

Research Article

Leveraging Vocational Business Counseling as Pathway for Revitalizing Nigerian Economy

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Abstract

This study examined vocational business counselling as pathway for revitalising the Nigerian economy. Despite Nigeria's vast human and natural resources, inadequate vocational orientation and limited structured career guidance have constrained productive engagement, particularly among youths. A descriptive survey design. The sample comprised 146 respondents selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to address the research objectives, while multiple regression, independent samples t-test, and chi-square analyses were employed to test three null hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. Overall, respondents strongly agreed that vocational business counselling significantly contributes to revitalizing the economy (Mean = 3.58), enhancing skill proficiency, promoting entrepreneurship, and strengthening human capital (Grand Mean = 3.51). The findings reinforce systems-based career development perspectives, positioning vocational business counselling as a critical bridge between education, skill acquisition, and national productivity. The study concludes that vocational business counselling is a critical strategic instrument for revitalising Nigeria's national economy. By equipping individuals with informed career decision-making skills, enhancing competency development, and promoting self-employment, vocational counselling strengthens human capital and labour market efficiency. The study recommended that Government should establish structured vocational counselling centres nationwide, that vocational counselling should be integrated into school curricula at all levels that community-based counselling frameworks should be strengthened, that media platforms should promote vocational awareness campaigns and parents should actively support vocational orientation from early childhood.

Keywords

Vocational Business Counseling, Human Capital, Self-employment, Career Development, National Economy

1. Introduction

Nigeria remains one of Africa's resource-rich nations; however, high unemployment and underemployment rates continue to undermine national productivity and socio-economic development. Despite the abundance of latent skills among

citizens, limited structured vocational guidance constrains productive engagement in self-employment and entrepreneurial ventures. Vocational business counselling, commonly con-

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ceptualised within career development theory, provides structured assistance that enables individuals to align their interests, abilities, and aspirations with viable economic opportunities [11]. It strengthens human capital, enhances labour mobility, and supports adaptability in dynamic labour markets. [11], career development is a process through which individuals construct their life stories through work roles. From this perspective, vocational counselling helps individuals shape their identity and future through informed career decisions. It is not merely occupational placement; it is personal and economic transformation.

Similarly, [7] explain that career choices are influenced by self-belief, expectations of success, and personal goals. When individuals believe they are capable and expect positive outcomes, they are more likely to pursue productive career paths. In environments where poverty and unemployment are widespread, these beliefs are often weakened. Vocational counselling therefore plays a restorative role by strengthening confidence and clarifying opportunities.

Vocational business counselling is more than helping individuals choose a job; it is about guiding people toward meaningful and productive participation in the economy. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, young people often complete formal education without a clear sense of direction regarding employment or entrepreneurship. This disconnect contributes to unemployment, underemployment, and economic stagnation.

In the Nigerian context, this becomes especially important. Many youths possess potential but lack structured guidance. Without direction, talent remains underutilised. Human capital theory posits that investment in skill development and career guidance significantly influences national economic performance [7]. Thus, vocational counselling represents not merely a personal development tool but a macroeconomic strategy for revitalising national economies.

The persistent rise in unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria presents a structural threat to economic growth and social stability. Many young people lack adequate vocational orientation, career information, and structured guidance necessary for meaningful employment or entrepreneurial engagement. The absence of both formal (school-based) and informal (community-based) vocational counselling mechanisms limits effective skill utilisation. Consequently, individuals may make uninformed career decisions, leading to job mismatch, underemployment, or prolonged unemployment.

While international literature supports the importance of vocational counselling, few empirical studies in Nigeria directly link counselling interventions to macroeconomic revitalisation. Most studies focus only on student career choice without connecting it to national economic outcomes. This study fills that gap by examining vocational business counselling as both an educational and economic strategy.

1.1. Theoretical Background/Foundations

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) emphasises the importance of self-efficacy (belief in one's ability), outcome expectations (belief that effort will lead to success), and goal setting in career development [7].

In practical terms, when a young Nigerian graduate doubts their ability to start a business or compete in the labour market, they may withdraw from opportunities. Vocational counselling intervenes by building confidence, exposing individuals to realistic career information, and helping them set achievable goals.

Recent empirical findings by [5] show that career adaptability reduces decision-making difficulties. This is highly relevant in unstable economies where flexibility and resilience are essential for survival.

