Influence of Group Counselling Programmes in Facilitating the Vocational Choice of Secondary School Students in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study investigated the influence of group counselling programmes on the vocational choice of secondary school students in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba state, Nigeria. The design of the study was descriptive survey. The population consist of 3,485 Students from 41 secondary schools in Jalingo education zone. The sample size of the study was 480 respondents from 12 public secondary schools in Jalingo education zone. The researcher’s self-developed questionnaire formed the instruments for data collection, validated by three experts from the department of educational foundations in Taraba State University. A Cronbach Alpha reliability of coefficient method was employed to ensure the reliability of the instrument at 0.768. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were used to guide the study. Descriptive statistic of mean score was used to answer the research questions. Chi square ($\chi^2$) inferential statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A checklist of 53 different vocations and 21-items questionnaire in four Likert point scale with demographic variables of the respondents was used for data collection. The study recommends that government should give group counselling priority, train more professional counsellors; counsellors and principals should give students adequate attention and should create more awareness and provide accurate information to students on group counselling to facilitate their vocational choice irrespective of their age and gender.

Introduction:

Group counselling is defined as a dynamic interpersonal process through which individuals within the normal range or adjustment work within a peer group and with a professionally trained counsellor, exploring problems and feelings in an attempt to modify their attitudes so that they are better able to deal with developmental problems (Owuamanam, in Babatunde and Osakinle 2013). The dynamic sum in group counselling implies that there is a force within which group members organize and operate to achieve their goals. According to Michael (2011), group counselling is a form of therapy, which posited that people benefited more from shared leaving experiences. Usually group counselling is focused on a particular issue, for example anger management. While a therapist usually manages group counselling contributions other members in the group are considered valuable since all in the group share similar issues. One of the main principles behind group counselling is the idea that dealing with specific issues may cause isolation, and a feeling that one is alone in facing one’s problems. Additionally, knowing other people with similar troubles can be comforting to each individual, who may not have access in their own family and friends to people with the same problem.

A group counselling consists of five and ten people, supported by a facilitator. members meet together regularly to learn more about themselves and how they relate to others. Group counseling programme is an invaluable tool for self-learning and experimenting with different ways of behaviors (Michael 2011). The basic contention of the developmental approach to group counselling programme in secondary school is that different age groups require significantly different treatment conditions. For example, the size of a group
counselling of fourteen-or fifteen-year-olds would be about 6 or 7 students; sixteen and seventeen -year-olds, 8 to 9 students; and adults, 10 to 15 students. The treatment setting for these groups takes place in conference room in form of psycho-drama and transactional analysis therapy such as counseele talk, debate, career counselling, career game and drama among secondary school students (Babatunde and Osakinle, 2013).

According to Michael (2011), group counselling programmes help in providing unique environment for sharing, exploring issues in depth among group members, avoiding self-isolation and loneliness. Group counselling, if highly organized, costs less, provides the opportunity to help others as well as being helped. it gives the feeling of empowerment, improvement by sensitivity and insight, promoting growth and change. in view of this conception, group counselling programme is out to assist students in decision-making through the help of a professional counsellor. Owuamanam (2003) as cited in Babatunde and Osakinle (2013), describes group counselling as a designed programme which a preventive measure is given to students as opportunity to discuss their common problems and issues relating to their educational and vocational problems. She also stressed the importance of guidance counsellor as the group guidance facilitator based on training and experience.

Giallombardo (2006), defined vocational choice as the sequences of positions, jobs occupation which a person engages in during his working life. Vocational choice preparation focuses on issue related to the world of work. Vocational choice should be initiated as early as the nursery school years through the primary, secondary and the tertiary school level. In 1980 during the round table conference in the United States vocational choice was define as a pattern of decision, transition, adjustment, related to one roles in work education, family, community and leisure.

