareness to students.

The author maintained that occupational information is a valid and useable data about positions, jobs and occupations including duties, requirement for entrance, conditions of work, reward offered advancement pattern, existing and predicted supply of and demand for workers, and sources for further information. In the same vein, [5] noted that occupational information is a process which incorporates as many details as possible about the available occupational opportunities meant to help the individual not only to make an effective career choice but also to adjust to and make success in it. An occupational information service is very useful for students of secondary schools. It is a service designed to assist secondary school students to explore the world of work by propagating accurate, valid and useful information about educational and vocational opportunities, their characteristics, demands and requirements for a career and this can only be effectively transmitted with the assistance of school counselors.

The impact of school counselors in availing occupational information services cannot be overemphasized. In the area of vocational and career services, counselors play a crucial role in assisting students to know what type of job he/she fits into after due assessment of his or her values, potentials, personality traits like temperament, dominance, etc. it also involves helping people to adjust, cope with job demands.

The school counselor thus, is an important team player or part of the educational leadership team that provides valuable assistance to students [6]. Historically, school counselors provide guidance and counseling on issues including academic, vocational and/or career counseling to students in a school counseling programme.

Counselors play a major role in assisting the teacher with students’ problems which the teacher finds it difficult to resolve, and also helps the staff to organize their contact with parents, and also assist them to develop many of the important guidance services of the school such as orientation activities, placement services, testing programmes, students personal records, follow-up services facilitating the organization and use educational and occupational information needed by teachers by assisting the staff carry on research and evaluation studies. To this end counselors are often seen as model to students. This implies that counselors are very influential to student’s career choice [7].

Career refers to a pattern of decision, transactions and adjustments related to one's role in work, education, family, community and leisure [8]. On the other hand career education is also seen as providing the students with the skills, attitude and information which they need to successfully enter the labor market smoothly at whatever point they leave school.

[9] collaborated this fact by stating that the responsibility of school career counselor or master is to help the students to develop healthy attitudes, knowledge, skills and behavior towards work so that they can make effective and hitch free transactions from school work. According to [8] career information center in the school serves as a collection center for various educational and vocational information which it help the students in their vocational plans. Students should be encouraged to visit the career information center regularly to get abreast with the current information and happening in the world of work and education within the locality and beyond.

It is also a fact that students' subject preferences and career choice are highly influenced by certain factors. According to [10] factors that may influence career could be classified into social and structural influences and these can inform career choices positively or negatively. Social influences are biases that inform internal and external perception of individuals. Gender stereotyping, role models, peers, media, and parents are examples of social influences. Structural influences are manifested in the institutional support available such as teachers and counselors, access to technology, and same-sex versus co-educational schools. While both social and structural factors can influence decisions about career choice, adolescents' perceptions are mostly influenced by social factors such as parents, peers and role models, prestige and job lucrativeness. When applied to skills, interests, and career options, stereotyping about gender roles can limit opportunities for both sexes and deprive the workforce of talent [11]

To minimize these influences, students at all levels of education need vocational or career orientation in order to be well informed about the world of work, as well as understanding themselves better. This will pave way to appropriate choice of career that suits an individual's interest, abilities, aptitudes, capabilities and values.

[12] noted that [13] in his book "Choosing a Vocation", list three factors which should govern career guidance inter alia:

- (i) *Clear understanding of one's self; his attitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations and causes.*
- (ii) *Knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensations, opportunities and the prospects in different lines of work.*
- (iii) *True reasoning of the relations of the two groups of factors. This implies that individuals should make a choice by true understanding of numbers 1 and 2 above for appropriate career development. The author corroborated this fact by stating that the responsibility of school career counselor or master is to help the students to develop healthy attitudes, knowledge, skills and behavior towards work so that they can make effective and hitch-free transition from secondary schools to tertiary institutions.*

Secondary school refers to a form of education people or children receive after completing primary education and before entering tertiary institution. In other words this education falls between primary and tertiary levels of education. Secondary education in Nigeria has undergone changes over the decades in terms of its structure, type and curriculum [14].

