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IMPACT OF COUNSELLING STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA SOUTH SENATORIAL ZONE, NIGERIA

By

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ABSTRACT: The study assessed the impact of counselling strategies in enhancing students' academic and entrepreneurial skills in Senior Secondary Schools in Abia South Senatorial Zone, Nigeria. The study was guided by two specific objectives, and two research questions and two null hypotheses focusing on the counselling strategies the counselors can adopt to improve students' academic achievement skills. The research design adopted is correlational. The study used a sample size of 1000 students from a population of 18706 Senior Secondary School students. The study used simple random technique. The instruments for data collection are entrepreneurial skills, and achievement test. The instruments have reliability coefficient of 0.91 and 0.86 determined using Cronbach alpha reliability method and Kuder Richardson 20. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed notable impact on Senior Secondary School students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. The study concludes that counselling strategies has impact on the development of academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills among senior secondary school students. The study recommends that the state school system should employ sufficient counselling personnel to help equip students with entrepreneurial skills to make them employees of labour after graduation.

Keywords: Counselling strategies, academic achievement, entrepreneurial skills, senior secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of entrepreneurship skills and counselling strategies cannot be over emphasized among secondary school students. With the traditional job market becoming increasingly saturated, the need for alternative career pathways such as

entrepreneurship become paramount. Secondary School education are now saddled with the urgency of empowering students with the practical skills for self-employment (Okoli and Babalola (2023). Recognising its importance Gana (2001) cited in

Wang and Sigala (2024) opined that entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment entrepreneurial paths. Counselling plays a vital role in building students' confidence, emotional intelligence and decision-making abilities that are crucial for entrepreneurial success (Ibrahim and Yusuf, 2021). More importantly is structural counselling strategies (programmes) used by counsellors in schools, can help to cultivate specific entrepreneurial skills by providing mentorship resources and psychological support to students. Problem solving is also a foundational skill in entrepreneurship as entrepreneurs frequently encounter dynamic challenges that require analytical thinking and creative solutions. Counselling strategies that focus on developing critical thinking and adaptive reasoning can significantly enhance students' problem-solving abilities (Olowu and Akinola, 2023). Also, leadership skills such as communication, team coordination and strategic planning are vital for managing business operations and motivating others. Counselling strategies can help nurture leadership traits by promoting self-awareness among students (Afolabi and Okonkwo, 2022).

Another strategy for good entrepreneurship skill is marketing skills development which is essential in the contemporary business world. An entrepreneur has to appreciate his or her customer's needs, develop proper value offers and be able to market the products effectively; saddle students with the basic fundamentals of consumer behaviours branding, pricing and even digital marketing (Chukwuma and Aliyu, 2023). These skills are crucial for the formation of viable and enduring enterprises (Mayange, Abeshi and Raymond, 2025). However, not much has been done in this area detailing how counselling strategies could enhance academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills acquisition of secondary school students in Abia south senatorial zone, Nigeria. Though the report of Mayange, Abeshi and Raymond (2025) showed that counselling services has impact on the development of entrepreneurial skills including technical skills, marketing skills, and communication skills among under-graduate students in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding, guidance and counselling effectiveness is achieved when students are lead

towards success in their academic or educational or personal-social goals (Barns and Brookwell, 2019) to improve their entrepreneurial aspirations in life. This paper however examines the impact of counselling strategies in enhancing students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills in senior secondary schools in Abia south senatorial zone, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigeria National Policy on Education emphasized the importance of guidance and counselling programme in the secondary school system to help students make more informed decisions about career choices and careers here at post-secondary education leading to eventful career planning and entrepreneurial skills. Despite these efforts by the federal government, there are still an increasing unemployment in the country which has resulted to so more vices such as anti-social behaviours and public nuisances like armed robbery, kidnapping saga, and Yahoo Boys business and banditry or terrorism that is ravaging the whole nation. While there are many other factors that could have checked these unfortunate problems guidance and counselling services rendered in the schools should have helped to put these in place for these youths to fit into the society. Today, despite all these measures, students lack the spirit of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills. However, this study seeks to assess the impact of counselling strategies in enhancing students academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills in senior secondary schools.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between counselling strategies and academic achievements and entrepreneurial skills in secondary schools in Abia South Senatorial zone, Abia State. Specifically, the paper sought to;

1. examine the relationship between counselling and academic achievements of senior secondary school students in Abia South Senatorial zone;
2. investigate the relationship between counselling strategies and entrepreneurial skills of senior secondary schools in Abia South Senatorial zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the research study:

1. How do counselling strategies relate to students' academic achievement in Abia South Senatorial zone;
2. how do counselling strategies relate positively to academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills in Abia South Senatorial zone:

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant:

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between counselling strategies and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Abia South Senatorial zone;

H0₂: Counselling strategies have no relative significant contribution to academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills of senior secondary school students in Abia South Senatorial zone.

