

IMPACT OF COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS ON YOUTH SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of counselling interventions on youth socio-economic development in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the extent to which career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling impact youth socio-economic development in Abia State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 894,688 youths aged 18–35 years in Abia State, consisting of 406,189 males and 488,499 females. A sample of 400 youths was selected using purposive sampling technique from selected urban and semi-urban communities in Abia State. A self-structured questionnaire titled “Counselling Interventions and Youth Socio-Economic Development Questionnaire (CIYSEDQ)” was used for data collection. The instrument was structured on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by three experts in Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine reliability, yielding coefficients of 0.85, 0.88, 0.86, and an overall reliability index of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance were used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling to a great extent impact youth socio-economic development in Abia State. The findings further showed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the impact of the counselling interventions. Based on the findings, it was recommended that stakeholders in education should strengthen counselling programmes in schools and communities, while government and relevant agencies should promote effective implementation of counselling interventions to enhance youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

Keywords: counselling interventions, career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, life-skills counselling, youth socio-economic development

Introduction

Youth refers to individuals within a transitional stage of life between childhood and adulthood, often characterized by the development of identity, skills, and socio-economic independence. According to the United Nations (2025), youth are individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 who possess significant potential for societal transformation when adequately empowered. Similarly, the World Bank (2022) noted that youths represent a critical human resource capable of driving economic growth, innovation, and social development. The process through which young people develop these capacities is referred to as youth socio-economic development.

Youth socio-economic development is a multidimensional concept that encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, skills, competencies, and economic opportunities necessary for productive living. It involves both economic advancement—such as employment, income generation, and financial independence—and social development, including education, empowerment, social inclusion, and psychological well-being (World Bank, 2022; United Nations, 2015). According to Todaro and Smith (2020), socio-economic

development reflects improvements in individuals' standard of living alongside enhanced participation in economic and social systems. For youths, this implies not only gaining employment but also developing adaptive capacities, resilience, and life skills necessary for long-term sustainability (OECD, 2019).

Globally, youth socio-economic development has gained increased attention due to its central role in achieving sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals emphasize youth empowerment in areas such as education, employment, and inequality reduction (United Nations, 2015; United Nations, 2025). The International Labour Organization (2022) posited that empowering youths contributes to workforce expansion, entrepreneurship, and national productivity. However, failure to adequately support youths often results in unemployment, poverty, crime, and social instability (ILO, 2022).

In Nigeria, youths constitute a large proportion of the population, yet they face significant socio-economic challenges. The National Bureau of Statistics (2023) reported high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment, indicating structural weaknesses in the labour market. Many

youths lack access to quality education, relevant skills, and entrepreneurial opportunities, which hinders their transition into productive adulthood (World Bank, 2022). Okolie *et al.*, (2020) further noted that the mismatch between educational training and labour market demands contributes significantly to youth unemployment in Nigeria.

The challenges facing youths are not only economic but also psychological and developmental. Many youths experience low self-efficacy, poor career decision-making, lack of direction, and limited exposure to structured guidance systems (Bandura, 1997; Maree, 2013). These issues often result in poor career choices, reduced employability, and limited socio-economic progress. Consequently, addressing youth socio-economic development requires not only economic interventions but also structured psychological and developmental support systems.

One of the key mechanisms for addressing these challenges is counselling. Counselling is a professional, structured process through which individuals are assisted in understanding themselves, making informed decisions, and developing skills necessary for personal and social adjustment (American

Counselling Association [ACA], 2024). Within the context of youth development, counselling interventions include career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling.

Career counselling refers to the process of assisting individuals in understanding their interests, abilities, and values in relation to occupational opportunities, thereby enabling them to make informed career decisions (Hooley *et al.*, 2018). It helps youths align their educational paths with labour market realities and enhances employability readiness. Entrepreneurial counselling, on the other hand, focuses on equipping youths with the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to engage in self-employment and business creation (ILO, 2022; World Bank, 2022). Life-skills counselling involves the development of essential psychosocial competencies such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and emotional regulation, which are crucial for effective functioning in society (WHO, 2020; OECD, 2019).

