



## CYBER COUNSELLING, PEER COUNSELLING AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AS CORRELATES OF CAREER AWARENESS AMONG SELECTED IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS DURING POST COVID-19 ERA IN LAGOS NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The study examined cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement as correlates of career awareness among in-school adolescents in Lagos. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. A total of 200 students selected using stratified sampling technique, participated in the study. They responded to 'Career Awareness Predictors Assessment Scale', comprising of Section A, which centres on respondents' socio-demographic information, and four other scales; Career Awareness Scale (18 items  $r=0.71$ ), Cyber Exposure Attitude Scale (10 items,  $r=0.88$ ), Peer Influence Scale (15 items  $r= 0.85$ ) and Parental Involvement Scale (16 items, 0.83). All the scales were structured based on five-point likert-scale, except the Cyber Exposure Attitude Scale, which was based on 6-point likert format scale. Three research questions were answered and data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression. Results revealed that cyber counselling ( $r = .393$ ;  $p<0.05$ ); Peer counselling ( $r = .432$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and parental involvement ( $r = .312$ ;  $p<.05$ ); were significant to the prediction of career awareness. It also revealed that the joint contribution of independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) on dependent variable (career awareness) was significant  $F (4/_{197}) = 18.95$ ;  $R^2= .474$ ,  $R2=213$   $p<.05$ ). About 21.3% variation was accounted for by the independent variables. The most potent factor was peer counselling, followed by cyber counselling, and then parental involvement. It was however recommended that it is important to foster more exposure towards better handling of computers towards effective cyber counselling. Government should make provisions of computer and internet facilities in schools and that the issue of career orientation should be given due attention among students. It is also recommended that well informed students should be trained to serve as peer counsellors for other students. The parents should be more encouraged to enable them play their roles better and more meaningful.*

**Keywords:** *Cyber counselling, Peer counselling, Parental involvement, Career awareness*

### INTRODUCTION

Career awareness encompasses beliefs, thoughts, feelings and attitudes which are inherent in an individual and predisposes him towards a specific profession. It describes a person's attitudes, knowledge, life experiences, and bringing all these considerations to bear when taking important decisions about career (Racho, Pascal, Peter & Pamela, 2014). Career awareness refers to the understanding of the various long-term employment possibilities and possessing the knowledge necessary to plan towards, and enter into a specific career (Amanda, Andre and Margaret, 2019). Career awareness is an essential skill that allows people to become more self-reliant and able to cope with rapidly changing labour markets, as it will guide through a process that helps them set career goals, secure the educational requirements they need to pursue their goals and thrive in the changing economy. Career awareness is fundamental in that it is the basis for making choices that affects the direction of a person's career (Watts, 2010).

According to Mildred and Edith (2017), career awareness begins right from the time children indulge in pretend play. Often children find themselves answering questions as to what they want to become when they are older. One group which seems to be somewhat in the dark on proper awareness of careers is adolescents. Obura and Ajowi (2012) are of the opinion that special programmes help in growing career awareness in schools by providing students with the appropriate



assistance and by helping them to identify and recognize their cognitive, physical and personal traits. School counselling programmes are supposed to raise the career awareness of students, by helping them develop their processing abilities (Rashid & Naimatullah, 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic seems to affect career awareness among adolescent students.

The escalating pandemic has induced anxiety and panic reactions in the general public (Arafat, Kar, Marthoenis, Sharma, Apu & Kabir, 2020; Wong, Leo & Tan, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented crisis in terms of the scope of its influence on both physical and mental health (Wang, Pan, Wan, Tan, Xu & Ho, 2020). To curb the transmission of this virus, governments all over the world have enforced strict epidemic-control measures such as stay-at-home orders and physical distancing regulations in public areas (Gostin & Wiley, 2020). To cope with the “new normal” and deal with the considerable challenges brought about by the pandemic, individuals tend to take positive actions towards acquiring new information technology and digital skills to meet the demands of home-based teleworking, in efforts to cope with the unpleasant emotions brought about by mandatory stay-at-home orders (Cheng & Chau, 2019). This study investigates cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement as correlates of career awareness among selected in-school adolescents in Lagos during post covid-19 era.