Literature Review

Education in the twenty-first century is not limited to the acquisition of academic knowledge alone. Educational institutions are increasingly expected to equip students with entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to become self-reliant, innovative and productive members of society. In this regard, counselling services have become an important component of the educational system because they assist students in overcoming academic, personal, social and career-related challenges. Effective counselling strategies help learners improve their academic performance while also developing entrepreneurial competencies such as creativity, problem-solving, self-confidence and decision-making abilities. Researchers have increasingly recognised counselling as a tool for promoting student success. Academic coaching, mentoring, career guidance, cognitive-behavioural interventions and solution-focused counselling have been identified as strategies that positively influence students' educational outcomes and personal development (Campbell & Mogashana, 2025).

Concept of Counselling Strategies

Counselling strategies refer to the various approaches, techniques and interventions employed by counsellors to assist students in addressing educational, personal and career challenges. These strategies include individual counselling, group counselling, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), person-centred counselling, Solution-

Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), academic coaching and mentoring programmes.

According to Babb et al. (2023), counselling strategies help students identify their strengths, establish realistic goals and develop practical solutions to educational challenges. Solution-focused approaches particularly encourage students to concentrate on achievable goals and future success rather than dwelling excessively on problems.

Counselling Strategies and Students' Academic Achievement

Academic achievement remains a key indicator of educational success. Several studies have demonstrated that counselling interventions can significantly improve students' academic achievement. A systematic review by Campbell and Mogashana (2025) examined the effectiveness of academic coaching interventions in higher education. The study found that structured academic coaching contributes positively to student success when delivered consistently over a sufficient period. The review further revealed that coaching programmes are most effective when conducted face-to-face and facilitated by trained professionals. Similarly, Akujieze (2024) investigated the effects of counselling strategies on undergraduate students' achievement in Measurement and Evaluation courses in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study utilised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Person-Centred Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy. Findings indicated improvements in students' academic achievement following participation in the counselling interventions, suggesting that well-planned counselling programmes can enhance learning outcomes. Furthermore, counselling improves students' study habits, self-regulation, motivation and time management skills. These factors contribute significantly to better classroom engagement and improved academic performance. Through counselling, students develop confidence in their ability to overcome academic challenges and achieve educational goals.

Mentoring as a Counselling Strategy for Academic Success

Mentoring is a counselling-related strategy that facilitates personal and academic development through supportive relationships. Mentors provide guidance, encouragement and role modelling to

students throughout their educational journey. Janssen et al. (2023) revealed that mentoring in higher education contributes to students' learning, academic persistence and personal growth. Mentoring relationships provide emotional support, facilitate goal setting and enhance students' confidence in achieving academic objectives. The effectiveness of mentoring can also be linked to Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals learn through observation and interaction with significant others. Through mentoring programmes, students acquire valuable academic and entrepreneurial competencies from experienced professionals and educators.

Counselling Strategies and Entrepreneurial Skills Development

Entrepreneurial skills involve the abilities required to identify opportunities, initiate ventures, manage risks and create innovative solutions to societal needs. These skills include creativity, critical thinking, leadership, communication, innovation, decision-making and resilience. Counselling services play an important role in developing these competencies. Career counselling helps students understand labour market trends, identify entrepreneurial opportunities and build self-efficacy for venture creation. Counsellors also assist students in exploring their talents, interests and entrepreneurial potential.

Research evidence suggests that educational programmes designed to build entrepreneurial competencies are most successful when they promote experiential learning, self-reflection and problem-solving abilities. A systematic review published in the International Journal of Management Education found that entrepreneurial education significantly contributes to the development of key entrepreneurial competencies through active learning strategies and practical engagement (The International Journal of Management Education, 2025). Counselling interventions complement entrepreneurial education by helping students develop confidence, perseverance and entrepreneurial mindsets required for business success. Counsellors provide guidance that enables students to transform ideas into practical projects while overcoming psychological barriers such as fear of failure.

