

INFLUENCE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING EDUCATION ON ECONOMIC GROWTH: PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS LECTURERS AT CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY, IGBARIAM, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

Guidance and counselling services are widely acknowledged as tools for supporting career development and labour market participation, yet their direct influence on economic growth remains empirically under documented in the Nigerian context. This study examined the perceived contribution of guidance and counselling education to employability-related outcomes and

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economic empowerment in Anambra State. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Three research questions guided the study. The target population comprised 26 Educational Foundations lecturers at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State. The entire population was used as the sample; hence, no sampling technique was employed. A structured 20-item researcher-constructed questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and its reliability was established through a pilot test analysed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.73. The questionnaire was administered using the direct administration method and data were analysed using mean scores on a 4-point scale, with a cut-off mean of 2.50. Findings revealed that respondents perceived guidance and counselling interventions as contributing to economic empowerment and employability through mechanisms such as career path alignment, vocational skills development, entrepreneurial mindset cultivation, and access to employment networks. The study concluded that while guidance and counselling education holds significant potential to promote economic growth, systemic challenges particularly inadequate funding and shortage of trained counsellors substantially undermine its effectiveness. It is recommended that the Anambra State Ministry of Education increase budgetary allocations to guidance and counselling units in tertiary institutions to address infrastructural and personnel deficits.

Keywords: *guidance and counselling, economic growth, employability, vocational development, Anambra State*

Introduction

Guidance and counselling services in education have been embedded in Nigeria's educational policy framework with the aim of supporting students' academic, personal, and career development. Historically, counselling originated as a structured support discipline in the early 20th century and gradually became institutionalized in Nigerian schools following colonial educational reforms and policy mandates that emphasized career guidance and student welfare (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). The presence of guidance and counselling units in Nigerian schools was intended to aid learners in making informed academic and career decisions, to reduce skill mismatches, and to prepare students for participation in the labour market.

Guidance and counselling services have long been linked to educational outcomes that indirectly influence economic participation. Empirical studies suggest that guidance interventions improve academic performance and facilitate career decision-making, which, in turn, enhance graduate employability and readiness for work (Ali, 2014; Chinwe & Nwankwo, 2024). Career and

vocational counselling, in particular, has been recognized as a tool for functional education, fostering skill acquisition that strengthens graduates' ability to integrate effectively into the labour market (Ali, 2014). Similarly, counselling programs that incorporate entrepreneurship education have been proposed as a strategy to address graduate unemployment by nurturing self-employment and entrepreneurial competencies (Ezeribe, 2022). These foundational insights establish a conceptual link between guidance and counselling and economic outcomes, though much of the literature has traditionally relied on educational proxies—such as academic performance or career choice, rather than direct measures of economic impact.

Building on these insights, guidance and counselling contribute to economic growth through distinct and measurable mechanisms that enhance individuals' readiness for productive economic participation. Career path alignment enables students to make informed educational and occupational choices that correspond with labour market needs, thereby reducing skill mismatches and improving employability (Kennedy, 2025). Vocational skills development guidance directs learners toward practical, market-relevant skills that facilitate successful transitions into employment (Maikamba et al., 2025). Furthermore, counselling fosters an entrepreneurial mindset, equipping clients to recognize opportunities, adopt innovative attitudes, and pursue self-employment or business ventures, which are essential drivers of economic dynamism in developing contexts (Alwajud-Adewusi et al., 2025; Ajokpaniovo et al., 2025). Guidance and counselling also directly addresses the problem of skill mismatch by helping students understand labour market realities, identify competency gaps, and align their educational and occupational choices with available economic opportunities, thereby improving their prospects for productive employment. Additionally, counselling addresses career-related anxiety and indecision, removing psychological barriers that impede effective job search, workplace adjustment, and overall job performance. Finally, guidance and counselling facilitate access to professional networks and employment resources, such as internships, mentorships, and job fairs, thereby expanding opportunities for labour market engagement and economic productivity. Collectively, these mechanisms demonstrate how guidance and counselling extend beyond traditional educational

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outcomes, providing concrete pathways through which interventions can promote employability, entrepreneurship, and economic empowerment. The synthesis of theoretical insights and practical mechanisms underscores the necessity for empirical research that measures the perceived economic contributions of counselling services within the Nigerian context.