### **Cyber Counselling**

The traditional face-to-face counselling model is now growing wider to accommodate online technology such as informational websites, online support groups, encompassing self-help programmes as well as assessment and psychotherapeutic software. More technologically proficient counsellors are corresponding with clients through emails, or even operating their entire practice online using a variety of communication tools such as videoconferencing, instant messaging and self-help resources (Fenichel, 2010). The cyberspace is a realm where exchange of information and interaction takes place between two parties or between an individual and a computer network as made possible by digital data exchanged over computer networks. The interaction could be used for a variety of purposes including the provision of counselling services. Following the closure of schools as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, school counsellors began offering remote counselling to students via Zoom, WhatsApp, Telegram etc., as a result, cyber-counselling seems to be an emerging phenomenon within the counselling environment (Oboh, 2020).

Cyber services encompass, but not limited to; online counselling, online therapy, cyber therapy, e-therapy, web-counselling or computer mediated psychotherapy (Eyo, 2011). However, the term “text-based counselling” is used specifically to discuss cyber-counselling occurring within email or chat modalities (Ogunlade and Akeredolu, 2012). According to Adika (2011), cyber-counselling is just as productive as the traditional face-face counselling. Bette (2019) stressed that to stay relevant in today’s world, counsellors cannot ignore the influence of new technology. Saad, Suraj and Vaibhav (2018) stressed that the internet has become a place where students visit often to interact, shop, be entertained etc., the internet should also be employed for means as productive and important as interacting with an information system that helps raise their awareness of best among careers available for them. This system removes the challenge of lack of fast and reliable access to useful information needed to make career choices. If this system is used in a constructive manner, it will complement real life counsellors (Saad, Suraj and Vaibhav, 2018). Adolescents now choose to engage in cyber-counselling when their schedules do not allow face-to-face appointments or they are unable to access services as a result of current COVID-19 circumstances. Students are turning to this new help modality; instead of making face-to-face schedules they can simply log on to an online counselling website to register or get information via a host of cyber services offered on the internet. There has been a significant increase in the use of cyber communication during counselling services (Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds and Coy, 2012).



## Peer Counselling

Peer groups are one of the most influential social agents which affect adolescents' behaviour and choices, hence adolescents find the need to seek alternative helping structures and they often resort to their peers (Oluwatimilehin & Owoyele, 2012). School counsellors have the knowledge of students' inclination for providing help and assistance to one another and they seek to put the students' helping and caring tendencies into practice. Moreover, due to the paucity of guidance counsellors in schools during the pandemic, recruiting and training peer counsellors is a tool that can be used to reach out to students who are in need of counselling services and when necessary make such referrals to the school counsellor (Mildred and Edith, 2017). It is a way by which students develop caring and assistance techniques, and put those into practice for others (Eyo, 2011). According to Bette (2019), peer counselling is an interactive relationship within age-groups aimed at influencing positive change, as peers express themselves freely without strains. Peer counsellors are not professionals; they are just students who provide assistance to other students to help clarify concerns they might be experiencing under the supervision of professional counsellors.

Peer influence is vital to raising career awareness, and instrumental for developing career decision making capacities among adolescents. Bette (2019) stressed that the rationale of peer counselling is based on the premise of peer influence as adolescents with similar characteristics and age tend to influence each other's behaviours significantly. Secondary school students have the potential to transform counselling services when effectively trained to offer support to their peers. Researchers (Bankole and Ogunsakin, 2015; Bette, 2019) agree that peer influence shapes student's perception and attitude. Therefore, peer influence plays vital role in raising students' career awareness.

The peer counsellor has the role of probing the nature and enormity of the challenge to figure out who could work best with the student and determining the length of the intervention. Pamela and John (2015) revealed that when students interact with their peers, they are likely to take into consideration the advice they get from these interactions. According to Okiror and Otabong (2015) students seek advice, information, mentorship, guidance and advice from peers who have similar experiences. Peer relationships are also very influential in raising students' awareness of careers. Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015) revealed peer relationships as a vital factor in assisting students in career awareness. Jose, Arturo, Adela, Eugeni, Carmina, Gemma, Teresa and Mar (2018) discovered that peer counselling was more useful than role playing for raising and enhancing career awareness and personal growth. Saad, Suraj and Vaibhav (2018) also reported the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in secondary schools.