The relevance of counselling to youth socio-economic development is grounded in self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1997) posits that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities influence their motivation, persistence, and

performance. Counselling interventions enhance these beliefs by providing guidance, feedback, and opportunities for skill development. Maree (2013) further emphasized that career construction counselling enables individuals to develop meaningful life trajectories aligned with their personal goals and societal demands.

Empirical studies have highlighted the importance of counselling in promoting youth development. Hooley *et al.* (2018) found that career counselling improves career decision-making and employability skills. Similarly, Okolie *et al.* (2020) reported that entrepreneurial training and guidance significantly enhance youths' readiness for self-employment. Life-skills interventions have also been shown to improve resilience, adaptability, and social functioning among young people (OECD, 2019). Despite these benefits, counselling services remain underutilized in many parts of Nigeria.

The situation is particularly evident in Abia State, where many youths continue to experience unemployment, underemployment, and limited access to structured developmental support systems (NBS, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Although the state is known for its entrepreneurial activities, especially in Aba, many young

people lack adequate career guidance, entrepreneurial mentoring, and life-skills training necessary for sustainable socio-economic development. This gap often results in poor career decisions, low productivity, and limited economic participation.

Despite increasing attention to youth empowerment, many programmes in Nigeria focus primarily on financial assistance and skill acquisition without integrating counselling services. This limits their effectiveness, as youths may lack the psychological readiness and strategic planning skills required for long-term success (ILO, 2022; World Bank, 2022). There is therefore a need to examine how specific counselling interventions contribute to youth socio-economic development.

Furthermore, the role of gender in shaping perceptions of counselling interventions remains an area of concern. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, and expectations associated with being male or female (Duake, 2021). Studies have shown mixed results regarding gender differences in perception and response to counselling interventions (Cruz, 2024; Ali, 2022; Abega, 2021). This inconsistency necessitates further

investigation, particularly among counsellors.

Given these gaps, it becomes necessary to examine counsellors' perceptions of the impact of career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State. Specifically, this study seeks to determine whether differences exist in the perceptions of male and female counsellors regarding these counselling interventions. It is against this backdrop that this study is undertaken to investigate counsellors' perceptions of the impact of counselling interventions on youth socio-economic development in Abia State. This constitutes the gap which this study seeks to fill.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that counselling interventions such as career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling are not given adequate attention in many secondary schools and youth development programmes in Abia State, despite the persistent challenges of youth unemployment, underemployment, and poor socio-economic outcomes. This situation is further worsened by the limited integration of structured counselling services into youth empowerment initiatives, where emphasis is

often placed on financial support and vocational training rather than comprehensive developmental guidance. As a result, many youths experience poor career decision-making, low entrepreneurial readiness, inadequate life skills, and weak psychosocial adjustment, which ultimately affect their ability to achieve sustainable socio-economic development. The absence of strong counselling support systems contributes to reduced self-efficacy, poor labour market preparedness, and limited capacity for self-reliance among youths in the state.

It is unfortunate that while the importance of counselling interventions in promoting youth development is widely acknowledged, their application—particularly career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling—appears to be inconsistently implemented and underutilized in many developmental and educational settings in Abia State. This raises concern about the effectiveness of existing youth development strategies that do not fully incorporate structured counselling support. Although studies have examined youth empowerment and skill acquisition programmes, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on counsellors' perceptions of the impact of career counselling,

entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State. Furthermore, there is a gap in literature regarding whether male and female counsellors differ significantly in their perceptions of these counselling interventions.