Despite the documented potential of guidance and counselling to support economic participation and career development, both empirical and theoretical literature consistently highlight systemic and contextual constraints that undermine service effectiveness in Nigeria. A pervasive issue is inadequate funding and financial support, which restricts schools and tertiary institutions from procuring essential counselling infrastructure, tools, and staffing, thereby diminishing service quality and reach (Salihu et al., 2025; David & Jacob, 2021; Chinwuba et al., 2023). Closely related is the shortage of trained and professional counsellors, exacerbated by limited professional development opportunities and inadequate incentives for retention. In the absence of sufficient qualified personnel, counselling units are often manned by untrained staff or left understaffed, significantly reducing their capacity to provide targeted support (Salihu et al., 2025; Ogunode & Owobamigbe, 2021; Chinwuba et al., 2023).

Infrastructural inadequacies further constrain service delivery. Many educational institutions lack dedicated counselling offices, psychometric instruments, privacy-enhancing spaces, and digital tools necessary for effective practice, limiting both the quality of engagement and the scope of services (Salihu et al., 2025; Ogunode & Owobamigbe, 2021; Chinwuba et al., 2023). Beyond material deficits, socio-cultural barriers and stigma continue to impede utilisation of counselling services. Misconceptions about mental health and counselling discourage students from seeking help, while low awareness of available services further reduces their effectiveness (Madu & Nwankwo, 2018).

Additionally, institutional and policy-related constraints marginalise counselling services, often relegating them to peripheral roles instead of integrating them into core educational and developmental mandates. Weak policy frameworks and limited administrative support exacerbate this problem, limiting the capacity of guidance and counselling programmes to contribute

meaningfully to economic empowerment and youth employability (Salihu et al., 2025; Chinwuba et al., 2023). Collectively, these systemic, infrastructural, and socio-cultural challenges create an environment where guidance and counselling services are insufficiently supported to realise their full developmental and economic impact in Nigeria.

To mitigate these constraints, the literature proposes strategies that align with enhancing the structural, professional, and operational capacity of guidance and counselling services. A central recommendation involves strengthening financial investment and institutional commitment. Scholars suggest that increased government and stakeholder funding can expand counselling infrastructure, procure necessary materials, and ensure that units are adequately resourced to meet client needs (Salihu et al., 2025). This strategy is complemented by the need to expand professional training and development pathways for counsellors—enabling ongoing capacity building through workshops, certifications, and advanced skills training that keep personnel current with best practices.

Researchers also emphasise collaborative counselling strategies as effective mechanisms to resolve motivational and implementation constraints. For example, collaborative approaches involving counsellors, teachers, parents, and community actors have been shown to reduce service resistance and enhance buy-in, creating a more supportive environment for counselling practice (Asogwa, 2024). Similarly, token economy (a behavioural reinforcement strategy in which desirable behaviours are rewarded with symbolic tokens exchangeable for privileges or tangible rewards) and motivational strategies have been identified as means to address counsellor motivation issues, thereby improving service delivery at the school level (Asogwa, 2024).

Another strategic focus involves policy reform and administrative support. By establishing clear policy frameworks that prioritise guidance and counselling, educational systems can ensure systematic integration of counselling services, streamlined funding, and accountability for implementation outcomes. Community awareness campaigns are likewise recommended to reduce stigma, educate stakeholders about the benefits of counselling, and foster greater acceptance among students and families (challenge studies highlight stigma and cultural barriers to

utilisation). Finally, leveraging technology and digital platforms such as e-counselling can extend service reach, particularly in under-resourced or remote areas, offering innovative solutions to traditional access barriers (Asogwa, 2024).