## Parental involvement

The family is crucial in a child's early development assisting the child in the choice of school placement and career decisions. Mathatha and Ndhlovu (2017) opined that parents often wonder what careers their children will go into when they are grown up. Parents have the power to shape, sustain and advance their children's career choices through their active involvement in their children's life activities. According to Llamas and Tuazon (2016), learners with parents who are involved in their education have better social skills and show improved behaviour. Parental involvement does not just refer to parents enquiring about their school performances, but also in communicating with their children with the aim of having a healthy relationship with them, so that the process of encouraging, mentoring, leading and inspiring may be successful (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014)

According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), parental involvement is a significant element in education and can also be achieved through home-based parental involvement like listening to the child as they read, helping them in completing their homework as well as school-based activities, which include attending parents meetings and education workshops. According to Sapungan and



Sapungan (2014), parents should also be involved in children's sports activities, as this would improve achievements and serve as motivation.

Parents' involvement in the educational and career choices of their children is highly critical during the children's school years and often during the transition to life after school (Shumba and Naong, 2012). Latashia (2012) defined parental involvement as parents assisting their children improve their school work by being a pillar of support, encouragement, help and providing a suitable home environment for career development. This takes a variety of forms which includes: good parenting in the home, provision of a secure and stable atmosphere, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, active participation in school governance and events, sharing of information with schools and maintaining sustainable and healthy contacts, good models of positive social and educational values, and high aspirations as regards personal fulfilment (Adika, 2011). However, Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) opined that students whose parents are actively involved tend to have more positive attitude towards education and are better positioned to make appropriate career choices and decisions.

Parents prove to be an essential part of adolescents' career awareness. Family ties have positive impact on students' performance. Family-school relationship is a cooperative process of planning and problem-solving involving school staff, parents, children and significant others to maximize resources for students' academic achievement and social-emotional development" (Kisulu, Kimani & Kombo, 2012). Specifically, as regards career awareness, choices and decision making, adolescents tend to use their family climate as a point of reference. Thus, there is the need for parents to be equipped with the necessary tools, information or resources so that they can conveniently and appropriately provide feedback and opportunities for career awareness and exploration (Latashia, 2012).

As students make the transition to secondary school, families often assume that students and school counsellors will work together to formulate a career plan, so they believe their input as parents shrinks (Kisulu, Kimani & Kombo, 2012). Secondary school counsellors have the burden of working with a very large number of students. As a result a lot of students go through secondary school with a short-sighted awareness of available careers and a poor understanding of self. For this reason school counsellors must identify the needs of their students as regards awareness of careers and provide information to parents so that the family becomes more actively involved in the development of their child or children's career path (Latashia, 2012).

Udoh and Sanni (2012) reported parents' level of formal education exert a significant influence on the career awareness of secondary school students. Latashia (2012) noted that parental level of education had significant positive influence on the pupils' educational and occupational aspirations. According to Williams (2016), parent's occupation influences children's career choices both intentionally and inadvertently. By the time children move into adolescence, they begin considering their futures, often looking to their parents either as role models or for career advice.

According to Eyo (2011), parental attachment was positively related to career exploration. Hezlina and Abdul-Mutalib (2013) found that parents, particularly mothers are more influential than peers in the career choice of secondary school students. Parental attachment has been shown to be positively correlated with career exploration.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of career awareness is paramount to career decision that should be carefully made because it affects the entire life or existence of an individual secondary school students. In cases where students do not have meaningful awareness of available careers, the tendency to make wrong career choices is high. In reality, one of the avenues for career awareness and information is the career guidance counsellors that have become inaccessible on face-to-face interaction due to



the effects of the COVID-19 on our society. Another fundamental problem in our schools is the inadequacy of guidance counsellors. In some that should also be supplementing this inadequacy with peer counselling, the importance and awareness is low. Parents also that should be playing their fundamental family roles are also not doing their best. Were all these factors to be available and effectively deployed, career awareness among the secondary school students would have been meaningful and effective during the COVID era. The issues of cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement on career awareness of in-school adolescents therefore become pertinent. Though, studies have been done on other factors that play important role on career awareness among adolescents, not known study has focused on combining cyber-counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement on career awareness of in-school adolescents in Lagos State. To this end, this study investigated cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement as correlates of career awareness among in-school adolescents in some selected secondary schools in Lagos State.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between the independent variables (cyber-counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) and the dependent variable (career awareness) among in-school adolescents in Lagos?
2. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (cyber-counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) on the dependent variable (career awareness)?
3. What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (cyber-counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) to the dependent variable (career awareness)?

