

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL COGNITIVE CAREER COUNSELLING ON SELF-EFFICACY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS IN JOS-NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of Social Cognitive Career Counselling (SCCC) on self-efficacy among Senior Secondary School One (SS1) students in Jos-North Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by concerns over the low levels of career self-efficacy exhibited by many secondary school students, often manifested through poor confidence in career decision-making, limited competence in career exploration, and weak perceptions of control over career outcomes. The study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test non-equivalent control group design. A sample of 60 SS1 students was selected from two public secondary schools using simple random sampling and intact classes. Thirty-five students constituted the experimental group, while twenty-five students formed the control group. Data were collected using the Career Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES), adapted from the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale. The instrument demonstrated satisfactory validity (KMO = 0.842; Bartlett's Test $\chi^2(210) = 2190.41$, $p < .001$) and high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.97$). The experimental group received Social Cognitive Career Counselling for six weeks, while the control group participated in placebo sessions on general educational topics. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that Social Cognitive Career Counselling significantly improved students' confidence in career decision-making ($\eta^2 = .501$), competence in career exploration and planning ($\eta^2 = .549$), and perceived control over career development and outcomes ($\eta^2 = .663$). The study concluded that Social Cognitive Career Counselling is an effective intervention for enhancing career self-efficacy among secondary school students. It was recommended that schools integrate structured career counselling programmes into their guidance services to promote informed career development and decision-making.

KEYWORDS: Social Cognitive Career Counselling, self-efficacy, career decision-making, career exploration, career development, secondary school students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Career development is a lifelong and dynamic process that begins in childhood and becomes increasingly significant during adolescence, when individuals begin to formulate occupational interests, career aspirations, and self-beliefs that shape their future vocational paths. For senior secondary school students, career development is particularly important because they are required to make crucial decisions regarding subject specialization, tertiary education, and future occupations. These decisions often have long-term implications for personal fulfilment, educational attainment, and employability (Gashi, 2023). Career counselling is a professional intervention designed to help individuals understand themselves, explore occupational opportunities, and make informed educational and vocational decisions (McMahon & Watson, 2020). In Nigeria, many secondary school students encounter difficulties in making appropriate career choices due to inadequate access to career guidance services, socio-economic limitations, limited exposure to occupational information, and insufficient institutional support. These challenges frequently result in low self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy, a central construct of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks and achieve desired outcomes (Pradeep, 2024). Within the context of career development, self-efficacy influences students' confidence in making career decisions, engaging in career exploration activities, overcoming barriers, and pursuing career goals. Students with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate persistence, resilience, and proactive career behaviour, while those with low self-efficacy may experience anxiety, indecision, and reduced motivation (Pajares, 2016).

Career self-efficacy comprises several dimensions that are particularly relevant to secondary school students. These include confidence, competence, and control. Confidence refers to students' belief in their ability to successfully make career-related decisions and perform career development tasks. Competence involves perceptions of possessing the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to achieve career goals. Control refers to the belief that one has personal influence over career outcomes through effort, planning, and informed decision-making. Together, these dimensions contribute significantly to students' career readiness and long-term career success, hence the need for practical intervention such as Social Cognitive Career Counselling.

Social Cognitive Career Counselling (SCCC), derived from Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing career development processes. The approach emphasizes the interaction among self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, learning experiences, environmental influences, and personal goals in shaping career behaviour. Through interventions such as career assessments, career exploration activities, goal-setting exercises, mentoring, and skills development, SCCC seeks to strengthen students' confidence, competence, and control over their career development (National Career Development Association, 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Cognitive Career Counselling and Confidence in Career Decision-Making

One of the primary objectives of Social Cognitive Career Counselling is to enhance individuals' confidence in making career-related decisions. According to Cohen (2015), SCCC facilitates self-awareness, career exploration, and informed decision-making through activities such as career assessments, informational interviews, career fairs, and mentorship programmes. These activities enable students to gain greater confidence in their ability to identify suitable career options and make appropriate educational choices. Empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of SCCC in enhancing confidence-related aspects of career self-efficacy. Jemini-Gashi et al. (2023) reported significant improvements in career self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and career goals among high school students who participated in a structured career guidance programme. Similarly, Demirtaş-Zorbaz, Korkut-Owen, Arıcı-Şahin, and Mutlu (2023) found that participants exposed to the Career Sailboat intervention demonstrated significantly higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy than students in the control group. These findings suggest that structured career counselling interventions can significantly improve students' confidence in making career decisions.