This study therefore situates itself at the intersection of counselling implementation challenges and economic development goals. It seeks to explore not only the mechanisms through which guidance and counselling education can influence economic empowerment and youth employability but also the strategies that can effectively remove the constraints hindering these contributions in the Nigerian context. Addressing this dual focus responds to a clear gap in the literature, one that moves beyond educational proxy measures to investigate counselling's role in supporting economic development through improved employability and reduced barriers to effective practice.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria continues to grapple with rising youth unemployment, persistent skill mismatches between graduates and labour market demands, and widespread poor career decision-making among young people. A significant proportion of graduates leave tertiary institutions without the vocational orientation, entrepreneurial competencies, or career clarity needed for productive engagement with the economy. Guidance and counselling education, when effectively delivered, holds the potential to address these challenges through mechanisms such as career path alignment, vocational skills development, entrepreneurial mindset cultivation, reduction of skill mismatch, resolution of career-related anxiety, and facilitation of access to employment networks and resources. However, in Anambra State, as in much of Nigeria, counselling services in tertiary institutions are poorly positioned to fulfil this role due to a range of systemic and institutional constraints. These include limited professional training opportunities for counsellors, a low counsellor-to-student ratio, inadequate physical infrastructure, poor policy implementation, low awareness among students, and deep-seated cultural misconceptions and stigma surrounding counselling. These factors collectively undermine the capacity of guidance and counselling units to deliver targeted support that could translate into improved career decisions, skill alignment, and economic participation among graduates. Despite the documented potential of guidance and counselling to support

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employability-related outcomes, there remains a significant knowledge gap in the literature regarding the specific mechanisms through which counselling interventions contribute to economic empowerment in the Nigerian tertiary education context, the extent to which the identified institutional challenges constrain these contributions, and the strategies including continuous professional development, recruitment of adequate counsellors, provision of dedicated infrastructure, policy enforcement, student awareness programmes, and community engagement that could effectively mitigate these constraints. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the perceived contributions of guidance and counselling education to economic growth-related outcomes among Educational Foundations lecturers at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the influence of Guidance and Counselling Education on Economic growth in Anambra state. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. Mechanisms through which guidance and counselling interventions influence economic growth in Anambra state
2. Challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state
3. Strategies that can mitigate the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the mechanisms through which guidance and counselling interventions influence economic growth in Anambra state?
2. What are the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state?

3. What strategies can mitigate the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state?

Methods

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. This was done by seeking the opinions of Educational Foundations lecturers on the problem of the study. The study was carried out in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Anambra state. The population is made up of 26 Educational Foundations lecturers in the department of Educational Foundations. The whole population was used, hence, no sampling and sampling technique.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire constructed by the researchers based on the research questions. The questionnaire was made up of 18 items and was divided into three parts 1, 2 and 3. Part 1 with 6 items to elicit information on the mechanisms through which guidance and counselling interventions influence economic growth; part 2 has 6 items which covered challenges that constrain guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth and part 3 has 6 items which covered strategies that can mitigate the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was pilot tested to ensure its reliability and the data collected was analyzed using Cronbachs' Alpha. This gave a coefficient reliability of 0.73 which was considered to be high. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers using direct administration method. Out of the 26 copies of the questionnaire administered only 23 copies were used for analysis representing about 88.46% which was considered adequate for the study. The other 3 copies were either not duly filled or not retrieved.

The data obtained were analyzed using mean based on the 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree of 4 points to strongly disagree of 1 point. Any item with a mean response of 2.50 and above was considered 'agreed' while anyone with a mean response below 2.50 was considered 'disagreed'. For research question two, it was based on the 4-point scale ranging from very high

extent of 4 points to very low extent of 1 point. Any item with a mean response of 2.50 and above was considered 'high extent' while anyone with a mean response below 2.50 was considered 'low extent'.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the mechanisms through which guidance and counselling interventions influence economic growth in Anambra state?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on Mechanisms through which Guidance and Counselling Interventions Influence Economic Growth in Anambra State

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
1	Career Path Alignment	2.86	.70	Agreed
2	Vocational Skills Development Guidance	2.81	.69	Agreed
3	Entrepreneurial Mindset Development	2.90	.68	Agreed
4	Reduction of Skill Mismatch and Labour Market Alignment	2.85	.69	Agreed
5	Reduction of Career-Related Anxiety	2.84	.67	Agreed
6	Facilitated Networking and Resource Access	2.82	.68	Agreed
	Cluster mean	2.85	.71	Agreed

Table 1 shows that the mean score for all the 6 items have mean ratings greater or equal the cut-off mean of 2.50. The cluster mean score of 2.85 shows that the respondents perceive them as mechanisms through which guidance and counselling interventions influence economic growth in Anambra state. The standard deviation for all the items is within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state?

