

Career Counseling and Sustainability of Trades and Crafts in Western Niger Delta, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Career counseling is a valuable process that assist individuals in making informed decisions about career paths. This study on career counseling and sustainability of trades and crafts in Western Niger Delta used an exploratory research design and content analysis was used in providing subjective answers to the research questions that were raised to guide the study. The findings amongst others reveals that the variables of career counseling, including, career orientation and career coaching respectively have substantial effects on career decision making and career development. Also, recommendations were proffered, including providing timely orientation to the younger generations of the Western Niger Deltans to fall back to the traditional trades and crafts of our forefathers in the phase of the inaccessible of white collar jobs in government Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the International oil companies (IOCs) to harness the comparative advantages of self-employment and benefits of entrepreneurial pursuits in trades and crafts in disparity to having a civil service career with a white collar job limited by National minimum wage legislation.

Keywords: Career, Counseling, Crafts, Trades, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Employment counseling is an attempt to determine individual's interests, desires, aspirations, and skills and capabilities in various occupations and jobs. Employment counseling helps individuals in dealing with interpersonal, decisional and emotional problems with regard to their chosen occupations and the work environment (Juneja, 2015).

Juneja (2015) described career counseling as both a remedial approach of providing individuals with expertise assistance in dealing with issues on how to become a professional in their chosen careers, and a preventive approach that helps young men and women in realizing their potential and career interests before it becomes too late to make a right career choice. On the other hand giving career counseling makes employees to develop a sense of belongingness towards ones career and stick to the career even in the crisis of frustrations of redundancy and unemployment, deciding whether to go back to school or work, and finding ways to balance different life roles (Holland, 1997).

The Western Niger Delta is known for its full cultural heritage, particularly in crafts and trades such as wood carving and carpentering, oil pam processing, fishing and preparation of fishing traps/nets, raffia palm processing and distillation of alcohol, crop production and rearing of domestics animals otherwise known as animal husbandry. These trades and crafts reflect the diverse ethnic groups in the region and often serves for both functional and ceremonial purposes, showcasing the indigenous technology of the people of Western Niger Delta. The crafts and trades of the Western Niger Delta people do not only preserve our cultural heritage but also

contribute to the local economy, providing employment opportunities, catering for the livelihood of millions of people as well as maintaining the cultural identity of the Western Niger Deltans (Onwuka, 1966).

Sustainability in trades and crafts operates in the best interest of all current and future stakeholders. In a manner that ensures the long term survival of the trades and crafts and its associated economic, social and environmental systems. Also, government have to do everything in her powers to encourage and support responsible and inclusive trades and craftsmanship, by building the enabling entrepreneurial environment (Landrum & Edwards, 2009). United Nations (2025), sustainability development goals report that the government should take action in six priority areas including: food systems, energy access and social protection – for peace and prosperity for people and the planet.

In the current phase of dwindling opportunities for white collar jobs, it behooves the researcher to call for a renaissances of the indigenous crafts and trades of the people of the Western Niger Delta to solve the problem of youth unemployment and consequent wasting of the youth generation. Hence this paper seek to find a solution to the scarcity of white collar jobs, emanating from organizational delayering in attendance to technological advancements and incursions in a competitive global business environment. Also due to the rationalization of jobs in Nigeria giving the political disadvantageousness of the people of the Niger Delta as members of minority tribes in the State of Nigeria. As marginalized minority tribes still face systemic disadvantages rising inequalities. In addition to the unattractiveness of basic white collar jobs in the professions of teaching, health care attendance, office administration, policing and military/paramilitary services as compared to the salaries and allowances of political elites in Nigeria and Nigerians in diaspora. Sharp differences in salaries paid to workers in the International Oil Companies (IOCs) and other white collar workers in government ministries and departments. With attendant inflation of prices of goods and services, devaluation of the currency and inadequacy of the National Minimum Wage in meeting the basic needs of family members of a vast majority of the people of the Western Niger Delta. It calls for a re-direction of bread winners to look for supplementary income from the seemly outdated indigenous traditional/cultural crafts and trades formerly abandoned for white collar jobs in the advent of colonization and early independence of the State of Nigeria.

This paper seeks to fill the knowledge gap in the literature of career counselling as a strategy for the human resources management of the youths of Western Niger Delta to ensure the re-inventing and sustainability of crafts and trades as solution to the ravaging unemployment, redundancy, unattractiveness of white collar jobs and declining accessibility of full time engagement of our young generations in scarce and hither to lucrative white collar occupations.

Research Questions

- i. What is the effects of career orientation on career choice making?
- ii. To what extent does career coaching determining career development/realization of potentially?
- iii. What is the nature of the relationship between career mentoring and job satisfaction/professionalism?

