

Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice among Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the relationship between guidance and counselling services and career decision-making among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses were developed. A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were gathered using a researcher-constructed instrument named the Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (GCSCSSSQ). The target population consisted of 42,762 individuals, including 6,225 teachers/counsellors and 36,537 senior secondary students. A sample size of 380 was determined using the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) table. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were applied. The instrument's validity was established through expert review, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.74. Data analysis involved frequency counts, percentages, tables, and opinion summaries for the research questions, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the hypotheses. Findings indicated that; educational counselling significantly and positively influences students' career choices. Vocational counselling shows a significant but indirect link to career decisions related to job security. Recommendations included integrating career counselling into the secondary school curriculum, increasing awareness among parents and stakeholders about the value of these services, and enhancing support from government through policies that improve counsellor salaries, provide essential facilities, and promote continuous training for counsellors and teachers in effective guidance practices.

Keywords:

Akwa Ibom State, Career Choice, Guidance and Counselling Services, Secondary School

Introduction

The integration of guidance and counselling services into the secondary school system in Akwa Ibom State represents a positive step toward fostering student confidence and resilience, ultimately supporting better academic outcomes. Declining academic performance and poor examination results may be linked to insufficient guidance and counselling support, as well as growing neglect of students' emotional and psychological needs—issues potentially exacerbated by broader socio-economic challenges in the region. These concerns often lead to diminished self-esteem and, in some cases, depression among students. In response, school-based guidance and counselling programs have

been introduced to offer necessary support. While relatively new in some schools, such services have existed in various forms for many years.

Additionally, the development of school counselling began in the early 20th century in the United States, where it was designed to help students understand future responsibilities and support their educational and career goals within a healthy framework (Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023). Over time, significant progress has been made globally in establishing institutional frameworks to support students' personal, academic, and vocational growth. In Nigeria, formal guidance and counselling was first introduced in 1958. By the 1980s, it had become an officially recognized component of the national education system (Bassey & Edet, 2018; Josephat, Timothy & Semali, 2024; Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu, 2025; Umar, Sani & Umar, 2025).

Globally, guidance and counselling are acknowledged as vital elements of education, with growing emphasis on their integration into school systems. Wankasi & Adekunle (2023) outline four primary forms: personal, educational, vocational, and parental guidance, though this study focuses on the first three. Core services include; orientation programs for new or transferring students; individual assessments that help identify students' strengths and needs; and information provision on academic, career, and personal-social topics, all aimed at promoting independence and informed life choices.

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

Relatively, Counselling approaches can be directive, non-directive, or integrative, and are applied not only in schools but also within families and healthcare environments to assist individuals in managing life's challenges (Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023).

Wankasi & Adekunle (2023) conducted an evaluation of guidance and counselling services, examining their benefits, influencing factors, and overall effectiveness using both theoretical and empirical sources, along with a quantitative, descriptive approach. The study was carried out in selected secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State and offered recommendations for enhancing service delivery based on its findings.

Despite these developments, many secondary schools still lack adequate resources and structures to deliver essential counselling services effectively. This study investigates how guidance and counselling services influence career choices among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

In addition, to evaluate the current state of guidance and counselling (G&C) in these schools, key indicators include the presence of qualified counsellors and accessible educational counselling services, availability of vocational information, and regular use of affordable personal counselling. Career choices can also be assessed by examining how well they reflect students' abilities and interests, the influence of parents, and the extent to which decisions are informed by accurate knowledge.

Other pointers to effective G&C programs include high student uptake of academic counselling linked to improved outcomes (such as better grades and lower failure rates), engagement with vocational guidance and self-understanding activities, and personal counselling that leads to positive behavioral changes. Additional factors include having trained personnel, implementing proactive initiatives like orientation sessions, career days, and workshops, access to career resources and exam information (e.g., WAEC, JAMB), and adequate staffing relative to student numbers.

Program effectiveness is further measured through follow-up systems, monitoring of student progress, and feedback from service users on quality and relevance. However, most existing studies on this topic originate outside Nigeria, and local research tends to focus on university students or general youth populations. Currently, no known study has specifically examined guidance and counselling in the context of secondary school career development in Akwa Ibom State.

Addressing this gap is essential, as the senior secondary years represent a critical period for identity and career formation. This study therefore seeks to investigate how counselling services influence career choice and development among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, with the aim of

providing evidence-based recommendations to enhance academic outcomes and prepare students for independent, productive futures.

Statement of the Problem

Choosing a career remains a significant challenge for young people, particularly at the secondary school level. Also, Secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State often struggle to make well-informed career decisions due to limited access to counseling, weak guidance systems, and a narrow range of employment opportunities. Many finish their education without a clear understanding of their own strengths, interests, or the demands of the job market, which can lead to confusion and dissatisfaction in their professional lives.