**METHODS**

The descriptive survey design of correlation type was adopted in the study. Participants were two hundred (200) in-school adolescent students randomly selected from four schools within Lagos metropolis, using multistage sampling procedure technique. They responded to ‘Career Awareness Predictors Assessment Scale”, a battery of four scales. The battery comprised of Section A, which centres on respondents’ socio-demographic information, and four other scales; Career Awareness Scale developed by Racho et al. (2014) (18 items  $r=0.71$ ), Cyber Exposure Attitude Scale, adapted from Rochlen, Beretvas and Zach (2004) (10 items,  $r=0.88$ ), Peer Influence Scale; adapted from Milicent (2016) (15 items  $r= 0.85$ ), Parental Involvement Scale developed by Ladd (1998) (16 items, 0.83). All the scales were structured based on five-point likert-scale, except the Cyber Exposure Attitude Scale, which was based on 6-point likert format scale. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and multiple linear regression to test the three research questions.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question One:** What is the significant relationship between the independent variables (cyber-counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) and the dependent variable (career awareness) among in-school adolescents in Lagos?

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Inter-correlations among the variables**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Career awareness	200	56.52	13.09	1.00			
Cyber counselling	200	36.34	6.16	.393**	1.00		



Peer counselling	200	23.97	5.32	.432**	.548**	1.00	
Parental involvement	200	23.48	7.10	.312**	.578**	.432**	1.00

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows correlation between the independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) and dependent variable (career awareness) among in-school adolescents in Lagos. It was observed that cyber counselling ( $r = .393$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); Peer counselling ( $r = .432$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and parental involvement ( $r = .312$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); had significant relationship with career awareness. There were also significant correlations among the independent variables.

**Research Question Two:** What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) on the dependent variable (career awareness)?

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis on Career Awareness**

R = .474 R Square = .225 Adjusted R Square = .213 Standard Error = 7.18629					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	2937.128	3	979.043	18.958	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	10121.992	196	51.643		
Total	13059.120	199			

\*p, 0.05

It was observed from Table 2 that a significant combined effect of the independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) to the prediction of the dependent variable (career awareness) among in-school adolescents in Lagos. The result yielded a coefficient multiple regression R of .474,  $p < 0.05$ . The equation also showed adjusted  $R^2$  of .213, suggesting that the independent variables accounted for 21.3% variation in the prediction of career awareness. It was revealed that the above variances are the explained variances within the scope of this study. This implies that the above independent variables contributed significantly, even though the percentage of contribution is not evenly distributed. The other unexplained factors could be variables that are not within the scope of this study.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) to the dependent variable (career awareness)?

**Table 3: Relative Contribution of Independent Variables to the Prediction of Career awareness**

Model	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients		T	P
	B	Standard Error	$\beta$		
Constant	22.987	2.757		8.339	P<0.05
<b>Cyber counselling</b>	.224	.102	.186	2.201	P<0.05
<b>Peer counselling</b>	.543	.140	.297	3.890	P<0.05
<b>Parental involvement</b>	.074	.075	.077	.983	P<0.05

From table 3, it shows that each of the independent variables made a significant contribution to the prediction of career awareness. In term of magnitude of contribution, Peer counselling made the most significant contribution ( $\beta = .297$ ;  $t= 3.890$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). The contribution of other independent variables to career choice was observed in the following order: Cyber counselling ( $\beta = .186$ ;  $t= 2.201$ ;  $p<0.05$ ); and Parental involvement ( $\beta = .077$ ;  $t= .983$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

### DISCUSSIONS

The relationships between the independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) and the dependent variable (career awareness) have been revealed. The finding reveals that there was significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The result showed that cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement had significant relationship with career awareness. The finding was in collaboration with the work of Jose, Arturo, Adela, Eugeni, Carmina, Gemma, Teresa and Mar (2018) who had discovered that peer counselling was more useful than role playing for raising and enhancing career awareness and personal growth. Adika (2011) also reported that cyber-counselling is just as productive as the traditional face-face counselling. There has been a significant increase in the use of cyber communication during counselling services (Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds and Coy, 2012). Also, researchers (Bankole and Ogunsakin, 2015; Bette, 2019) agree that peer influence shapes students perception and attitude. Therefore, peer influence plays vital role in raising students' career awareness. Pamela and John (2015) added that when students interact with their peers, they take into consideration the advice they get from these interactions. Udoh and Sanni (2012) had highlighted the role of parental involvement reporting that parents exert a significant influence on the career awareness of secondary school students. Parental attachment has been shown to be positively correlated with career exploration (Eyo, 2011; Hezlina & Abdul-Mutalib, 2013).