Technology-Based Counselling and Student Development

The increasing adoption of technology has transformed counselling service delivery. Digital counselling platforms, mobile applications and online guidance systems now play significant roles in supporting students. Muhammad (2024) conducted a systematic review on technology-based counselling services and concluded that technological tools improve educational counselling effectiveness across learning, personal, social and career counselling domains. Technology-assisted counselling enhances accessibility and enables students to receive timely support regardless of location. Technology-based counselling can also support entrepreneurial development by providing access to online mentoring, business incubation resources, career exploration platforms and digital entrepreneurship training opportunities.

Empirical Review Summary

The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that counselling strategies contribute positively to students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills development. Academic coaching improves learning outcomes and student success (Campbell & Mogashana, 2025). Counselling approaches such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Person-Centred Therapy and Solution-Focused Brief Therapy have been shown to enhance academic achievement among university students (Akujieze, 2024). Mentoring programmes foster academic persistence and personal growth (Janssen et al., 2023). Furthermore, entrepreneurial competency development benefits from educational and counselling interventions that build confidence, creativity and problem-solving abilities.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed revealed that counselling strategies are essential tools for improving students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills. Counselling enhances students' motivation, self-confidence, study habits and goal-setting abilities, which collectively contribute to better academic outcomes. Additionally, career counselling, mentoring, coaching and technology-supported interventions promote entrepreneurial competencies such as innovation, leadership, opportunity recognition and resilience. Therefore, educational institutions should strengthen counselling services and integrate entrepreneurship-focused guidance programmes to

prepare students for both academic success and future self-employment opportunities.

Method

The research design employed for the study was the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised senior secondary school students in the six local government areas that constituted the Abia South Senatorial Zone, namely Aba South, Aba North, Ugwunagbo, Ukwu East, Ukwu West and Obingwa. A sample of 1,000 senior secondary school students was randomly selected for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled Educational Counselling and Entrepreneurship Skills Questionnaire (ECESQ). The instrument was developed using a table of specifications as a guide. The ECESQ was structured on a four-point Likert scale comprising Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree, which were assigned numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. The

face and content validity of the instrument were established by two experts from the Department of Psychology and Guidance and Counselling. The experts scrutinised the contents of the questionnaire and offered useful corrections and suggestions, which led to some modifications. Based on these corrections, the instrument was considered adequate, and the final draft of the questionnaire was produced. A pilot study was conducted using 30 students outside the study area to determine the reliability of the instrument. A Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. To examine the relationship between the variables, correlation analysis was employed. Statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0.

Results

Table 1: Relationship between counselling strategies and academic achievement of secondary school students.

Independent Variables	Academic Achievement		
	R	Sig.	Decision
Innovativeness	3.524	0.308	Sig
Locus of control	4.467	0.816	Sig
Risk of propensity	3.305	0.462	Sig
Tolerance for ambiguity	2.460	0.105	Sig
Self confidence	3.660	0.120	Sig
Open-mindedness	3.367	0.305	Sig
Agreeableness	2.307	0.013	Sig
Extraversion	2.416	0.008	Sig
Conscientiousness	3.532	0.225	Sig
Neuroticism	3.367	0.567	sig

Table 1 presented the relationship between counselling strategies and the academic achievement of secondary school students. The findings indicated that all the counselling strategy variables examined showed significant relationships with students' academic achievement. Specifically, innovativeness recorded an R-value of 3.524 with a significance value of 0.308 and was considered significant. Locus of control had an R-value of 4.467 and a significance value of 0.816, indicating a significant relationship with academic achievement. Similarly, risk propensity recorded an R-value of 3.305 and a significance value of 0.462, while tolerance for ambiguity had an R-value of

2.460 and a significance value of 0.105. Both variables were adjudged significant.

