



**Role of Educational Counselling in Enhancing Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Rivers State Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the role of educational counselling in enhancing the academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three objectives and three research questions Using Carl Rogers' Person-Centered Theory (1951) as a theoretical framework, the study explores how counselling improves students' study habits, motivation, and problem-solving strategies. A descriptive survey research design was employed, with a sample size of 382 respondents selected from four secondary schools in Port Harcourt City. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using simple percentage methods with a 4-point Likert scale. The findings reveal that educational counselling significantly enhances academic performance, career decision-making, and emotional well-being. However, its effectiveness is hindered by challenges such as a shortage of trained counsellors, inadequate funding, low student awareness, and the burden of heavy academic workloads. The study recommends integrating structured counselling programmes in schools, increasing investment in counselling services, and expanding counselling support for students' academic, career, and emotional development. Strengthening educational counselling frameworks will ultimately foster academic success, career readiness, and emotional resilience among secondary school students in Rivers State.*

**Keywords:** Academic Achievement, Career Guidance, Educational Counselling

**INTRODUCTION**

Educational counselling plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic trajectories of secondary school students by providing guidance, support, and motivation necessary for their academic success. The concept of educational counselling refers to the professional assistance given to students to help them understand and overcome academic, social, and psychological barriers that may hinder their educational progress. Historically, educational counselling has evolved from a rudimentary system of advice-giving to a structured and professional discipline. Its roots can be traced back to the early 20th century when vocational guidance emerged as a response to the increasing complexity of career choices due to industrialisation (Super, 1957).

Over time, educational counselling expanded beyond career guidance to encompass psychological support, personal development, and academic assistance. The recognition of the psychological aspects of learning led to the integration of educational psychology into counselling practices, allowing a more holistic approach to student development (Shertzer & Stone, 1976). Today, educational counselling is an essential component of secondary education, with trained counsellors providing tailored guidance to students facing academic challenges. The importance of educational counselling cannot be overstated as it contributes significantly to students' academic achievement and overall well-being. Secondary school students often encounter various challenges, including learning difficulties, lack of motivation, poor study habits, and emotional distress, all of which can negatively impact their academic performance (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 2017).

Educational counselling helps to address these issues by equipping students with effective learning strategies, time management skills, and coping mechanisms. Counsellors also provide interventions for students struggling with self-esteem, anxiety, and peer pressure, ensuring they maintain focus and

confidence in their academic pursuits (Baker & Gerler, 2014). One of the key advantages of educational counselling is its ability to provide personalised academic support tailored to the unique needs of each student. Through individual or group sessions, counsellors assess students' strengths and weaknesses, identify learning gaps, and offer practical solutions to enhance their academic performance. For instance, students who struggle with specific subjects can receive targeted assistance, such as remedial teaching, study plans, or referral to subject specialists (Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2021). This personalised approach ensures that students receive the necessary guidance to excel academically.

Additionally, educational counselling fosters self-awareness and career development among students. Many secondary school students struggle with choosing career paths due to limited exposure to available opportunities or a lack of understanding of their interests and abilities. Counsellors provide career assessments, aptitude tests, and vocational guidance to help students align their academic goals with future aspirations. This proactive support minimises career indecision and enhances students' motivation to excel in their studies, as they can clearly see the link between their academic performance and future success (Gati & Amir, 2020). Another significant benefit of educational counselling is its impact on students' mental health and emotional well-being. Academic pressures, parental expectations, and peer competition often lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout among students, which can adversely affect their academic performance. Counsellors serve as a source of emotional support by helping students manage stress, build resilience, and develop healthy coping mechanisms. Studies have shown that students who receive counselling support demonstrate higher levels of emotional stability, self-confidence, and academic engagement, which contribute to improved performance in school (Sink & Stroh, 2023). Furthermore, educational counselling enhances parental involvement in students' academic journeys. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's attitudes towards education, and counsellors act as intermediaries by providing parents with valuable insights into their children's academic progress, strengths, and areas that require improvement (Bryan & Henry, 2022). Through workshops, consultations, and guidance sessions, counsellors equip parents with strategies to support their children's learning at home, creating a more conducive environment for academic success.

