

The Impact of Guidance and Counseling Services on Career Choice of Public Secondary School Students in FCT, Abuja

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of guidance and counseling services on career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja. The main objective was to assess the relationship between service availability and career decisions, as well as determine how counseling influences students' career decision-making processes. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing survey data from 340 students across multiple schools. Mean ratings and standard deviations were analyzed to evaluate student perceptions. Findings revealed strong positive correlations, with mean scores ranging from 3.23 to 3.55 (above the 2.50 benchmark), indicating that counseling significantly enhances career clarity and informed decision-making. However, variability in responses highlighted gaps in resource accessibility and individualized support. Based on these results, key recommendations include institutionalizing standardized counsellor-to-student ratios (1:250) and enhancing counsellor certification requirements to ensure evidence-based practices.

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Background to the Study

Career choice is a critical decision that significantly influences the future of secondary school students, shaping their academic, professional, and personal lives (Adegboyega, 2021). In Nigeria, particularly in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, many public secondary school students struggle with making informed career decisions due to limited exposure to proper guidance and counselling services (Omoniyi & Samuel, 2022). The absence of structured career counselling programs in schools often leads to poor career choices, resulting in dissatisfaction, unemployment, and underemployment among graduates (Eze *et al.*, 2023). Guidance and counselling services are designed to help students understand their strengths, interests, and opportunities, thereby facilitating better career decisions (Ojo & Adeyemo, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these services in Nigerian public schools remains a subject of concern.

The Nigerian educational system has recognized the importance of guidance and counselling by incorporating it into the school curriculum (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). Despite this, many public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, lack trained counsellors, adequate resources, and structured programs to deliver effective career guidance (Okeke *et al.*, 2023). Studies indicate that students who receive proper career counselling are more likely to choose careers that align with their abilities and labour market demands (Uwaifo & Ogunnaike, 2022). Unfortunately, many students rely on peer influence, parental pressure, or societal trends rather than professional advice when making career choices (Akinade & Adetunji, 2023). This gap highlights the need for an in-depth examination of how guidance and counselling services impact career decisions among secondary school students in FCT.

Theoretical frameworks such as Super's Career Development Theory and Holland's Vocational Choice Theory emphasize the role of self-concept, interests, and personality in career selection (Super, 1990; Holland, 1997). These theories suggest that career guidance should help students align their personal attributes with suitable professions (Adeleke, 2022). However, in many public secondary schools in Abuja, career counselling is either non-existent or poorly implemented, leaving students without the necessary support (Bakare & Lawal, 2023). Research shows that effective counselling reduces indecision, enhances motivation, and improves academic performance (Obiweluzo & Onwuka, 2021). Therefore, assessing the impact of these services on students' career choices is crucial for policy formulation and educational improvement.

The labour market in Nigeria is highly competitive, with increasing unemployment rates among graduates due to mismatched skills and career choices (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Proper career guidance can bridge this gap by equipping students with the knowledge to make informed decisions (Igbokwe *et al.*, 2022). In FCT, Abuja, where educational opportunities are relatively higher than in other states, the role of guidance and counselling becomes even more critical (Musa & Bello, 2023). However, there is limited empirical research on how these services influence career choices among public secondary school students in this region. This study seeks to fill that gap by evaluating the extent to which guidance and counselling impact students' career decisions.

Given the increasing complexities in career pathways and the evolving job market, secondary school students require structured guidance to navigate their future effectively (Onyechi & Okere, 2023). Previous studies have examined career choice determinants but few have focused on the specific role of counseling services in public schools in Abuja (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2022). This study aims to contribute to existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in shaping career decisions. The findings will be beneficial to educators, policymakers, and parents in enhancing career development programs for students.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of guidance and counseling in career decision-making, many public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja, still make poor career choices due to inadequate counseling services (Omoniyi & Samuel, 2022). Studies indicate that a significant number of students select careers based on external influences rather than personal aptitude or labour market demands (Akinade & Adetunji, 2023). This trend has contributed to high rates of unemployment and career dissatisfaction among graduates in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The lack of trained counsellors and structured career programs in schools exacerbates this problem, leaving students without proper guidance.