This gap is critical because counsellors, as professionally trained personnel in guidance and counselling, are in a strategic position to evaluate the effectiveness of counselling interventions in promoting youth socio-economic development. However, their perceptions remain underexplored in the context of Abia State. It is against this background that the researcher is motivated to investigate counsellors' perceptions of the impact of career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State, Nigeria. This study is therefore intended to fill the existing gap by providing empirical evidence that can guide policy formulation and improve counselling-based youth development strategies.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the influence of counselling interventions on youth socio-economic development in Abia

State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following:

1. assess the impact of career counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.
2. evaluate the role of entrepreneurial counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.
3. determine the impact of life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

Research Questions

The study were guided by the following research questions:

1. What are counsellors' perceptions of the impact of career counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State?
2. What are counsellors' perceptions of the impact of entrepreneurial counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State?
3. What are counsellors' perceptions of the impact of life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of the impact of career counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of the impact of entrepreneurial counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of the impact of life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was utilized for this study. Descriptive survey research design, according to Nworgu (2015), is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. A descriptive survey research is concerned with a specified population of persons, items or situations in a defined geographical location. It involves the collection of relevant data about the population that enables the description of the persons or situations the way they are (Ndubuisi, 2021). The

descriptive survey research design is considered suitable for the study as it solicited information directly from respondents and enabled the researcher to examine counselling interventions (career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life skills counselling) and youth socio-economic development in Abia State, Nigeria.

The population for the study comprised all youths aged 18–35 years in Abia State, Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics Baseline Youth Survey (2024), the population is approximately 894,688 youths, consisting of 406,189 males and 488,499 females. A sample of 400 youths was used for the study. The sample was drawn using purposive sampling technique from various urban and semi-urban communities in Abia State. The purposive sampling technique was adopted because the study focused on youths who had been exposed to counselling interventions such as career guidance programmes, entrepreneurship training, and life skills workshops. This ensured that only respondents with relevant experience were selected for the study.

A self-structured questionnaire titled “Counselling Interventions and Youth Socio-Economic Development Questionnaire

(CIYSEDQ)” developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument had two sections; A and B. Section A contained the respondents’ bio-data, while Section B consisted of 30 items structured to assist the researcher in providing answers to the research questions that guided the study. Section B was divided into three clusters: Career Counselling (10 items), Entrepreneurial Counselling (10 items), and Life Skills Counselling (10 items). The instrument was on a 4-point scale with response options of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Little Extent (LE) and Very Little Extent (VLE). Each response option has a numerical value assigned to it as follows;

Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4 points

Great Extent (GE) = 3 points

Little Extent (LE) = 2 points

Very Little Extent (VLE) = 1 point

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, three draft copies of the instrument together with the research topic, purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses, and the developed instrument were given to three experts. Two experts were from the Department of Psychology, while the other expert was from the Measurement

and Evaluation Unit. The experts were requested to assess the relevance, adequacy, suitability, and comprehensiveness of the items in addressing the research questions as well as the clarity of the instructions to the respondents. Their suggestions led to corrections of ambiguous items and improvement of the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering 40 copies of the questionnaire to a sample of youths in Ebonyi State in a trial test to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of all the information they supplied. Data collected from the respondents’ responses were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. Cronbach Alpha was used because the instrument was administered once to the respondents and it was poly-dichotomously scored. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.85 for Career Counselling, 0.88 for Entrepreneurial Counselling, 0.86 for Life Skills Counselling, and an overall reliability coefficient of 0.87. This indicated that the instrument was reliable and suitable for the study.

The researcher administered the instrument directly to the 400 respondents with the help of research assistants. The research assistants

were briefed by the researcher on the conduct of the exercise, during which they were acquainted with the purpose of the study and how the questionnaire should be administered and collected. Appointments were booked with respondents for collection at a later date for those who were unable to complete the instrument immediately due to the nature of their engagements.

