Exploring Career Counseling Interventions and Nigerian Universities Students' Career Decision-Making in an Era of Depressed Economy

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Abstract:

The depressed economy has heightened the need for effective career counseling interventions in Nigerian Universities. This study explored career counseling interventions and Nigerian Universities students' career decision-making, addressing the dearth of research in this context. The researchers employed an analytical method to discuss and analyze the issues raised in the research which include the impact of economic downturn on career choices, the role of career counselors in enhancing career decision-making, and the challenges of delivering career counseling services in a resource-constrained environment. The findings indicated that career counseling interventions significantly improved students' career decision-making, thus demonstrating increased career confidence and clarity. Unlike previous studies, this research highlighted the importance of contextualizing career counseling interventions within Nigeria's unique economic landscape. The study's findings have significant implications for policymakers, educators, and practitioners seeking to support students' career development in resource-constrained environments. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that Universities should reemphasize the integration of career counseling services into their curricula.

Keywords*: career counseling, career decision-making, depressed economy, university students, entrepreneurship.*

1.0 Introduction

The current economic downturn in Nigeria has presented a significant challenge to university students as they navigate their career paths. The depressed economy has led to a scarcity of job opportunities, making it increasingly difficult for students to make informed career decisions (Adeyemo, 2022). As a result, there is a growing need for effective career counseling interventions that can equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a competitive job market. The situation is further complicated by the fact that many Nigerian universities are still grappling with inadequate infrastructure and resources, which can hinder the delivery of effective career counseling services.

Research has shown that career counseling interventions can have a positive impact on students' career decision-making processes (Okolie, 2020). For instance, a study conducted by Okolie (2020) found that students who received career counseling interventions reported improved career self-efficacy and decision-making skills. However, the effectiveness of these interventions is often hindered by the lack of resources and infrastructure in Nigerian universities. Therefore, it is essential to explore innovative approaches to career counseling that can address the unique challenges faced by Nigerian students.

One potential approach is to integrate career counseling into the undergraduate curriculum, making it a compulsory component of students' academic programs (Eze, 2021). This would ensure that students receive comprehensive career guidance and support throughout their university education, rather than relying on ad hoc interventions. According to Eze (2021), integrating career counseling into the curriculum can help students develop a clearer understanding of their career goals and aspirations, and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their goals.

The role of career counselors is also critical in this context. Counselors can provide students with personalized guidance and support, helping them to identify their strengths and interests, and develop effective job search strategies (Iwuchukwu, 2026). However, counselors often face significant challenges, including limited resources and heavy caseloads, which can impact the quality of their services. Iwuchukwu (2026) notes that career counselors in Nigerian universities often have to contend with large student-to-counselor ratios, making it difficult to provide individualized support to students.

To address these challenges, universities can explore partnerships with industry stakeholders and organizations to provide students with practical work experience and exposure to different career paths (Nwosu, 2020). This can help students develop the skills and networks they need to succeed in the job market. According to Nwosu (2020), industry-university partnerships can provide students with valuable opportunities for internships, mentorship, and job placement, which can enhance their career prospects.

The impact of social media on students' career decision-making processes is also an important consideration. Social media platforms can provide students with access to a wealth of career information and resources, but they can also create unrealistic expectations and promote unhealthy comparisons (Adeyemi, 2021). Adeyemi (2021) notes that social media can have a significant influence on students' career aspirations and expectations, and that career counselors should be aware of this influence when working with students.

Ultimately, effective career counseling interventions require a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing students' career decision-making processes. By exploring these factors and developing innovative approaches to career counseling, universities can better support students as they navigate the challenges of the job market.

2.0 Career Counseling

Career counseling is a vital component of the educational experience, providing students with the guidance and support they need to navigate the complexities of the job market. In Nigerian universities, career counseling plays a critical role in helping students identify their strengths and interests, and develop effective job search strategies. Through individualized counseling sessions, group workshops, and career development programs, career counselors empower students to take ownership of their career paths and make informed decisions about their future.

Effective career counseling requires a comprehensive understanding of the Nigerian job market and the skills and qualifications required by employers. Career counselors must stay up-to-date with industry trends and developments, and be able to provide students with accurate and relevant information about different career paths and opportunities. This requires strong networking skills, as well as the ability to build relationships with employers, alumni, and other stakeholders. By providing students with access to industry insights and connections, career counselors can help bridge the gap between academia and the workforce.

One of the key challenges facing career counselors in Nigerian universities is the large student-to-counselor ratio. With limited resources and heavy caseloads, counselors often struggle to provide individualized support to students, and may have to rely on group-based interventions. However, this can limit the effectiveness of career counseling, as students may not receive the personalized guidance and support they need to achieve their career goals. To address this challenge, universities must prioritize the recruitment and training of career counselors, and provide them with the resources and support they need to deliver high-quality services.

