



SELF-EFFICACY AND CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES AS PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT IN NSUKKA EDUCATION ZONE, ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study examined self-efficacy and career guidance services as predictors of students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 4,382 Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, a sample size of 351 students were sampled through multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using three structured questionnaire titled, Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ), Career Guidance Services Questionnaire (CGSQ) and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ). The instrument was validated by three experts, while its reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha method. The internal consistency of the instruments yielded reliability coefficients of 0.83, 0.88 and 0.87 for SEQ, CGSQ, and AAQ respectively. Data collected were analyzed using regression analysis. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that self-efficacy significantly predicts students' academic adjustment and accounts for 20.7% of the variation in students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The study also revealed that career guidance services significantly predict students' academic adjustment and account for 14.7% of the variation in students' academic adjustment. Furthermore, the findings showed that self-efficacy and career guidance services jointly account for 28.9% of the variation in students' academic adjustment and significantly predict students' academic adjustment in the study area. Based on the findings, it was concluded that self-efficacy and career guidance services are important determinants of students' academic adjustment. It was therefore recommended, among others, that school counsellors should organize programmes aimed at improving students' self-efficacy and that effective career guidance services should be strengthened in secondary schools to enhance students' academic adjustment.

Keywords: Self-Efficacy; Career Guidance Services; Academic Adjustment; Secondary School Students.

Introduction

Education remains one of the most important instruments for personal development and national transformation. Through education, individuals acquire knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes necessary for effective participation in society. However, the achievement of educational goals depends largely on the ability of students to adapt effectively to the academic environment. Academic adjustment refers to the degree to which students successfully cope with educational demands, school routines, interpersonal relationships, and emotional challenges associated with learning. According to Credé and Niehorster (2012), academic adjustment involves students' ability



to adapt psychologically, socially, and academically to the school environment in ways that enhance learning and educational achievement. Students who are academically adjusted tend to demonstrate positive attitudes toward learning, emotional stability, effective study habits, and satisfactory academic performance, whereas poorly adjusted students often experience anxiety, frustration, poor achievement, and school-related stress.

In Nigeria, the issue of students' academic adjustment has become a growing concern among educators, counsellors, psychologists, and parents due to increasing cases of poor academic performance, truancy, examination malpractice, school dropout, and emotional instability among secondary school students. Many students encounter challenges relating to academic pressure, peer influence, family expectations, and uncertainty about future careers. These challenges are particularly pronounced during adolescence, which is characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. According to Ugwuanyi and Okeke (2022), adolescents in secondary schools frequently experience adjustment difficulties because of the increasing demands associated with academic work and career decision-making. Similarly, Ede, Igbo, and Nwoke (2021) observed that many secondary school students in Nigeria struggle to balance academic expectations with emotional and social pressures, thereby affecting their school adjustment. The situation appears more evident in many public secondary schools within Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, where students are exposed to numerous socio-economic and educational challenges. Students in the zone often contend with issues such as financial difficulties, inadequate learning facilities, parental pressure, examination anxiety, and uncertainty concerning occupational aspirations. Teachers and school counsellors have continued to express concern over students' poor classroom participation, declining motivation, low self-esteem, and inability to cope with academic stress. According to Eze and Omeje (2023), students who lack adequate psychological support and confidence in their abilities are more likely to experience academic maladjustment and low educational attainment.

Among the psychological variables associated with students' academic adjustment, self-efficacy has gained considerable attention in contemporary educational research. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capability to successfully organize and perform actions required to attain specific goals. The concept originated from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that individuals' beliefs about their abilities influence their motivation, behaviour, persistence, and emotional reactions (Bandura, 1997). Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to approach academic tasks with confidence, determination, and resilience, while those with low self-efficacy often avoid difficult tasks and become discouraged when confronted with academic challenges. Recent studies have continued to establish the important role of self-efficacy in students' academic adjustment and achievement. For instance, Honicke and Broadbent (2016) found that self-efficacy significantly predicts students' academic success and persistence in learning activities. Similarly, Alhadabi and Karpinski (2020) reported that students with strong self-efficacy beliefs tend to exhibit better emotional adjustment, higher academic motivation, and stronger engagement in school activities. In the Nigerian context, Ugwuanyi, Okeke, and Nwachukwu (2021) revealed that students' academic self-efficacy positively influences their ability to cope with school-related stress and academic demands. Likewise, Nwosu and Ossai (2023) found that self-efficacy contributes significantly to students' emotional stability, academic engagement, and school adjustment.