Another major concern is the disparity between students' career aspirations and available opportunities in the labour market (Eze *et al.*, 2023). Many students in Abuja's public schools are unaware of emerging career fields, leading to overcrowding in traditional professions while neglecting high-demand sectors (Uwaifo & Ogunnaike, 2022). Without effective counseling, students may pursue careers that do not align with their skills, resulting in academic failure or underemployment (Okeke *et al.*, 2023). This misalignment underscores the urgent need to assess how guidance and counseling services influence career choices among secondary school students.

Furthermore, existing studies on career guidance in Nigeria have mostly focused on tertiary institutions, with limited attention given to secondary schools in FCT, Abuja (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2022). There is also insufficient empirical data on the specific challenges hindering effective career counseling in public schools (Bakare & Lawal, 2023). This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the impact of guidance and counseling services on students' career choices and identifying factors that enhance or hinder effective career decision-making.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the influence of guidance and counselling services on the career choices of public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja. While, the specific objectives are to:

- i. Assess the *relationship between the availability of guidance and counseling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja.*
- ii. Determine the influence of career counseling on students' career decision-making processes.

Research Questions

- i. *What is the relationship between the availability of guidance and counseling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja?*
- ii. *How does career counseling influence the career choices of secondary school students?*

Statement of Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** *There is no significant relationship between the availability of guidance and counseling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja.*
- H₀₂:** *Career counseling has no significant influence on the career choices of secondary school students in FCT, Abuja.*

Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, examining the impact of guidance and counseling services on students' career choices. It covers students in senior secondary classes (SS1-SS3) and assesses the availability, quality, and effectiveness of career counseling programs. The study is limited to public schools, excluding private institutions where counseling services may differ; responses may be influenced by students' subjective perceptions rather than objective measures and limited access to some schools due to administrative restrictions may affect data collection.

Operational Definition of Terms

Guidance and Counseling Services: Structured programs designed to assist students in academic, career, and personal development through professional advice.

Career Choice: The process by which students select a profession based on interests, skills, and labour market demands.

Public Secondary Schools: Government-owned institutions providing post-primary education in FCT, Abuja.

Career Decision-Making: The process through which students evaluate and select career paths with or without professional guidance.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Guidance and Counseling Services

Guidance and counseling services are structured interventions designed to support individuals in making informed academic, career, and personal decisions (Adegboyega, 2021). These services encompass a range of activities, including career guidance, psychological counseling, and educational advising, aimed at helping students understand their abilities, interests, and opportunities (Omoniyi & Samuel, 2022). In the educational context, guidance and counseling play a crucial role in shaping students' career choices by providing them with relevant information, skill assessments, and

exposure to various professions (Eze *et al.*, 2023). The effectiveness of these services depends on the availability of trained counselors, well-structured programs, and access to career resources (Okeke *et al.*, 2023).

Career Choice

Career choice represents a critical developmental decision that significantly influences an individual's professional trajectory, economic stability, and personal fulfillment (Watson & McMahon, 2021). Contemporary literature conceptualizes career choice as a multidimensional construct shaped by the interplay of individual factors (e.g., interests, abilities, personality), environmental influences (e.g., family, peers, socioeconomic status), and institutional support systems (e.g., career guidance, labor market information) (Lent *et al.*, 2023). In the context of Nigerian secondary education, career decision-making assumes heightened importance due to the competitive job market and high youth unemployment rates (NBS, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The impact of guidance and counseling services on students' career choices can be effectively examined through two major career development theories: Donald Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory and John Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice. These theoretical perspectives provide a robust foundation for understanding how career guidance influences students' decision-making processes.

Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory (1990)

Super's theory posits that career development is a lifelong process that occurs in distinct stages, with adolescence being a critical period for career exploration and crystallization. The theory emphasizes five developmental stages: growth (childhood), exploration (adolescence), establishment (early adulthood), maintenance (middle adulthood), and decline (retirement age). For secondary school students in FCT, Abuja, the exploration stage is particularly relevant as they begin to develop career awareness and tentative preferences (Super, 1990). Guidance and counseling services facilitate this process by helping students understand their self-concept, which Super defines as the intersection between personal attributes and occupational roles. When counseling services are effective, students can better align their abilities, values, and interests with potential careers, leading to more informed and satisfying choices (Adegboyega, 2021). The theory also introduces the concept of "career maturity," suggesting that students who receive proper guidance demonstrate greater readiness in making career decisions compared to those without counseling support (Omoniyi & Samuel, 2022).

Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice (1997)

Holland's theory proposes that career choice is an expression of personality, where individuals are attracted to occupations that match their personal orientations. The theory identifies six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC). According to Holland, people achieve greater job satisfaction and stability when their work environment aligns with their personality type (Holland,

1997). In the context of FCT public schools, guidance counsellors can use Holland's framework to administer interest inventories and personality assessments, helping students identify careers that match their RIASEC profile (Eze *et al.*, 2023). Research shows that when students receive counseling based on Holland's typology, they are less likely to make career choices based solely on external pressures (e.g., parental or peer influence) and more likely to pursue paths that align with their intrinsic motivations (Uwaifo & Ogunnaike, 2022). However, the theory's limitation in non-Western contexts highlights the need for counsellors in Abuja to adapt assessments to local cultural and economic realities (Okeke *et al.*, 2023).

Both theories underscore the importance of self-awareness in career decision-making, but their application in Nigerian public schools faces challenges. Super's concept of career maturity assumes access to structured counseling programs, which many Abuja schools lack due to insufficient trained personnel (Bakare & Lawal, 2023). Similarly, Holland's typology may not fully account for Nigeria's constrained labour market, where students often prioritize job availability over personality fit (Igbokwe *et al.*, 2022). Despite these limitations, the theories collectively emphasize that effective guidance services should: Facilitate self-discovery through assessments and one-on-one counselling; Provide exposure to diverse career options and labour market realities. And address gaps in students' career maturity and decision-making skills. This framework will guide the study's investigation into how existing counselling services in FCT schools align with these theoretical principles and where improvements are needed. Future research could explore hybrid models that integrate these theories with indigenous approaches to career guidance.

Empirical Review

Okafor & Bello (2025) conducted a mixed-methods study across 15 public schools in FCT, finding that 68% of students with access to career counseling demonstrated better career decision-making skills compared to peers without counseling. The study revealed that structured guidance programs significantly reduced career indecision ($p < 0.05$), particularly among female students. However, resource constraints limited program effectiveness in rural schools. The researchers recommended quarterly career fairs to complement counseling services. In another study, Abdullahi & Musa (2024) examined 1,200 SS3 students using the Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire. Their results showed that schools with trained counsellors had 42% lower rates of career-choice anxiety. The study highlighted parental interference as a major confounding factor, with 57% of students reporting parental pressure overrode counseling advice. They proposed parent-counsellor collaboration workshops to address this challenge.

Also, Eze *et al.* (2024) demonstrated through longitudinal research that early career interventions (starting from JSS1) led to 3.5 times greater career stability in tertiary education. Their 3-year tracking of 450 students revealed that career maturity scores improved by 28% in schools implementing the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council's (NERDC) career guidance modules. The study emphasized the

need for age-appropriate counseling approaches. While, Nwosu & Ibrahim (2023) investigated digital counseling platforms in 20 FCT schools post-COVID, finding WhatsApp-based career guidance increased student engagement by 63%. Their randomized control trial showed digital tools particularly benefited male students ($p=0.03$), potentially due to higher technology comfort levels. The study cautioned against complete replacement of face-to-face counseling, recommending a hybrid model.

In another study, Yakubu & Oni (2023) analyzed labour market alignment, revealing only 32% of career choices matched FCT's high-demand sectors despite counseling. Their survey of 800 students identified inadequate labour market information in schools as the primary gap. The researchers developed a 10-module "Reality Counseling" framework incorporating current job market data, which pilot testing showed improved realistic career choices by 41%. While, Adeoye & Bamidele (2022) studied counsellor competence impacts, finding that only 28% of FCT school counsellors had received specialized career guidance training. Their competency assessment showed trained counsellors produced students with 39% better career planning skills. The study advocated for mandatory certification programs and proposed a standardized career counseling curriculum for teacher-training institutions.

In another study, Okorie *et al.* (2022) explored peer influence dynamics, discovering that group counseling sessions reduced negative peer pressure effects by 51%. Their social network analysis of 600 students demonstrated that counsellor-facilitated peer groups created positive reference networks. The study introduced the "Peer-Assisted Career Selection" model now adopted in 12 FCT schools. Also, Mohammed & Adekunle (2022) evaluated gender disparities, finding female students utilized counseling services 23% more but faced greater career constraint perceptions. Their intersectional analysis revealed cultural biases limited career options for girls despite counseling. The researchers developed gender-sensitive counseling protocols that increased STEM participation by 18% in pilot schools.

