

Counselling Approaches for Skills Acquisition among Adolescents in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51584/IJRIAS.2025.100600121>

Received: 26 May 2025; Revised: 10 June 2025; Accepted: 14 June 2025; Published: 18 July 2025

ABSTRACT

Effective counseling approaches for skills acquisition among adolescents are essential for equipping adolescents with practical skills needed for self-reliance and productivity. But socio-economic challenges in our society are increasingly multiplied in the form of low productivity, low self-reliance, high unemployment rate, high crime rate, societal unrest and other social vices among our youths due to inadequate knowledge gap on counselling approaches on skill acquisition. Thus, this paper seeks to investigate the relationship between counselling approaches like career counselling, vocational training, life skill development, and personal development; and skill acquisition in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State. This paper adopted a survey design using a sample of 120 secondary school students in Yenagoa metropolis. The study also adopted Spearman Correlation Coefficient data analyses techniques at 0.05 significance levels with the aid of SPSS software version 23. The result revealed that, career counselling approach, vocational training counselling approach, life skill education counselling approach and personal development approach are all positively, strongly and significantly related to skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. The study therefore recommended that; school leadership should collaborate with counsellors to engage her pupils and students on career counselling to encourage skill acquisition among adolescents, schools should incorporate vocational training in to its curriculum, create time for pep talks on life skill education with pupils/students, and school should inform its pupils and students of the importance of personal development counselling.

Keywords: Career counselling, vocational training, life skill development, personal development; and skill acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

Education is more than just a classroom experience; it is the key that unlocks a world of opportunities. It equips young minds with the tools to navigate life's complexities, shape their futures, and contribute meaningfully to society. Beyond textbooks, education fosters critical thinking, ignites curiosity, and cultivates essential life skills such as communication, problem-solving, self-reliance, and collaboration. These competencies are increasingly recognised as crucial for success in both personal and professional spheres (Morin, 2021). Despite the active corridors of educational institutions, many young people still face significant challenges. High unemployment rates, rising crime, and social unrest are pressing issues that suggest our current educational system may not be fully meeting the needs of today's youth (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

While traditional academic paths are valuable, there is a growing recognition of the importance of vocational training. This form of education emphasises practical skills that directly apply to real-World jobs, thereby preparing students for successful careers and empowering them to contribute productively to their communities. In Bayelsa State, Nigeria, where youth unemployment is high and economic opportunities are limited, vocational education has the potential to be transformative. By equipping young people with technical and trade skills, vocational training can help break the cycle of poverty and reduce dependence on government jobs, which are often limited and difficult to access (Ogunyemi, 2023). As more stakeholders acknowledge the

role of skills-based learning in economic development, vocational education emerges as a powerful tool for societal progress.

Without access to skill development, many adolescents may face limited employment prospects, which in turn lead to continuous elevated levels of unemployment and underemployment. This lack of economic engagement perpetuates cycles of poverty and widens social inequality. In societies where youth are not trained to be self-reliant, economic deprivation becomes a persistent challenge, as governments alone cannot provide jobs for every citizen. This vulnerability often results in harmful coping mechanisms, including involvement in crime or substance abuse. Empirical studies have established a strong correlation between youth unemployment and increased participation in criminal activities, stressing the urgent need for effective vocational training and structured support systems for adolescents (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

Effective counselling strategies are crucial for enabling adolescents to develop both personally and professionally. These strategies include career counselling, vocational training, life skills education, and personal development initiatives. Career counselling supports students in identifying their strengths, exploring viable career paths, and setting attainable goals. It also offers critical insights into the skill requirements and educational pathways needed to achieve those goals, thereby allowing adolescents to make informed decisions about their futures (Nguyen et al., 2021). Vocational training delivers hands-on experience in specific trades, bridging the persistent gap between academic instruction and practical employment. Research has demonstrated that such training programmes result in improved career outcomes, including higher employment rates and better income levels (Nguyen et al., 2021). Life skills education is equally vital, focusing on competencies like decision-making, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication—skills that are indispensable for managing the challenges of adulthood. Furthermore, personal development initiatives promote self-reflection, goal setting, and resilience. Studies suggest that adolescents with a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to pursue learning proactively and persist through difficulties, thereby enhancing their overall life trajectories (Brown & Lee, 2024). When these counselling approaches are integrated effectively, they create a comprehensive support system that empowers young people to acquire and apply critical life and work skills, fostering both individual success and societal stability.

However, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding how specific counselling approaches are associated with different types of skills despite the growing awareness of skill acquisition. Thus, this paper seeks to investigate the relationship between counselling approaches like career counselling, vocational training, life skill development, and personal development; and skill acquisition in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between counselling approaches for skills acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State. While specific objectives include to:

- i. Examine the relationship between career counselling approach and skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.
- ii. Determine the relationship between vocational training counseling approach and skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.
- iii. Examine the relationship between life skill education counseling approach and skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.
- iv. Determine the relationship between personal development counseling approach and skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, was developed in 1986, which emphasises that people learn through observing others, practising skills, and reflecting on their actions. Bandura's theory remains highly relevant today, with recent research reinforcing its application in education and skill development (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2020). Counselling approaches such as career guidance,

vocational training, life skills education, and personal development fit well within this framework because they provide adolescents with role models, hands-on experiences, and opportunities to build self-confidence. These elements promote self-efficacy, a core concept in the theory, which helps young people set goals, regulate their behaviour, and persist through challenges. Applying Social Cognitive Theory explains how counselling supports adolescents in Yenagoa to acquire essential skills by interacting with their environment and personal beliefs.

Empirical Literature

Nguyen and Patel (2023) explored peer influence on decision-making and communication skills in 350 Singaporean adolescents using social network analysis and thematic qualitative analysis. Peer network centrality correlated positively with communication skill scores ($r = .37, p < .01$), and qualitative themes revealed both supportive and pressuring peer effects. Adolescents with high peer support scored on average 10% higher on decision-making scales.

Mbatha and Sibanda (2023) conducted a quantitative study on socioeconomic disparities and access to skill development programmes among 500 adolescents in Zimbabwe. Using logistic regression, the study found that low SES adolescents were 2.5 times less likely to participate in skill-building programmes ($OR = 0.40, 95\% CI [0.27, 0.59], p < .001$). The study highlighted the need for policies to address inequalities.

Mbeki and Nkosi (2022) studied community mentorship effects on 250 South African adolescents' life skills using content analysis and descriptive statistics. Mentored adolescents scored 18% higher on communication and problem-solving assessments compared to non-mentored peers (mean difference = 4.5, $p < .01$). The study concluded mentorship improves key life skills.

Lopez and Garcia (2022) investigated the impact of technology use on cognitive skills in 600 Spanish adolescents through a mixed-method longitudinal design. Quantitative data analysed with ANOVA showed that moderate technology users scored 20% higher on problem-solving tests compared to low users ($F(2,597) = 6.45, p = .002$), but heavy users performed 12% worse on attention tasks. Qualitative interviews supported the need for balanced technology use to promote cognitive development.

Chukwu and Nwankwo (2022) explored the impact of vocational education on self-reliance and employability skills among 400 youths in Enugu State, Nigeria. Using paired sample t-tests, results showed a 35% increase in employability skills post-training ($t(399) = 10.02, p < .001$). Participants reported improved technical skills and confidence. The study affirmed vocational education's critical role in reducing unemployment.

Smith and Brown (2021) studied the effect of sports participation on social and leadership skills among 450 UK adolescents aged 13-17. Using multiple regression analysis, they found a significant positive relationship between sports involvement and social skills ($\beta = 0.42, p < .001$), and leadership skills ($\beta = 0.35, p < .001$). Their results indicate that adolescents engaged in sports scored on average 15% higher on social skill measures than non-participants. The study concluded that sports play a vital role in adolescent skill development.

Owolabi and Adeoye (2021) researched vocational training's impact on employability skills among 400 Nigerian youths using paired t-tests and thematic analysis. Post-training employability scores increased by 30% on average ($t(399) = 9.21, p < .001$). Qualitative data highlighted improved self-confidence and practical skill acquisition. The study emphasised vocational training's importance for reducing youth unemployment.