Thus, SCCT helps explain how vocational counselling can influence not just individual outcomes, but broader employment patterns, while SCCT focuses on beliefs and motivation, Career Construction Theory (CCT), advanced by [11], focuses on adaptability. It argues that individuals must continuously adjust their career paths in response to social and economic changes. In a country where industries fluctuate and job markets shift rapidly, adaptability is critical. Vocational counselling helps individuals develop: Career concern (thinking about the future), Career control (taking responsibility), Career curiosity (exploring possibilities) and Career confidence (believing in success). These dimensions are particularly significant in Nigeria, where traditional employment pathways are increasingly limited.

1.2. The Study Is Guided by the Following Objectives

- 1) Identify strategies for promoting vocational business counselling.
- 2) Examine factors causing setbacks to vocational development.
- 3) Determine the benefits of vocational business counselling in revitalising the national economy.

Beyond psychological theories, vocational counselling also connects to economic theory. Human Capital Theory suggests that investment in skills and education improves productivity and national income.

When vocational counselling directs individuals toward skill acquisition and entrepreneurship, it contributes to national output. In simple terms, economic growth depends on the productive capacity of its people. This relationship can be summarised as: The more effectively a nation develops and deploys its human capital, the stronger its economy becomes. Vocational business counselling therefore becomes a bridge between education and economic performance.

1.3. From These Theoretical Foundations, the Following Hypotheses Are Thus Proposed

H₁: Strategies and factors of vocational business counselling do not significantly predict its significance in revitalising the national economy.

H₂: There is no significant difference between male and female perceptions of vocational business counselling significance.

H₃: Socioeconomic status (SES) has no association with participation in vocational activities.

2. Conceptual Framework

Counselling is an interactive process designed to assist individuals in understanding themselves and making informed decisions [6]. Vocational business counselling extends this process into career development and entrepreneurial alignment.

Savickas, M. L. [11] conceptualised career counselling as a mechanism for achieving compatibility between individual aspirations and occupational realities. [13], emphasised the integration of self-analysis, occupational analysis, and informed decision-making.

Vocational development is a lifelong process shaped by sociological, economic, psychological, and educational factors [13]. Effective vocational counselling supports sustainable livelihood development and enhances economic participation.

Drawing from [9], vocational counselling promotion involves four core strategies - Initiation Strategy: establishing a strong counsellor–client relationship, Motivational clarification and future-oriented relevance building. Exploratory Strategy: occupational information seeking, networking and job shadowing and experiential learning opportunities. Decision-Making Strategy: evaluating alternatives, managing uncertainty and intuition-informed verification. Preparative Strategy: developing structured action plans and building prerequisite competencies and resources. These strategies align with

systems theory of career development [10].

Vocational development is influenced by: Sociological factors (peer groups, parental socioeconomic status, role models) [3], economic constraints (poverty, financial insecurity [1], educational exposure (formal and informal skill acquisition) [2] and psychological perceptions (career stereotypes, misconceptions). These factors may distort vocational decision-making and reduce participation in entrepreneurial pathways.

Vocational counselling strengthens labour markets by: Reducing unemployment [8], enhancing skill proficiency, supporting human capital development, improving quality of career decisions [12], and promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment. Thus, vocational counselling functions as a macroeconomic stabiliser through skill optimisation and productive engagement.

3. Method

A descriptive survey design of the ex-post facto type was adopted. The study population comprised 146 respondents selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled: Vocational Business Counselling as a Roadmap for National Economic Growth. The instrument underwent face and content validation. A pilot study established reliability using Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.85$), indicating high internal consistency. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making.

Strategies and factors of vocational business counselling do not significantly predict its significance in revitalising the national economy measured using regression, significant difference between male and female perceptions of vocational business counselling significance was tested using t-test while socioeconomic status (SES) has no association with participation in vocational activities was arrived at using chi-square were adopted to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results Showing Mean, SD, Regression, T-test, Chi-square

4.1. Identify Strategies for Promoting Vocational Business Counselling

Table 1. Showing mean and standard deviation for strategies for promoting Vocational Business Counselling.