Findings have equally revealed the joint contribution of independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) on the dependent variable (career awareness). It shows that cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement jointly accounted for 21.3% when pulled together have significant effects on career awareness among in-school adolescents, and that the remaining 78.7% is accounted for by variables outside this study. Corroborating this finding, Rashid and Naimatullah (2014) reported that school counselling programmes are supposed to raise the career awareness of students, by helping them develop their processing abilities. Bette (2019) added that to stay relevant in today's world, counsellors cannot ignore the influence of new technology, while Saad, Suraj and Vaibhav (2018) stressed that the internet has become a place where students visit often to interact, shop, be entertained etc., the internet should also be employed for means as productive and important as interacting with an information system that helps raise their awareness of best among careers available for them. On the contribution of peer counselling, Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015) submitted that peer relationships as a vital factor in assisting students in career awareness. Saad, Suraj and Vaibhav (2018) had also reported the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in secondary schools.



Researcher (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014; Llamas & Tuazon, 2016; Mathatha & Ndhlovu, 2017) had agreed on the effective role of parental involvement on career awareness among school children. Parents' involvement in the educational and career choices of their children is highly critical during the children's school years and often during the transition to life after school (Shumba and Naong, 2012).

The relative contribution of the independent variables (cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement) on the dependent variable (career awareness) has also been unveiled, as the result shows that all of cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement are potent predictors of career awareness. The most potent factor was peer counselling, followed by cyber counselling, and then parental involvement. In line with this finding, Oluwatimilehin and Owoyele (2012) had reported the significant role of peer counselling as one of the most influential social agents which affect adolescents' behaviour and choices, hence adolescents often resort to their peers when there is the need to seek alternative help. Bette (2019) corroborated this that peer counselling is an interactive relationships within age-groups aimed at influencing positive change, as peers express themselves freely without strains. Jose, et al (2018) had reported that peer counselling was more useful than role playing for raising and enhancing career awareness and personal growth. On the role of cyber counselling, Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds and Coy (2012) had reported that there has been a significant increase in the use of cyber communication during counselling services. Adika (2011) also reported that cyber-counselling is just as productive as the traditional face-face counselling. Parental influence also had relative contribution to the determinant of career awareness among school children. This has been supported by an earlier finding of Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) who reported that students whose parents are actively involved tend to have more positive attitude towards education and are better positioned to make appropriate career choices and decisions. Williams (2016) added that parents influence children's career choices both intentionally and inadvertently. Udoh and Sanni (2012) supported the significant role of parental involvement reporting that parents exert a significant influence on the career awareness of secondary school students. Parental attachment has been shown to be positively correlated with career awareness (Eyo, 2011; Hezlina & Abdul-Mutalib, 2013).



## Conclusion

Cyber counselling, peer counselling and parental involvement have all shown to be significant in influencing the career awareness among secondary school students. This shows that parental influence support plays a significant role in career awareness and aspirations of students. It is on this premises that this study conclusively maintains that students are highly influenced early in their lives as to career awareness and most of these students choose jobs without relating them to their interests, satisfaction and capacity to cope with the nature of the job which could be achieved with the assistance of well trained counsellors that are available in schools. Considering the findings of the study, it can be concluded that peer counselling, cyber counselling and parental involvement are pivotal to career awareness. In addition, the process can be concretized by availability of sufficient manpower in terms of trained counsellors who will be able to guide, direct and assist the students towards achieving their ultimate goal. The findings therefore filled the missing gaps.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following suggestions were made:

1. Teachers and school counsellors of these children should also be assisted on more exposure towards better handling of computers towards effective cyber counselling. Public school climate should be geared towards maintaining availability of computers with internet facilities and motivation mode so as to bring the most out of their best practices and knowledge which will in the long run enhance career awareness and subsequent meaningful career choices.
2. It is also recommended that well informed students should be trained to serve as peer counsellors for other students. Schools should also ensure peer acceptance among peers, as it is important to foster peer counselling environments that encourage peers to be more tolerant of one another, and to minimize a social dominance hierarchy among the peer group,
3. Government should implement stern policies that will ensure that computer and internet facilities are made available in schools and that the issue of career orientation should be given due attention among students, and schools should endeavour to provide enabling environment for the students of the schools, so as to improve their behavioural attitude.
4. Parents should be encouraged to display more of parental involvement in the lives of their children, especially when it relates to career awareness among school children. The parents should be more encouraged to enable them play their roles better and more meaningful.

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