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The choice of career has been a serious problem among secondary school students in Nigeria. No matter what one's age is, the choice of career or desire is an important question for everybody. A lot of student in secondary schools believe that their future is a glorious adventures in which they are bound to succeed. Many of them have the idea that they would be able to work in the public or private establishments as soon as they complete secondary school education. Some have planned to become lawyers, engineers, medical doctors, accountants and so on. Students in secondary schools like many other young adults are always worried about what they will do with their lives, the kind of adult they will become. They are concerned about early entry into the occupational world and finding productive and rewarding places in and out rapidly. How the young people of today meet the problems of tomorrow will depend upon the amount of success they make in planning for

that tomorrow. Planning for tomorrow itself is primarily the responsibilities of the parents, teachers and school counselor. Students need general orientation into the world of work through the curriculum. The choice of career is a delicate issue that requires caution and serious considerations. The kind of career the youths pursue can affect their lives in many ways. For example, it can determine where the individual lives and the type of friends kept. It can reflect how much education one will have and determine the amount of money one will earn. People desires from a career are different, many people desire high income; others want adventures while some others want to serve people to make the world a better place. Every student carries the unique history of their past and this determines how they view the world. It is against this background that the current research focused on assessing occupational information services and how it affects students' career choice in secondary schools in Benue State.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the effect of occupational information services on student carrier choice in secondary schools in Benue State

Specific Objectives are to:

- i. Determine the impact of school counselors on secondary school students in Benue State
- ii. Examine student-counselor relationship with regards to career counseling in secondary schools in Benue State
- iii. Examine the sources of occupational information in secondary schools in Benue State
- iv. Examine the factors that influence carrier choice of students in secondary schools In Benue State

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- i. What is the impact of school counselors on secondary school students?
- ii. To what extent is the student-counselor relationship with regard to career counseling in secondary school?
- iii. How adequate are the sources of occupational information in secondary school?
- iv. What are the factors that influence career choice of students in secondary school?

2. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter briefly highlights the methods used in carrying out the research. It is described on the following sub-headings. Design of the study, area of the study, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, validation of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

2.1 Design of the Study

The study used descriptive survey design; the design was employed because it is the most appropriate design for the study and because the population of the study was so large that a few was considered as the representative sample.

2.2 Area of Study

The area of study is Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. The local government area is very accessible; it can be reached either by road or water. It is bounded by Nasarawa State, Nigeria to the North, with river Benue running through it and to the South by Gwer Local Government Area and to the West by Otukpo Local Government Area.

2.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises of one thousand five hundred and ten (1,510) comprising of one thousand four hundred and ninety (1490) junior and senior secondary students and twenty (20) counselors of twenty selected secondary schools in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

2.4 Sampling Techniques

Random sampling technique was used. Five secondary schools were randomly selected out of various secondary schools in Gwer-West Local Government Area. The sample consisted one hundred and fifty (150) students and twenty (20) counselors who were randomly selected from five purposely selected secondary schools. They are: Calvin Foundation College Naka, Government Comprehensive College Naka, Mont-Sinai Secondary School Naka, Mont-Lasalle College Naka, and Splendid Group of Schools respectively. The random sampling technique was chosen to give equal chance in selecting the schools.

2.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection for the study was a structured questionnaire using four (4) point rating scale. The respondents were instructed to indicate their responses under strongly agree (SA) = 4 Agree (A) = 3 disagree (D) = 2 and strongly disagree (SD) = 1

2.6 Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire used by the researcher was validated by three experts in the educational psychology and center for counseling services and all necessary corrections, observations and amendments were made, it was considered adequate by the validates therefore, produced for data collection.

2.7 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined by the use of Spearman Rank Order Correlation Co-efficient which yielded 0.87 reliability co-efficient.

2.8 Method of Data Collection

Questionnaire was used for data collection. It was administered by five (5) research assistants, one (1) per school on students, the answered questionnaires were retrieved and the response recorded formed the data for the study.

2.9 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using mean statistics and standard deviation with an acceptance mean value of ≥ 2.50 , whereas otherwise rejected.

3. Results and Discursion

Data collected was analyzed and the summary of the analysis was presented in tables.

Research Question 1: what are the impacts of school counselors on secondary schools students in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 1: mean ratings of responses of students and school counselors on the impact of school counselors on secondary schools students in the study area. (n=170)

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std	Remark
1	Counselors help students with effective career choice decision	2.82	0.74	Agreed
2	School counselors improve students discipline	2.52	0.77	Agreed
3	School counselors assist students with options that fit their interest values and skills.	2.61	0.66	Agreed
4	Counselors help students to provide information on the skills, education and training requirements for jobs.	2.82	0.67	Agreed
5	Counselors help students to discover their strength and weakness	2.90	0.74	Agreed
6	Provides information about the nature of work, working conditions, and work distribution.	2.59	0.68	Agreed
7	Provides information on projected average earnings for jobs.	2.24	0.44	Not Agreed
8	Counselors provide information on advantages and disadvantages of the job.	2.40	0.38	Not Agreed
9	Counselors help students to understand themselves, attitudes, abilities and interest.	2.59	0.78	Agreed
10	Counselors assist students to adjust and cope with job demands	2.62	0.84	Agreed
11	Counselors assist teachers with students weaknesses and strength	2.53	0.76	Agreed
12	They assist staff to organize students' contacts with their parents.	2.58	0.73	Agreed
13.	Counselors helps schools to develop guidance services such as orientation activities, placement services, students personal records, and follow up services.	2.50	0.97	Agreed