Self-efficacy is also closely linked to students' career development and future aspirations. Students who believe in their abilities are more likely to explore career opportunities confidently, set realistic educational goals, and persist in achieving occupational aspirations. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2017) explained through the Social Cognitive Career Theory that self-efficacy shapes students' career interests, educational choices, and occupational decision-making processes. In support of this position, Owan and Agunwa (2021) observed that students with high career-related self-efficacy demonstrate greater confidence in subject selection, career planning, and academic commitment. This implies that self-efficacy may significantly influence students' academic adjustment because students who possess confidence in their abilities are more likely to remain motivated and



psychologically stable in school environments. Another major factor that may influence students' academic adjustment is career guidance services. Career guidance services refer to organized counselling programmes designed to assist students in understanding themselves, obtaining career information, making appropriate educational and vocational decisions, and preparing for future occupations. Such services may include orientation programmes, vocational counselling, appraisal services, information services, placement services, and follow-up activities. According to Gysbers and Henderson (2014), career guidance services help students develop self-awareness, career maturity, and decision-making skills necessary for educational and occupational success.

The relevance of career guidance services in secondary schools has become increasingly important due to the complexity of contemporary educational and occupational systems. Students are often required to make critical decisions regarding subject combinations, educational pathways, and future careers at an early stage of life. However, many adolescents lack adequate understanding of their abilities, interests, and occupational opportunities. Consequently, they may make unrealistic career choices based on parental influence, peer pressure, or societal prestige. According to Salman (2021), inadequate career guidance among secondary school students often results in confusion, low motivation, poor academic focus, and maladjustment. Career guidance services also provide emotional and psychological support that can enhance students' academic adjustment. Through counselling interactions, students acquire problem-solving skills, goal-setting techniques, and coping strategies that help them adapt effectively to school life. Amalu (2020) asserted that effective counselling programmes improve students' self-confidence, academic motivation, and emotional well-being. Similarly, Eremie and Jackson (2022) found that students who receive adequate career counselling services demonstrate better academic engagement, positive learning attitudes, and improved educational aspirations.

Despite the recognized importance of guidance and counselling services, many secondary schools in Nigeria still face challenges relating to inadequate counselling facilities, shortage of professional counsellors, insufficient funding, and poor access to career information resources. In many public secondary schools, guidance services are either poorly organized or completely absent. Consequently, students are often left without adequate support in handling educational and vocational challenges. According to Okafor and Eze (2021), the neglect of career guidance programmes in schools contributes to students' poor academic adjustment, unrealistic career aspirations, and emotional instability. This situation appears common in several schools within Nsukka Education Zone, where many students may not have access to effective counselling support. Furthermore, rapid technological advancement, globalization, and increasing unemployment rates have made career planning more challenging for students. Modern labour markets require individuals to possess not only academic competence but also career adaptability and decision-making skills. Students who lack proper career guidance may become uncertain about educational pathways and occupational opportunities, thereby affecting their academic adjustment. According to Brown and Lent (2020), effective career guidance services help students develop career adaptability, confidence, and resilience needed to cope with changing educational and occupational environments.

Several recent studies have examined the relationship between self-efficacy, guidance services, and students' adjustment. For example, Alsubaie (2022) found that self-efficacy significantly predicts students' academic adaptation and emotional well-being. Similarly, Ugwuanyi et al. (2021) reported that students with strong self-efficacy beliefs demonstrate greater persistence and adjustment in academic activities. In relation to guidance services, Owan and Agunwa (2021) found that career counselling programmes positively influence students' educational aspirations and academic engagement. Likewise, Eremie and Jackson (2022) established that guidance services improve students' school adjustment and career decision-making abilities. However, despite the increasing body of literature on self-efficacy and career guidance services, there appears to be limited empirical evidence on their combined influence on students' academic adjustment, particularly among secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Most previous studies focused



on academic achievement, career choice, or university students rather than examining academic adjustment among secondary school students within the study area. Considering the socio-cultural and educational peculiarities of Nsukka Education Zone, there is a need for localized research to determine the extent to which self-efficacy and career guidance services predict students' academic adjustment.