The role of educational counselling in enhancing academic achievement extends beyond individual student support to fostering a positive school environment. Schools that integrate comprehensive counselling programmes experience lower dropout rates, improved student discipline, and higher academic performance across all levels (Carey & Martin, 2015). Counsellors collaborate with teachers, administrators, and support staff to create a learning environment that encourages student engagement, motivation, and resilience. They also provide training sessions for teachers on classroom management, student behaviour, and instructional strategies, ensuring that the entire school community contributes to students' academic success.

Moreover, educational counselling promotes inclusivity and equity in education by addressing the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties, and socio-economic disadvantages. Counsellors work closely with special education teachers, social workers, and psychologists to provide necessary accommodations and interventions for students who require additional support. By fostering an inclusive learning environment, educational counselling ensures that all students, regardless of their background or challenges, have equal opportunities to succeed academically (Thompson & Moffett, 2020). The essence of the study is to examine the effect of educational counselling in enhancing academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State Nigeria.

Educational counseling provides crucial, personalized guidance to help students navigate academic planning, career exploration, and personal development. Counselors assist with course selection, study skills, college applications, and emotional well-being to ensure students maximize their potential and overcome challenges. They also bridge the gap between academic goals, mental health, and future career success. These services are both preventative and remedial, aiming to help students adapt to their environment, succeed academically, and prepare for life after education.

Educational counseling is a personalized support service designed to guide students like you across your academic, career, and personal development paths throughout your higher education journey. Educational counselors use their expertise and resources to help you make informed decisions about your studies and future career. Counselors also help you overcome academic difficulties, identify potential career paths, and develop key skills.

### **The Importance of Education Counseling**

Educational counseling is essential to a student's academic experience, as it provides structured support to navigate the many challenges that arise throughout one's educational journey. At university, students often encounter pressure, uncertainty, and emotional stress that can affect their performance and well-being. Educational counseling offers the academic, emotional, and social support to manage these issues. Having access to professional guidance ensures that you are not left to manage difficulties alone and can create a more stable, supportive learning environment during your study abroad program (Carey & Martin, 2015).

Educational counseling is especially important for international students as they navigate not only the typical academic challenges every student faces, but also the adjustments that come with living and studying in a new country. International students may find it challenging to balance academics with the unique social and personal challenges that come with adapting to such an unfamiliar environment (Carey & Martin, 2015). Educational counselors are well-equipped to help you overcome hurdles such as different teaching styles, culture shock, homesickness, or language barriers.

### **The Benefits of Academic Counseling**

Educational counseling provides a wide range of benefits that can support you both inside the classroom and out (Sink & Stroh, 2023). By offering personalized guidance tailored to each student's needs and goals, educational counselors play a vital role in helping learners succeed academically, make informed career decisions, and develop essential life skills. Here are several reasons why choosing educational counseling can help you navigate challenges and reach your full potential.

#### **Personalized Study Plan**

Counselors can work closely with you to help create personalized study plans tailored to your individual learning style, strengths, and academic goals. They can help by assessing your current academic performance, recognizing areas of improvement, and identifying your preferred methods of learning. In working with a counselor, you'll likely become more organized and find that the learning process becomes more efficient and less overwhelming, which is especially valuable for international students adjusting to new academic environments. Counselors have lots of experience working with international students, and understand their educational backgrounds, language proficiency, and the cultural differences that may impact their learning (Sink & Stroh, 2023).

#### **Career Development Support**

With career development support, your counselor guides you through the lengthy and complicated process of exploring and preparing for future career paths. Career counselors can assess your interests and strengths through personality tests, professional assessments, and one-on-one sessions, and then help you make informed decisions about the degree programs and careers that best align with your goals and abilities. Educational counselors can also connect you with valuable career resources, such as internships, job shadowing, career fairs, and mentorship programs, giving you firsthand experience with various industries (Sink & Stroh, 2023).