From the data presented in table 1 above, items 1-6 and 9-13 have their mean ratings ranged from 2.50 to 2.90 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. While items 7 and 8 had their mean scores below 2.50. This indicated that the respondents have agreed that 98% of the items in table 1 were the impact of school counselors for effective occupational services in secondary schools in the study area. The standard deviation of the respondents ranged from 0.66 to 0.98 this indicated that the respondents were not too far from the mean rating and the opinion of one another, on the impact of school counselors in secondary schools in the study area.

Research Question 2: To what extent is the student-counselors relationship with regard to career counseling in secondary schools in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean ratings of responses of students and counselors on the extent of student-counselors relationship with regard to career counseling in secondary schools in the study area (n=170).

S/No	Items	\bar{X}	Std	Remark
1	The Counselors is seen as a role model to students	3.45	0.65	Agreed
2	Students counselors relationship is like the father and the son	3.48	0.77	Agreed
3	Counselors student relationship influences students career choice	3.01	0.80	Agreed
4	Students' fear of exposing their problems to the world make them feel isolated to the counselors	3.29	0.76	Agreed
5	Counselors' effort determines either the success or failure of students in choosing their career	3.33	0.50	Agreed
6	Students counselor relationship provides a conducive atmosphere to deal with students problems	3.05	0.66	Agreed
7	Assist students to accept their attitudes interest and abilities for self-fulfillment.	3.34	0.68	Agreed

From the data presented on table 2 above, all the seven (7) items have their mean ratings ranged from 3.01 to 3.48 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicated that the respondents have agreed that all the seven (7) items on table 2 measured the extent of students-counselors relationship with regard to career counseling in secondary schools in the study area. The standard deviation of the respondents ranged from 0.65 to 0.80 indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean ratings and the opinion of one another.

Research Question 3: what are the sources of occupational information in secondary schools in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean ratings of responses of students and school counselors on the sources of occupational information in secondary schools in the study area (n=170).

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std	Remark
1	Printed media	3.59	0.64	Agreed
2	Libraries	3.47	0.60	Agreed
3	Magazines	3.64	0.87	Agreed
4	Journals	3.59	0.61	Agreed
5	Mass media	3.58	0.60	Agreed
6	Counselors	3.64	0.88	Agreed
7	Subject Teachers	3.55	0.59	Agreed
8	Work experience program	3.41	0.49	Agreed
9	Field trip	3.21	0.38	Agreed
10	Career conference	3.11	0.35	Agreed
11	Internet	3.00	0.33	Agreed

From the data presented on table 3 above, all the eleven (11) items have their mean ratings ranged from 3.00 to 3.64 which were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicated that the respondents have agreed that all the eleven (11) items on table 3 were the sources from which occupational information are stored. The standard deviation of the respondents ranged from 0.33 to 0.88 indicating that the respondents were not too far from the mean ratings and the opinion of one another.

Research Question 4: What are the factors that influence career choice of students in secondary schools in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean ratings of responses of students and school counselors on the factors that influence career choice of students in secondary schools in the study area (n=170).

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	Std	Remark
1	Students career choice can be influence by peer group	3.58	0.76	Agreed
2	Many students choose career based on the prestige of the job	3.64	0.84	Agreed
3	Students accept career choice of their parent	3.32	0.57	Agreed
4	Students chooses career because of their interest in the occupation	3.58	0.77	Agreed
5	Food influence students career choice	1.66	0.24	Reject
6	Preference for geographical location	3.50	0.70	Agreed
7	Societal influence	3.34	0.55	Agreed
8	Financial influence	3.40	0.59	Agreed

Data presented on table 4 above, showed that item 1 to 4 and 6-8 had mean ratings ranged from 3.32 to 3.58 which were all above the cut-off point of 2.50 while item (5) had its mean below 2.50 this implies that the respondents agreed with 7 out of 8 items as the factors that influence career choice of students in secondary school in the study area. While item 5 had a mean rating of 1.66 which is below the cut-off point of 2.50 this therefore implies that respondent disagreed with the item as one of the factors that influence career choice of students in secondary schools in the study area. The standard deviation of the respondents from items 1 to 8 ranged from 0.55 to 0.84 and on item 5 which is 0.24 indicated that the respondents were not too far from the mean rating and opinion of one another on the factors that influence career choice of students in secondary schools in the study area.