Social Cognitive Career Counselling and Competence in Career Exploration

Career exploration competence involves students' ability to identify, evaluate, and pursue career opportunities based on their interests, abilities, and values. SCCC enhances competence by exposing students to occupational information, career planning activities, and opportunities for experiential learning. Research has consistently demonstrated the positive impact of career counselling interventions on students' competence in career exploration. Situmorang et al. (2025) found that students who participated in a six-week mobile career counselling intervention recorded significant improvements in self-assessment, occupational information gathering, planning, and problem-solving competencies. Likewise, Pang, Xie, Kang, and Hu (2025) reported that participation in career education programmes significantly enhanced students' adaptability, learning engagement, and academic self-efficacy. These findings indicate that structured career interventions can strengthen students' competencies necessary for effective career exploration and planning.

Social Cognitive Career Counselling and Control over Career Development and Outcomes

Perceived control over career development refers to an individual's belief that personal actions can influence career outcomes. Social Cognitive Career Theory emphasizes that self-efficacy and outcome expectations play crucial roles in fostering proactive career behaviors and long-term goal commitment (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2017). Studies have shown that SCCC interventions can improve students' perceptions of control over their career development. Wang and Liu (2022) found that SCCT-based group counselling significantly improved career adaptability among high school students and produced lasting effects beyond the intervention period. Similarly, Murasing, Chakraborty, and Raji (2025) reported that career decision-making self-efficacy served as a significant mediator between personality traits and career goals, indicating that students who believe they can

influence their career outcomes are more likely to pursue meaningful career aspirations. Furthermore, Cardoso et al. (2022) observed improvements in vocational identity, career adaptability, and career decision-making self-efficacy following a theory-based career intervention programme.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies conducted in Asia, Europe, and other regions have established the effectiveness of Social Cognitive Career Counselling (SCCC) in improving career self-efficacy and career-related outcomes, empirical evidence from Nigeria remains limited. Existing Nigerian studies have primarily focused on the relationship between self-efficacy and career aspirations rather than evaluating the effectiveness of structured social cognitive career counselling interventions. Furthermore, little empirical evidence exists regarding the effects of SCCC on the dimensions of confidence, competence, and control among senior secondary school students in Plateau State. This gap necessitates further investigation.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of career guidance and counselling in promoting informed career decision-making, many senior secondary school students in Jos-North Local Government Area of Plateau State continue to experience low self-efficacy. Low self-efficacy often manifests in poor confidence in career decision-making, limited competence in career exploration, and weak perceptions of control over career outcomes. Consequently, students may develop unrealistic career aspirations, make inappropriate educational choices, or remain uncertain about their future career paths. Inadequate career guidance services, limited access to occupational information, socio-economic challenges, and insufficient exposure to structured career development programmes have contributed to low levels of career self-efficacy among many students.

Although Social Cognitive Career Counselling has demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing career-related outcomes in several international contexts, there is limited empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness among senior secondary school students in Jos-South, Plateau State. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine whether Social Cognitive Career Counselling can significantly improve confidence in career decision-making, competence in career exploration, and control over career development and outcomes among Senior Secondary One (SS1) students in Jos-North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to several stakeholders. First, the study will benefit senior secondary school students by providing evidence on the effectiveness of Social Cognitive Career Counselling in enhancing career self-efficacy and promoting informed career choices. Second, guidance counsellors will gain valuable insights into the application of Social Cognitive Career Theory as an intervention framework for addressing students' career development challenges and improving counselling outcomes.

Third, school administrators and educational planners will benefit from empirical evidence that can support the integration of structured career counselling programmes into secondary school curricula. Fourth, policymakers in the education sector will find the study useful in designing and implementing policies aimed at strengthening career guidance services in secondary schools across Plateau State and Nigeria as a whole. Finally, the study will contribute to the existing body of literature on career counselling, self-efficacy, and career development by providing empirical evidence from a Nigerian context where such studies remain relatively scarce.