The availability of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools across the state is inconsistent, and their delivery is often irregular, weakening students' ability to make thoughtful career choices. The study points to insufficient support from parents, teachers, and trained counselors. Without proper direction, students may choose career paths without considering labor market trends or long-term employment prospects. This lack of structured support not only makes it harder for students to align personal interests with realistic career options but also increases the likelihood of future job instability. How students perceive career decisions within their social and developmental environment significantly shapes their future employment outcomes and sense of job security. Inadequate guidance during this critical stage often leads to unrealistic ambitions, mismatched career selections, and persistent challenges in finding stable work.

Several factors contribute to poor career decision-making among secondary school students in the state. These include declining academic performance, individual characteristics such as age, gender, and aptitude, peer and personal influences, dominant local industries, societal views on prestigious jobs, concerns about job stability and satisfaction, religious and cultural values, family background, socioeconomic status, learning experiences, parental pressure, absence of dedicated career guidance units in schools, available employment options, and students' cognitive abilities, among others.

However, limited involvement and support from parents and guardians—especially in fostering a supportive home environment and engaging actively in their children's education—have been shown to negatively impact students' career aspirations. Parental influence often overshadows students' personal preferences, playing a major role in shaping their attitudes toward different academic fields and ultimately affecting their final career decisions. This study aims to explore how educational, vocational, and personal counseling services affect career choices and long-term job security, moving beyond the commonly acknowledged effects of parental influence and the absence of formal counseling structures in secondary schools across Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to assess how guidance and counseling services shape career decisions among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Other specific objectives include:

- i. Evaluating how educational counseling affects students' career choices among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. Examining the link between vocational counseling and career choices that offer job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What factors influence educational counseling and career choices among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
2. How does vocational counseling affect career choices associated with job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

H₀₁: Educational counseling has no significant effect on the career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between vocational counseling and career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Significance of the Study

The findings offer both theoretical and practical insights for students, parents, educators, school counselors, the State Ministry of Education, policymakers, educational stakeholders, and the general public. The study highlights the important relationship between counseling services and the career decisions students make during secondary school, and the way the choices have lasting effects on their development and job security. Since early academic and career decisions shape long-term educational and professional paths, understanding this link is crucial.

The results could help school counselors, teachers, researchers, and administrators improve counseling practices. They may also assist parents and educators in recognizing their roles in supporting students' career development. Additionally, the study could inform strategies aimed at reducing unemployment and underemployment by promoting early career planning aligned with labor market needs.

It may also provide counselors with tools to evaluate and enhance the quality of their services for better student outcomes. For policymakers and education authorities, the findings could support efforts to strengthen career guidance programs in schools, leading to more informed student decisions. Finally, the study serves as a useful reference for future research on education, career development, and employment security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Review of Literature

Concept of Guidance and Counselling Services

Guidance, in its most basic sense, refers to directing, advising, or showing someone the way. It involves support provided by a more experienced individual to help someone with less experience navigate significant life challenges—such as educational, vocational, or personal issues.

Migunde (2021) describes guidance both as a concept and a process. As a concept, it emphasizes the full development of the individual. As a process, it supports self-awareness—helping individuals recognize their strengths, limitations, and available resources—and promotes self-direction, enabling them to make informed decisions and solve problems independently. Although the terms “guidance” and “counseling” are often used interchangeably, guidance is the broader term, with counseling being one of its components. Some scholars distinguish between two phases: the adjustive phase, which addresses emotional, social, and personal concerns (commonly referred to as counseling), and the distributive phase, which focuses on educational and career-related matters (more accurately described as guidance) (Migunde, 2021).

Essential components of modern education systems as conferred by Bassey & Edet (2018), Migunde (2021), and Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025) has key features of effective guidance and counseling programs to include:

- i. **Qualified Personnel:** Availability of trained and certified counselors.
- ii. **Service Infrastructure:** Dedicated counseling spaces, access to assessment tools (e.g., personality and IQ tests), and scheduled time for counseling activities.

Proactive Initiatives: Implementation of orientation sessions, career fairs, and workshops.

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

As noted by Bassey & Edet (2018) and Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025), guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State are structured, professional interventions designed to support students in self-understanding, academic success, and informed career decisions. These services—covering academic, vocational, and personal domains—are vital in aligning students' interests with suitable career choices.

Guidance and counseling are complementary processes focused on personal, academic, and professional growth. Guidance tends to be preventive and informative, offering direction and advice to support decision-making. Counseling, by contrast, is therapeutic, confidential, and aimed at resolving deeper emotional or psychological issues (Egenti, 2021; Migunde, 2021). Examples include: **Academic Counseling:** Helps students choose subjects, improve study techniques, and manage exam-related stress; **Vocational Counseling:** Also called career guidance, it provides insights into job markets, career pathways, and uses assessments to identify individual aptitudes.