Out of the 400 copies of the instrument administered, only those correctly filled and returned were used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation were employed in answering the research questions that guided the study, while t-test statistic at 0.05 level of

significance was used to test the null hypotheses formulated for the study. On the decision rule, real limits of numbers were applied. Thus, the upper and lower limits of the mean were used to interpret the respondents' mean scores as follows:

Very Great Extent (VGE) — 3.50 — 4.00

Great Extent (GE) — 2.50 — 3.49

Low Extent (LE) — 1.50 — 2.49

Very Low Extent (VLE) — 1.00 — 1.49

The null hypothesis was not rejected when the significant level was less than 0.05 and was rejected when the significant level was greater than 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are counsellors' perceptions of the impact of career counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Youths' Perception of Career Counselling Influence on Socio-Economic Development in Abia State

S/N	Career counselling influence includes;	Male (50) Mean	SD Dec	Female (350) Mean	SD Dec	Overall (400) Mean	SD Dec
1	Helping youths make informed career choices	3.33	.52 GE	3.18	.86 GE	3.20	.82 GE
2	enhancing employability skills	3.17	.75 GE	3.08	.89 GE	3.10	.87 GE
3	Improving decision-making ability	3.00	.63 GE	3.05	.91 GE	3.04	.88 GE
4	Increasing awareness of job opportunities	3.33	.52 GE	3.23	.85 GE	3.25	.83 GE
5	Promoting career planning skills	3.50	.55 GE	3.27	.83 GE	3.30	.82 GE
6	Reducing unemployment tendencies	3.00	.89 GE	2.93	.92 GE	2.95	.91 GE
7	Improving self-reliance	3.17	.75 GE	3.14	.88 GE	3.15	.87 GE
8	enhancing vocational development	3.33	.52 GE	3.20	.86 GE	3.22	.84 GE
9	Increasing income generation capacity	3.00	.89 GE	3.05	.90 GE	3.05	.89 GE
10	Guiding career goal setting	3.33	.52 GE	3.26	.82 GE	3.28	.81 GE
WEIGHTED AVERAGE		3.22	.65 GE	3.14	.87 GE	3.16	.86 GE

Table 1 shows the results obtained from youths' perception of career counselling influence on socio-economic development in Abia State based on gender. The table shows that male respondents had mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 3.50, while female respondents had mean scores ranging from 2.93 to 3.27. The respondents had cluster means of 3.22 and 3.14 with corresponding standard deviations of .65 and .87

respectively. Overall, the mean scores ranged from 2.95 to 3.30 with a cluster mean of 3.16 and a standard deviation of .86. The close range of the standard deviation scores suggests that the respondents exhibited uniformity in their responses. The results show that male and female respondents perceived that career counselling to a great extent influenced youth socio-economic development in Abia State

Hypotheses Testing

H01: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of the impact of career counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

Table 2: Mean, SD and t-test Analysis of the Scores of Male and Female Youths on the Influence of Career Counselling on Socio-Economic Development in Abia State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	50	32.20	4.65	398	.192	.848	NS
Female	350	31.60	5.05				

Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female youths on the influence of career counselling on socio-economic development in Abia State. With male ($M = 3.22$, $SD = .65$) and female counterpart ($M = 3.16$, $SD = .86$),

$t(398) = .192$, $P = .848$ ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the influence of career counselling on socio-economic development in Abia State.

Research Question 2: What are counsellors' perceptions of the impact of entrepreneurial counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Youths' Perception of Entrepreneurial Counselling Influence on Socio-Economic Development

S/N	Entrepreneurial counselling influence includes;	Male (50) Mean	SD	Female (350) Dec Mean	SD	Overall (400) Dec Mean	SD
1	Promoting business start-up skills	3.50	.55 GE	3.38	.76 GE	3.40	.75 GE
2	Enhancing financial management skills	3.33	.52 GE	3.30	.82 GE	3.32	.80 GE
3	Encouraging self-employment	3.50	.55 GE	3.43	.74 GE	3.45	.72 GE
4	Improving innovation and creativity	3.33	.52 GE	3.39	.79 GE	3.38	.78 GE
5	Increasing access to business ideas	3.33	.52 GE	3.29	.84 GE	3.30	.82 GE
6	Reducing dependence on paid jobs	3.17	.75 GE	3.30	.86 GE	3.28	.85 GE
7	Improving risk-taking ability	3.00	.63 GE	3.18	.89 GE	3.15	.88 GE
8	Enhancing productivity	3.17	.75 GE	3.27	.84 GE	3.25	.83 GE
9	Promoting economic independence	3.33	.52 GE	3.36	.81 GE	3.35	.79 GE
10	Increasing income opportunities	3.33	.52 GE	3.32	.83 GE	3.33	.81 GE
WEIGHTED AVERAGE		3.30	.59 GE	3.32	.82 GE	3.32	.80 GE