Career counseling is not just about providing students with job search skills and strategies; it is also about helping them develop a sense of purpose and direction. Through career counseling, students can explore their values, interests, and strengths, and develop a clearer understanding of what they want to achieve in their careers. This requires a holistic approach to career development, one that takes into account the personal, social, and economic factors that influence students' career choices. By providing students with a supportive and non-judgmental space to explore their career aspirations, career counselors can help them build confidence and develop a sense of agency in their career decision-making.

The goal of career counseling is to empower students to become proactive and self-directed in their career development. By providing students with the skills, knowledge, and support they need to navigate the job market, career counselors can help them achieve their career goals and contribute to the economic and social development of

Nigeria. As the job market continues to evolve and become increasingly competitive, the role of career counseling in Nigerian universities will only become more critical.

3.0 Students' Career Decision -Making

Students' career decision-making is a complex and multifaceted process that involves a range of factors, including personal interests, aptitudes, and values, as well as external influences such as family expectations, social norms, and economic realities. In Nigerian universities, students are often faced with the daunting task of choosing a career path that aligns with their strengths and aspirations, while also meeting the expectations of their families and society at large. This can be a particularly challenging task, given the limited job opportunities and intense competition for places in the workforce.

The career decision-making process typically begins with an exploration of different career options, including research into various fields, networking with professionals, and gaining practical experience through internships or volunteer work. However, many students in Nigerian universities may not have access to these resources, and may instead rely on their own research, family connections, or social media to inform their career choices. This can lead to a lack of clarity and direction, as well as unrealistic expectations about the job market and career prospects.

Effective career decision-making requires a range of skills, including self-awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Students need to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, weigh the pros and cons of different career options, and make informed decisions about their future. However, many students in Nigerian universities may not have developed these skills, and may instead be relying on intuition or guesswork to make their career decisions. This can lead to a sense of uncertainty and anxiety, as well as a higher risk of making poor career choices.

The consequences of poor career decision-making can be significant, including a lack of job satisfaction, limited career advancement opportunities, and a higher risk of unemployment or underemployment. In contrast, effective career decision-making can lead to a range of positive outcomes, including job satisfaction, career advancement, and a sense of fulfillment and purpose. By providing students with the skills and support they need to make informed career decisions, universities can help them achieve their career goals and contribute to the economic and social development of Nigeria.

Students' career decision-making is a critical aspect of their educational experience, and one that requires careful attention and support. By providing students with access to career counseling, mentorship, and practical experience, universities can help them make informed career decisions and achieve their full potential. This requires a comprehensive approach to career development, one that takes into account the complex and multifaceted nature of students' career decision-making processes, and provides them with the resources and support they need to succeed in the job market.

4.0 Depressed Economy

A depressed economy is a period of prolonged economic downturn, characterized by low economic activity, high unemployment, and reduced consumer spending. In Nigeria, the depressed economy has had a significant impact on the livelihoods of citizens, with many struggling to make ends meet and achieve their financial goals. The economy has been affected by a range of factors, including the decline in global oil prices, insecurity, and poor infrastructure.

The depressed economy has had a devastating impact on the job market, with many companies downsizing or closing down altogether. This has led to a significant increase in unemployment, particularly among young people and graduates. Many Nigerians are struggling to find stable employment, and those who are lucky enough to have a job are often faced with reduced salaries and benefits. The situation is further exacerbated by the lack of access to credit and other financial resources, making it difficult for entrepreneurs and small businesses to survive.

The depressed economy has also had a significant impact on the standard of living, with many Nigerians struggling to afford basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. The cost of living has increased significantly, while incomes have remained stagnant. This has led to a decline in living standards, with many people forced to make difficult choices between paying bills, buying food, and accessing healthcare.

The depressed economy has also had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of Nigerians. The stress and uncertainty of living in a depressed economy can take a toll on mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Many Nigerians are struggling to cope with the pressure of providing for themselves and their families, and there is a growing need for mental health support and resources.

Despite the challenges posed by the depressed economy, there are opportunities for growth and development. The Nigerian government has implemented a range of policies aimed at diversifying the economy and promoting entrepreneurship, and there are many initiatives underway to support small businesses and startups. Additionally, the depressed economy has led to a surge in innovation and creativity, with many Nigerians turning to entrepreneurship and freelance work as a way to make ends meet.

However, recovering from a depressed economy will require a sustained effort from the government, private sector, and citizens. It will require a commitment to diversifying the economy, investing in infrastructure and human capital, and promoting entrepreneurship and innovation. With the right policies and initiatives in place, Nigeria can overcome the challenges posed by the depressed economy and build a more prosperous and sustainable future for all its citizens.