Bassey & Edet (2018) and Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025) highlight several core services within effective guidance and counseling programs:

- i. **Orientation Services:** Designed to help new students adapt to the school environment. Transitioning into secondary school can be disorienting due to separation from family, unfamiliar rules, and new social dynamics. Orientation programs ease this adjustment by familiarizing students with school routines and expectations.
- ii. **Appraisal Services:** Involve gathering and analyzing data—through observation, interviews, testing, and background information—to better understand each student. Reliable data is essential for counselors to provide meaningful support in planning academic, career, and social paths.
- iii. **Educational and Occupational Information Services:** Aim to equip students with up-to-date knowledge about educational opportunities, job markets, training options, and required qualifications, enabling informed decisions about their futures.
- iv. **Placement and Follow-up Services:** Placement helps students choose appropriate subject combinations and career directions after secondary school. It supports alignment between individual goals and available opportunities in education and employment. Follow-up services track former students into higher education or the workforce. Schools maintain contact to assess outcomes, and the collected data helps evaluate the effectiveness of the counseling program (Bassey & Edet, 2018). The demand for guidance and counseling in secondary education has grown globally, prompting many countries to integrate these services into their education systems.

In Nigeria, several factors have contributed to this development, as highlighted by Bassey & Edet (2018) and Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2025):

1. **Increased Student Enrollment:** Rising numbers in secondary schools have intensified the need for structured support in subject and career selection, as well as preparation for higher education or employment—whether as employees or entrepreneurs in formal and informal sectors.
2. **Workforce Development Needs:** There is a shortage of skilled personnel in technical and sub-professional fields. Guidance within schools can help nurture youth potential, attitudes, and competencies crucial for national development.
3. **Technological Change:** In an era of rapid automation and innovation, individuals frequently change jobs or locations. Counseling helps students adapt by broadening their practical skills and maintaining competitiveness.
4. **Youth Development Needs:** Adolescents require support in forming identities, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, and finding their place in society.
5. **Educational Reforms:** Since independence, Nigeria has undergone numerous changes in its education system, which can create confusion and uncertainty among students—further underscoring the need for guidance services (Bassey & Edet, 2018; Udoh et al., 2025).

Counseling services help students evaluate their abilities, achievements, interests, and coping strategies in light of important life decisions. These services are vital for addressing academic, career, personal, and social challenges. Schools must provide adequate time, space, and trained personnel to support students in resolving personal issues. The goal is to foster self-understanding through individual or group interactions.

Bassey & Edet (2018) and Abubakar, Abdulwahab, Aminu & Auwalu (2025), emphasize that effective guidance and counseling in schools plays a critical role in helping students understand links between health and the environment, develop life skills, and build attitudes that influence long-term success. Quality counseling can enhance students' self-esteem and contribute to improved academic outcomes.

The main types of guidance and counseling services in schools include:

Educational Guidance and Counseling: Supports students in overcoming learning difficulties, improving academic performance, and maximizing their educational potential.

1. **Vocational Guidance and Counseling:** Assists students in making realistic and appropriate career choices, including selecting suitable training and adjusting to chosen professions.
2. **Personal and Psychological Guidance and Counseling:** Addresses personal issues affecting students' well-being, offering individual or group support and referring complex cases to specialized professionals when needed.
3. **Individual Guidance and Counseling:** Provides one-on-one support to help students manage personal challenges and develop independence, fostering self-reliance and emotional resilience.

Concept of Career Choice

UNESCO (2026) advocates that the concept of career choices revolves around technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and integrating career guidance and counselling (CGC) into the schools programme to align individual skills to sustainable labour markets demands. Career counseling—also known as career guidance—is specifically aimed at assisting individuals in choosing, changing, or leaving a career path.

World Bank Group (2026) viewed career development to mean a lifelong process involving managing learning to acquire suitable knowledge or skills, work and the capacity to move towards a personal visualize professional work goal in future.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Social Learning Theory (SLT) introduced by Albert Bandura in 1986, social learning theory describes how people learn behaviors through environmental exposure, especially by observing and imitating others. It posits that individuals acquire new actions by watching models, replicating those behaviors, and anticipating the outcomes of their choices. According to the theory, human behavior can be modified through learning mechanisms that encourage positive behavioral change (Akpabio, 2025).

Within the scope of this study, SLT demonstrates how interactions between counsellors and students—particularly in goal setting and resource provision—can inspire behavioral adjustments that help students overcome personal and academic obstacles (Akpabio, 2025). Teacher-counsellors can use this framework to guide students academically. Evidence suggests that counselling effectiveness is often judged by visible changes in student behavior, indicating that supportive learning environments enable students to adapt their conduct and manage academic challenges more effectively.