This study is anchored on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the reciprocal interaction among personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour. The theory posits that individuals' beliefs about their abilities influence their actions, motivation, emotional responses, and adaptation to challenges (Bandura, 1997). In the context of this study, students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are expected to adjust better academically because they perceive themselves as capable of overcoming school-related challenges. Similarly, supportive school environments that provide effective career guidance services may enhance students' confidence, motivation, and academic adjustment. The significance of investigating self-efficacy and career guidance services as predictors of students' academic adjustment lies in the potential contribution of the findings to educational practice and policy development. The findings may help school counsellors design programmes aimed at improving students' self-confidence and career awareness. The study may also assist teachers, parents, and educational administrators in understanding the importance of supportive educational environments that foster students' academic adjustment. Furthermore, the study may contribute to existing literature by providing current empirical evidence from Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. Therefore, in view of the increasing challenges confronting secondary school students in adapting to academic demands and making appropriate career decisions, this study seeks to investigate self-efficacy and career guidance services as predictors of students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine self-efficacy and career guidance services as predictors of students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the;

1. predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State;
2. predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State;
3. joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?
2. What is the predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?
3. What is the joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.
2. There is no significant predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.



3. There is no significant joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a correlational research design. This design is considered appropriate because it sought to determine the predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services (predictor variables) on academic adjustment (criterion variable) without manipulating them. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), correlational design is useful in examining the extent to which variables are related and can predict one another in educational research settings. The study was conducted in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The zone comprises both urban and rural secondary schools with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The area was selected because students in the zone are observed to experience varying levels of academic adjustment challenges, which may be linked to psychological and counselling-related factors. The population of the study comprised of all the 4382 Senior Secondary School (SS2) students in public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. SS2 students are chosen because they are at a critical stage of academic and career decision-making and are more likely to experience issues related to academic adjustment and career planning. A sample size of 351 SS 2 students in public secondary schools in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State was used for the study. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table.

Three instruments were used for data collection, they are; Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SEQ), Career Guidance Services Questionnaire (CGSQ) and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ). The instruments were designed by the researcher through review of literature. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts: one in Educational Psychology and one in Guidance and Counselling and one in Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their corrections, suggestions, and modifications were incorporated into the final draft to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the instrument. To determine the reliability of the instruments, the instruments (SEQ, CGSQ, and AAQ) were administered to SS 2 students in Obollo-Afor education zone who are not part of the study but share similar characteristics. The reliability of the instruments was established using the Cronbach Alpha method. The internal consistency of the instruments yielded reliability coefficients of 0.83, 0.88 and 0.87 for SEQ, CGSQ, and AAQ respectively. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires (SEQ, CGSQ, and AAQ) to the respondents with the help of their classroom teachers who served as research assistants. The research assistants were briefed on the modalities of administration and collection of the instruments. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately upon completion to ensure a high return rate. Data collected were analyzed using regression analysis. Specifically, linear regression was used to answer research questions 1-2, while research question 3 was answered using multiple regression analysis. Hypotheses 1-2 were tested using regression t-test, while regression ANOVA was used to test hypothesis 3. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Research Question One

What is the predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?

Table 1: Linear regression analysis of the predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.455 ^a	.207	.205	3.23906



(R²) = Coefficient of Determination

The result presented in Table 1 shows the linear regression analysis of the predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The result revealed a correlation coefficient (R) value of .455, which indicates a moderate positive relationship between self-efficacy and students' academic adjustment. This implies that as students' self-efficacy increases, their level of academic adjustment also tends to increase. The coefficient of determination (R Square) value of .207 indicates that self-efficacy accounts for 20.7% of the variation in students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. This means that self-efficacy significantly contributes to explaining students' academic adjustment, while the remaining 79.3% of the variation may be attributed to other variables not included in the study.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Table 2: Regression t-test analysis of significant predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.541	1.313		20.972	.000
	Self Efficacy	.299	.031	.455	9.545	.000

The result in Table 2 shows that t-value of 9.545 with associated exact probability value of .000 was obtained. This probability value of 0.000 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant since the obtained probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State was rejected. The researchers therefore, conclude that there is a significant predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Research Question Two

What is the predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?