Rationale for the Study

The motivation for this study stems from the increasing concern about the difficulties many secondary school students face in making informed career decisions and planning realistic career pathways. As students transition from secondary education to higher education and the labour market, they require adequate confidence, competence, and control to navigate complex career choices successfully. Given the limited availability of structured career counselling programmes in many Nigerian secondary schools and the scarcity of empirical studies evaluating Social Cognitive Career Counselling interventions within Plateau State, there is a need to investigate effective strategies for enhancing students' career self-efficacy. By examining the effects of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on confidence, competence, and control among SS1 students in Jos-North, this study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations that can improve career guidance practices and support students in achieving meaningful educational and career outcomes.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the effects of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on Self-Efficacy among Senior Secondary Students in Jos-North, Plateau State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the effects of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on the confidence in career decision making ability of SS1 students;
2. find out the effects of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on the competence in career exploration of SS1 students;
3. determine the effects of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on the control over career development and outcomes of SS1 students.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on confidence in career decision making ability of SS1 students?
2. What is effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on competence in career exploration of SS1 students.
3. What is the effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on control over career development and outcomes of SS1 students?

Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant effect of effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on confidence in career decision making ability of SS1 students.
2. There is no significant effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on competence in career exploration of SS1 students.
3. There is no significant effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on control over career development and outcomes of SS1 students.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Cognitive Career Theory, developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994), which offers a robust empirically-supported framework for understanding how individuals form career interests, make choices, and achieve success in their chosen paths. The theory integrates core constructs from Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, including; self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goal mechanisms into the domain of career development. The SCCT posits that an individual's career development is influenced by a dynamic interplay of personal attributes (e.g., self-efficacy), environmental conditions (e.g., social supports, barriers), and overt behaviors (e.g., decision-making, goal setting) (Lent et al., 1994). These interactive elements guide how individuals develop career interests, make educational and vocational choices, and achieve varying levels of performance and persistence. In other words, SCCT explains how personal environmental and behavioral factors interact to shape individuals' career development with a particular focus on self-efficacy, overcome expectations and goal-setting.

SCCT is particularly useful for developing directive counselling interventions, such as Social Cognitive Career Counselling (SCCC), where counselors guide clients by strengthening self-efficacy beliefs, clarifying outcome expectations, and helping individuals set and pursue meaningful goals (Lent & Brown, 2024). This approach is highly relevant in the Nigerian context, where secondary school students often face significant environmental barriers such as limited career guidance, socioeconomic constraints, and cultural expectations that may affect their career decision-making process (Ibrahim & Udu, 2024). The directive nature of SCCC enables the counselor to help students in Jos-North LGA identify and build upon their self-efficacy, explore realistic outcome expectations, and develop aspirations aligned with their individual strengths and environmental contexts. This model also emphasizes the importance of learning experiences both direct (e.g., academic successes) and vicarious (e.g., role models) in shaping self-efficacy and career goals (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 2024).

3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES**Research Design and Participants**

This study adopted a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the pre-test–post-test non-equivalent control group design. The design involved an experimental group that received Social Cognitive Career Counselling (SCCC) and a control group that did not receive the intervention. The use of intact classes made random assignment of participants impractical; therefore, a quasi-experimental approach was considered appropriate.

The population for the pilot study comprised 2,429 SS1 students from 22 public senior secondary schools in Jos-North Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. A sample of 60 SS1 students drawn from two public secondary schools participated in the study. Thirty-five students from one school constituted the experimental group, while twenty-five students from the second school formed the control group. A simple random sampling technique (balloting method) was used to select the two schools from the twenty-two public secondary schools. Thereafter, intact SS1 classes in the selected schools were used for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using the Career Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES), adapted from the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale (CDMSES) developed by Betz and Taylor (1994). The modified instrument was designed to measure students' self-efficacy in relation to career development. The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A elicited respondents' demographic information, while Section B contained 21 items measuring dimensions of career self-efficacy, namely confidence, competence, and control. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1) for positively worded items, with reverse scoring for negatively worded items. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) results revealed three components with Eigenvalues greater than one (>1), accounting for 86.2% of the cumulative variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.842, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(210) = 2190.41$, $p < .001$, which demonstrated satisfactory factor loadings where all items were retained in the instrument. In addition, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.97 was obtained, indicating excellent reliability and a high level of internal consistency among the instrument items (Gregor & O'Brien, 2015).

Procedure for Data Collection

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Jos, and subsequently from the Plateau State Ministry of Education and the principals of the participating schools. Permission was also obtained to use trained counsellors and teachers as research assistants. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by excluding participants' names from the instruments, and all information collected was used strictly for research purposes. Two research assistants were trained on the objectives of the study, ethical principles of research, instrument administration procedures, confidentiality, rapport building, and data management. The study commenced with the administration of a pre-test to both the experimental and control groups using the Career Self-Efficacy Scale. The intervention was then implemented for six weeks, after which the post-test was administered during the seventh week using the same instrument.