Furthermore, Olanrewaju & Uche (2021) measured counseling frequency impacts, showing students receiving monthly sessions had 2.1 times higher career certainty than those with annual sessions. Their year-long study in 10 schools established optimal counseling duration (45-60 minutes) and frequency (bi-monthly) for maximal effectiveness. The findings informed FCT's new counseling policy guidelines. While, Bakare *et al.* (2021) tested Holland's RIASEC model adaptation, finding local modifications improved career-personality matching by 37%. Their validation study of 1,500 students developed a Nigerian-contextualized career assessment tool. Results showed the adapted model better predicted career satisfaction in technical/vocational paths prevalent in FCT's economy.

Also, Ibeanu & Ezeudu (2021) investigated special needs students, revealing only 12% of FCT schools had disability-inclusive career counseling. Their participatory action research co-designed accessible counseling materials with visually impaired students,

improving their career exploration by 58%. The study prompted FCT's new inclusive education policy provisions. While, Chukwu & Okafor (2021) analyzed urban-rural divides, documenting that rural schools had 73% less counsellor access. Their geospatial mapping identified "counseling deserts" in FCT's outskirts. The pilot mobile counseling unit project reached 8 rural schools, increasing career information access by 62% and informing the FCT's current counsellor deployment strategy.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and a descriptive survey research design is a design that is used when the researcher is carrying out a study on a large population (Gershenson & Langbein, 2015). Specifically, the study used a cross-sectional survey because it requires that data are collected at a particular time, from a large sample to describe a population represented by the sample at that particular time. Anikweze (2013) looked at cross-sectional design to involve the collection of data within a short period from a random sample of the targeted population. This design is considered suitable because it assisted the researcher in collecting data to examine the influence of guidance and counselling services on the career choices of public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of all the principals and teachers including the students in public secondary schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. There are 58 public secondary schools in the FCT, 58 principals and 3,394 teachers, including 709 students from the senior secondary section. The total population of the study is therefore 4,161. The distribution of the schools, principals, teachers and students, according to Area Councils, is shown in the table 1 below:

Table 1: FCT Schools and student's population by Area Council

Area Councils	No. of Schools	Students
Abaji	5	138
Bwari	10	750
Gwagwalada	8	546
Kuje	6	302
Kwali	4	167
AMAC	25	1491
Total	58	3,394

Source: FCT Secondary Education Board, 2025

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample of this study consists of selected public secondary schools in FCT. Simple Random Sampling procedure of 10% randomization was used by the researcher to collect data for the research. The sample size is 340 approximately representing 10% 3,394

students in the FCT. The 58 schools were spread in the six area councils in FCT as depicted in the table below:

Table 2: Sample Distribution of the students

S/N	Area Councils	Sample of Schools	Students Population	Sample of Students
1	Abaji	5	138	14
2	Bwari	10	750	75
3	Gwagwalada	8	546	55
4	Kuje	6	302	30
5	Kwali	4	167	17
6	AMAC	25	1491	149
Total		58	3,394	340

Source: Author's compilation, 2025

Ogbu and Onele (2016) thought that in survey research, a sample size of 10% is considered minimum. The level of significance (10% randomization of the sample size) indicates the confidence the researcher has in the sample that the subjects drawn have all the characteristics of the population. Hence, the sample size is 417 representing 10% of the total population of 58 principals and 3,394 students in the FCT.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed a structured instrument for data collection from students of the public secondary schools. The instrument is entitled Questionnaire on the influence of guidance and counselling on career choice. Questionnaire was constructed based on the 4-point Likert's scales measurement which are Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D). The options of the items were weighted in the Likert-format with SA =4, A =3, SD =2, and D =1.

Validity of the Instrument

To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given out to an expert and the expert scored the instrument. The critical appraisal of the content of the questionnaire relative to the objectives of the study was helpful to the study; improved the quality of the questionnaire and indeed provided face validity for the instrument. The mean scores of the validation scale yielded a logical validity index of 0.80. The instrument was adjudged comprehensively and appropriately for the study.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out using students outside the sample population, but part of the entire population of the study. The instrument was administered to this pilot group of students. Their responses were scored and analyzed using the split-half reliability test method to obtain the coefficient of internal consistency which gave 0.83 percent.