Table 3: Linear regression analysis of the predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.385 ^a	.147	.145	3.35886

(R²) = Coefficient of Determination

The result presented in Table 3 shows the linear regression analysis of the predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The result revealed a correlation coefficient (R) value of .385, which indicates a positive relationship between career guidance services and students' academic adjustment. This implies that improvement in career guidance services is associated with improvement in students' academic adjustment. The coefficient of determination (R Square) value of .147 indicates that career guidance services account for 14.7% of the variation in students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. This means that career guidance services contribute 14.7% toward explaining students' academic



adjustment, while the remaining 85.3% of the variation may be due to other variables not included in the study.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Table 4: Regression t-test analysis of significant predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	29.740	1.329	22.371	.000
	Career_Guidance_Services	.266	.034	7.763	.000

The result in Table 4 shows that t-value of 7.763 with associated exact probability value of .000 was obtained. This probability value of 0.000 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant since the obtained probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State was rejected. The researchers therefore, conclude that there is a significant predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Research Question Three

What is the joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State?

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis of the predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.538 ^a	.289	.285	3.07088

(R²) = Coefficient of Determination

The result presented in Table 5 shows the multiple regression analysis of the predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The result revealed a multiple correlation coefficient (R) value of .538, which indicates a moderate positive relationship between the combined variables (self-efficacy and career guidance services) and students' academic adjustment. This implies that when self-efficacy and career guidance services increase together, students' academic adjustment also tends to improve. The coefficient of determination (R Square) value of .289 indicates that self-efficacy and career guidance services jointly account for 28.9% of the variation in students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. This means that the two predictor variables collectively contribute 28.9% in explaining students' academic adjustment, while the remaining 71.1% of the variation may be attributed to other factors not included in the study.



Hypothesis Three

There is no significant joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Table 6: Regression ANOVA of significant joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1335.634	2	667.817	70.816	.000 ^b
	Residual	3281.743	348	9.430		
	Total	4617.377	350			

The result in Table 6 shows that F-ratio of 70.816 with associated exact probability value of .000 was obtained. This probability value of 0.00 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found to be significant since the obtained probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis no significant joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State was rejected. The researchers therefore, conclude that there is a significant joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Discussion of Findings

Predictive power of self-efficacy on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

The finding of the study revealed that self-efficacy accounts for 20.7% of the variation in students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The finding further showed that self-efficacy significantly predicts students' academic adjustment in the study area. This implies that students who possess strong beliefs in their abilities are more likely to adjust effectively to academic demands, school activities, and learning challenges. The finding suggests that self-efficacy plays an important role in enhancing students' confidence, persistence, emotional stability, and ability to cope with academic stress within the school environment. The finding is not surprising because self-efficacy influences how students think, behave, and respond to challenging academic situations. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy determines the level of effort individuals put into activities, their perseverance when faced with difficulties, and their emotional reactions to challenging situations. Students with high self-efficacy are usually more motivated to learn, more resilient in difficult situations, and more willing to engage in academic tasks. Such students often perceive academic challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. Consequently, they tend to demonstrate better classroom participation, improved study habits, and positive adjustment to school life. On the other hand, students with low self-efficacy may doubt their abilities, avoid difficult tasks, and experience anxiety or frustration when faced with academic challenges.

The finding agrees with the position of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that individuals' beliefs about their capabilities significantly influence their behaviour, motivation, and adjustment. Bandura (1997) maintained that self-efficacy affects the choices individuals make, the effort they put into activities, and their persistence in overcoming obstacles. In the context of this study, students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to cope effectively with academic demands and adjust positively to school environments. The finding is in agreement with the study conducted by Udensi et al. (2024), who examined the role of self-esteem and self-efficacy in academic adjustment among undergraduates in a Nigerian university. The researchers found that self-



efficacy contributes positively to students' academic adjustment and emphasized the importance of promoting self-belief among students to enhance school adaptation. The finding also agrees with the study of Olugbeko and Lana (2025), which investigated academic self-efficacy and school adjustment among first-year university students in Nigeria. The study revealed a high positive relationship between academic self-efficacy and school adjustment and further showed that self-efficacy had a significant relative effect on students' adjustment to school life. Similarly, the finding is consistent with the study of Bello, Babamba, and Fatimoh (2023), who found that self-efficacy significantly predicts academic adjustment among students in Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria.