Counselling Intervention

The experimental group received Social Cognitive Career Counselling (SCCC) for six weeks. The intervention consisted of three 45-minute sessions per week, making a total of 18 sessions. The counselling programme focused on enhancing students' self-efficacy through activities related to self-awareness, career exploration, outcome expectations, goal setting, decision-making skills, and realistic career planning. The intervention was designed to strengthen students' confidence in career decision-making, competence in career exploration, and perceived control over career development and outcomes.

Controlled Placebo

To control for the Hawthorne effect and ensure equivalent attention across groups, the control group participated in placebo sessions of equal duration and frequency as the experimental group. These sessions focused on general educational topics such as examination malpractice, causes of cultism, and effective study habits. The placebo activities were facilitated by trained research assistants and did not include any career counselling content.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the pre-test and post-test administrations were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. ANCOVA was considered appropriate because it controls for initial differences between groups and provides a more accurate estimate of the effect of the intervention. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27. Hypotheses were rejected when the p-value was less than 0.05 and retained when the p-value exceeded 0.05.

4. RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on confidence in career decision making ability of SS1 students?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre- and Post-test Confidence in Career Decision Making Ability Mean Scores of SS1 Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pre-test \bar{x}	SD	Post-test \bar{x}	SD	\bar{x} Gain	Post-test \bar{x} Difference
Experimental	35	21.63	7.50	33.17	7.53	11.54	13.69
Control	25	18.72	6.06	19.48	4.91	0.76	

Note: N = 60. Decision benchmark, $\bar{x} \leq 27.0$ = low, and $\bar{x} > 27.0$ = High for 9 items using a 5-Scale

As shown in Table 1, the experimental group ($\bar{x} = 21.63$, $SD = 7.50$) and the control group ($\bar{x} = 18.72$, $SD = 6.06$) demonstrated comparable career decision-making scores at pre-test. Following the intervention, the experimental group, which received Social Cognitive Career Counselling showed a substantial increase in mean scores ($\bar{x} = 33.17$), resulting in a mean gain of 11.54. Conversely, the control group, which received no exposure to the counselling intervention, remained at a low level during the post-test ($\bar{x} = 19.48$), yielding a minimal mean gain of 0.76. The resulting post-test mean difference between the two groups was 13.69. These descriptive findings suggest that the Social Cognitive Career Counselling intervention effectively enhanced the career decision-making abilities of the participants compared to those in the control condition.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant effect of effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on confidence in career decision making ability of SS1 students.

Table 2: ANCOVA Result of the Difference Between the Pre-test and Post-test Confidence in Career Decision Making Ability Mean Scores of SS1 Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type III Sum of					
	Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2847.19 ^a	2	1423.60	33.93	.000	.543
Intercept	3049.55	1	3049.55	72.68	.000	.560
Pre-test	113.47	1	113.47	2.70	.106	.045
Post-test (Group)	2399.13	1	2399.13	57.18	.000	.501
Error	2391.74	57	41.96			
Total	50504.00	60				
Corrected Total	5238.93	59				

Note: N = 60. R Squared = .543 (Adjusted R Squared = .527).

As shown in Table 2, the pre-test analysis indicated no significant difference between the experimental and control groups' baseline confidence in career decision-making abilities, [$F(1, 59) = 2.70$, $p = .106$]. However, after adjusting for pre-test scores, the post-test main effect of the intervention was statistically significant, [$F(1, 59) = 57.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .501$]. The Social Cognitive Career Counselling intervention accounted for 50.1% of the variance in post-test confidence scores. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, demonstrating that the Social Cognitive Career Counselling significantly increased the confidence in career decision-making abilities among Senior Secondary School One (SSS 1) students in Jos-North, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on competence in career exploration of SS1 students?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre- and Posttest Mean Scores on Perceived Competence in Exploring and Planning Career of SS1 Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pre-test \bar{x}	SD	Post-test \bar{x}	SD	\bar{x} Gain/ Loss	Post-test \bar{x} Difference
Experimental	35	11.86	4.52	19.40	4.99	7.54	9.6
Control	25	10.64	3.96	9.80	3.29	-0.84	

Note: N = 60. Decision benchmark, $\bar{x} \leq 15.0$ = low, and $\bar{x} > 15.0$ = High for 5 items using a 5-Scale