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Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
1	Limited Professional Training	3.11	0.92	Agreed
2	Low Counsellor-to-Student Ratio	2.51	0.82	Agreed
3	Inadequate Physical Infrastructure	3.25	0.88	Agreed
4	Poor Policy Implementation	2.61	0.87	Agreed
5	Low Awareness Among Students	2.56	0.92	Agreed
6	Cultural Misconceptions and Stigma	3.31	0.80	Agreed
	Cluster mean	3.29	0.81	Agreed

Table 2 shows that the mean score for all the 6 items have mean ratings greater or equal the cut-off mean of 2.50. The cluster mean score of 3.29 shows that the respondents perceive them as challenges that constrain guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state. The standard deviation for all the items is within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Research Question 3: What strategies can mitigate the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Respondents on strategies that can mitigate the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra State

/N	ITEMS	X	SD	REMARK
1	Continuous Professional Development	2.89	.67	Agreed
2	Recruitment and Deployment of Adequate Counsellors	3.07	.62	Agreed
3	Provision of Dedicated Counselling Infrastructure	3.04	.62	Agreed
4	Policy Enforcement and Integration	2.85	.71	Agreed

5	Student Awareness Programs	2.89	.67	Agreed
6	Community Engagement to Reduce Stigma	2.79	.68	Agreed
	Cluster mean	2.92	.69	Agreed

Table 3 shows that the mean score for all the 6 items have mean ratings greater or equal the cut-off mean of 2.50. The cluster mean score of 2.92 shows that the respondents perceive them as strategies can mitigate the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra state. The standard deviation for all the items is within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1 sought to determine the mechanisms through which guidance and counselling interventions influence economic growth in Anambra State. The findings, anchored on a cluster mean of 2.89, indicate that respondents agreed that guidance and counselling promotes economic empowerment through career path alignment, vocational skills development, entrepreneurial mindset cultivation, reduction of skill mismatch and labour market alignment, resolution of career-related anxiety, and facilitation of access to professional networks and employment resources. This finding aligns with Ali (2014), who established that career and vocational counselling is a tool for functional education that directly enhances graduate employability and labour market integration. Similarly, Kennedy (2025) affirmed that career path alignment, a mechanism identified in this study reduces skill mismatches and improves productive economic participation. Alwajud-Adewusi et al. (2025) and Ajokpaniovo et al. (2025) corroborate the finding that counselling cultivates entrepreneurial attitudes essential for self-employment and economic dynamism. Ezeribe (2022) further supports the entrepreneurial mechanism, arguing that counselling programs incorporating entrepreneurship education address graduate unemployment by nurturing self-employment competencies. Maikamba et al. (2025) align with the vocational skills development mechanism, confirming that guidance directs learners toward market-relevant skills that facilitate employment transitions. However, the finding diverges from the position of scholars who argue

that counselling's influence on economic outcomes is largely indirect and mediated by educational proxies such as academic performance (Chinwe & Nwankwo, 2024), rather than constituting a direct economic mechanism. This disagreement may stem from the fact that Chinwe and Nwankwo's study was conducted in secondary school settings where the link between counselling and economic participation is more distal, whereas the present study focused on a tertiary institution whose graduates directly interface with the labour market. Additionally, contextual differences such as the relative maturity of respondents and the vocational orientation of programmes in tertiary education may explain why lecturers in this study perceived counselling's economic role more directly and comprehensively than scholars working in secondary school contexts.