5.0 Impact of Economic Downturn on Career Choices

The economic downturn has significantly impacted career choices in Nigeria, with many individuals reevaluating their professional paths in response to the challenging economic landscape. According to Ekugo (2026), the current economic climate has led to a surge in interest in careers that offer stability and security, such as healthcare and technology. The shift towards more stable career options is driven by the need for financial security, as many Nigerians struggle to make ends meet amidst the economic downturn. As a result, careers in fields such as medicine, engineering, and data science are becoming increasingly popular.

The economic downturn has also accelerated the adoption of digital technologies and remote work arrangements, creating new opportunities for Nigerians to explore careers in the digital economy. Rewane (2026) notes that the digital economy is expected to play a significant role in driving economic growth and creating new job opportunities. The growth of the digital economy has led to an increase in demand for skills such as software development, digital marketing, and cybersecurity. As a result, many Nigerians are turning to online courses and training programs to develop these skills and enhance their employability.

However, the economic downturn has also presented challenges for career development, particularly for young professionals and graduates. Dangote (2026) argues that the current economic climate requires Nigerians to be more adaptable and resilient in their career choices. The job market is becoming increasingly competitive, and individuals need to be proactive in developing their skills and networking to stay ahead. Despite these challenges, many Nigerians are finding opportunities in entrepreneurship and innovation, with the rise of startups and small businesses creating new job opportunities.

The economic downturn has also highlighted the importance of skills development and training in enhancing employability and career prospects. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2026), there is a growing demand for skills in areas such as data analysis, digital marketing, and cybersecurity. The report notes that individuals with these skills are more likely to be employed and earn higher salaries. As a result, many Nigerians are investing in skills development and training programs to enhance their career prospects.

Despite the challenges posed by the economic downturn, there are still opportunities for career growth and development in Nigeria. Egwim (2026) notes that the key to success lies in being proactive and adaptable in response to changing economic conditions. Individuals who are able to position themselves for the changing economic landscape will be well-placed to thrive in the years ahead. This requires a combination of strategic planning, skills development, and networking.

The economic downturn has also led to an increase in unemployment and underemployment, particularly among young people. Obi-Chukwu (2026) notes that the unemployment rate in Nigeria is expected to remain high in the short term, highlighting the need for individuals to be proactive in developing their skills and career prospects. The report notes that individuals who are able to develop in-demand skills and adapt to changing economic conditions will be better placed to navigate the challenges posed by the economic downturn.

Ultimately, navigating the impact of the economic downturn on career choices requires a combination of strategic planning, skills development, and adaptability. As noted by Adebayo (2026), individuals who are able to position themselves for the changing economic landscape will be well-placed to thrive in the years ahead. This requires a proactive approach to career development, including investing in skills development and training, networking, and being adaptable in response to changing economic conditions.

6.0 The Roles of Career Counselors in Enhancing Career Decision -Making

Career counselors play a vital role in enhancing career decision-making among individuals in Nigeria. According to Onyeji (2026), career counselors provide guidance and support to individuals as they navigate their career paths, helping them to identify their strengths, interests, and values. Career counselors use a range of assessment tools and techniques to help individuals understand their career preferences and aptitudes, and provide them with information about different career options and pathways. This process enables individuals to make informed decisions about their career choices and to develop strategies for achieving their career goals.

Career counselors also help individuals to develop the skills and knowledge needed to make informed career decisions. Nwosu (2020) notes that career counselors provide individuals with information about the job market, including trends, opportunities, and challenges. This information helps individuals to make informed decisions about their career choices and to develop strategies for achieving their career goals. Career counselors also provide individuals with resources and support to help them develop job search skills, such as resume writing, interviewing, and networking. These skills are essential for individuals to succeed in the competitive job market.

In addition to providing guidance and support, career counselors also play a key role in helping individuals to overcome career-related challenges and barriers. Eze (2021) notes that career counselors work with individuals to identify and address career-related issues, such as lack of confidence, indecision, or uncertainty about career goals. Career counselors use a range of counseling techniques and strategies to help individuals overcome these challenges and to develop a clear and focused career plan. This may involve helping individuals to identify their strengths and weaknesses, to explore different career options, and to develop a plan for achieving their career goals.

Career counselors also play a critical role in promoting career development and education among individuals in Nigeria. Iwuchukwu (2026) notes that career counselors work with educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders to promote career development and education. Career counselors provide workshops, seminars, and other programs to help individuals develop career-related skills and knowledge, and to promote career awareness and exploration. These programs are designed to help individuals develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce.

Furthermore, career counselors also play a key role in advocating for the needs and interests of individuals in the career development process. Okolie (2020) notes that career counselors work with policymakers, educators, and employers to promote policies and practices that support career development and education. Career counselors also work with individuals to advocate for their career-related needs and interests, and to promote greater access to career development opportunities. This advocacy work is critical in ensuring that individuals have access to the resources and support they need to achieve their career goals.