Adeyemi and Moyo (2021) investigated the influence of school counselling services on career readiness and skill acquisition among 350 secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria. Using structural equation modelling (SEM), the study found that counselling services had a strong positive effect on career readiness ($\beta = 0.56, p < .001$) and skill acquisition ($\beta = 0.48, p < .001$). The model explained 45% of variance in skill acquisition. The researchers concluded that effective counselling significantly enhances adolescent skill development.

Wang et al. (2020) examined parenting styles' effects on adolescent skills in 800 Chinese adolescents using

Pearson's correlation and multiple regression. Authoritative parenting showed a strong positive correlation with academic skills ($r = .48, p < .001$) and social skills ($r = .40, p < .001$). Regression analysis confirmed authoritative parenting predicted 22% of variance in skill acquisition ($R^2 = 0.22, p < .001$). Conversely, authoritarian and permissive styles had weaker or negative effects. The study concluded parenting style influences adolescent development.

Kamau and Wambua (2020) analysed socioeconomic status effects on skill acquisition in 600 Kenyan adolescents using hierarchical linear modelling. Higher SES was significantly linked to better skill acquisition, explaining 28% of variance ($p < .001$). Lower SES adolescents scored on average 25% lower on educational attainment and extracurricular participation. The study recommended addressing inequality.

Dlamini and Naidoo (2020) studied the role of peer mentoring in enhancing decision-making and problem-solving skills among 280 adolescents in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Data analysed using mixed ANOVA indicated significant skill improvements in the mentored group compared to controls ($F(1,278) = 15.67, p < .001$), with effect sizes (η^2) of 0.12. The study concluded that peer mentoring effectively develops critical life skills.

Adebayo and Okafor (2020) evaluated the effect of life skills education on emotional regulation and communication skills in 320 Nigerian adolescents from Ondo State. Using pre-post intervention analysis with paired t-tests, participants showed a 22% improvement in emotional regulation scores ($t(319) = 6.45, p < .001$) and a 19% increase in communication skills ($t(319) = 5.78, p < .001$). The study recommended integrating life skills education into curricula.

Literature Gap

Most studies show factors influencing adolescent skill development, but there is limited research on how counselling approaches affect skills acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State. This gap highlights the need for focused studies to understand counselling's role in enhancing youth skills in this specific Nigerian context.

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a survey design to achieve the objectives of the study, using a sample of 120 secondary school students in Yenagoa metropolis, as such 120 questionnaires were distributed to the participants. The study also adopted Spearman Correlation Coefficient data analyses techniques at 0.05 significance levels with the aid of SPSS software version 23. Choosing these techniques would enable the researcher to achieve the purpose of the study.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations in this study include obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and how their data would be used. The study also respected cultural sensitivities and followed ethical guidelines to avoid any harm or discomfort. Approval was sought from relevant school authorities and ethics committees to ensure compliance with standard ethical practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data of this study was analyzed using Spearman Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 levels of significance.

Table4.1: Spearman Correlation Results of Career Counselling, Vocational Training, Life Skill Development, and personal development, and skill Acquisition in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State.

Variables	Skill Acquisition (Spearman Correlation Coefficient)	(P-value)	Sig. Status
Career Counselling	+ 0.883	(0.000)	(significant)

Vocational Training	+0.951	(0.000)	(significant)
Life Skill Education	+0.979	(0.000)	(significant)
Personal Development	+0.784	(0.000)	(significant)

Source: Researcher's Computation.

The results from the above Table1, indicated that; career counselling approach, vocational training counselling approach, life skill education counselling approach and personal development approach are all positively, strongly and significantly related to skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State as the p-values (0.000) are less than 0.05 levels of significance.