Counsellors may apply strategies such as self-monitoring programs and independent learning techniques to strengthen students' study routines, time management, and overall academic skills. These interventions can lead to improved school performance, as well as gains in emotional health, behavioral regulation, and personal development. When educators, counsellors, and school administrators collaborate to foster a positive school climate, secondary students in Akwa Ibom State are more likely to build a strong sense of self, which contributes to academic achievement.

This perspective is reinforced by Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological systems theory (SEST), cited in Akpabio (2025), which holds that human development arises from ongoing interactions between individuals and their environments. From this view, people both shape and are shaped by the systems they interact with, and many student and school issues stem from the quality of these relationships. Addressing barriers to success therefore requires interventions that consider broader ecological contexts—including family, school, and community systems.

The study seeks to examine how schools operate within interconnected layers: individual, institutional, and community levels. Since students both influence and are influenced by these systems, a comprehensive approach—such as SEST—is essential for understanding developmental processes. Students, teachers, families, and institutions form interdependent networks, meaning that secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State are affected by dynamics in both their homes and schools as they navigate academic and social expectations. Guidance and counselling services should thus integrate systemic and developmental insights to promote student growth (Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023). This implies that counsellors, teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders must work together to help students develop competence across academic, career, personal, and social domains.

Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's ecological model as referenced by Akpabio (2025) and Wankasi & Adekunle (2023), school counsellors should utilize both internal and external resources to remove learning barriers. In practice, the socio-ecological model provides a solid basis for school-based counselling. Counsellors cannot focus solely on individual students; they must also engage with wider systems, initiating change within schools and connecting with community supports. Teachers and counsellors share a key responsibility in designing and implementing guidance initiatives that respond to students' changing developmental needs.

Applying this framework to the current research suggests that academic success depends on a student's ability to access education and reach their full potential. The purpose of school counselling goes beyond healthy development—it also involves creating conditions where students can pursue personal and social goals with adequate support.

As a result, secondary school students who receive counselling are more likely to improve academically. The microsystem—the immediate environment—is one of the most impactful levels in ecological theory and shapes how counselling is delivered. It includes relationships with family, peers, religious groups, and schools, all of which contribute to interpersonal growth. The macrosystem refers to cultural values, societal norms, and structural influences tied to a student's background. The chronosystem accounts for changes over time that affect development. Finally, the exosystem includes extended family, neighbors, media, social services, and government policies—all of which shape students' thinking and decision-making.

Empirical Studies

Educational Counseling and Career Choice of Secondary School Students

Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2026) examined how career decisions in secondary schools influence job security in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Guided by Super's Career Development Theory (1957) and Holland's Vocational Personality Theory (1959), the study had three objectives and corresponding research questions. A sample of 300 SS3 students was randomly selected from three schools in Abak Local Government Area. Data were collected using structured Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using percentages and chi-square tests. Results revealed a significant relationship between career choice and job security. The study recommended strengthening school counselling units to support informed decisions, encouraging parents to guide rather than dictate choices, and urging the government to create job opportunities and platforms that support stable careers and national development.

Ekpo, Ekang & Umo-Udo (2025) investigated how educational leadership impacts goal attainment in public secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The study identified a gap between leadership knowledge and actual performance and aimed to close it. Based on human capital and goal attainment theories, it involved 593 education personnel from four selected schools out of 14 in Uyo (AKSSEB, 2023). Using descriptive and survey methods, data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. A 10-item questionnaire was administered to 226 respondents, selected via Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970), using simple and stratified random sampling. Data analysis used opinion polls, tables, and percentages. Findings showed that educational leadership significantly affects teaching quality and student exam results, and indirectly influences school enrollment. The study recommended regular supervision for needs assessment, provision of essential educational resources, and adoption of democratic and transformational leadership styles to improve educational outcomes.

Bassey & Edet (2018) studied the impact of counselling components—occupational information, appraisal services, vocational and educational guidance, and career day/week—on students' career decisions. A random sample of 490 students from ten secondary schools was used. Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression. Results indicated that all these elements significantly influence senior secondary students' career choices.

2.3.2 Vocational Counselling and Career Choice of Secondary School Students

Akpabio (2025) explored how age and academic track influence entrepreneurial skill development among senior secondary students. Using a descriptive survey design, the study included 397 SS2 students selected via Taro Yamane's formula from a population exceeding 54,000 in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire and analyzed with t-tests. Findings indicated that older students developed stronger entrepreneurial skills than younger

ones. Those in commercial and vocational programs also showed greater entrepreneurial ability compared to science and arts students. The study concluded that both age and course of study significantly affect skill development and recommended age-appropriate teaching strategies, integrating entrepreneurship across subjects, and increasing hands-on learning to prepare students for self-employment.