Overview of Trades and Crafts in the Western Niger Delta

Fishing trips in Ijaw waters

Fishing can be embarked upon by individuals or by a community crowd during fishing festivals. Some of the materials used for fishing in our villages are Nets (Diii or Igbor), Hooks (Dar-iyii), Spears (Duunmu) and native traps (Itei). It is really a delightful scene to watch ijaws getting engaged in their respective fishing exercises as they are seen, struggling with live fishes in volumes of water such as in ponds, dykes, swamps, creeks and in rivers. Some expert fishermen even extend their fishing expeditions to the wide sea which is close to the Atlantic Ocean especially those in Agge, Burutu and Forcados.

<https://ijahss.in/article/theijowandtheeconomiesofthenigerdelta>



Palm Oil Trade

Before the era of crude oil, Nigeria’s economy thrived on agricultural exports, with palm oil playing a central role. Palm oil, derived from the fruit of oil palm trees, abounding in the wetlands of the Western Niger Delta, served various purposes, including soap and cosmetics production, biofuels, and food processing. Palm oil was used as an industrial lubricant, in tin-plate production, street lighting, and as material for candle making. <https://pindfoundation.org/project/palm-oil-value-chain/>





Wood carving and carpentering

Wood carving and carpentering reflect the unique traditions and beliefs of the locals of the Western Niger Delta. While carpentering involves the construction and repair of wooden structures. Wood carving is the art and craft of creating beautiful pieces of items, like masks, doors, stools and musical instruments from wood, from intricate carvings and furniture to cabinetry and artistic sculptures, using local woods from ebony, mahogany and iroko.



(The Woodworker, 2025).

Raffia Palm Tapping Fermentation and Distillation of Alcohol

The production of alcoholic beverages from the sap of raffia palm, has continued for decades in Western Niger Delta. The alcohol content of fermented sap is dependent on the ethanol productivity and tolerance of the fermenting yeast, and on the efficiency of the distillation. However in most cases, middlemen dilute the ethanol beverage before selling it to customers (Elijah et al, 2012).



Traditional Poultry

Rearing local breeds of chicken is a typical activity of rural households across Nigeria, including in the Western Niger Delta. Millions of households keep local chickens across the region, with an average flock size of 11 per household. These birds, though not reared with a specific commercial intent, provide a safety net for rural households, and serve several purposes; they provide a store of wealth and occasional income, add to the household protein consumption, and are used in meeting traditional obligations such as gift-giving during festive seasons. (Alabi & Aruna, 2006).



Source: Appiah, 2025.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Different Meanings to Career

Geber, (1992) describe career as an advancement, a profession ,a lifelong sequence of jobs, and a life- long sequence of role related experiences.

The Six Stages of Modern Career Development

There are six stages of modern career development: Assessment, Investigation, Preparation, Commitment, Retention and Transition.

Being aware of what occurs in each stage of career development gives one the knowledge of activities and tools to apply to successfully help one to navigate from one stage to another.

When making a career decision, most people progress through each stage in a circular fashion, as they gather more information about themselves, the world of works and as they begin to align there career decision with their age, developmental stage and life goals. (Michello-Casto, 2003).

The Boundaryless Career and the Protean Career

In the emergence of the gig economy as a result of rapid technological advancement and globalization, sprouting several career transitions, as remote work became more available, and people grew interested in flexible work, balancing work and family demands. The boundaryless and protean career types emerged. The boundaryless career primarily focuses on the mobility between a succession of jobs, each separate from a single work organization. While the protean career is another concept among the evolving nature of employment in contemporary work environment focusing on the individuals self-directed pursuit of personal and professional goals. Individuals who follow a protean career guide themselves with their intrinsic values, interests, and passions rather than linear career paths and external expectations obtainable in traditional offices (Munoz, 2023).

Self- concept Theory of Career Development

According to Super (1990), self-concept is a product of complex interactions among a number of factors, including physical and mental growth, personal experiences, and environmental characteristics and stimulation. Building on Super's notion of self-concept theory, Savickas (2002) came up with his career construction theory, stating that , individual career development is influenced by the interaction of individuals with situations; A process whereby an individual develops his career by implementing vocational self-concepts in work roles.

Career Orientation and Career Decision Making

Career orientation involves helping individuals understand their interest, skills, and values to make informed career decisions. Effective career decision making includes self-assessments, exploring options, and aligning personal goals with potential career paths. While Career decision making is the process of evaluating career options and selecting a path that aligns with one's skills, interests, values and long-term goals.

Alliyah et al, (2025) recommends for the enrichment and delivery of career orientation programmes, a focused and timely provision of career orientation, relevant content, and long term-support to improve career decision-making confidence and success.