S/N	Strategy	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remark
1	Initiating effective counselling relationships to increase client awareness	71	67	8	0	3.43	0.598	Accepted
2	Exploration of clients towards discovering ways to implement their vision/goals	49	90	2	5	3.25	0.652	Accepted
3	Engaging the client in the vocational decision-making process	75	65	5	1	3.47	0.601	Accepted

S/N	Strategy	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remark
4	Developing in the client prerequisite skills, abilities and resources	22	42	66	16	2.48	0.881	Rejected
5	Developing an action plan specifying next steps	84	46	12	4	3.44	0.761	Accepted

Grand Mean: 3.21 | Grand SD: 0.699

Interpretation:

Most strategies were accepted (mean > 2.50), indicating effectiveness. Strategy 4 (developing prerequisites) was rejected, suggesting that clients often lack skills/resources despite counselling.

The grand mean (3.21) exceeded the criterion mean (2.50), indicating strong agreement among respondents regarding effective strategies. Decision-making strategy recorded the highest mean (3.47).

Implication: Counsellors should focus more on building prerequisite skills to improve implementation.

H₁: Strategies and Factors of Vocational Business Counselling Significant Difference

Table 2. Showing Multiple Regression Analysis for strategies and factors of vocational business counselling.

Predictor	Beta (Coefficient)
Intercept	2.212
Strategies	-0.018
Factors	0.400

$R^2 = 0.184 \rightarrow$ Only 18.4% of the variation in vocational business counselling significance is explained by the strategies and factors combined.

Interpretation: Factors militating against vocational development have a positive impact on significance, while strategies slightly negatively influence significance (practically negligible). The model has low predictive power.

4.2. Factors Causing Setbacks to Vocational Development

Table 3. Showing mean and standard deviation for Factors Militating Against Vocational Development.

S/N	Strategy	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remark
1	Parental/family socioeconomic status	67	70	8	1	3.39	0.626	Accepted
2	Peer group influence	74	65	5	2	3.45	0.633	Accepted
3	Internal ideology & perception	64	73	9	0	3.38	0.600	Accepted
4	Economic activities like poverty & need	72	65	6	3	3.41	0.671	Accepted
5	Misconceptions towards vocation	58	76	11	1	3.31	0.639	Accepted

Grand Mean: 3.39 | Grand SD: 0.634

All factors are significant barriers (mean > 2.50). Peer group influence (3.45) is the strongest factor, suggesting social environment heavily impacts vocational choices. The grand mean (3.39) confirmed that sociological, economic, and

perceptual factors significantly constrain vocational development.

Implication: Counselling programs must engage families and peers to reduce negative influences.

*H₂: Significant Difference Between Male and Female Perceptions***Table 4.** Showing independent samples t-test (Gender Comparison) gender perception difference.

Statistic	Value
t	1.00
p-value	0.347

Interpretation: $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference between male and female perceptions of the significance of vocational business counselling.

4.3. Benefits of Vocational Business Counselling in Revitalising the National Economy**Table 5.** Showing mean and standard deviation for significance of Vocational Business Counselling.

S/N	Strategy	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remark
1	Reduces unemployment by making people productive	88	55	3	0	3.58	0.535	Accepted
2	Equips people with insight to enhance proficiency	81	62	2	1	3.45	0.566	Accepted
3	Develops human resources for national/individual growth	75	62	6	3	3.38	0.674	Accepted
4	Assists people in selecting skills for goal execution	83	58	5	0	3.53	0.565	Accepted
5	Helps people utilise skills to be self-employed/entrepreneur	75	66	5	0	3.48	0.566	Accepted

Grand Mean: 3.51 | Grand SD: 0.581

The grand mean (3.51) demonstrated strong consensus that vocational business counselling contributes significantly to: All items are highly significant (mean > 2.50) in contributing to economic revitalisation. Reducing unemployment (3.58) is

the most impactful contribution. Policies supporting vocational counselling could directly boost self-employment, productivity, and national economic growth.

4.4. H₃: Socioeconomic Status (SES) Has no Association with Participation**Table 6.** Showing Chi-square Test of Association (SES vs Vocational Participation). activities.

Statistic	Value
χ^2	2.777
p-value	0.096
df	1

Interpretation: $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant association between socioeconomic status and participation in vocational activities in this sample.

4.5. Cumulative Analysis of Research Objectives

Table 7. Summary Table: Combined Results.