Udoh, Asuquo, and Nwagu (2025), guided by Super's Career Development Theory (1957) and Holland's Vocational Theory (1959), studied the relationship between career choice and future job security in Akwa Ibom State. The research involved 300 SS3 students from three schools in Abak Local Government Area. Structured Likert-scale questionnaires were administered, with 287 valid responses analyzed using percentages and chi-square tests. Results showed a significant association between informed career decisions and long-term job stability. The study recommended strengthening school counselling units, encouraging parental support, and government-led initiatives to create youth employment opportunities and career guidance platforms.

Ekanem and Asuquo (2024) surveyed 150 SSIII students in Obot Akara Local Government Area to identify factors influencing career decisions. Simple random sampling was used, and data were analyzed using percentages. Findings showed that 86% of respondents considered role models—such as teachers, parents, and guardians—as key influencers in career choices, highlighting the need for adult guidance. Financial limitations were also critical: 90% agreed that poverty hinders proper career counselling, especially in low-income families attending public schools. The study concluded that career selection processes in public schools are inadequate and recommended comprehensive orientation programs involving families, educators, and counsellors. It also emphasized allowing students to choose careers based on personal strengths and advocated for free access to major exams like NECO, WAEC, and JAMB for disadvantaged students.

Ekpo, Umoh, and Udoaka (2024) examined adult education as a strategy to reduce illiteracy and poverty in Nigeria, aiming for universal education by 2030. The program includes basic literacy, post-literacy, and vocational training, contributing to entrepreneurial growth. The study aimed to identify gaps in adult education affecting sustainable entrepreneurship in Akwa Ibom State. A descriptive survey was conducted across nine centres (three per senatorial district), with 126 participants selected through stratified sampling from 888 centres. Data were collected via a 10-item questionnaire and analyzed using percentages and tables; secondary data were reviewed contextually. Findings confirmed that adult education supports small business development, self-empowerment, and job creation. However, challenges included insufficient funding, inconsistent policies, unqualified instructors, low enrollment, and poor infrastructure. The study concluded that adult and non-formal education needs strengthening and recommended increased funding, teacher training, monitoring to prevent misuse of funds, and government-supported job or empowerment programs for adult learners. Another finding from Akpabio's (2025) study indicated no significant difference in entrepreneurial skill acquisition based on career track in the same region, suggesting that students across disciplines show similar interest in developing these skills. Even science students recognized the value of entrepreneurship for improving economic prospects and actively pursued related knowledge. Similarly, arts and commercial students engaged in various activities to build entrepreneurial competencies.

Overall, students in commercial and vocational streams still demonstrated higher levels of entrepreneurial skill development than those in science and arts. This underscores the influence of academic pathways and career focus on entrepreneurial engagement. The study emphasized the importance of aligning entrepreneurship education with learners' developmental stages and integrating it across all subject areas.

Migunde (2021) studied the effect of career counselling on student development in Kenyan secondary schools. The sample included 341 students (158 males, 183 females) from forms one to four. Surveys assessed various aspects of career development. Results showed female students were more likely to seek counselling, but there was no significant difference in career development outcomes between those who accessed counselling and those who did not. The study concluded that a comprehensive national guidance and counselling policy is needed to enhance service delivery and effectiveness.

Egenti (2021) evaluated the role of guidance counsellors in promoting career awareness among secondary school students in Delta State, Nigeria. Two research questions and hypotheses were tested using a descriptive survey design. Out of 448 counsellors in the population, 178 from the Delta North

education zone were sampled. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled “Guidance Counsellors’ Career Awareness Creation Questionnaire” (GCCACQ), validated by experts and found reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.882$). A total of 171 completed responses were received (96.1% response rate). Mean scores addressed the research questions, while t-tests evaluated hypotheses at $\alpha = 0.05$. The study identified ten core roles and thirteen essential skills for counsellors in fostering career awareness and recommended regular in-service training to strengthen these capabilities.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were gathered using a researcher-constructed instrument named the Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (GCSCSSSQ). The target population consisted of 42,762 individuals, including 6,225 teachers/counsellors and 36,537 senior secondary students. A sample size of 380 was determined using the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) table. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were applied. The instrument’s validity was established through expert review, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach’s Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.74. Data analysis involved frequency counts, percentages, tables, and opinion summaries for the research questions, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the hypotheses.

Data Analysis on Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice of Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State

Response to Research Question One

What factors influence educational counselling and career choice among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

As shown in Table 4.4, 72.58% of respondents agreed that students’ attitudes toward difficult subjects significantly affect career decisions, while 27.42% disagreed. A majority (81.72%) believed the Akwa Ibom State government effectively supports career development through educational counselling and the deployment of qualified counsellors, compared to 18.28% who did not. Additionally, 69.09% affirmed that guidance services contribute to better enrollment and academic performance relevant to career planning, while 30.91% held the opposite view. Regarding curriculum integration, 83.33% reported that counselling is included in school timetables to support academic and career outcomes, whereas 16.67% disagreed. On awareness, 55.11% felt that students’ understanding of counsellors’ roles, positive interactions, and responsiveness to concerns promote career development, while 44.89% did not. However, only 25.27% believed that most schools have adequate private consultation rooms to ensure confidentiality, while 74.73% disagreed—highlighting a major infrastructure shortfall in effective counselling delivery.