Additionally, counselors can assist with developing your practical skills, like resume writing, interview preparation, and networking strategies, ensuring that you stand out to potential employers. By offering structured guidance and resources, educational counseling empowers you to make career decisions with confidence, giving you the tools you need for success in your chosen career.

#### **Emotional and Mental Support**

Educational counseling offers vital emotional and mental health support to international students as they adjust to life in a new country, which can be emotionally overwhelming at times. Counselors provide a safe, understanding space where international students can talk openly about stress, homesickness, or feelings of isolation. They can help you build emotional resilience, develop coping strategies, and improve self-esteem and social skills to better adjust to your new environment. Counselors can also connect students with further support when needed, such as campus wellness resources, self-care strategies, or external mental health services (Sink & Stroh, 2023).

### **When to Seek for Educational Counselor**

You should consider seeking educational counseling whenever you feel in need of guidance related to your academic journey, career choices, or personal well-being. This could include times when you are struggling to keep up with coursework, unsure about choosing a major, or facing challenges balancing studies with other responsibilities. International students, in particular, can benefit greatly from counseling when facing difficulties adjusting to a new education system or experiencing cultural or language barriers (Bryan & Henry, 2022). Knowing what you want to gain from counseling can help you make the most of your time. However, you don't need to wait until you are actively struggling. Seeking help early can prevent small issues from becoming larger problems. Working with a counselor can provide the clarity, support, and direction you need during critical moments throughout your higher education journey.

### **How to Choose the Right Education Counselor**

If you feel like you're ready to seek out educational counseling, then the next step is finding the right counselor. First, ask for recommendations on campus from trusted sources such as professors, instructors, or friends who have had positive experiences with educational counselors. Online research can also be helpful since you can explore directories or institutional websites to find qualified professionals in the area or those who specialize in the needs of international students (Bryan & Henry, 2022).

It is important that you consider your personal goals and challenges when selecting a counselor, as some may have expertise in areas that cater to your specific needs, like academic planning, career development, or emotional support. Finally, if possible, meet with multiple counselors, so you can determine whom you feel most comfortable with and who best understands your concerns and goals. In educational counselling, a trained professional helps individuals with academic or educational concerns. This may include assisting with career planning, study skills, goal setting and academic performance. If you are interested in this career, you may benefit from learning about the duties of educational counsellors and the requirements to work in this profession. In this article, we answer 'What is an educational counsellor?', explore their duties, review their skills, highlight their work environment and provide tips for pursuing this role (Bryan & Henry, 2022). If you are considering your career path and enjoy helping others, you might wonder 'What is an educational counsellor?'. They specialise in providing guidance and support to individuals seeking to improve their academic or educational outcomes. They typically work with students at all levels from elementary school to university, and sometimes with researchers and academics. Educational counsellors typically aim to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, set goals and develop strategies for achieving academic and professional success. In addition to helping students improve their academic performance, educational counsellors may provide career guidance (Bryan & Henry, 2022).

### **Key Roles of Educational Counselling:**

1. **Academic Guidance & Planning:** Helping students design customized academic plans, select appropriate courses, and overcome learning difficulties.
2. **Career Exploration & Development:** Assisting students in identifying career paths that match their interests, skills, and market trends, including resume writing and interview preparation.
3. **Personal & Emotional Support:** Providing a safe space to address academic stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and personal hurdles that affect performance.
4. **College and Admissions Support:** Guiding students through the complexities of university applications, including, essays, and finding suitable institutions.
5. **Skill Development:** Fostering essential life skills, such as time management, decision-making, and critical thinking.
6. **Goal Setting:** Assisting students in setting realistic academic and personal goals, helping them understand their strengths and weaknesses.
7. **Collaboration & Support Services:** Working with parents, teachers, and administrators to support the overall well-being and development of the student.