With the amount of vocational options for people to explore today, vocational career development has become an increasingly popular tool for individuals to learn more about their vocational interests and possibilities. Vocational career development is especially helpful when working with students. The secondary school years are an important time for students because of the transitions they will be facing and their decisions regarding further education and vocational career choice (Giallombardo 2006). School counselors play an essential part in providing students with information about their vocational careers (Gibson& Mitchell, 1995; Bloch, 1996; Barker, 2000 in Giallombardo 2006). Unfortunately, counselors in a school setting usually carry a large case load of students and may not have a large amount of time to devote to vocational career development, therefore group counselling is then now employed to guide and counsel the students on their vocational choice (Gulleksen 1995 in Giallombardo 2006).

The societies had masculine and famine vocations. However, with explosion and improved technology. Emphasis on fundamental human right many vocations are no longer gender bias, even though women are in social service vocation like teaching, nursing, and hotel services, probably due to their affectionate attitude. In spite of gender free vocational preference, the female low literacy rate, marital status and productive function are affecting their vocational choice. It Is therefore, that vocational guidance should not undermine the sex and marital status of client. This is necessary because certain occupation requirement put restriction on marital status particularly women. The marital status of women therefore needs to be identified, for instance for entering into police a woman must join the force before she marries. Both gender and age (mental and chronological), are influential to vocational choice. However, the chronological age is most at time more relevant because it indicates on physical maturity (Tor-Anyiin, 2008).

Vocation choice is one of the parameter or yardstick that students made in determining their future plans. Their decision will influence their future throughout their lives. Basavage (1996) in Mbagwu and Okechukwu (2016) asked; what is it that influences children career choice? These ideas of what motivates a child into a certain vocation and repels him/her from other are not new, these issues have become a growing interest to educators, counsellors, minsters and social scientists. Those factors that influence vocational include; socio economic status and educational level of the family, employability of the vocation, environment, age of the choice maker, gender, religious affiliation and other social factors (Basavage 1996 in Mbagwu & Okechukwu 2016).

In Nigeria and beyond, boys and girls choose subjects that leads to their vocation when they are in secondary school. Vocational choice is not an immediate event but it arrived at through sense of development process of...
interest. Super (1990) in Akume (2010) identified five stages of career development with the accompanying developmental tasks as thus; Growth stage (birth to 14 years), Exploration stage (15-25 years) Establishment stage (25-44 years) and Decline Stage (65 years to death). The theory based on the belief that career choice provide opportunity for expressing one’s self concept and developmental task that the individuals needs to accomplish at each stage of life.

Roe’s in Akume (2005), expressed that in providing vocational counselling for students, counselor should try to investigate the early child experience of the students in order to guide him/her into the appropriate career group. Holland in Tor-Anyiin (2008), stressed that vocational theory is based on the self-concepts, the vocational choice depends much on how much the students knows himself. The counselor should use assorted appraisal programme to help clients know their individual personality.

Career choice is one of the important issues in education and also it is an indispensable aspect of life. The federal government of Nigeria (FGN, 2004) outline the importance of vocational guidance in secondary school and emphasized the need for career guidance at all educational level, thus; “in view of the apparent ignorance of many students about career prospects and in view of the personality maladjustment among secondary school students, career officers and counselor shall be appointed in post primary schools”. With this statement Tor-Anyiin and Akko (2006), stressed that vocational guidance is relevant in facilitating the right choice of subject and combination, planning and preparing for entry into vocations. Yahaya (2007), confirmed that adequate and appropriate vocational information or facts and figures must be given to students always in the school to assist students identify and outline resources, environmental opportunities in the process of self-understanding, planning, decision making and coping with the challenges that are related to their developmental changes. Information is very important in students life vocational choice, lack of information makes students jumps in to vocations badly and end up frustrated. Wattles (2009) stated that most of the secondary school students lack accurate information on vocational choice, majority of the students selected same gender role occupational opportunities to help them make models. According to Akume (2010), vocational guidance is primarily concerned with creativity awareness in the students about their personality attributes and the world of work so that they will be better placed to make vocational choice. The counsellor has to provide students with information about their aptitudes, interests, temperament, values and disposition. Vocational opportunities, job requirement and nature of training, and conditions of services and such other information that can equipped them about career prospects in their environments for better future. this can be done easily by the counsellor through deep counselling in the school. the counsellor need to be information conscious and currents. this will enable students to be information headed. Natalie (2006), opined that young adults through interaction with the context of family, school and community learn about and explore career choice. He explained that adolescent’s own aspiration is influenced by their parents, aspirations or expectations. Parental support and encouragement are important factors that have been found to influence career choice. Children may choose what their parent desire simply to please them (Taylor et. al 2004 in Kochung & Migunde 2011).