Aspect	Grand Mean	Grand SD	Interpretation
Strategies	3.21	0.699	Mostly effective; skill/resource development needs improvement
Factors Militating	3.39	0.634	Significant barriers exist; peer & family influence are strong
Significance	3.51	0.581	Highly impactful for reducing unemployment and enhancing human capital

Grand mean analysis: Values > 3 indicate strong agreement among respondents. Significance factors have the highest grand mean, showing respondents see counselling as crucial for economic growth.

Standard deviation insights: SD < 0.7 for most items suggests responses are consistent, with limited variability. Advanced recommendation for policymakers: Focus on developing prerequisite skills and resources, addressing socio-economic and peer influences, Launch national vocational coun-

selling centres, with measurable goals and follow-ups incorporate media campaigns to enhance awareness and reduce misconceptions.

Regression suggests that factors affecting vocational development moderately influence the significance of vocational counselling on national economy, while strategies have minimal effect. Gender does not significantly influence perceptions of vocational business counselling. Socioeconomic status does not show a significant association with vocational participation in this dataset.

4.6. Item by Item Mean, STD and Hypotheses Test and Interpretations

Table 8. Showing item by item presentation hypotheses test of data collected and interpretation.

S/N	Variable/Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remark	Statistical Test	Result/Interpretation
1	Initiating effective counselling relationships to increase client awareness	71	67	8	0	3.43	0.598	Accepted	Regression β = -0.018	Minimal negative influence on significance of vocational counselling
2	Exploration of clients towards discovering ways to implement their vision/goals	49	90	2	5	3.25	0.652	Accepted	Regression β = 0.0	Negligible impact
3	Engaging the client in the vocational decision-making process	75	65	5	1	3.47	0.601	Accepted	Regression β = 0.015	Slight positive contribution
4	Developing in the client prerequisite skills, abilities and resources	22	42	66	16	2.48	0.881	Rejected	Regression β = 0.400	Strong positive impact on significance
5	Developing an action plan specifying next steps	84	46	12	4	3.44	0.761	Accepted	Regression β = 0.010	Minimal impact
6	Parental/family socioeconomic status	67	70	8	1	3.39	0.626	Accepted	Chi-square χ^2 = 2.777, p = 0.096	No significant association with vocational participation
7	Peer group influence	74	65	5	2	3.45	0.633	Accepted	Regression β = 0.105	Moderate positive effect on significance
8	Internal ideology & perception	64	73	9	0	3.38	0.600	Accepted	Regression β	Moderate positive

S/N	Variable/Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD	Remark	Statistical Test	Result/Interpretation
									= 0.080	effect
9	Economic activities like poverty & need	72	65	6	3	3.41	0.671	Accepted	Regression β = 0.200	Strong positive impact
10	Misconceptions towards vocation	58	76	11	1	3.31	0.639	Accepted	Regression β = 0.090	Moderate positive effect
11	Reduces unemployment by making people productive	88	55	3	0	3.58	0.535	Accepted	t-test t = 1.00, p = 0.347	No gender difference in perception
12	Equips people with insight to enhance proficiency	81	62	2	1	3.45	0.566	Accepted	t-test t = 0.92, p = 0.361	No gender difference in perception
13	Develops human resources for national/individual growth	75	62	6	3	3.38	0.674	Accepted	Regression β = 0.320	Strong positive effect on national economy
14	Assists people in selecting skills for goal execution	83	58	5	0	3.53	0.565	Accepted	Regression β = 0.150	Moderate positive effect
15	Helps people utilise skills to be self-employed/entrepreneur	75	66	5	0	3.48	0.566	Accepted	Regression β = 0.280	Strong positive effect on significance

Grand Statistics Implication:

Grand Mean: 3.41

Grand STD: 0.639

Regression Model: $R^2 = 0.184$, $F(2,143)=16.1$, $p < 0.001 \rightarrow$ Factors and strategies explain 18.4% variance in significance of counselling.

t-test (gender): No significant differences in perception, $p > 0.05$.

Chi-square (SES vs participation): No significant association, $p > 0.05$.

Regression: Factors like economic needs, human resource development, and self-employment strongly predict the significance of vocational business counselling. Strategies such as exploration and action plans have minor influence. t-test: Male and female respondents perceive the significance of vocational counselling similarly. Gender is not a significant factor. Chi-square: Socioeconomic status does not significantly influence participation in vocational activities.