3.1 Discursion of findings

The impact of school counselors for effective occupational services in secondary schools is very important because counselors help students to adjust in their academic performance, improves student's discipline, assist students to discover their potentials and help students to make informed career choices and also through their effort enable students to discover their strength and weakness.

This is in conformity with [7] which maintains that counselors provide guidance and counseling on issues including academic, vocational and/or career counseling to students in school counseling programme. [4] also observed that occupational information is a valid and useable data about positions, jobs and occupations including duties, requirement for entrance, conditions of work, reward offered, advancement pattern, existing and predicted supply of and demand for workers, and sources for further information. In the same vein, [5] noted that occupational information is a process which incorporates as many details as possible about the available occupational opportunities meant to help the individual not only to make an effective career choice but also to adjust to and make success in it.

Students-counselors relationship with regard to career counseling in secondary schools, positioned the counselors as a role model to students, students counselor relationship is like a father and the son, counselors

also influence students career choice, and their efforts determine either the success or failure of students in choosing their career, students fear of exposing their problems to the world make them feel isolated to the counselor. This is in consonant with the views of [6] who reintegrated that counselor plays a vital role in students, as the counselor is often seen as a model to students. This implies that a counselor is very influential to a student's career choice. That is, his/her effort determines the success of students in choosing a career. Counselor plays a crucial role in assisting each student to gain self-understanding in relation to the social and psychological world which he/she lives. This implies helping each student to understand his aptitudes, interest, abilities and opportunities for self-fulfillment, engage in professional counseling with individuals who have problems which inhibit their ability to learn; the counselor provides conducive atmosphere in which students can deal with their problems openly and effectively thereby improving their ability to learn effectively; and also to assist students to realize the need to accept his aptitudes, interest, attitudes, abilities and opportunity for self-fulfillment.

Another important component of occupational information is the source from which the information can be obtained. The major sources of occupational information include; printed materials and computerized information systems. Printed sources of occupational information include Occupational Information Network (O*NET) and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH). O*NET is a comprehensive system for organizing, describing, distributing and collecting data on occupations and the work place. While the OOH includes information about the nature of work, working conditions, the distribution of work, training required for occupational entry and advancement, average earnings, and projected 5-to7- year's employment outlooks. This is in line with the study of [14] Principles of Vocational Guidance and Career Education, and sources of obtaining occupational information to include career and school conference, group guidance, field trips, occupational guidance, work experience, internet websites and publications.

The factors that influence career choice of students in secondary schools which include peer group, prestige of the job, parental influence and also their interest in the occupation whereas item twenty which is food where not agreed to be a factor that influence career choice of students in secondary schools in the study area. This is in line with the work of [4] who stated that young people are said to select occupations like medicine, Engineering, accounting mainly because of the positions and prestige attach to the job and not necessarily as a result of conscious assessment of the individual interest and abilities. Therefore occupational information may be a veritable means of providing career awareness to students.

[15] confirmed research findings that the value of the peer group with whom the school students ends the most time are stronger factor in the students level of academic success than the values, attitudes, and the support provided by the family. Peer influence is also known as peer pressure and it involves changing one's behavior to meet the perceived expectations of others. [16] after considering a literature on parental influences on career choice of their children finds out that parents' behavior create environments which exist a power influence on the parental characteristics of their offspring. According to [17] in his study reported that a combination of a prestigious parental role model and close-father-son relationship encourages a very effective parents' "transfer" of career values and influence on children's career choice. Lastly, [18] sees parental influence in choice of career showing in direct order, that is, the parents insist on the choice of school and even the courses they concentrate on, this itself is a setting off on a pre-determined career regardless of the child talents, interest and desires.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The study has revealed the importance of occupational information service on student's career choice in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. It has also determine the student-counselors, relationship as regard to career counseling, reported the sources of occupational information services in secondary schools and the factors that influence students career choice in the study area. It therefore concluded that public and private secondary schools in the study area should continue to hire qualified personnel who will render qualitative career counseling services.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The school administrators should budget money for proper funding of the occupational information services
2. Employment and recruitment of more counselors should be encouraged.
3. Parents should be made to know the implication of imposing career choices on their children.

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