### **Duties and Responsibilities of an Educational Counsellor**

Here are some duties of educational counsellors:

1. Consulting with students: Educational counsellors meet with students individually or in groups to discuss their academic progress. They may also address specific career goals and personal issues that potentially influence each student's academic performance.
2. Guiding academic and career goals: Counsellors assist students in setting academic and career goals and creating a plan to achieve them. They can also provide information about different career paths and options for continuing education.
3. Administering and interpreting assessments: Counsellors can administer and interpret various assessments such as aptitude and personality tests, and interest inventories. This helps students gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future.
4. Developing and implementing academic and personal support programmes: Educational counsellors develop and implement programmes to support students academically and personally. This may include tutoring, mentoring and counselling on a personal level.
5. Providing resources and referrals: Counsellors provide students with resources and referrals to external organisations or certified professionals to help them address personal issues that affect their academic success. This may include issues as broad as mental health or financial concerns.
6. Collaborating with faculty and educational support staff: Counsellors work closely with faculty and educational support staff to identify and address student needs. Collectively, they try to create an environment that provides support for students struggling academically or personally.
7. Maintaining detailed records and documentation: Counsellors maintain accurate and confidential records of their interactions with students. They record the details of administered assessments and the services they provide for future reference.

Keeping up to date with educational trends and research: Counsellors attempt to stay current regarding trends and research in education and counselling. This helps them ensure they provide effective and relevant services to students.

## **Theoretical Review**

### **Person-Centered Theory**

Carl Rogers' Person-Centred Theory (1951) is a humanistic psychological approach that emphasises the importance of individual experiences, self-concept, and personal growth in achieving fulfilment. Rogers developed this theory as a response to the deterministic perspectives of psychoanalysis and behaviourism, advocating instead for a more empathetic and client-focused approach to therapy and counselling (Rogers, 1959). The theory is particularly relevant to educational counselling as it promotes self-directed learning, emotional support, and holistic student development.

### **Principles of Person-Centred Theory**

Person-Centred Theory is grounded in several key principles that define its approach to counselling and personal development:

Self-Actualisation – Rogers (1951) argued that every individual possesses an inherent drive towards personal growth, learning, and self-improvement when placed in a nurturing environment. Unconditional Positive Regard – Counsellors should offer students acceptance and respect without judgement, enabling them to express themselves freely (Rogers, 1965).

Empathy – Effective counselling requires understanding students' emotions and perspectives from their own point of view (Corey, 2016). Congruence (Genuineness) – Counsellors should be authentic and transparent in their interactions with students, fostering a relationship based on trust and openness (Mearns & Thorne, 2013). Locus of Evaluation – The individual (student) should be encouraged to develop their own sense of self-worth rather than relying on external validation (Rogers, 1959).

### **Application of Person-Centred Theory to Educational Counselling**

Person-Centred Theory is highly applicable to educational counselling in secondary schools, particularly in Rivers State, Nigeria, where students face numerous academic and psychological challenges. The principles of this theory align with the need for supportive, non-judgemental counselling services that enhance students' academic achievement and personal development.

Promoting Academic Achievement – By fostering self-actualisation, counsellors can help students develop confidence in their abilities, improving their motivation and academic performance (Corey, 2016). Addressing Emotional and Psychological Barriers – Many students in Rivers State struggle with stress, peer pressure, and family expectations. An empathetic counselling approach can create a safe space for students to express concerns and seek solutions (Rogers, 1961). Enhancing Career Counselling – The theory's emphasis on self-discovery supports career guidance, allowing students to explore career paths based on personal interests and abilities (Mearns & Thorne, 2013). Overcoming Cultural and Parental Resistance – By fostering unconditional positive regard, counsellors can engage parents and communities to build trust in the counselling process, reducing resistance to its adoption in schools (Rogers, 1965).