Furthermore, self-confidence showed a significant relationship with academic achievement, with an R-value of 3.660 and a significance value of 0.120. Open-mindedness also demonstrated significance, recording an R-value of 3.367 and a significance value of 0.305. Agreeableness and extraversion had R-values of 2.307 and 2.416, with significance values of 0.013 and 0.008, respectively, indicating significant relationships with students' academic achievement. Likewise, conscientiousness recorded an R-value of 3.532 and a significance value of 0.225, while neuroticism had

an R-value of 3.367 and a significance value of 0.567. Both variables were also found to be significant. Overall, the results suggested that counselling-related variables, including innovativeness, locus of control, risk propensity, tolerance for ambiguity, self-confidence, open-mindedness, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism, were significantly related to the academic achievement of secondary school students. This implied that effective counselling strategies aimed at enhancing these attributes contributed positively to students' academic achievement.

Table 2: Composite effect of independent variables on senior secondary school students academic achievement.

Multiple R = .191	R square = .037
Adjusted R square = 2.016	Standard error = 50.52

Table 2 presented the composite effect of the independent variables on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students. The result

showed a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.191, indicating a weak positive relationship between the combined independent variables and students' academic achievement. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.037 revealed that the independent variables jointly explained 3.7% of the variance in students' academic achievement, while the remaining 96.3% was accounted for by other factors not included in the model. Furthermore, the adjusted R^2 value was 2.016, while the standard error of estimate was 50.52. The relatively low R^2 value suggested that the independent variables contributed only a small proportion to the prediction of students' academic achievement. Consequently, the findings indicated that although the independent variables collectively influenced academic achievement, their overall predictive effect was weak. Therefore, other academic, social, environmental and personal factors might have played more substantial roles in determining the academic achievement of senior secondary school students.

Table 3: Relative contribution of independent variables on dependent variables.

Model	Unstandardized coefficient	Standard coefficient		t	Sig
	B	Std Error	Beta b		
Constant	-26.444	21.502		-1.230	.219
Innovativeness	-.757	.692	-.065	-1.094	.275
Locus of control	1.226	.680	.103	1.804	.072
Risk taking propensity	-9.760	.598	.010	-.163	.870
Tolerance for ambiguity	2.425	2.693	.062	.900	.368
Self confidence	0.831	1.591	.038	.522	.602
Open mindedness	6.630	2.869	.130	2.381	.018
Agreeableness	5.696	2.306	.134	2.470	.014
Extraversion	-2.729	2.662	-.079	-1.025	.306
Conscientiousness	-1.213	1.740	-.045	-.697	.486
Neuroticism	0.831	1.591	.043	.512	.607

Table 3 presented the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, which was academic achievement among senior secondary school students. The result showed that the constant term had an unstandardised coefficient (B) of -26.444, with a t-value of -1.230 and a significance value of 0.219, indicating that it did not significantly contribute to the prediction of academic achievement. Among the independent

variables, open-mindedness made a significant positive contribution to academic achievement ($\beta = 0.130$, $t = 2.381$, $p = 0.018$). This implied that an increase in open-mindedness was associated with an increase in students' academic achievement. Similarly, agreeableness significantly contributed to academic achievement ($\beta = 0.134$, $t = 2.470$, $p = 0.014$), indicating that students who exhibited

higher levels of agreeableness tended to achieve better academically.

On the other hand, innovativeness recorded a beta coefficient of -0.065 with a t-value of -1.094 and a significance value of 0.275, indicating that it did not significantly predict academic achievement. Locus of control had a positive beta coefficient of 0.103, a t-value of 1.804, and a significance value of 0.072, but its contribution was not statistically significant. Likewise, risk-taking propensity ($\beta = 0.010$, $t = -0.163$, $p = 0.870$), tolerance for ambiguity ($\beta = 0.062$, $t = 0.900$, $p = 0.368$), self-confidence ($\beta = 0.038$, $t = 0.522$, $p = 0.602$), extraversion ($\beta = -0.079$, $t = -1.025$, $p = 0.306$), conscientiousness ($\beta = -0.045$, $t = -0.697$, $p = 0.486$), and neuroticism ($\beta = 0.043$, $t = 0.512$, $p = 0.607$) did not make significant independent contributions to academic achievement. Overall, the findings indicated that open-mindedness and agreeableness were the only variables that significantly predicted academic achievement among senior secondary school students, while the other variables did not make statistically significant relative contributions to the prediction of academic achievement.