Parental factor has a significant influence on students vocational choice particularly during adolescence stage. Ugwu (2009), observed that parental influence makes a major during adolescence. Parents may demand their children assume their profession, a family business or go for a particular vocation based on what they think the family needs, the level of impact made by those parents depends so much on their level of education and socialization.

Nwoke (2007), observed that parents educational background seems to influence and propel the type of courses children study in the tertiary institutions and their subsequent vocational choice. Likewise, Okeke in Mbagwu (2016) opined that parent’s occupation influences vocational choice of their children. 60% of the children are willing to follow their parent’s occupation. He expressed that parents work status also determines students vocational choice. Ejike (2001) in Mbagwu (2016) also stated that, the students with parents of low occupational status did not choose their parents occupation while the students with parents who have higher occupational status are willing to choose their parents occupation.

Gullekson (1995), in Giallombardo (2005), found that when vocational career planning activities were implemented, counselors would hold one-time seminars to a large group of students in order to provide
information in a timely manner. Within these large group seminars, the school may provide information on post-secondary education and vocational careers, but not necessarily help the students learn about their interests and values regarding their vocational choice. Vocational career exploration can be helpful when counselors meet on an individual basis with students, however this is not always realistic with the number of students counselors may have on their caseload.

One way to reach a number of students on a more individual basis is with groups. Career counselling in groups would provide counselors the opportunity to meet with more students at once as well as providing individualized information on their vocational choices. Using groups would allow students to explore their own self, hear others’ fears and desires, and gain knowledge about their vocational choice. Counsellors, therefore, have an important role in advocating for broad based vocational career plans that focus on the students interests and abilities which will give student’s increased future vocational choice.

Statement of the Problem:

In spite of the implementation of counselling programmes in Nigeria secondary school education system, most secondary school students in Jalingo education zone of Taraba State have not been able to select appropriate subjects in terms of study area, which can facilitate their vocational choice positively.

The problem of this study is the prevalence of job dissatisfaction, low job productivity and personality mismatch with career decision making in the study area. The researcher observed that students were not given proper or suitable vocational counselling and accurate information of the vocation that can give them job satisfaction and job satisfactoriness.

This study therefore, assess the influence of group counselling programmes in facilitating the vocational choice of secondary school students in Jalingo education zone of Taraba State.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of group counselling programmes in facilitating the vocational choice of secondary school students in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine factors, other than age and gender that influence students’ vocational choice in in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.
2. Determine the influence of age differences on students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.
3. Determine the influence of gender on students’ vocational choice in secondary schools in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.

Research Questions:

This study address the following research questions;

1. What factors, other than age and gender, that influence students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone of Taraba State?
2. To what extent would age differences influence students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State?
3. To what extent would gender influence students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State?

Hypotheses:

The following null hypotheses based on the purpose of the study are postulated and tested at $H_0 > 0.05$ level of significance during the investigation:
1. There is no significant effect of group counselling programmes on students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.

2. There is no significant age difference in the vocational choice of students in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.

3. There is no significant gender difference in vocational choice of students in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.

**Methodology:**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design aimed at determining the influence of group counselling programmes in facilitating Secondary School students vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba state.

The population of this study consists of all SS II students in Jalingo Education Zone of Taraba state, with population of three thousand four hundred and eighty-five (3,485) students from the forty-one (41) secondary schools in Jalingo education zone.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from the entire SS II students of public secondary school in Jalingo education zone Taraba State. The disproportional or non-proportional sampling technique was used in selecting only twelve (12) secondary schools in Jalingo education zone of Taraba State.