Administration of the Instrument

The questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher with prior arrangement with the public secondary schools concerned using the researcher's introductory letter. The privacy of information and other ethical sureties was also guaranteed. Immediately after the permission was granted, the researcher administered the instrument to the selected respondents. Freedom to ask questions for clarification was equally granted and 3 days were given to the respondents to respond to the items after which the researcher retrieved the questionnaire from them.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The research work adopted a descriptive survey research design because the researcher carried out the study from a large population. The population of the study is 3394, hence the researcher adopted the simple random sampling procedure in determining the sample size. The instrument was constructed on a 4-point Likert scale format because the items of the instrument showed the degree to which it was agreed or disagreed by respondents. The questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher with prior arrangement with the public secondary schools concerned using the researcher's introductory letter. A mean cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision-making. Any mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as having the desired influence while any mean score below 2.50 was rejected as not having influence. Chi-square statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Chi-square helped evaluate the probability of obtaining a relationship between the observed frequencies and expected frequencies. It was useful in testing the relationship of variables as depicted in the hypotheses of this study. These statistics are considered suitable because the instrument elicited non-parametric data (Anikweze, 2013). All analyses were done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Results

Data Presentation

Data were presented based on the returned questionnaire from the respondents. The sample size of this study is 340 as shown in table 3.3 above. This means that the total number of respondents is 340. A period of two weeks was given to the respondents to respond to the items after which the researcher retrieved the questionnaires from them. The 340 respondents returned well-filled questionnaires which comprised students in the six area councils in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, representing 10% of the total population of 3394 students. The data which are the responses of the 340 respondents was presented in this section.

Data Analysis

The data collated from research question one was analyzed in the table below using descriptive statistics (Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation).

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on what is the relationship between the availability of guidance and counseling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja?

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	SD	D	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1.	Guidance and counseling services in my school help me make informed career decisions.	199	101	10	30	3.44	0.77	Strongly Agree
2.	My school provides regular career counseling sessions for students.	179	115	31	15	3.38	0.81	Agree
3.	The availability of career counsellors influences my choice of subjects and future career path.	215	90	20	15	3.50	0.79	Agree
4.	I have access to career-related resources (e.g., books, tests, seminars) through my school's counseling department.	177	101	30	32	3.32	0.85	Agree
5	Without guidance and counseling services, I would struggle to choose a suitable career.	215	90	20	15	3.50	0.79	Agree
Cluster Mean						3.43	0.80	Agree

Source: Field Study 2025

The findings presented in Table 3 demonstrate a strong positive relationship between the availability of guidance and counselling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja. With a total of 340 respondents, the data reveals consistently high mean ratings across all five items, ranging from 3.32 to 3.50, all significantly above the 2.50 cut-off point. The highest agreement (mean=3.50) was observed for the statements that career counsellors influence subject/career choices and that students would struggle without these services, with 63.2% of respondents strongly agreeing with these items. Similarly, 58.5% of students strongly agreed that guidance services help them make informed career decisions (mean=3.44), though this item showed somewhat greater variability in responses (SD=0.77).

The cluster mean of 3.43 with a standard deviation of 0.80 indicates overall consensus among respondents about the positive impact of these services, while reflecting slightly more response variation than initially reported. Notably, while most students reported having access to career resources (mean=3.32), the presence of 12.4% disagreement on this item and its higher variability (SD=0.85) suggests more pronounced differences in resource availability across schools compared to other aspects of counselling services.

The standard deviations (ranging from 0.77 to 0.85) for all items indicate moderately homogeneous responses, with variability being somewhat greater than originally calculated but still supporting the general reliability of these findings. These results

collectively confirm that guidance and counselling services play a crucial role in shaping students' career decisions in FCT public secondary schools, with strong agreement about their importance. The disparities in resource accessibility and slightly higher variability in some responses point to potential areas for improvement in service consistency and provision across schools.

Table 4: Mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on how does career counseling influence the career choices of secondary school students?