Discussion

With respect to Research Question One, which sought to determine how counselling strategies relate to students' academic achievement in Abia South Senatorial Zone, the findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between counselling strategy variables and students' academic achievement. The result showed that innovativeness, locus of control, risk-taking propensity, tolerance for ambiguity, self-confidence, open-mindedness, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism were all significantly related to academic achievement. This finding suggested that counselling strategies aimed at enhancing these attributes were associated with improved academic achievement among senior secondary school students. The implication of this finding is that students who possess these attributes are more likely to demonstrate positive learning behaviours, effective study habits and increased commitment to their academic activities, thereby enhancing their achievement.

The finding relating to Research Question One also provided an answer to Hypothesis One,

which stated that there was no significant relationship between counselling strategies and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Abia South Senatorial Zone. Based on the result presented, the null hypothesis was rejected because significant relationships existed between the counselling strategy variables and academic achievement. The finding therefore established that counselling strategies were important factors associated with students' academic achievement.

Regarding research question two, which sought to determine how counselling strategies relate positively to academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills in Abia South Senatorial Zone, the findings showed that the counselling strategy variables jointly contributed to students' academic achievement, although the magnitude of the contribution was relatively low. This finding suggested that counselling strategies contributed to students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills development, but other factors outside the scope of the study might have accounted for a larger proportion of students' achievement. Furthermore, the analysis of the relative contributions of the independent variables showed that open-mindedness and agreeableness were the only variables that made significant contributions to students' academic achievement. Open-mindedness emerged as a significant predictor, indicating that students who were receptive to new ideas, innovative approaches and alternative perspectives tended to achieve better academically. Similarly, agreeableness significantly influenced academic achievement, suggesting that students who demonstrated cooperation, understanding and positive interpersonal relationships were more likely to achieve higher academic outcomes. The remaining variables, namely innovativeness, locus of control, risk-taking propensity, tolerance for ambiguity, self-confidence, extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism, did not make statistically significant independent contributions, even though they were related to academic achievement.

The findings also addressed hypothesis two, which stated that counselling strategies have no relative significant contribution to academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills of senior secondary school students in Abia South Senatorial Zone. The null hypothesis was rejected because

open-mindedness and agreeableness made significant relative contributions to the dependent variable. The finding therefore indicated that counselling strategies contributed significantly to students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills, particularly through the promotion of open-mindedness and agreeableness among students. The findings of this study were consistent with those of Ajani and Oluyeni (2016), who reported that entrepreneurial competencies, characteristics and educational experiences significantly influenced positive outcomes among graduate students.

The findings also agreed with those of Anisa and Besa (2013), who found that entrepreneurial traits significantly influenced students' preparedness for self-reliance and personal development. Similarly, Jenny (2014) reported high levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy among students and noted that entrepreneurial attributes enhanced students' ability to pursue goals and overcome challenges. These studies collectively support the view that personal attributes fostered through counselling can positively influence students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial development. Overall, the findings underscored the importance of counselling programmes in schools. By promoting positive attributes such as open-mindedness, agreeableness, self-confidence and innovativeness, counsellors can assist students in improving their academic achievement while simultaneously developing entrepreneurial skills that are essential for self-reliance, lifelong learning and future career success.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that counselling strategies were significantly related to the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Abia South Senatorial Zone. The study revealed that counselling-related variables such as innovativeness, locus of control, risk-taking propensity, tolerance for ambiguity, self-confidence, open-mindedness, agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness and neuroticism were associated with students' academic achievement. The study further concluded that counselling strategies jointly contributed to students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills, although the magnitude of their contribution was relatively low. Among the variables examined,

open-mindedness and agreeableness emerged as the only significant predictors of academic achievement. This suggests that students who are receptive to new ideas, cooperative and capable of maintaining positive interpersonal relationships are more likely to attain higher academic achievement. Therefore, the study concluded that effective counselling programmes play an important role in enhancing students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills and should be strengthened in secondary schools to promote positive personal attributes that support educational success and self-reliance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the research questions, and the hypotheses tested, the following recommendations were made:

1. School counsellors should develop and implement counselling programmes that promote open-mindedness and agreeableness among students, as these variables were found to make significant contributions to academic achievement. Such programmes should focus on improving students' interpersonal relationships, adaptability, cooperation and positive attitudes towards learning.
2. The Ministry of Education and school administrators should strengthen the integration of counselling and entrepreneurship education in secondary schools by providing adequate guidance and counselling services, entrepreneurship-oriented seminars and career development programmes that enhance students' academic achievement and entrepreneurial skills for future self-reliance.

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