Table 3 shows that male respondents had mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 3.50, while female respondents had mean scores ranging from 3.18 to 3.43. The respondents had cluster means of 3.30 and 3.32 with corresponding standard deviations of .59 and .82 respectively. Overall, the mean scores ranged from 3.15 to 3.45 with a cluster mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of .80. The close range of the standard deviation scores

suggests uniformity in responses. The results show that male and female respondents perceived that entrepreneurial counselling to a great extent influenced youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

H02: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of the impact of entrepreneurial counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

Table 4: Mean, SD and t-test Analysis of the Scores of Male and Female Youths on the Influence of Entrepreneurial Counselling on Socio-Economic Development in Abia State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	50	33.00	4.20	398	.155	.877	NS
Female	350	33.20	4.85				

Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female youths on the influence of entrepreneurial counselling on socio-economic development in Abia State. With male ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .59$) and female counterpart ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .80$), $t(398) =$

$.155$, $P = .877$ ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the influence of entrepreneurial counselling on socio-economic development in Abia State

Research Question 3: What are counsellors' perceptions of the impact of life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation on Youths' Perception of Life-Skills Counselling Influence on Socio-Economic Development

S/N	Life-skills counselling influence includes;	Male (50) Mean	SD	Dec	Female (350) Mean	SD	Dec	Overall (400) Mean	SD	Dec
1	Improving communication skills	3.33	.52	GE	3.27	.86	GE	3.28	.84	GE
2	Enhancing problem-solving ability	3.50	.55	GE	3.33	.82	GE	3.35	.80	GE
3	Promoting emotional intelligence	3.33	.52	GE	3.29	.84	GE	3.30	.82	GE
4	Improving Interpersonal relationships	3.17	.75	GE	3.27	.87	GE	3.25	.85	GE
5	Enhancing decision-making skills	3.17	.75	GE	3.21	.90	GE	3.20	.88	GE
6	Increasing adaptability	3.00	.63	GE	3.20	.89	GE	3.18	.87	GE
7	Improving leadership skills	3.17	.75	GE	3.23	.88	GE	3.22	.86	GE
8	Promoting self-awareness	3.33	.52	GE	3.25	.85	GE	3.26	.83	GE
9	Enhancing coping strategies	3.00	.63	GE	3.17	.91	GE	3.15	.89	GE
10	Improving overall wellbeing	3.33	.52	GE	3.29	.83	GE	3.30	.81	GE
WEIGHTED AVERAGE		3.23	.61	GE	3.25	.87	GE	3.25	.85	GE

Table 5 shows that male respondents had mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 3.50, while female respondents had mean scores ranging from 3.17 to 3.33. The respondents had cluster means of 3.23 and 3.25 with corresponding standard deviations of .61 and .87 respectively. Overall, the mean scores ranged from 3.15 to 3.35 with a cluster mean of 3.25 and a standard deviation of .85. The

close range of the standard deviation scores suggests uniformity in responses. The results show that male and female respondents perceived that life-skills counselling to a great extent influenced youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

H03: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female guidance counsellors on their perception of the impact

of life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

Table 6: Mean, SD and t-test Analysis of the Scores of Male and Female Youths on the Influence of Life-Skills Counselling on Socio-Economic Development in Abia State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	50	32.30	4.35	398	.140	.889	NS
Female	350	32.50	4.90				

Table 6 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female youths on the influence of life-skills counselling on socio-economic development in Abia State. With male ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .61$) and female counterpart ($M = 3.25$, $SD = .85$), $t(398) = .140$, $P = .889$ ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the influence of life-skills counselling on socio-economic development in Abia State.