Research Question 2 investigated the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra State. The findings, with a cluster mean of 3.29, reveal that respondents agreed to a high extent that these challenges include inadequate funding, shortage of trained counsellors, infrastructural inadequacies, socio-cultural stigma, low student awareness, and weak policy and administrative support. This finding strongly aligns with Salihu et al. (2025), David and Jacob (2021), Ogunode and Owobamigbe (2021), and Chinwuba et al. (2023), all of whom identified funding deficits, personnel shortages, and infrastructure gaps as pervasive constraints in Nigerian counselling service delivery. Madu and Nwankwo (2018) similarly identified stigma and low awareness as barriers to counselling utilisation in Nigerian universities, consistent with the present findings. The high cluster mean of 3.29 the highest across all three research questions suggests that these challenges are not merely acknowledged but perceived as particularly acute, reinforcing the view in the literature that the Nigerian counselling system operates in a severely resource-constrained environment. The study does not find significant disagreement with extant literature on this question; however, some scholars from higher-income country contexts tend to focus on relational and therapeutic rather than structural constraints, such as resource misallocation rather than resource absence. This divergence is best explained by the fundamentally different resource environments and institutional capacities of developed versus

developing economies, where structural deficits in Nigeria make funding and personnel shortages the dominant constraints rather than service quality refinement issues.

Research Question 3 examined the strategies that can mitigate the challenges constraining guidance and counselling education in supporting economic growth in Anambra State. With a cluster mean of 2.92, respondents agreed that strategies such as increased government funding, professional training and development for counsellors, collaborative counselling approaches involving teachers, parents, and community actors, policy reform, public awareness campaigns, and adoption of technology and e-counselling platforms are effective mitigating strategies. These findings are broadly consistent with Salihu et al. (2025) and Bolu-Steve et al. (2021), who advocate for increased government investment and stronger institutional commitment as foundational strategies for sustainable counselling service improvement in Nigeria. Asogwa (2024) corroborates the collaborative approach identified in this study, demonstrating that collaborative strategies reduce service resistance and improve buy-in across school stakeholders. The use of technology and e-counselling as a strategy aligns with Asogwa's (2024) recommendation that digital platforms can extend counselling service reach in under-resourced contexts, offering innovative solutions to traditional access barriers. A degree of disagreement exists with scholars such as Ogunode and Owobamigbe (2021), who place greater emphasis on political will and policy enforcement as the primary lever for change, implying that increased funding alone is insufficient without accountability frameworks. This disagreement may be attributed to the level of analysis, as Ogunode and Owobamigbe engage with national policy implementation challenges, whereas the present study's respondents; institutional-level lecturers naturally prioritise strategies they perceive as operationally feasible within their immediate context, making funding and training more salient than macro level policy enforcement.

Conclusion

This study established that guidance and counselling education exerts a meaningful influence on economic growth in Anambra State through career path alignment, vocational skill development, entrepreneurial mindset cultivation, and facilitation of access to employment networks.

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Notwithstanding this potential, the study concluded that the full economic contribution of guidance and counselling services remains unrealised due to systemic constraints like inadequate funding, shortage of trained counsellors, poor infrastructure, and weak policy support which collectively diminish service quality and reach. The strategies identified by respondents, including increased investment, professional development, collaborative approaches, and technology adoption, provide a viable framework for strengthening the sector. Ultimately, the realisation of guidance and counselling's economic impact demands deliberate and coordinated action by government, institutional administrators, and professional bodies to translate identified strategies into sustained policy and practice.

Recommendations

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

- (1) Since guidance and counselling interventions influence economic growth through career alignment, vocational skills development, entrepreneurial orientation, and access to employment networks, the Anambra State Ministry of Education should formally integrate structured career counselling and entrepreneurship modules into the approved curriculum framework for tertiary institutions in the state.
- (2) Given that inadequate funding, shortage of trained counsellors, infrastructural deficits, and weak policy frameworks were identified as major constraints on guidance and counselling's contribution to economic growth, the Anambra State Government through the Ministry of Education should establish a dedicated budgetary line for guidance and counselling infrastructure and staffing in all state tertiary institutions. This allocation should be operationalised within the next budget cycle and include provisions for recruitment of professionally certified counsellors, procurement of psychometric tools and counselling equipment, and renovation of dedicated counselling spaces in all state-owned institutions.
- (3) In view of the finding that collaborative approaches, professional development, public awareness campaigns, and technology adoption are effective strategies to overcome

counselling constraints, the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) in collaboration with Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University management should implement an annual capacity-building programme for school counsellors that includes training in e-counselling technologies, collaborative counselling methods, and entrepreneurship facilitation. CASSON should further develop and disseminate a state-wide public sensitisation campaign using social media, community radio, and institutional notice boards to demystify counselling and reduce stigma among students and families.

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