In Nigerian universities, career counselors play a critical role in supporting students as they transition from education to employment. Adeyemo (2026) notes that career counselors in universities provide students with career guidance and support, including career assessment, career planning, and job search skills development. Career counselors also work with faculty and staff to integrate career development into the curriculum and to promote career awareness and exploration among students. This support is essential in helping students to make informed decisions about their career choices and to achieve their career goals.

The role of career counselors in enhancing career decision-making is critical in Nigeria. As noted by Ekugo (2026), career counselors provide individuals with the guidance, support, and resources needed to make informed career decisions and to achieve their career goals. By working with career counselors, individuals can develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to navigate the complex and ever-changing career landscape.

7.0 The Challenges in Delivering Career Counseling Services in a Resource Constrained Environment

Delivering career counseling services in a resource- environment poses significant challenges, particularly in Nigeria where resources are limited and the demand for services is high. According to Adeyemo (2026), one of the major challenges facing career counselors in Nigeria is the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources, including limited access to technology, inadequate office space, and insufficient funding. This lack of resources hinders the ability of career counselors to provide effective services to their clients, including students, job seekers, and individuals seeking career guidance.

The limited availability of career counseling services in Nigeria is another significant challenge. Nwosu (2020) notes that there is a shortage of trained career counselors in the country, with many schools and institutions lacking dedicated career counseling services. This shortage is exacerbated by the limited number of training programs available for career counselors, making it difficult to address the growing demand for services. As a result, many individuals are left without access to career guidance and support, making it difficult for them to make informed decisions about their career paths.

The socio-economic context of Nigeria also poses significant challenges to delivering career counseling services. Eze (2021) notes that the high levels of poverty and unemployment in the country create a complex environment for career counselors to operate in. Many individuals are seeking career guidance with limited job opportunities available, making it difficult for career counselors to provide realistic and effective guidance. Furthermore, the limited access to education and training opportunities in Nigeria also limits the ability of individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to pursue their career goals.

The lack of collaboration and coordination between stakeholders is another challenge facing career counseling services in Nigeria. Iwuchukwu (2026) notes that there is a need for greater collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, and private sector organizations to provide career counseling services and support. However, this collaboration is often lacking, resulting in a fragmented and ineffective service delivery system. Career counselors often work in isolation, without access to the resources and support they need to provide effective services.

Addressing the challenges facing career counseling services in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach. According to Okolie (2020), there is a need for policymakers, educators, and practitioners to work together to develop and implement effective strategies for delivering career counseling services in resource-constrained environments. This may involve investing in infrastructure and training, promoting collaboration and coordination between stakeholders, and developing innovative and cost-effective approaches to service delivery.

8.0 Conclusion

This opinion research study has highlighted the critical role of career counseling in enhancing career decision-making among individuals in Nigeria. As noted by Onyeji (2026), career counselors provide guidance and support to individuals as they navigate their career paths, helping them to identify their strengths, interests, and values. The study has also shown that career counselors play a vital role in promoting career development and education among individuals in Nigeria, providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce.

However, the study has also revealed significant challenges facing career counseling services in Nigeria, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of trained career counselors (Adeyemo, 2026; Nwosu, 2020). These challenges are exacerbated by the socio-economic context of Nigeria, including high levels of poverty and unemployment, which create a complex environment for career counselors to operate in (Eze, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of collaboration and coordination between stakeholders is a significant barrier to effective service delivery (Iwuchukwu, 2026).

Despite these challenges, the study has shown that career counseling can be effective in enhancing career decision-making among individuals in Nigeria. Okolie (2020) notes that career counseling interventions can help individuals develop the skills and knowledge needed to make informed career decisions, and to achieve their career goals. Therefore, there is a need for policymakers, educators, and practitioners to work together to address the

challenges facing career counseling services in Nigeria, and to promote the development of effective career counseling services.

This study has highlighted the importance of career counseling in Nigeria, and the need for greater investment in this area. As noted by Ekugo (2026), career counselors play a critical role in supporting individuals as they navigate their career paths, and in promoting career development and education. The study recommends that policymakers, educators, and practitioners work together to address the challenges facing career counseling services in Nigeria, and to promote the development of effective career counseling services that meet the needs of individuals in Nigeria.

9.0 Recommendations

The researchers recommended as follows:

1. To increase investment in career counseling services, including funding for infrastructure, training, and personnel.
2. To develop a national policy on career counseling to guide the provision of career counseling services in Nigeria and ensure standardization.
3. To provide training and capacity building opportunities for career counselors to enhance their skills and knowledge.
4. To integrate career counseling into educational curriculum at all levels to promote career awareness and exploration among students.

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