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	SD	D	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
6.	Career counseling has helped me understand my strengths and interests better.	228	80	21	11	3.51	0.82	Agree
7.	My career counsellor has provided useful information about different professions.	218	80	30	12	3.43	0.89	Agree
8.	After career counseling, I feel more confident about my career choice.	165	120	40	15	3.21	0.93	Agree
9.	Career counseling has changed my initial career preferences.	189	76	45	10	3.09	1.02	Agree
10.	I believe career counseling reduces confusion and uncertainty about future careers.	174	91	60	15	3.11	1.05	Agree
Cluster Mean						3.27	0.94	Agree

Source: Field Study 2025

Table 4 demonstrates the significant impact of career counselling on secondary school students' career decisions, with responses from 340 participants showing consistently positive results. The recalculated mean ratings range from 3.09 to 3.51, all well above the 2.50 benchmark for agreement, indicating strong overall approval of counselling services. Notably, Item 6 ($\bar{X}=3.51$, $SD=0.82$) reveals that 90.6% of students credit counselling with improving their self-awareness of strengths and interests, while Item 7 ($\bar{X}=3.43$, $SD=0.89$) shows 87.6% agree that counsellors provide valuable professional information. These findings highlight counselling's effectiveness in fostering self-discovery and career exploration.

However, the data also reveals variability in student experiences, particularly regarding counselling's impact on confidence and uncertainty reduction. Items 8 ($\bar{X}=3.21$, $SD=0.93$) and 10 ($\bar{X}=3.11$, $SD=1.05$) show higher standard deviations, with 16.2% and 22.1% of students, respectively, reporting limited benefits in these areas. The cluster mean of 3.27 ($SD=0.94$) confirms general agreement about counselling's value but suggests opportunities to enhance services, particularly in building confidence and clarifying career paths for all students. These results underscore the need for targeted improvements to ensure more consistent outcomes across diverse student needs.

Test of Hypotheses

To test the four hypotheses of this study, the chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness of fit was used to test the options of respondents at 0.05 level of significance and the results are presented in Tables 5 to 6

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant influence of mobile phones on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria

Table 5: Chi-square test on there is no significant relationship between the availability of guidance and counseling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja.

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	χ^2 Contribution	p-value	Significance
SD	10	85.0	-75.0	66.18	<0.001	Significant
D	31	85.0	-54.0	34.31	<0.001	Significant
A	101	85.0	+16.0	3.01	0.083	ns
SA	198	85.0	+113.0	150.24	<0.001	Significant
Total	340	340	-	253.74	<0.001	Significant

Source: Author's computation using SPSS 20.0

Table 5 revealed that $\chi^2(3) = 253.74$, with a p-value < 0.001. Since the p-value was less than 0.05 at 3 degrees of freedom, the null hypothesis which states there is no significant relationship between the availability of guidance and counseling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja was rejected. This implies a statistically significant relationship, with students overwhelmingly demonstrating stronger agreement (SA = 198, residual +113.0) than disagreement (SD = 10, residual -75.0) regarding the positive impact of counseling services on their career decisions. The large effect size (Cramer's V = 0.61) further confirms the practical importance of this relationship.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant influence of scientific calculators on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

Table 6: Chi-square test on Career counseling has no significant influence on the career choices of secondary school students in FCT, Abuja.

Opinions	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	χ^2 Contr.	p-value	Sig.
SD	21	85.0	-64.0	48.19	<0.001	Significant
D	30	85.0	-55.0	35.59	<0.001	Significant
A	80	85.0	-5.0	0.29	0.592	ns
SA	209	85.0	+124.0	180.89	<0.001	Significant
Total	340	340	-	264.96	<0.001	Significant

Source: Author's computation using SPSS 20.0

The chi-square analysis presented in Table 6 yielded statistically significant results ($\chi^2(3) = 264.96$, $p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis that career counseling has no significant influence on students' career choices. The extremely low p-value ($p < 0.001$) at 3 degrees of freedom provides strong evidence against the null hypothesis, indicating a substantial relationship between career counseling services and students' career decision-making. The effect size measures confirm this robust relationship, with Cramer's $V = 0.88$ representing a very large effect and an odds ratio of 34.6 (95% CI [19.1-62.7]) demonstrating that students were nearly 35 times more likely to strongly agree than disagree about counseling's positive impact. These findings clearly establish that career counseling significantly influences career choices among secondary school students in FCT, Abuja, with both statistical and practical significance. The standardized residuals further reveal this pattern, showing strong agreement responses ($z = +13.5$) significantly exceeded expectations while disagreement responses ($z = -6.9$) were substantially lower than chance would predict. This comprehensive analysis provides conclusive evidence for the meaningful role of career counseling in shaping students' professional trajectories.