Integrating Counselling into the School System – The emphasis on student-centred support aligns with efforts to incorporate counselling into the curriculum, addressing both academic and personal development needs (Corey, 2016). Carl Rogers' Person-Centred Theory provides a solid foundation for effective educational counselling, emphasising self-actualisation, empathy, and student-centred support. By applying this theory, secondary schools in Rivers State can enhance academic achievement, emotional well-being, and career development among students. The theory's principles of unconditional positive regard, congruence, and empathy offer a framework for overcoming existing barriers to counselling, ensuring its integration into the educational system for long-term student success.

### **Empirical Review**

Okoroji, Ugwu, and Anyanwu (2015) conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of school counselling services on student performance in secondary schools in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive research design, the researchers collected both primary and secondary data from nine government schools. A sample of 190 respondents was analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings revealed a positive relationship between the effectiveness of school counselling services and students' academic performance. The study recommended that both teachers and students should be educated on the roles of school counsellors to avoid misconceptions and enhance the utilization of counselling services.

Wankasi (2023) assessed the state of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools, identifying benefits and hindering factors. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive approach, data were collected from 192 participants through questionnaires. The study found that inadequate funding, lack of counselling materials, and unqualified counsellors were significant challenges. Despite these obstacles, students benefited from counselling services through improved academic performance, enhanced self-esteem, and better decision-making skills. The study concluded that effective guidance and counselling services are crucial for student development and recommended increased support from government and stakeholder.

Osumah (2022) investigated the relationship between comprehensive guidance and counselling programmes and academic achievement among secondary school students in Edo State. The correlational study involved a sample of 2,200 students, with data collected via a validated questionnaire. Analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient revealed a significant positive relationship between comprehensive counselling programmes and students' academic performance. The study recommended the implementation of comprehensive guidance programmes in all secondary schools and the employment of qualified counsellors to enhance student achievement.

Lasisi and Ibraheem (2022) examined the correlation between guidance and counselling services and student indiscipline in Ilorin South Local Government Area. Using a correlational research design, data were collected from 150 senior secondary students through questionnaires. The findings indicated a significant relationship between the availability and effectiveness of counselling services and the prevalence of indiscipline. The study highlighted the importance of proper implementation of counselling services to foster a disciplined and conducive learning environment. It recommended raising awareness about the importance of guidance and counselling services among students and reducing the stigma associated with seeking help.

Olubunmi and Kolawole (2021) evaluated the impact of school environment and students' self-esteem on academic performance in senior secondary schools in Obafemi-Owode LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria. Adopting a survey research design, data were collected from 396 respondents. Descriptive statistics revealed that both self-esteem and a supportive school environment are significant factors influencing

academic performance. The study concluded that fostering a positive school environment and enhancing students' self-esteem are crucial for improving academic engagement and performance. It recommended collaboration between parents and teachers to create a supportive learning atmosphere.

The reviewed empirical studies highlight the significance of educational counselling in improving secondary school students' academic performance, career choices, and emotional well-being. Research by Okoroji et al. (2015) established a positive link between counselling services and students' academic achievements, while Wankasi (2023) identified inadequate funding and unqualified counsellors as barriers to effective counselling. Similarly, Osumah (2022) confirmed that comprehensive guidance programmes significantly enhance student performance, and Lasisi and Ibraheem (2022) found that effective counselling helps address student indiscipline. Olubunmi and Kolawole (2021) further demonstrated that a supportive school environment and student self-esteem are crucial for academic success. Despite these findings, a notable gap exists in literature concerning the specific impact of educational counselling on academic achievement in Rivers State, Nigeria. Most studies focus on general academic performance and school discipline, with limited research exploring the direct effects of counselling services on students' educational success within this region. Additionally, few studies comprehensively address the challenges affecting educational counselling and how these can be mitigated. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the impact of counselling on student achievement, identifying barriers to effective implementation, and assessing its role in academic performance, career guidance, and emotional well-being in Rivers State.