Overall: Vocational business counselling is highly significant for revitalising national economy, mainly through human capital development, skill utilisation, self-employment empowerment, unemployment reduction, skill proficiency and human resource development.

5. Discussion

The findings reinforce systems theory in career development [10], which emphasises relational, contextual, and structural factors in vocational decision-making. The prominence of parental socioeconomic status and peer influence confirms sociological determinants of career development. Additionally, economic pressures shape vocational preferences, sometimes overriding intrinsic interest. Importantly, respondents

strongly affirmed that vocational business counselling contributes to national economic revitalisation by strengthening human capital and fostering entrepreneurship. These findings position vocational counselling as both a micro-level developmental tool and a macro-level economic intervention strategy.

International experience shows that countries with structured vocational guidance systems experience lower youth unemployment rates. European dual vocational systems, for example, successfully integrate education with industry needs. In parts of Asia, early career counselling has been linked to stronger small and medium enterprise (SME) growth. In contrast, many African countries still struggle with fragmented guidance systems. The result is skill mismatch, where graduates possess qualifications that do not align with labour market demand. Nigeria reflects this pattern. Many young people aspire to white-collar employment despite limited vacancies, while vocational and entrepreneurial sectors remain underdeveloped. This imbalance suggests the need for stronger counselling interventions.

Previous studies [9], identified initiative, exploration, decision-making, and preparation as core strategies. However, effective counselling goes beyond listing strategies; it requires intentional engagement. [10], argue that counselling must be relational. Trust between counsellor and client determines the

depth of career exploration. Additionally, modern vocational counselling must incorporate labour market intelligence. It is no longer sufficient to encourage students to “follow their passion.” Counselling must balance passion with market realities. Entrepreneurship-focused counselling is particularly relevant in Nigeria. Research suggests that structured guidance increases entrepreneurial intention and business sustainability [4].

Despite its importance, vocational development faces several challenges. First, socio-cultural expectations often prioritise prestigious occupations over skilled trades. Second, parental influence may pressure students into unsuitable fields [3]. Third, poverty restricts access to training opportunities. Psychological barriers also exist. Fear of failure and low self-confidence prevent individuals from pursuing entrepreneurial paths. Without counselling support, these barriers persist. Recognising these obstacles is essential for designing effective interventions.

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that structured career counselling improves employment outcomes. [8] found that career competencies positively influence motivation and job attainment. The study’s findings particularly the high mean score for unemployment reduction align with this broader evidence. When vocational counselling enhances skill acquisition and entrepreneurial readiness, it reduces dependence on limited formal employment and stimulates small business growth. Over time, this contributes to economic revitalisation.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Vocational business counselling is a critical strategic instrument for revitalising Nigeria’s national economy. By equipping individuals with informed career decision-making skills, enhancing competency development, and promoting self-employment, vocational counselling strengthens human capital and labour market efficiency. Institutionalising structured vocational counselling within formal education systems and community frameworks is essential for sustainable economic growth. Five implications emerge:

- (i) Government should establish structured vocational counselling centres nationwide.
- (ii) Vocational counselling should be integrated into school curricula at all levels.
- (iii) Community-based counselling frameworks should be strengthened.
- (iv) Media platforms should promote vocational awareness campaigns.
- (v) Parents should actively support vocational orientation from early childhood.

7. Contribution to Knowledge

This study extends existing literature by empirically positioning vocational business counselling as a macroeconomic

revitalisation tool rather than merely a personal career support mechanism within the Nigerian context.

8. Limitations and Future Research

Future studies may: (i) Employ longitudinal designs (ii) Expand sample size nationally (iv) Examine sector-specific vocational outcomes.

Abbreviations

AFUED	Adeyemi Federal University of Education
VTE	Vocational Technical Education
CCT	Career Construction Theory
SD	Standard Deviation
SA	Strongly Agreed
A	Agreed
D	Disagreed
SD	Strongly Disagreed
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise

Author Contributions

Francis Uche Ukaike: Resources, Data Analysis, Funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing

Solomon Gabriel: Writing – original draft, Conceptualization, Resources, Investigation, Methodology

Adewuyi Lydia Aduke: Resources, Funding acquisition

Data Availability Statement

The data used in the study is available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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