An instrument titled “Influence of Group counselling Programmes in facilitating the vocational choice of secondary schools Students in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State (IGCP)” was employed to collect relevant data. IGCP consists of a checklist comprising a 53 different vocations and questionnaire made up of 21 items with demographic variables of the respondents. In the checklist each student was allowed to choose a vocation of his/her choice irrespective of their age and gender while in the questionnaire, the Likert scale type was used in measuring the student’s level of awareness. The responses on the modified Likert scale type are as follows; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), it is intensified that the response of the respondents towards vocational choice on Likert scale type determined their scores respectively. The Instrument was validated by three experts from the faculty of education Taraba State University for face and content validity. The reliability of IGCP was established with Cronbach Alpha Techniques with a reliability co-efficient of 0.768. Reliability coefficients was considered to be sufficient enough to confirm and reflect the internal consistency of the instruments. The instruments (IGCP) was administered to the 480 respondents in the twelve (12) selected schools in Jalingo Education zone. The descriptive analyses using mean, standard deviation, frequencies, percentages in tables was used to summarize and organize data and to describe the characteristics of the sample population. Inferential statistics was used in making deductions and generalizations about the whole population. Chi-square was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. In answering the research questions, the interpretation for the mean score is such that low mean (1.00-2.49) stands for disagree, while high mean (2.50-4.00) stands for agree. This decision was arrived at after considering the level of lower and upper boundaries for the level of decision taken for all the responses in the instrument.

The decision rule for testing the hypotheses is that, where the probability value (p) is less than the level of research significance and where the value of X² calculated is greater than the X² Critical the null hypothesis is rejected. Also, where the probability value (p) is greater than the level of research significance and where the value of X² calculated is less than the X² Critical the null hypothesis is retained, this was the decision rule for testing the 3 null hypotheses of the research.

**Results:**

**Research Question 1:**

What factors, other than age and gender, that influence students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone of Taraba State?
Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of group counselling programmes on student’s vocational choice.

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                 | N  | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Remark   |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|--------|----------------|----------|
| 1   | Group counselling programmes helps me to know how to go about choosing my vocation | 480 | 3.4750 | .66794         | AGREED   |
| 2   | Group counselling programmes provide me with all information about my vocation | 480 | 3.2000 | .73788         | AGREED   |
| 3   | The kind of information to collect about my vocation are known to me through group counselling programmes | 480 | 3.1083 | .81782         | AGREED   |
| 4   | Schools subjects necessary for my vocational choice are known to me through Group counselling programmes | 480 | 3.1000 | .86837         | AGREED   |
| 5   | Through Group counselling programmes I know where to go and collect information about my vocational choice | 480 | 3.1292 | .83752         | AGREED   |
| 6   | Group counselling programmes helps me to understand that different vocation has different salaries | 480 | 3.1104 | .87787         | AGREED   |
| 7   | Group counselling programmes helps me with my disciplinary problems. | 480 | 3.0125 | .88117         | AGREED   |
| 8   | Group counselling programmes helps me to be aware of my vocational opportunities | 480 | 3.1833 | .85951         | AGREED   |
| 9   | Group counselling technique through the Guidance counselor assist me in vocational choice making. | 480 | 3.0854 | .86873         | AGREED   |
| Valid N |                                                                 | 480 |        |                |          |

Mean Criterion: **2.50 above (Agree)**     **Below 2.50 (Disagree)**

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Table 1 shows that based on the decision means value of 2.50 and above, all the items on the research question are in agreement that group counselling programmes influence students vocational choice to a high extent.