Response to Research Question Two

How does vocational counseling affect career choices associated with job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4.5 indicates that 53.76% of respondents agreed that counselling helps students make subject choices that support future careers and job security, while 43.82% disagreed, citing limited access to services. Only 35.48% believed that parental education and career background strongly influence students’ career decisions, while 62.63% disagreed. A majority (57.26%) agreed that access to career counsellors reduces learning barriers and provides over half of the career-related information students receive, compared to 41.13% who disagreed. On service quality, 60.48% agreed that effective counselling builds problem-solving skills that enhance employment stability, while 37.63% did not. Regarding curriculum, 45.70% felt that integrating career guidance into the curriculum helps students align their natural abilities with suitable careers, but 53.23% disagreed. Meanwhile, 53.23% believed that secondary school students in Akwa Ibom lack sufficient awareness to make independent career decisions without adult support, while 45.43% disagreed. Finally, 59.68% agreed that making career guidance a mandatory subject improves career choices and job security, whereas 39.25% disagreed.

Testing Hypothesis One

H_{01} : Educational counseling has no significant effect on the career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

This was restated as:

H₀: Educational counseling has no significant effect on the career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

H₁: Educational counseling has significant effect on the career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

To examine this relationship, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used, guided by the following interpretation scale (ICAN, 2006, cited in Ekpo, 2023):

0.0 – 0.2: Negligible

0.2 – 0.4: Low

0.4 – 0.6: Moderate

0.6 – 0.8: Substantial

0.8 – 1.0: High to very high

Using the Pearson formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 r &= \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum(x)^2 - (\sum x)^2][N\sum(y)^2 - (\sum y)^2]}} \\
 &= \frac{6(157540) - (1440)(792)}{\sqrt{[6(378326) - (1440)^2][6(137270) - (792)^2]}} \\
 &= \frac{945240 - 1140480}{\sqrt{[2269956 - 2073600][823620 - 627264]}} \\
 &= \frac{-195240}{\sqrt{[196356][196356]}} \\
 &= \frac{-195240}{\sqrt{38555678736}} \\
 &= \frac{-195240}{196356} \\
 &= 0.994 \sim 0.99 \\
 \therefore r &= 0.99
 \end{aligned}$$

(a) The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.99$) reveals a very strong positive association, indicating that higher levels of educational counselling are closely linked to greater influence on students' career decisions. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.9801$) implies that about 98.01% of the variation in career choice can be explained by educational counselling.

(b) A t-test was conducted to assess statistical significance:

$$\begin{aligned}
 t &= r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}} \quad (\text{Ekpo, 2023}) \\
 H_0: & \text{the correlation is not significant.} \\
 H_1: & \text{the correlation is significant.} \\
 t &= r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}} \\
 &= 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{6-2}{1-0.99^2}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{4}{1-0.98}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{4}{0.02}}
 \end{aligned}$$

Two tailed Test.

$$= 0.99 \sqrt{200} = 0.99 \times 14.14 = 13.99 \sim 14.00$$

Calculated value = 14.00

Degrees of freedom (D/F) = $N - 2 = 6 - 2 = 4$

Critical t-value at $\alpha = 2.78$ at 0.05 (two-tailed), since the calculated t-value (14.00) exceeds the critical value (2.78), the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative. This indicates a statistically significant effect of educational counselling on career decision-making among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

4.3.2 Testing Hypothesis Two

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between vocational counseling and career choices associated with job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Restated as:

H_0 : There is no significant relationship between vocational counseling and career choices associated with job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

H_1 : There is no significant relationship between vocational counseling and career choices associated with job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Pearson correlation analysis yielded:

$$\begin{aligned} r &= \frac{N \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N \sum (x)^2 - (\sum x)^2][N \sum (y)^2 - (\sum y)^2]}} \\ &= \frac{7(226979) - (1360)(1202)}{\sqrt{[7(270806) - (1360)^2][7(212948) - (1202)^2]}} \\ &= \frac{1588853 - 1634720}{\sqrt{[1895642 - 1849600][1490636 - 14444804]}} \\ &= \frac{-45867}{\sqrt{[46042][45832]}} \\ &= \frac{-45867}{\sqrt{2110196944}} \\ &= \frac{-45867}{45936.88} \\ &= 0.9985 \sim 0.99 \\ \therefore r &= 0.99 \end{aligned}$$

(a) The result ($r = 0.99$) indicates a very high positive correlation, suggesting that vocational counselling is strongly associated with career decisions aimed at securing stable employment. The r^2 value of 0.9801 shows that approximately 98.01% of the variability in such career choices can be attributed to vocational counselling.