Table 3 shows that the pre-test means scores for the experimental and control groups, which were $\bar{x} = 11.86$ and $\bar{x} = 10.64$, respectively, with standard deviations of $SD = 4.52$ and $SD = 3.29$. Post-test mean scores are 19.40 and 9.80 for the experimental and control groups and their standard deviation scores are 4.99 and 3.29, respectively. For both the pre-test and post-test, the experimental group's mean gain was 7.54, whereas the control group's score was -0.84. The mean scores differed by 9.6 in the post-test scores. As a result of being exposed to Social Cognitive Career Counselling, senior secondary school one students' perceived competence in exploring and planning career rose from its baseline low level to high level.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on competence in career exploration of SS1 students.

Table 3: ANCOVA Result of the Pre-test and Post-test Competence in Exploring and Planning Careers Mean Scores of SS1 Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1349.50 ^a	2	674.75	34.94	.000	.551
Intercept	1755.86	1	1755.86	90.91	.000	.615
Pre-test	5.50	1	5.50	.29	.596	.005
Post-test (Group)	1341.49	1	1341.49	69.46	.000	.549
Error	1100.60	57	19.31			
Total	16680.00	60				
Corrected Total	2450.40	59				

Note: N = 60 R Squared = .551 (Adjusted R Squared = .535).

In Table 3, the probability value for pre-test is above the 0.05 significance level ($p = 0.596$). It implies that there is no significant difference in the pre-test competence in exploring and planning careers mean scores between the experimental and control groups [$F(1, 59) = 0.29, p > .05$]. On the other hand, the post-test mean score had a p-value less than the 0.05 significance level when the effect of pre-test was controlled for ($p = 0.000$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, concluding that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of competence in exploring and planning careers mean scores, $F(1, 59) = 69.46, p < .05$. The Social Cognitive Career Counselling was responsible for 55.1% of the variance in competence in exploring and planning careers with a moderate effect size, $\eta^2 = 0.549$. This implies that Social Cognitive Career Counselling significantly increased the competence in exploring and planning careers of senior secondary school students in Jos-North, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What is the effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on control over career development and outcomes of SS1 students?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre- and Posttest Perceived Control Over Career Development and Outcomes Mean Scores of SS1 Students in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pre-test \bar{x}	SD	Post-test \bar{x}	SD	\bar{x} Gain/ Loss	Post-test \bar{x} Difference
Experimental	35	16.20	5.61	28.66	5.37	12.46	13.94
Control	25	15.16	5.86	14.72	4.35	-0.44	

Note: N = 60. Decision benchmark, $\bar{x} \leq 21.0 =$ low, and $\bar{x} > 21.0 =$ High for 7 items using a 5-Scale

Table 5 as presented, results indicates that the experimental and control groups had pre-test mean scores of 16.20 and 15.16 with standard deviation scores of 5.61 and 5.86 respectively. At the post-test, the mean scores of experimental groups increased to 28.66 with a mean gain of 12.46, while the control group remained low with 14.72, indicating a mean reduction of 0.44. The mean difference between the experimental and control groups' post-test scores was 13.94 signifying that, students had low perceived control over career development and outcomes at baseline, but experimental group went higher than control group after the exposure to Social Cognitive Career Counselling.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant effect of Social Cognitive Career Counselling on control over career development and outcomes of SS1 students.

Table 6: ANCOVA Result of the Pre-test and Post-test Perceived Control Over Career Development and Outcomes Means Scores of SS1 Students in the experimental and Control Groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2833.25 ^a	2	1416.62	56.29	.000	.664
Intercept	3279.78	1	3279.78	130.33	.000	.696
Pre-test	.52	1	.52	.02	.886	.000
Post-test (Group)	2816.31	1	2816.31	111.91	.000	.663
Error	1434.40	57	25.17			
Total	35595.00	60				
Corrected Total	4267.65	59				

Note: N = 60; R Squared = .664 (Adjusted R Squared = .652).

Table 6 result reveals that the pre-test probability value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance ($p = 0.886$). It implies that there was no significant difference between the pre-test mean scores for perceived control over career development and outcomes of students in the experimental and control groups [$F(1, 59) = 0.02$, $p > .05$]. On the contrary, the post-test mean score had a p-value that was lower than the 0.05 level of significance ($p = 0.000$) after adjusting for the pre-test influence. Consequently, there was a significant difference in perceived control over career development and outcomes between students randomized into the experimental and control groups ($F(1, 59) = 111.91$, $p < .05$). The Social Cognitive Career Counselling accounted to a 66.4% influence in perceived control over career development and outcomes with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.663$). This demonstrates that perceived control over career development and outcomes among senior secondary school one students in Jos-North, Plateau State was improved after the exposure of experimental group to Social Cognitive Career Counselling.

5. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of Social Cognitive Career Counselling (SCCC) in enhancing crucial career development components - self-efficacy in career decision-making, competence in career exploration and planning, and perceived control over career development among senior secondary students in Jos-North, Plateau State, Nigeria. The findings consistently demonstrate the robust positive impact of the SCCC intervention across all measured constructs, providing strong empirical support for its utility in this context.

Finding revealed that the SCCC intervention significantly enhanced the career decision-making abilities and confidence of participants compared to the control group. Students exposed to SCCC showed a marked increase in their confidence regarding their confidence in career choices. This outcome aligns directly with the core objectives of SCCC, which posits that structured activities like career assessments, informational interviews, and mentorship programs foster self-awareness and informed decision-making (Cohen, 2015). The present finding is also strongly supported by existing literature. Demirtaş-Zorbaz, Korkut-Owen, Arıcı-Şahin, and Mutlu (2023), for example, found that participants in their Career Sailboat intervention demonstrated significantly higher levels of career decision-making self-efficacy. This parallel strongly validates the current study's results, indicating that active, structured career interventions are effective in boosting students' belief in their capacity to navigate career choices. The consistency across these studies suggests a reliable mechanism through which SCCC empowers students with the confidence needed for effective career decision-making.

Finding highlighted that senior secondary school students' perceived competence in exploring and planning careers significantly increased from a baseline low level to a high level as a result of SCCC. The intervention accounted for a high variance in this competence, indicating its substantial influence. This outcome underscores SCCC's role in equipping students with the practical skills needed to identify, evaluate, and pursue career opportunities. This result is well-supported by the study of Situmorang et al. (2025), who reported that students participating in a six-week mobile career counseling intervention showed significant improvements in self-assessment, occupational information gathering, planning, and problem-solving competencies. The congruence between the current study's findings and Situmorang et al.'s work confirms that SCCC-based approaches, by exposing students to relevant occupational information and planning activities, are instrumental in developing concrete competencies necessary for effective career exploration. This suggests that the structured activities within SCCC translate directly into enhanced practical abilities for career navigation.

Moreover, the study found that while students initially reported low perceived control over career development, the experimental group demonstrated significant improvement after the SCCC intervention, surpassing the control group. SCCC accounted for a large effect size, influencing 66.4% of the perceived control over career development and outcomes. This indicates that SCCC successfully fostered students' belief that their personal actions can indeed influence their career trajectories. This outcome is consistent with the tenets of Social Cognitive Career Theory, which emphasizes the crucial roles of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in promoting proactive career behaviors and goal commitment (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2017). The finding is also supported by Wang and Liu (2022), who demonstrated that SCCT-based group counseling significantly improved career adaptability among high school students, with lasting effects. Improved career adaptability, as shown by Wang and Liu, is inherently linked to an increased sense of control, as adaptive individuals feel more capable of shaping their career paths in response to challenges. The strong influence of SCCC on perceived control in the current study reinforces the idea that by building self-efficacy and clarifying outcome expectations, interventions can empower students to take a more proactive and influential role in their career development.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings unequivocally establish Social Cognitive Career Counselling as a highly effective intervention for fostering career decision-making confidence, enhancing career exploration and planning competence, and strengthening perceived control over career development among senior secondary students. The substantial effect sizes and statistical significance across all three outcomes underscore the practical importance of SCCC in supporting students' holistic career development. These results are consistently supported by existing literature, further cementing the evidence base for SCCC as a valuable tool in educational and counselling settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Secondary school administrators and guidance counsellors should adopt and implement Social Cognitive Career Counselling programmes as part of regular guidance services. This will enable students to make more informed educational and occupational choices.
2. School authorities should provide structured career exploration and planning activities such as career talks, mentorship programmes, career fairs, and occupational information services. Such activities will further strengthen students' career development skills and preparedness for future occupations.
3. Guidance counsellors, teachers, parents and government should collaborate to encourage students to set career goals, make informed decisions, and take responsibility for their career development. This will foster greater self-confidence, personal agency, and commitment to achieving career aspirations.

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