**Research Question 2:**

*To what extent would age difference influence students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State?*

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the influence of group counselling programmes on student’s vocational choice with respect to their age differences

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                 | N  | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Remarks |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|--------|----------------|---------|
| 10  | Group counselling programmes helps to reduce age conflict and friction on my vocational choice. | 480 | 2.9937 | .91722         | AGREED  |
| 11  | Group counselling programmes provides me with vocational opportunities regarding to my age. | 480 | 3.0000 | .87651         | AGREED  |
| 12  | Group counselling programmes helps me to solve difficulties related to my vocational choice and my age | 480 | 3.2083 | .82897         | AGREED  |
| 13  | Group counselling programmes helps me to understand the strength and weakness of my age towards vocational choice. | 480 | 3.0875 | .89807         | AGREED  |
| 14  | Group counselling programmes assists me to choose my vocation without age bias. | 480 | 3.1042 | .89861         | AGREED  |
| 15  | Group counselling programmes equip me with job opportunities information in line with my age. | 480 | 3.0167 | .91367         | AGREED  |

Valid N | 480 |

Mean Criterion: **2.50 above (Agree)**                                      **Below 2.50 (Disagree)**
Table 2 reveals that the mean value of 2.50 above was met and therefore, the response to all the items agreed that group counselling programmes influences the vocational choice of students with respect to their age differences. Therefore, the vocational choice of students is influenced by their age to a high extent.

**Research Question 3:**

*To what extent would gender influence students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.*

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on group counselling programmes on male and female vocational choice.**

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                 | N  | Mean | Std. Deviation | Remarks |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|----------------|---------|
|     | Group counselling programmes helps to reduce gender conflict and friction on my vocational choice. | 480 | 3.0646 | .92178         | AGREED  |
|     | Group counselling programmes provides me with vocational opportunities regarding to my gender. | 480 | 3.0354 | .92788         | AGREED  |
|     | Group counselling programmes helps me to solve difficulties related to my vocational choice and my gender. | 480 | 3.1667 | .82834         | AGREED  |
|     | Group counselling programmes helps me to understand the strength and weakness of my gender towards my vocational choice. | 480 | 3.1083 | .90737         | AGREED  |
|     | Group counselling programmes assists me to choose vocation without gender bias. | 480 | 2.9917 | .93412         | AGREED  |
|     | Group counselling programmes equip me with job opportunities information in line with my gender. | 480 | 3.0375 | .89457         | AGREED  |

Mean Criterion: **2.50 above (Agree)**  **Below 2.50 (Disagree)**

Table 9 shows that, the mean of the items are higher than the mean value of 2.50, this signifies, that Group counselling programmes influences the vocational choice of male and females students to a high extent.

Three null hypotheses were raised in this study. These were aimed at determining the influence of group counselling programmes in facilitating the vocational choice of secondary school students in Jalingo education zone of Taraba state. The hypotheses were as follows:

**Hypothesis 1:**

*There is no significant effect of group counselling programmes on students’ vocational choice in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.*
From the result of Chi-square ($X^2$) analysis, in the table above, it was discovered that the p-value (0.000) is less than the level of significance (0.05) also it was observed that the $X^2$ calculated (134.00), is greater than the $X^2$ critical (36.42). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted, which now states that “There is significant difference in group counselling and students vocational choice”. The level of students’ awareness through group counselling influence their vocational choice to high extent.

**Hypothesis 2:**

*There is no significant age difference in the vocational choice of students in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.*

Table 5: Chi-Square ($X^2$) Tests for the influence of age differences in group counselling programmes on student’s vocational choice

| Chi-Square Tests (0.05) |   |   |   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
|                         | Value | Df | p-value | $X^2$ Critical |
| Pearson Chi Square      | 134.00 | 24 | 0.000   | 36.42        |

Analysis of the $X^2$ in the above tables shows the null hypothesis was nullified because, the p-value (0.0035) was less than the significance level of the research which is 0.05 and also the $X^2$ calculated (26.3) is greater than the $X^2$ critical (25). This then shows that there is significance difference in group counselling and students vocational choice with respect to their age. This signify that age is not a determinant factor of vocational choice.