(b) Significance was tested using t- test given as thus:

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

H_0 : the correlation is not significant.

Two tailed Test.

H_i : the correlation is significant.

$$t = r \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r^2}}$$

$$= 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{7-2}{1-0.99^2}} = 0.99 \sqrt{\frac{5}{0.98}} = 0.99 \sqrt{5.102} = 0.99 \times 2.258 = 2.237$$

$$= 0.99 \sqrt{250} = 0.99 \times 15.81 = 15.65 \sim 15.7$$

Calculated value = 15.7

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

Critical t-value = 2.57 at 0.05 two tailed test.

The computed t-value (15.7) surpasses the critical t-value = 2.57, leading to the rejection of H_o . Therefore, there is a significant, though indirect, connection between vocational counselling and career choices associated with job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The study found that:

- i. Educational counselling has a significant and positive influence on the career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. There is a significant, though indirect, connection between vocational counselling and career choices associated with job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

The first finding shows that educational counselling has a significant and positive influence on the career choices of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This supports earlier findings by Udoh, Asuquo & Nwagu (2026), who explored the impact of career guidance on student outcomes.

A study on job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, revealed a strong connection between career choice and future employment stability. This highlights the importance of educational counselling in helping students recognize their strengths and interests, enabling them to make well-informed decisions about subjects and careers that support long-term professional stability and meaningful work.

Ekpo, Ekang, and Umo-Udo (2025) investigated how educational leadership influences goal achievement in public secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Their research identified a gap between theoretical knowledge and actual performance in leadership practices and aimed to address it. Results showed that effective educational leadership has a direct and significant impact on teaching quality and student examination outcomes in these schools. Bassey and Edet (2018) reviewed various aspects of counselling—including occupational information, appraisal services, vocational and educational guidance, and career day/week events—and found that these components significantly influence senior secondary school students' career decisions.

Further findings indicate a significant but indirect relationship between vocational counselling and career choices linked to job security among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This supports earlier research by Egenti (2021) and Udoh, Asuquo, and Nwagu (2025), which also confirmed a strong association between career choice and job security in Akwa Ibom State.

Akpabio (2025) examined how age and career track affect entrepreneurial skill development among senior secondary students. The study found older students acquired entrepreneurial skills more effectively than younger ones. It also showed that students in commercial and vocational programs developed stronger entrepreneurial competencies compared to those in science and arts streams. These findings suggest that targeted counselling, especially in delivering occupational information, plays a crucial role in shaping informed career decisions.

Conversely, Ekanem and Asuquo (2024) studied career decision-making among SSIII students in Obot Akara Local Government Area and found that 86% of respondents were influenced by role models such as parents, teachers, and guardians when choosing careers. Many students expressed interest in entrepreneurship not necessarily due to their chosen career path but as a means to improve personal financial standing and support their education. These results align with Melbourne (2019), Wankasi and Adekunle (2023), and Ekpo, Umoh, and Udoaka (2024), who argue that career decisions shape entrepreneurial skill acquisition. Collectively, these studies show that both educational

background and career choice significantly affect students' entrepreneurial abilities, with more educated students showing greater initiative, creativity, problem-solving skills, and risk-taking tendencies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

An empirical analysis of guidance and counselling services in Akwa Ibom State reveals that educational counselling has a significant positive effect on students' career decisions. Vocational counselling shows a significant but indirect link to career choices related to job security.

- i. The Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education and the State Secondary Education Board should incorporate career counselling into the secondary school curriculum and require every public school to employ at least one qualified career counsellor to support academic performance and career development for future job stability.
- ii. Parents, teachers, and community members should be educated during PTA and town hall meetings about the importance of allowing students to choose careers based on aptitude and interest rather than social expectations. Curriculum developers and policymakers should integrate entrepreneurship education into all academic tracks—not just commercial and vocational streams—to ensure equal access to entrepreneurial skills.

Contributions to Knowledge

The study provides both theoretical and practical insights into how guidance and counselling shape career decisions in Akwa Ibom State, with relevance across Nigeria. It deepens understanding of key components—educational, vocational, and personal counselling—in relation to career development, benefiting students, counsellors, teachers, and school administrators. The State Secondary Education Board can also use the findings to identify barriers affecting counselling effectiveness and academic outcomes, and to promote counselling strategies that lead to better career choices, improved academic performance, and long-term job security.