Career Coaching and Career Development/Realization of Potentials

Career coaching is the practice of helping individuals identify areas for growth in their professional lives and implement strategies that can allow them to foster success. There are various types of career coaching including networking coaching, and succession coaching. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2025)

- Networking Coaching helps improve communication and networking skills which are essential for success in any industry. Career coaches helps in identifying networking opportunities and provide strategies for making meaningful connections in industry, enhancing one’s professional reputation and open up new opportunities for career growth.
- Succession coaching develops and implements plans that help facilitates structural changes, facilitate smooth transactions, to avoid disruptions in their workflow for the manufactures of appreciable levels of output of goods and services.

Career Mentoring and Jobs Satisfaction/Professionalism.

In the ever-evolving landscape of the professional world, individuals often find themselves navigating a complex maze of opportunities, challenges, and decisions. As technology advances, industries transform, and job markets become more competitive, the need for mentorship has never been more crucial.

Career mentoring is a dynamic and mutually beneficial relationship between an experienced, knowledgeable professional (mentor) and an individual seeking guidance and support (mentee). The mentor shares insights, knowledge, and advice based on their own experiences, while the mentee absorbs this wisdom to make informed decisions about their career path. Open communication, trust, and a commitment to the mentees growth characterize the relationship.

Career mentoring, a specialized form of business mentoring, is designed to assist mentees in navigating their career paths and formulating strategies to achieve their professional objectives. Its significance has grown substantially in the contemporary job landscape. In the era white collar job of the setting career progressions were often linear, with promotions primarily based on seniority, and job changes typically equated to advancements. However, in the modern job landscape career growth is limited by complexity, necessitating a more dynamic and strategic approach to career advancement. Mentees now embark on meandering paths, involving lateral moves across trades or industries to broaden their expertise for higher leadership roles. (Mentoring Complete, 2019).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

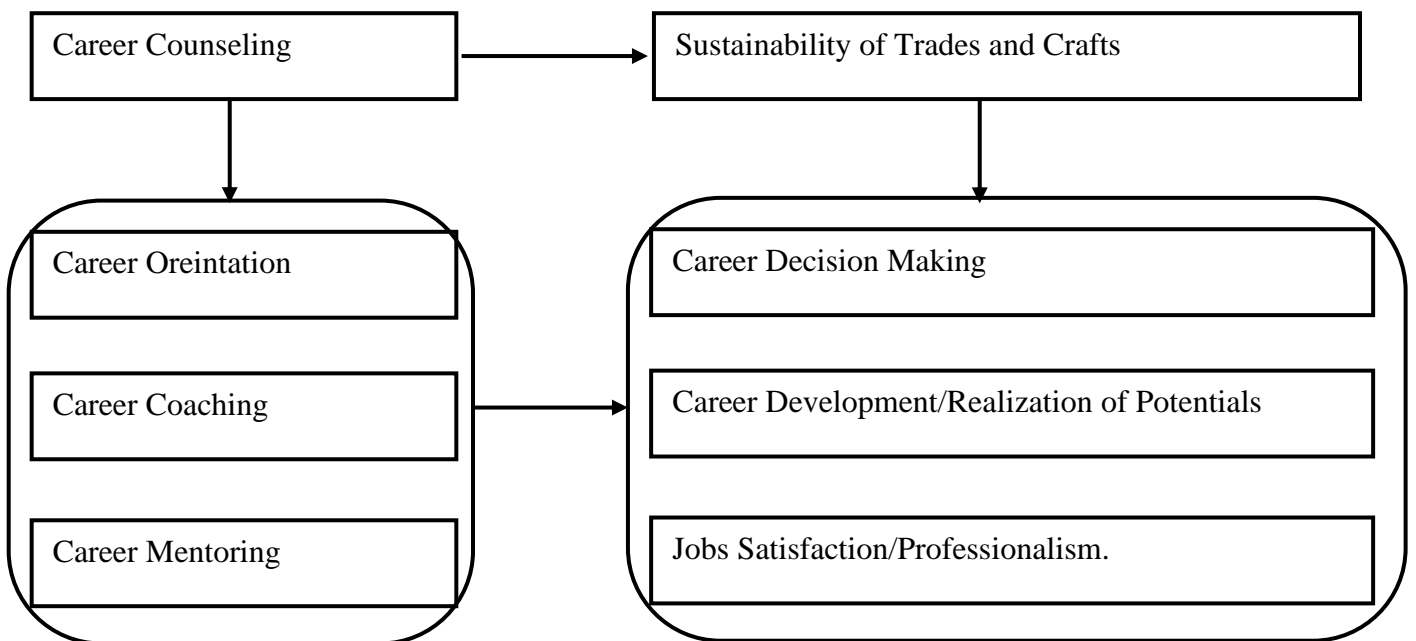


Fig 1: Conceptual Model of Career Counselling and Sustainability of Trades and Crafts