### **Statement of Problem**

The necessity of this study arises from the numerous challenges hindering the role of educational counselling in enhancing academic achievement among secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. One major issue is the inadequate number of professional counsellors, which leaves many students without proper academic, emotional, and career guidance. Additionally, limited awareness among students and teachers regarding the importance of counselling has resulted in the underutilisation of these services, reducing their impact on students' academic progress. Poor funding further weakens the effectiveness of counselling programmes, as many schools allocate insufficient resources, leading to a shortage of materials, training opportunities, and dedicated counselling spaces. The heavy workload of the few available counsellors affects the quality of guidance provided, making it difficult for them to offer individualised attention. Furthermore, some counsellors lack adequate training, limiting their ability to address students' academic and psychological challenges effectively. Cultural and religious beliefs also present significant barriers, with some parents and students perceiving counselling as unnecessary or conflicting with traditional values. This has led to resistance against participation in counselling sessions. Low student interest and participation further weaken the impact of these services, as some students lack motivation or fear stigma and peer judgment. Parental resistance remains another critical challenge, with some parents discouraging their children from attending counselling, believing it contradicts their personal guidance. Concerns about confidentiality also deter students from seeking help, as they fear their personal issues may not remain private. The absence of well-defined counselling policies results in inconsistent implementation, while schools' overemphasis on examinations often neglects students' emotional well-being. Additionally, peer pressure discourages students from seeking help, and the lack of follow-up mechanisms reduces long-term effectiveness. This study investigates these challenges to provide solutions that can improve the role of educational counselling in academic achievement in Rivers State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine the role of educational counselling in enhancing academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State Nigeria. While the specific objectives are to:

1. **Examine** the impact of educational counselling on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. **Identify** the challenges hindering effective educational counselling in secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. **Assess** the role of counselling in improving students' academic performance, career choices, and emotional well-being.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does educational counselling impact the academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges hindering effective educational counselling in secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. In what ways does counselling improve students' academic performance, career choices, and emotional well-being?

### RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive survey research design to investigate the role of educational counselling in enhancing the academic achievement of secondary school students in Port Harcourt City, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study focuses on four selected schools: two public secondary schools, Government Secondary School Borikiri and Community Secondary School Rumuomasi, and two private secondary schools, Bloombreed High School and Jephthah Comprehensive Secondary School. The total population consists of 8,700 individuals, including students and staff from these schools. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 382 respondents was determined to ensure a representative selection of participants. A purposive sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaires, ensuring that only individuals with relevant knowledge and experience in educational counselling and academic performance participated. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, designed to evaluate the impact of educational counselling on students' academic success. Data were analysed using the simple percentage method, providing a clear interpretation of findings. To measure responses, a 4-point Likert scale was adopted, allowing participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement with key statements on the role of educational counselling. This method facilitated a comprehensive analysis of how educational counselling contributes to academic achievement, offering empirical insights into its significance in secondary schools across Port Harcourt City.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Showing the total number of administered questionnaires, returned questionnaires, and unretrieved questionnaires along with their percentages:**

Questionnaire Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Administered Questionnaires	382	100%
Returned Questionnaires	350	91.6%
Unretrieved Questionnaires	32	8.4%

The table shows that out of 382 administered questionnaires, 350 (91.6%) were returned, while 32 (8.4%) were not retrieved, indicating a high response rate.

#### A. Data Analysis

**Table 2. Answer to Research Question 1: How does educational counselling impact the academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria?**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (Freq/%)	A (Freq/%)	D (Freq/%)	SD (Freq/%)	Total (%)
1	Educational counselling helps students set academic goals and improve their study habits.	180 (51.4%)	120 (34.3%)	30 (8.6%)	20 (5.7%)	100%
2	Access to educational counselling enhances students' motivation and performance in school.	175 (50.0%)	125 (35.7%)	30 (8.6%)	20 (5.7%)	100%
3	Students who receive educational counselling perform better academically than those who do not.	185 (52.9%)	110 (31.4%)	30 (8.6%)	25 (7.1%)	100%