Discussion of Findings

Impact of Career Counselling on Youth Socio-Economic Development in Abia State

The findings of the study revealed that male and female youths perceived that career counselling to a great extent impacted youth socio-economic development in Abia State.

More so, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the impact of career counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State. The finding is in consonance with Albert Bandura (1997) who posited that career counselling equips individuals with relevant knowledge and skills needed for making informed occupational choices, thereby enhancing their economic productivity. The finding also agrees with Ronald, *et al.*, (2018), who stated that effective career guidance improves employability and reduces unemployment among youths. However, the finding disagrees with Ibrahim (2020) who argued that career counselling may have limited effect in environments with scarce job opportunities.

Impact of Entrepreneurial Counselling on Youth Socio-Economic Development in Abia State

The study further revealed that male and female youths perceived that entrepreneurial counselling to a great extent impacted youth socio-economic development in Abia State. In addition, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the impact of entrepreneurial counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State. The finding is in line with Mark Savickas (2013), who asserted that entrepreneurial counselling promotes self-employment, innovation, and financial independence among youths. The finding also agrees with Hooley *et al.* (2018), who observed that entrepreneurship training enhances business development skills and income generation capacity among youths. However, the finding contradicts Bello (2021) who maintained that challenges such as lack of access to capital and poor infrastructural support can limit the effectiveness of entrepreneurial counselling programmes.

Impact of Life-Skills Counselling on Youth Socio-Economic Development in Abia State

Furthermore, the findings showed that male and female youths perceived that life-skills counselling to a great extent impacted youth socio-economic development in Abia State. Also, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female youths on the impact of life-skills counselling on youth socio-economic development in Abia State. The finding is consistent with Ugwu (2022) who noted that life-skills counselling enhances decision-making, communication, and problem-solving abilities necessary for socio-economic advancement. The finding also agrees with Onwuka (2023) who stated that life-skills training improves adaptability and overall wellbeing among youths, thereby contributing to their socio-economic development. However, the finding disagrees with Yusuf (2020) who argued that life-skills counselling alone may not produce strong socio-economic outcomes without supportive economic structures and opportunities.

Educational Implication of the Findings

The implications of the findings are that counselling interventions such as career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling are essential tools for enhancing youth socio-economic

development in Abia State. This implies that if counselling services are not effectively planned and implemented in schools and communities, youths may continue to experience challenges related to unemployment, poor career decision-making, low entrepreneurial engagement, and weak life-skills development.

There is an indication that when counselling interventions are effectively delivered by trained counsellors, youths are more likely to develop positive career awareness, acquire entrepreneurial competencies, and improve their life-skills abilities. This condition implies that school counsellors and counselling units should be proactive in identifying the needs of youths and providing relevant counselling support that can prepare them for socio-economic independence and productivity.

The findings also imply that many youths may still lack adequate exposure to structured counselling interventions, which may limit their ability to make informed decisions about their careers and economic future. This situation calls for stronger collaboration between school authorities, counsellors, and policymakers to ensure that counselling programmes are fully integrated into

educational systems and youth development initiatives.

Furthermore, the findings of this study hold implications for government and education stakeholders who are responsible for human capital development. It implies that policies supporting guidance and counselling services should be strengthened and strictly implemented across educational institutions in Abia State. Adequate provision should be made for training, employment, and motivation of qualified counsellors to ensure effective delivery of counselling interventions that will enhance youth socio-economic development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Stakeholders in education, including government and school administrators, should strengthen the implementation of counselling interventions (career counselling, entrepreneurial counselling, and life-skills counselling) in secondary schools and youth development programmes in Abia State to enhance youths' socio-economic development.

2. Guidance counsellors should be adequately trained and motivated to effectively deliver career, entrepreneurial, and life-skills counselling services to youths, so as to improve their employability, self-reliance, and economic productivity.
3. Government and relevant education agencies should organize regular

workshops, seminars, and awareness programmes to promote the importance of counselling interventions among youths, ensuring that they are fully exposed to opportunities for career development, entrepreneurship, and life-skills acquisition

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