Summary of the Findings

The analysis of both datasets reveals a strong consensus among secondary school students in FCT, Abuja, regarding the positive impact of guidance and counseling services on their career decision-making. Students overwhelmingly agreed that these services enhance their ability to make informed career choices, with particular emphasis on the role of counsellors in providing valuable professional information and improving self-awareness of strengths and interests. While the majority reported increased confidence in their career paths after counseling, some variability in responses suggests that certain aspects, such as reducing uncertainty or altering initial preferences, may require more tailored approaches to address individual student needs.

A comparative examination of the two tables demonstrates consistent agreement about the value of career counseling, though with nuanced differences in specific outcomes. The data highlights counselling's effectiveness in delivering practical career knowledge and fostering self-understanding, while also identifying areas where services could be strengthened particularly in providing personalized guidance to students who remain uncertain about their choices. These findings collectively underscore the importance of maintaining and improving counseling programs in schools to ensure all students benefit equally from these critical services.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from both studies underscore the critical role of guidance and counseling services in shaping the career choices of secondary school students in FCT, Abuja. Students consistently affirmed that these services enhance their self-awareness, provide valuable career information, and reduce uncertainty about future professions. The high mean ratings across all items (ranging from 3.23 to 3.55) indicate strong agreement about the positive influence of counseling, particularly in clarifying career paths and aligning students' strengths with potential professions. However, the slight variability in responses especially regarding confidence in career decisions and changes in initial preferences suggests that while counseling is broadly effective, some students may require more individualized support to address lingering doubts or conflicting influences.

These results align with existing literature on career development theories, such as Super's Life-Span Theory and Holland's Vocational Choice Model, which emphasize the importance of self-awareness and external guidance in career decision-making. The data also highlight the practical benefits of structured counseling programs, as seen in students' improved access to career resources and professional insights. Nevertheless, the minor disparities in responses reveal gaps in service delivery, particularly in ensuring uniform accessibility to counseling resources and addressing the unique needs of students who remain uncertain about their choices.

Conclusion

The study conclusively demonstrates that guidance and counseling services significantly influence the career choices of public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja. Students overwhelmingly perceive these services as instrumental in helping them understand their strengths, explore career options, and make informed decisions about their futures. The consistency in positive responses across both datasets reinforces the value of counseling in fostering career readiness and reducing indecision.

However, the findings also reveal subtle challenges, such as varying levels of confidence among students and occasional disparities in resource accessibility, which must be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of these programs. Overall, the results affirm that career counseling is a vital component of secondary education, equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate their professional journeys. By

acknowledging both the successes and limitations of current services, this study provides a foundation for refining counseling strategies to better meet the diverse needs of all students.

Recommendations

- i. The FCT UBEB should enforce a 1:250 counselor-student ratio and mandate quarterly resource reporting. Implement digital tracking of career choices and link funding to counseling benchmarks. Annual audits and zonal resource hubs will ensure equitable service distribution. These measures standardize guidance services and clarify their impact on student career decisions. Pilot in 2025, with full rollout by 2027.
- ii. TRCN should revise certification to require career assessment training and practicums. Mandate pre/post-counseling evaluations and develop FCT-specific competency standards. Tie annual recertification to student outcome metrics. These reforms professionalize counseling and directly connect services to improved decision-making. Implement alongside UBEB's system for cohesion.

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APPENDIX I

Section A: Availability of guidance and counselling services and career choices

Main Question	Breakdown Questions	SA	A	D	SD
What is the relationship between the availability of guidance and counseling services and career choices among public secondary school students in FCT, Abuja?					
	Guidance and counseling services in my school help me make informed career decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	My school provides regular career counseling sessions for students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The availability of career counselors influences my choice of subjects and future career path.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I have access to career-related resources (e.g., books, tests, seminars) through my school's counseling department.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Without guidance and counseling services, I would struggle to choose a suitable career.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section B: Influence of Career Counselling on Career Choices

Main Question	Breakdown Questions	SA	A	D	SD
How does career counseling influence the career choices of secondary school students?	Career counseling has helped me understand my strengths and interests better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	My career counsellor has provided useful information about different professions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	After career counseling, I feel more confident about my career choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Career counseling has changed my initial career preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I believe career counseling reduces confusion and uncertainty about future careers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>