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (Freq/%)	A (Freq/%)	D (Freq/%)	SD (Freq/%)	Total (%)
4	Educational counselling provides students with effective strategies to overcome academic challenges.	170 (48.6%)	130 (37.1%)	25 (7.1%)	25 (7.1%)	100%

The results from Table 2 indicate a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the positive impact of educational counselling on students' academic achievement in Rivers State. A majority of respondents, over 80%, either strongly agreed or agreed that educational counselling helps students set academic goals, enhances motivation, and provides strategies to overcome challenges. Only a small percentage (less than 16%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements, suggesting widespread recognition of counselling as a valuable tool for improving academic performance. These findings highlight the importance of integrating educational counselling into secondary schools to enhance students' study habits, motivation, and overall academic success.

**Table 3. Answer to Research Question 2: What are the challenges hindering effective educational counselling in secondary schools in Rivers State?**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (Freq/%)	A (Freq/%)	D (Freq/%)	SD (Freq/%)	Total (%)
5	Lack of trained and qualified counsellors is a major challenge hindering effective educational counselling in secondary schools.	160 (45.7%)	130 (37.1%)	35 (10.0%)	25 (7.2%)	100%
6	Inadequate funding and resources limit the effectiveness of educational counselling programmes in secondary schools.	170 (48.6%)	120 (34.3%)	35 (10.0%)	25 (7.1%)	100%
7	Many students are not aware of the benefits of educational counselling, which affects their willingness to participate.	150 (42.9%)	140 (40.0%)	35 (10.0%)	25 (7.1%)	100%
8	Heavy academic workload for teachers and students reduces the time available for proper counselling sessions.	155 (44.3%)	135 (38.6%)	35 (10.0%)	25 (7.1%)	100%

The results from Table 3 reveal that a lack of trained counsellors, inadequate funding, low student awareness, and heavy academic workload are significant challenges hindering effective educational counselling in secondary schools in Rivers State. A majority of respondents (over 80%) agreed or strongly agreed with these challenges, highlighting their widespread impact on counselling effectiveness. Only a small percentage (less than 17%) disagreed, indicating that these issues are widely acknowledged. These findings emphasise the urgent need for increased investment, awareness campaigns, and structural adjustments to enhance the effectiveness of educational counselling in secondary schools.

**Table 4. Answer to Research Question 3: In what ways does counselling improve students' academic performance, career choices, and emotional well-being?**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (Freq/%)	A (Freq/%)	D (Freq/%)	SD (Freq/%)	Total (%)
9	Educational counselling helps students develop better study habits and time management skills, leading to improved academic performance.	170 (48.6%)	130 (37.1%)	30 (8.6%)	20 (5.7%)	100%
10	Career counselling provides students with guidance on subject selection and future career paths, helping them make informed decisions.	175 (50.0%)	125 (35.7%)	30 (8.6%)	20 (5.7%)	100%

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA (Freq/%)	A (Freq/%)	D (Freq/%)	SD (Freq/%)	Total (%)
11	Counselling sessions help students manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges, improving their overall well-being.	165 (47.1%)	135 (38.6%)	30 (8.6%)	20 (5.7%)	100%
12	Regular counselling support increases students' confidence and motivation to achieve academic and personal goals.	180 (51.4%)	120 (34.3%)	30 (8.6%)	20 (5.7%)	100%

The results from Table 4 indicate that educational counselling significantly improves students' academic performance, career choices, and emotional well-being. A majority of respondents (over 80%) agreed or strongly agreed that counselling enhances study habits, career decision-making, stress management, and motivation. Only a small fraction (less than 15%) disagreed, showing strong support for the role of counselling in holistic student development. These findings highlight the importance of integrating counselling services in secondary schools to foster academic success, career readiness, and emotional stability among students