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Appendix 1

Guidance and Counselling Services and Career Choice of Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire

Section A: Personal Data of Respondent

Please respond carefully to each question by ticking as appropriate

Name of School/L.G.A.:

Education Zone: Uyo ☐ Ot Ekpene ☐ ☐

Section B: Educational counselling and career choice of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Questions	True	False
1	Students attitude to studies of difficult subjects significantly influence the choices of career among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State		
2	Educational counselling for career development are effectively provided by Akwa Ibom state government for secondary schools through engagement of professional guidance counsellors.		
3	Guidance and counselling services provided in Akwa Ibom educational zones aids school enrolment and improve grades of secondary school students for career choice in the state.		
4	Guidance and counselling services are inserted to school curriculum and timetable of secondary schools to enhance academic performance of students for better career choice.		
5	Students' awareness of the functions of guidance counsellors, good interpersonal relationships and regularly attendance to the students' complaints enhances career development in the state.		

6	Consultation rooms are adequately provided for counsellors to enhance confidentiality of students' information or problems shared with the counsellor in most secondary schools.		
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Section C: Vocational counselling and career choice for job security of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State

Liker Format – Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Indifferent (I); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	Questions	SA	A	I	D	SD
7	Guidance and Counselling services in Akwa Ibom secondary schools promotes effective students' subjects selection for career development and job security in future.					
8	Parental educational background and career significantly influences secondary school students' choice of career development in Akwa Ibom State.					
9	Access to career counsellors in secondary schools limits learning barriers by provides over 50% of guidance information for career choice for student in Akwa Ibom State.					
10	Effective guidance and counselling services for secondary school students' encourages problem solving methods leading to job/employment stability in Akwa Ibom State.					
11	Introduction of Career guidance studies to secondary school curriculum has contributed importantly to students matching their natural skills with career choice for job stability.					
12	Akwa Ibom students at secondary school level are not enlighten enough to make self-career choice for job in future without adult gudance.					
13	Government and school policies making career guidance and counselling a compulsory subject in the school curriculum improves career choice for job security in Akwa Ibom State					

PPMCC Analysis

Table 4.4: Questionnaire responses of three hundred and seventy two respondents to questions 1 - 6 in dichotomous format (Yes/No)

Questions in appendix	Yes = (x)	No = (y)	Total
1	270 (72.58%)	102 (27.42%)	372
2	304 (81.72%)	68 (18.28%)	372
3	257 (69.09%)	115 (30.91%)	372
4	310 (83.33%)	62 (16.67%)	372
5	205 (55.11%)	167 (44.89%)	372
6	94 (25.27%)	278 (74.73%)	372
Total	1440	792	2,232

Source: Computed by the researcher using field data (2026)

Table 4.5: Questionnaire responses of three hundred and seventy two respondents to questions 7 – 13 in Likert format

Questions in appendix	SA	A	SA+A= Yes(x)	SDA	DA	SDA+DA = No(y)	No Idea	Total
7	80	120	200 (53.76%)	34	129	163 (43.82%)	9	372
8	50	82	132 (35.48%)	90	143	233 (62.63%)	7	372
9	122	101	213 (57.26%)	47	106	153 (41.13%)	6	372
10	95	130	225 (60.48%)	48	92	140 (37.63%)	7	372
11	80	90	170 (45.70%)	86	112	198 (53.23%)	4	372
12	92	106	198 (53.23%)	54	115	169 (45.43%)	5	372
13	100	122	222 (59.68%)	44	102	146 (39.25%)	4	372
Total	609	751	1360	403	799	1202	42	2604

Source: Computed by the researcher using field data (2026)

Table 4.6: Contingency table showing the degree of significant influence of educational counselling on the career choice of secondary school students in AKS (X and Y)

Questions in Appendix	Responses		$(x)^2$	$(y)^2$	Xy
	Yes= x	No= y			
1	270 (72.58%)	102 (27.42%)	72900	10404	27540
2	304 (81.72%)	68 (18.28%)	92416	4624	20672
3	257 (69.09%)	115 (30.91%)	66049	13225	29555
4	310 (83.33%)	62 (16.67%)	96100	3844	19220
5	205 (55.11%)	167 (44.89%)	42025	27889	34235
6	94 (25.27%)	278 (74.73%)	8836	77284	26132
Total = Σ	1440	792	378,326	137,270	157,354

Source: Computed by the researcher using field data (2026)

Table 4.7: Contingency table showing the relationship between vocational counselling and career choice for job security of secondary school students in AKS (X and Y)

Questions in Appendix	Responses		$(x)^2$	$(y)^2$	Xy
	Yes= x	No= y			
7	200 (53.76%)	163 (43.82%)	40000	57600	29520
8	132 (35.48%)	233 (62.63%)	17424	52900	30360
9	213 (57.26%)	153 (41.13%)	45369	19600	31220
10	225 (60.48%)	140 (37.63%)	50625	14400	29400
11	170 (45.70%)	198 (53.23%)	28900	38416	33320
12	198 (53.23%)	169 (45.43%)	39204	24025	41552
13	222 (59.68%)	146 (39.25%)	49284	14884	29524
Total = Σ	1360	1202	270806	212948	226979

Source: Computed by the researcher using field data (2026)