**Hypothesis 3:**

*There is no significant gender difference in vocational choice of students in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State.*

Table 6: Chi-Square ($X^2$) Tests on the influence of Gender disparity in group counselling programmes on student’s vocational choice

| Chi-Square Tests (0.05) |   |   |   |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
|                         | Value | Df | p-value | $X^2$ Critical |
| Pearson Chi Square      | 33.3  | 15 | 0.005   | 25             |

The results shown in Table 13 above reveals that $X^2$ p-value was (0.005) is less than the level of significance (0.05) and also the $X^2$ calculated (33.3) is greater than the $X^2$ critical (25). This therefore, concludes that the null hypothesis is not retained, while the alternative hypothesis is upheld which states that “there is a significance difference in group counselling and student’s vocational choice with respect to their gender”.
The results of the study based on demographic data and vocational checklist on group counselling shows that group counselling have influence in facilitating the vocational choice of secondary school students in Jalingo education zone Taraba state. The respondents were between three age group of 12-15, 16-19 and 20 above, majority of the respondents were between the 16-19 age range. The respondents were male and female students. The male students comprised 55% of the study sample while the remaining 45% were the female counterpart. The vocational choice of the respondents was of diverse choice, the vocations with the highest number of respondents were medicine, law, pharmacy, accounting, mass communication, nursing, political science, biochemistry, medical laboratory technology, computer science and music, while the remaining vocations has less number of respondents. Different vocational choices were dominated by the two genders. The male dominated vocations ranging from Medicine, Law, Pharmacy, Computer Science, Chemical Engineering and Music, while the female students on the other hand dominated vocations such as, Nursing, Medical Laboratory Science, History and International Relations, Mass communication and Accounting.

A chi-square X² test was conducted to investigate the influence of group counselling programmes in facilitating the vocational choice students in Taraba state. The results of the finding were discussed under three major sub-heading which are;

- Vocational Awareness through group counselling programmes
- Influence of age differences on vocational Choice of Students
- Influence of gender disparity on vocational Choice of Students

### Vocational Awareness Through Group counselling Programmes:

Results of the first research question addressing the vocational awareness of students through group counselling programmes, as revealed in Table 6 shows that group counselling programmes influences the vocational choice of students to a high extent. However, the results of Hypothesis One as revealed in Table 9 stated there was a significant difference, in group counselling programmes and students vocational choice. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in group counselling programmes and student vocational choice, was not accepted. This finding is in agreement with Gysber (2008), study which states that classroom / group counselling improves school students behavior and ability to make vocational decision, He explain that most of the students do not believe in counselors advice which was often based on individual, this study elucidate that classroom group counselling which are moderate in students numbers and carried out by professional counselors can improve students potential and efficacy to make vocational choice than individual counselling. In same vein the study is in agreement with Obiunu, and Oghenebrorhie. (2010) who investigated some of the factors influencing career development of secondary school students. The findings from the study indicated that career counselling is required for appropriate career development. Some of the factors that were observed to affect career development include psychological, sociological, educational, hereditary, and economic factors. These play significant role in the career decision making process of secondary school students, group career counselling influence the career choice of students.

Likewise, the study disagrees with Borders and Drury (2008) who carried out a qualitative case study in one elementary school in Amsterdam, Netherlands to identify the relationship between students perception of counsellors’ advice on decision-making. The findings reflected that most students had negative perceptions...
about counsellors on vocational decision-making. The interviewed students stated that they could not connect their talents to skills and training being acquired in schools.

This study also did not support Amerikaner and Summerlin (2012) that conducted a study in Chicago to find out how students viewed their counsellors and teacher. They found out that most counsellors and teachers had no plans to provide leadership in the development, promotion, facilitation and dissemination of school counselling research demonstrating the connection between school counselling programs and student success. The finding disagrees with the study of Mau, Bilkos and Fouad (2011). The study concluded that most counsellors were not effective to the vocational need of many students but instead advised them according to their vocational performance which is not beneficial to the students, Michael (2011) explain that group counselling programmes helps in providing unique environment, sharing ideas, exploring issues in depth, avoiding self-isolation and loneliness, it give feeling of empowerment, improvement by sensitivity and insight, promoting growth and change. This principle reveals that vocation choice does not base on students academic performance (Class test) only, the counsellor needs to consider, gender, background variable etc. before students can achieve their vocational success. This is in line with Brown and Hackett (2006), social cognitive career theory that concluded that background variables, self-efficacy, personality effective trait, vocation conditions, outcome environmental factors and resources are necessary for the counselor to be considered in facilitating students’ vocational choice. The counselor should also consider, the career construction theory developed by Savikas (2010), which explain that individuals construct their career by understanding their vocational personality, interpreting their life and demonstrating adaptability which comes through group counselling programmes.