### Discussions of Findings

The findings from this study underscore the critical role of educational counselling in enhancing the academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The responses from Table 2 illustrate a high level of agreement among participants, with over 80% acknowledging that counselling helps students set academic goals, enhances motivation, and provides effective strategies to overcome academic challenges. These findings align with previous studies that emphasise the significance of educational counselling in fostering academic excellence. For instance, Adegoke and Culbreth (2017) argue that structured counselling interventions help students develop effective study habits and improve their motivation towards learning. Similarly, Adeyemo (2019) found that students who receive regular academic counselling exhibit better performance due to increased self-discipline and goal orientation. The results suggest that integrating counselling services within secondary schools can significantly contribute to students' academic success, ensuring they have the necessary guidance to navigate academic pressures effectively. The results presented in Table 3 highlight several challenges hindering effective educational counselling in Rivers State, including a lack of trained counsellors, inadequate funding, low student awareness, and the burden of heavy academic workloads on both students and teachers. More than 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with these challenges, indicating their widespread impact on counselling effectiveness.

These findings are consistent with the study by Oye, Obi, Mohd, and Bernice (2016), who found that insufficient trained counsellors and inadequate resources negatively affect the quality of counselling services in Nigerian secondary schools. Moreover, Egbo (2021) emphasised that limited financial support from school administrations and government agencies further constrains the provision of effective counselling services. These results suggest an urgent need for increased investment in counsellor training, awareness campaigns to educate students on the benefits of counselling, and structural adjustments to ensure counselling services are adequately prioritised within the educational system. Addressing these challenges will significantly improve the effectiveness of educational counselling and its contribution to students' academic progress.

The results in Table 4 further illustrate that educational counselling plays a pivotal role in improving students' academic performance, career choices, and emotional well-being. Over 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that counselling helps students develop better study habits, make informed career decisions, and manage stress effectively. This aligns with the findings of Akomolafe and Olorunfemi-Olabisi (2019), who demonstrated that students receiving career counselling tend to make more informed subject selections, which positively influences their future career paths. Similarly, studies by Yusuf and Adedokun (2020) confirm that counselling services help students cope with academic stress, thereby improving their overall emotional stability. The high level of agreement in the responses further supports the notion that integrating counselling into secondary schools is essential for fostering holistic student development, ensuring that students not only perform well academically but also develop

emotional resilience and confidence in their career choices. These findings collectively highlight the indispensable role of educational counselling in secondary schools. First, the study establishes that counselling significantly contributes to academic achievement by enhancing study habits, motivation, and problem-solving skills.

Second, it reveals the pressing challenges that undermine effective counselling, including insufficient counsellors, inadequate funding, and limited awareness among students. Lastly, it underscores the multifaceted benefits of counselling beyond academic performance, extending to career guidance and emotional well-being. These findings are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of person-centred counselling theory, which emphasises the importance of guidance in personal and academic development (Rogers, 1951). To enhance the effectiveness of educational counselling, policymakers and school administrators must prioritise training and hiring qualified counsellors while allocating sufficient resources to support counselling programmes. Awareness campaigns should be implemented to educate students on the benefits of counselling, thereby increasing their participation in available services. Moreover, schools should incorporate structured counselling sessions within their curricula to ensure that all students receive adequate support. By addressing these challenges and strengthening counselling frameworks, secondary schools in Rivers State can maximise the impact of educational counselling, ultimately improving academic outcomes, career readiness, and students' overall well-being.

### CONCLUSION

The study underscores the vital role of educational counselling in enhancing students' academic performance, career choices, and emotional well-being in secondary schools in Rivers State. Despite its benefits, challenges such as inadequate funding, a shortage of trained counsellors, and low student awareness hinder its effectiveness. Addressing these issues through increased investment, structured awareness programmes, and policy reforms will significantly improve counselling services. Strengthening counselling frameworks will ultimately foster academic success, career readiness, and emotional resilience among students.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the following findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Schools should integrate structured educational counselling programmes to enhance students' study habits, motivation, and problem-solving skills.
2. Government and school administrators should increase funding, recruit trained counsellors, and raise awareness to improve the effectiveness of educational counselling in secondary schools.
3. Counselling services should be expanded to support students' career decision-making, stress management, and overall emotional well-being.

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