In the same vein, the finding supports the study conducted by Oparaugo and Ebenebe (2021), which found that self-efficacy significantly predicts psychological adjustment among secondary school adolescents in Awka Education Zone, Nigeria. The study concluded that adolescents with higher self-efficacy beliefs demonstrate better emotional and school adjustment than those with lower self-beliefs. This finding further strengthens the assertion that self-efficacy is a critical psychological factor influencing students' adaptation to school life. Furthermore, the finding aligns with the study of Honicke and Broadbent (2016), who reported that academic self-efficacy significantly influences students' academic success, persistence, and adjustment. Similarly, Alhadabi and Karpinski (2020) found that self-efficacy positively predicts students' emotional adjustment, academic engagement, and educational achievement.

Predictive power of career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

The finding of the study revealed that career guidance services account for 14.7% of the variation in students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The finding further revealed that career guidance services significantly predict students' academic adjustment in the study area. This implies that the availability and effectiveness of career guidance services contribute meaningfully to how well students adapt to academic demands, school activities, and educational challenges. The finding suggests that students who receive adequate career guidance are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward learning, make informed educational decisions, and adjust effectively to school life. The finding may be attributed to the fact that career guidance services provide students with the necessary information, emotional support, and decision-making skills required for effective adaptation to the school environment. Through career counselling, orientation programmes, appraisal services, and vocational information, students are guided to understand their interests, abilities, and career aspirations. This understanding may enhance students' confidence, academic motivation, and commitment to educational goals. According to Gysbers and Henderson (2014), guidance and counselling services help students develop self-awareness, educational direction, and career maturity necessary for successful school adjustment.

The finding is consistent with the assumptions of Super's Career Development Theory, which emphasizes that career development is a continuous process influenced by self-concept, experiences, and environmental support (Super, 1990). The theory suggests that students who receive adequate career guidance are more likely to develop realistic educational and vocational goals, which may positively influence their academic adjustment. In the context of this study, students who are exposed to effective career guidance services may feel more focused, motivated, and emotionally stable in handling academic responsibilities. The finding agrees with the study conducted by Egbochuku (2008), who found that guidance and counselling services significantly improve students' academic performance, emotional stability, and school adjustment in secondary schools in Edo State, Nigeria. Similarly, the finding aligns with the study of Eremie and Jackson (2022), which revealed that career counselling services significantly influence students' academic engagement and educational aspirations among secondary school students in Rivers State.

The finding also agrees with the study of Aliyu and Suleiman (2021), who reported that guidance and counselling services positively influence students' academic motivation, career awareness, and



decision-making abilities in secondary schools in Nigeria. Furthermore, the finding corroborates the study of Ogbodo and Nwankwo (2022), who found that career guidance services significantly relate to students' educational adjustment and occupational preparedness. In the same vein, the finding is in agreement with the study conducted by Salman (2021), which showed that inadequate career guidance among secondary school students often leads to poor academic focus, uncertainty, and maladjustment. The study concluded that students who receive effective career counselling tend to exhibit higher levels of academic commitment and emotional stability. This indicates that career guidance services are important in promoting students' adjustment to school environments. The finding also supports the study of Lapan, Gysbers, and Sun (1997), who found that comprehensive school guidance programmes positively influence students' academic achievement, school satisfaction, and career development.

Joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State

The finding of the study revealed that self-efficacy and career guidance services jointly account for 28.9% of the variation in students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The finding further revealed a significant joint predictive power of self-efficacy and career guidance services on students' academic adjustment in the study area. This implies that the combined influence of students' belief in their abilities and the availability of effective career guidance services contributes significantly to how well students adapt to academic demands, school activities, and educational challenges. The finding suggests that students are more likely to adjust successfully to school when they possess high self-efficacy and receive adequate career guidance support. The finding may be attributed to the complementary roles played by self-efficacy and career guidance services in students' educational development. Self-efficacy enhances students' confidence, perseverance, motivation, and resilience in handling academic challenges, while career guidance services provide the necessary educational, vocational, and emotional support needed for effective school adjustment. When students believe in their capabilities and are adequately guided concerning educational and career decisions, they are more likely to remain focused, motivated, and emotionally stable in school environments. This combination may therefore improve students' ability to cope with academic stress and adapt positively to learning situations.

The finding supports Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviour in determining human functioning (Bandura, 1997). According to the theory, students' beliefs about their abilities influence their motivation, effort, persistence, and adjustment, while environmental support systems such as guidance services further shape their behaviours and outcomes. In this study, self-efficacy represents the personal factor, while career guidance services represent the environmental support that jointly influences students' academic adjustment. The finding is in agreement with the study conducted by Ugwuanyi, Okeke, and Nwachukwu (2021), who found that academic self-efficacy and supportive school environments jointly contribute to students' academic engagement and adjustment. Similarly, the finding aligns with the study of Eremie and Jackson (2022), which revealed that counselling services and students' personal attributes significantly predict academic engagement and school adjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

The finding also agrees with the study conducted by Honicke and Broadbent (2016), which established that academic self-efficacy significantly influences students' persistence, academic success, and adjustment. In the same vein, Gysbers and Henderson (2014) observed that effective guidance and counselling programmes promote students' educational adjustment, career awareness, and emotional stability. Furthermore, the finding corroborates the study of Ogbodo and Nwankwo (2022), who found that career guidance services and students' psychological characteristics jointly influence educational adjustment among senior secondary school students. The finding is also consistent with the work of Alhadabi and Karpinski (2020), who reported that self-efficacy,



motivation, and educational support systems significantly predict students' academic functioning and emotional adjustment. In addition, the finding agrees with the study of Owan and Agunwa (2021), which revealed that self-efficacy and career aspirations significantly influence students' academic commitment and school adjustment.

Conclusion of the Findings

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that self-efficacy and career guidance services are significant predictors of students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The study established that self-efficacy contributes significantly to students' ability to cope with academic demands, school activities, and educational challenges. Students who possess strong confidence in their abilities were found to demonstrate better academic adjustment than those with low self-efficacy. The study also concluded that career guidance services significantly influence students' academic adjustment. The availability of effective counselling and career guidance programmes helps students develop educational direction, career awareness, emotional stability, and positive attitudes toward learning, thereby enhancing their adjustment to school life. Furthermore, the study concluded that the combined influence of self-efficacy and career guidance services has a stronger predictive effect on students' academic adjustment than each variable considered independently. This indicates that students are more likely to adjust effectively to academic activities when they possess strong self-belief and receive adequate career guidance support. Therefore, the study concluded that improving students' self-efficacy alongside strengthening career guidance services in secondary schools will significantly enhance students' academic adjustment in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State.

Recommendations

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

1. School counsellors should organize regular counselling programmes, workshops, and motivational activities aimed at improving students' self-efficacy and confidence in their academic abilities.
2. Teachers should adopt supportive teaching methods that encourage students' active participation, independent learning, and positive self-beliefs in order to enhance their academic adjustment.
3. Parents should provide emotional support, encouragement, and a conducive learning environment that will help students develop confidence and positive attitudes toward academic activities.
4. Guidance and counselling units in secondary schools should be strengthened through the employment of qualified guidance counsellors and the provision of adequate counselling facilities and career information resources.
5. Schools should organize regular career guidance programmes such as career talks, orientation exercises, vocational seminars, and mentorship activities to help students make informed educational and occupational decisions.
6. Educational administrators and government agencies should provide adequate funding and policy support for effective implementation of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.
7. Guidance counsellors should assist students in identifying their interests, abilities, and career aspirations in order to improve their academic focus and adjustment to school life.
8. School management should create a supportive and psychologically safe learning environment that promotes students' emotional stability, resilience, and academic engagement.
9. Students should be encouraged to participate actively in counselling programmes and self-development activities that will strengthen their self-confidence, motivation, and coping skills.



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