**Influence of age differences on vocational Choice of Students:**

The finding from the second research question which addresses the extent at which group counseling programs influence students’ vocational choice with respect to their age differences as shown in Table 7 reveals that group counselling programmes influences students vocational choice with respect to their age differences to a high extent. It was further revealed in Hypothesis 2 Table 10 that there is significant difference, thus the null hypothesis of “There is no significant difference in group counselling programmes and the vocational choice of students in respect to their age differences” was nullified. Therefore, there is a significant difference in group counselling programmes and student’s vocational choice in respect to their age.

The finding was in support of Supper (1990) in Akume (2010) that identified five stages of career development with the accompanying age developmental terms. Reo in Akume (2005) expressed in providing vocational counselling for students counselor should try and investigate the early child experience of the students in order to guide them into appropriate vocation. This was in agreement with Tor-Anyim (2008) who said that both mental and chronological age influence student’s vocational choice. The study disagrees with Yakubu and Adigun (2010) which stated that school type, sex and location had no significance influence on student academic performance.

**Influence of gender disparity on vocational Choice of Students:**

The finding from the third research question focuses on the influence of group counselling programmes on students vocational choice with respect to their gender, as revealed in Table 8, group counselling programmes influences the vocational choice of male and female students to a very high extent. The Hypothesis 3 reveal in Table 11 that there is a significant difference in group counselling programmes and vocational choice between male and female students. Therefore, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in group counselling programmes and vocational choice between male and female students” was not retained.

This finding was supported by Osakwe (2007) who reported that the lack of awareness and absence of counselor was one of the factors of gender disparity in education among the Igala people, information is power and torchlight to students life. Counselors in collaborating with school management should always disseminate proper information to student without gender biases. In same vein the findings also agree with, Ezenibe, (2011) who examined the motivational factors and vocational preference of secondary school.

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adolescents, showed that there was a significant difference between male and female students who showed preferences to various vocational areas. This finding therefore, agrees with Joseph and Olu (2017) that there is a significant difference in the choice of career between male and female students, it also agrees with Eze, Ezenwafor and Obi (2015) which states that age and gender have effect on the academic achievement of students and disagrees with Ubana (2008), that sex of the students has no significant influence on students attitude towards counselling services.

**Conclusion:**

The study investigated the influence of group counselling programmes in facilitating the vocational choice of secondary school students of Jalingo education zone, Taraba State. An important conclusion that could be drawn from the study therefore, is that, group counselling programmes were effective and can be used to develop, change and influence attitude, students’ interest to facilitate insights and personal growth of secondary school students towards their career and vocational choices. Group counselling programmes were effective in providing students with the information needed on their vocational choice. The importance and use of group counselling programmes as an effective tool for enhancing students’ vocational choice has therefore been established in Jalingo Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should give counselling priority and provide a befitting and equipped office for counsellor in all secondary schools of Jalingo education zone Taraba State, this would enable the counselor to do the work effectively and create more awareness to students through group counselling.
2. Government should provide trained and professional counsellors for all the secondary schools in Jalingo education zone, Taraba State instead of career masters to make group counselling effective in all their school.
3. Teachers, counselors and school administrators should give adequate attention to students vocational choice from SS 1 through group counselling programmes with respect to their age difference.
4. Counselors should provide students with adequate information that can improve their vocational choice through group counselling programmes without gender bias.
5. There is need for school counselor to invite guest speaker on group counselling programmes sessions at least once in a term in their respective school to create more awareness.

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