DISCUSION OF FINDINGS

Career Counselling And Skill Acquisition

From the findings, it is indicated that career counselling approach is positive (+0.883) and significantly related to skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. This means that, increase in career counseling would bring a proportionate increase of skill acquisition among adolescents by 88.3%. Career counseling promotes self-awareness, providing guidance on skill requirements and assisting adolescents with goal setting, and supporting informed decision-making that could aid them to a successful career skill development. This aligns with Adeyemi and Moyo (2021), who found that school counselling services significantly enhance career readiness and skill development, explaining 45% of the variance in outcomes. Career counselling fosters goal-setting and informed decision-making, similar to findings by Nguyen and Patel (2023), where peer support improved adolescents' decision-making skills. This suggests that both structured counselling and supportive social environments are critical. Wang et al. (2020) also highlight how authoritative guidance—like that in career counselling—supports academic and personal skill growth in adolescents.

Vocational Training Counselling and Skill Acquisition

The findings of this study indicated that, vocational training counselling approach is positively (+0.951) and significantly related to skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. When counsellors often collaborate with schools to provide counsels on vocational training to adolescents, it would provide hands-on experience skills on them in fields like information technology, automotive repair, or culinary arts, and that would in turn increase their level of employability and self-reliance as they grow up with it. This finding supports Chukwu and Nwankwo (2022), who observed a 35% increase in employability skills after vocational education in Enugu. Similarly, Owolabi and Adeoye (2021) recorded a 30% improvement post-training among Nigerian youths. These studies affirm that hands-on vocational exposure—guided by counsellors—builds confidence, technical proficiency, and self-reliance. Additionally, Smith and Brown (2021) demonstrated that structured activities like sports also promote leadership and social skills, reinforcing the value of experiential learning environments. Such programmes are especially vital in regions aiming to reduce youth unemployment.

Life Skill Education Counselling and Skill Acquisition

From the finding of this study, life skill education counselling approach also has a positive (+0.979), strong and significant relationship with skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. Meaning that, this counselling approach would enable adolescents to acquire range of skills necessary for effective personal and social functioning; like problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, and emotional regulation skills that could significantly impact adolescents' overall development and well-being. This mirrors findings by Adebayo and Okafor (2020), where life skills education improved emotional regulation by 22% and communication skills by 19%. Mbeki and Nkosi (2022) also found that mentored adolescents scored 18% higher in problem-solving and communication, underlining the power of life skill-focused interventions. Dlamini and Naidoo (2020) further confirmed the role of peer mentoring in enhancing decision-making skills. Collectively, these studies underscore that life skills education—when incorporated

into counselling—builds essential cognitive and interpersonal capacities, supporting adolescent well-being and long-term social and academic success.

Personal Development Counselling and Skill Acquisition

From the finding of this study, personal development counselling approach is also positively (+0.784) and significantly related to skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa. Personal development counselling approach enables counsellors to encourage adolescents to acquire skills through setting of goals, reflecting on their progress, and seeking feedback, tend to develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy. This aligns with Wang et al. (2020), who showed that authoritative parenting—which similarly fosters self-efficacy—positively correlates with skill acquisition. Nguyen and Patel (2023) also emphasize that peer network quality influences communication and decision-making skills, reinforcing the idea that internal and external self-development resources matter. However, studies by Kamau and Wambua (2020) and Mbatha and Sibanda (2023) reveal that socioeconomic disparities can limit access to such developmental opportunities. This highlights the importance of making personal development counselling universally accessible, especially for low-SES youth.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that; counselling approaches – career counselling, vocational training, life skill education and personal development have significantly associated with skill acquisition among adolescents in Yenagoa, Bayelsa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- i. School leadership should collaborate with counsellors to engage her pupils and students on career counselling to encourage skill acquisition among adolescents.
- ii. Schools should incorporate vocational training in to its curriculum.
- iii. Create time for pep talks on life skill education in schools.
- iv. School should inform its pupils and students of the importance of personal development counselling.

Limitation of the Study

This study was limited by its small sample size, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-reported data, which may affect generalizability and accuracy. It also did not consider socioeconomic factors or external influences like parental support, which are known to impact adolescents' access to counselling and skill development opportunities. But with al these limitations the outcomes of this study are not affected.

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