The Model of career counselling and sustainability of trades and crafts reveals that career orientation enhance career choice and career decision self-efficacy. Career coaching assures career development and realization of employee potentials. Thus, career mentoring ensures job satisfaction and career professionalism.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used the qualitative exploratory research design to conduct the research with no attempt to provide conclusive answer to the research questions but to provide insight, ideas and information of the subject. Since, this paper is qualitative; the interpretative paradigm fits the paper to provide subjective opinion to the subject of investigation.

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of career counseling on the sustainability of trades and crafts in the Western Niger Delta, Nigeria. The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What is the effects of career orientation on career choice making?
- ii. To what extent does career coaching determining career development/realization of potentially?
- iii. What is the nature of the relationship between career mentoring and job satisfaction/professionalism?

Data was obtained from textbooks, internet, websites and journals and content analysis was used for the interpretation of the data.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Career orientation has a substantial effect on career choice and career decision making.
2. Career coaching determines career development and realization of potentials
3. Career mentoring has a positive relationship with career satisfaction and professionalism.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Career orientation includes making the young employee and beginner to be familiar with components of the trade, the goals, and objectives of the occupation and the core values of the chosen profession to take away fright and anxiety from the new comer (Ugbam, 201). Career orientation has a substantial effect on career choice and decision making, being that it helps young individuals to navigate career choices based on their traits and goals. Supporting decision making and engagement of youths in their chosen trade. Hence, in agreement with Alliyah et al (2025) observation that there is a strong relationship between career orientation and career choices.

Coaching, defined as a dialogue between an experienced and knowledgeable professional and a young amateur new entrant into a particular trade and craft for the transfer of knowledge Skills and Abilities (K S A) from the former to the later to foster career success and expertise that will lead to superior performance and sustained improvement (De Simone & Harris, 1988) Ensures the successful transfer of (K S A) of the older generation of trades and craftsmen to the younger generation of youths and novices of the indigenous trades and crafts. Career coaching, especially, succession coaching and networking coaching with knowledge of career development theories, labour market insights, trends and opportunities, largely assist the younger generation of new business entrants to develop successful careers (Frigerio & Rix, 2021).

Career mentoring helps new business entrants and young employees to grow by tapping into the expertise and experience of someone who has been there, done that'. Career mentoring is the best and most authentic method of helping people develop in their profession and achieve career goals. (Cook, 2023) A mentor can propel your success in your chosen trade and craft by pinpointing the errors he made, and work through your mistakes with you. The mentor adds decades of his experience to you in an instant. Defending you from making amateur trial and error efforts to avoid pitfalls. (Monn, 2023). Hence, providing experienced guidance for professional development. Also fostering professionalism and career satisfaction by providing practical individualized support to help mentees develop strong work habits, navigate workplace expectations and advance in career. (River Software, 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sustainability of the trades and crafts of the Western Niger Delta must ensure the production of high quality goods and services for continuous customer and client participation. So as not to limit the funding of her industrial activities.

Passing the indigenous workmanship from generation to generation as a cultural and economic heritage by adequate career counseling, orientation, coaching and mentorship.

1. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) should prioritize investments in Research and Development, succession coaching and capacity building of the young generation of Western Niger Deltans for refocusing attention and renaissance of large scale palm oil production and trade, commercialization of traditional poultry initiatives and fishing for increase in the quantity of outputs to earn more money and create new jobs.
2. The Nigerian government should strictly enforce the ban on importation of foreign cabinets and furniture to protect the jobs and boost the careers of wood carvers and carpenters in the Western Niger Delta for the sustainability of the industry.
3. Technical information from technological and scientific advances should be passed to our indigenous trades and craftsmen for large scale industrialization of the production/ operations of crafts and trades for curbing youth unemployment and reduction of the poverty level of the region.
4. During fishing festivals and other high level crowd gathering summits, timely career orientation should be given to the young generation of Western Niger Deltans to fall back to the traditional trades and crafts of our forefathers. In this period of high level of unemployment, lack of access to gainful employment in the international oil companies (IOCs) operating in the region. Rationalization of white collar jobs in government Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
5. Given the comparative advantages of self-employment and benefits of entrepreneurial pursuits in trades and crafts as compared to having a civil service career with a white collar job limited by National minimum wage legislation. Our youths should be counselled and mentored not to abandon the inheritance of our traditional crafts and trades.

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