



EVALUATION OF SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES AND STUDENTS PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

¹ EGBULE, Elizabeth Osita (Ph.D.) , ²Nwangwa Julian Enwerim

¹Senior Lecturer, ² Asst. Lecturer
Department of Guidance and Counselling
¹ Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Abstract: The study evaluates the role of school counselling services and student performance in secondary school in Delta State, Nigeria. The study employed primary data for analysis of the significance of counselling services to students' performance when taken advantage of by the students. Also, the study recognizes the relevance of counseling services in the school system. The paper found that there is positive relationship between effectiveness of school counselling services and students performance in secondary education. The paper recommended that teachers and students should be educated on the roles of the school counsellors to avoid misconception about them.

Key Words - Evaluation, Effectiveness, Performance, Counselling, Secondary Education

Introduction

The performance of secondary school students is currently becoming worse every day. In light of this, school counselors play a crucial role in secondary education in assisting students in developing their careers for the best possible performance in a variety of life scenarios, including those involving their education, profession, social life, health, morals, and personal and marital relationships (Egbule, 2013). It is important to remember that secondary school should expressly make guidance counseling employment a profession. Egbule's study found that the majority of parents of school-aged children blame school counselors' inefficiency in carrying out their duties for their children's low academic performance. These people have questioned whether school counselors actively participate in effective student counseling (Egbule & Egbule, 2008).

On the other hand, some parents also noticed that the majority of teachers viewed the school counselors as their competitors and came up with ways to undermine or discredit their work by creating the impression

that the schools lacked the necessary resources, such as a comfortable counseling office and sufficient funding, to support counseling work (Nwaokolo, 2006; Egbule, 2013). Most parents have negative feelings about school counselors' jobs as a result of their poor reputation for effectiveness, and some of them prefer to send their kids to the principal for counseling because of their friendly relationship with the principal.

On the other hand, Myrick (2003) and Egbule and Egbule (2008) emphasized that due to the fact that counselors are frequently mistaken for administrative assistants who have little time to devote to counseling students, some teachers have misconceptions about the position and duties of counselors. Some instructors fear counselors because they perceive them to be aligned with the administration, which feeds the myth. Generally speaking, developmental guidance has been attacked by teachers who are abrasive and unsupportive. These educators think that counselors don't have much of an impact on how students behave or perform. They object to having their pupils interact with counselors. They can even decide not to send their pupils to the advice department. They don't believe that counselors can actually assist, and they think that sending children to the guidance office during class time is a waste of time and really hurts the student. However, some teachers only send their kids to the counselor during the lunch hour (Muro & Kottman, 1995; Egbule & Egbule, 2013).

Myrick (2003) also mentions the existence of more myths. The author emphasizes that some instructors think counselors always support the students at the expense of the teacher and that this is a common misconception. They assert that kids frequently approach counselors to voice complaints about unjust treatment. Some teachers believe that counselors only hear one side of the issue, which leads them to draw conclusions from the available data. More than 100 primary school teachers, according to the findings of a recent survey by Muro and Kottman (1995), are familiar with the process of providing advice. Even fewer knew what counseling actually included.

While some of the more experienced instructors in the survey had a better understanding of the purposes of counseling, the majority believed that counselors' primary duty is to offer pupils specific assistance. It is regrettable that educators do not have a better understanding of developmental guidance's genuine goals. The goal of integrating advice and counseling into the curriculum of schools was to eliminate the ignorance of many young people regarding job options and personality disorders among schoolchildren. On the basis of this, career officers and counselors were chosen to assume the duties of educating students about the requirements for making an informed career decision (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Every new profession is viewed with mistrust until it can demonstrate its value, according to Denga (1982), in the public sector, particularly in secondary school systems, the position of school counselor is prevalent. Guidance and counseling services continue to fall short in their ability to combat the rising indiscipline in schools. Stabbing, fighting, robbery, rape, bullying, rioting, damage of school stores, administrative buildings, and libraries are among the most heinous acts that call for guidance and therapy. In addition, studies by Anagbogu et al. (2012) noted that young exuberance brought on by drug and sexual abuse, disobedience to school policies and rules, arriving late for class, using abusive language, among other things, has contributed to a high increase in secondary school dropouts, poor academic performance, and emotional and mental distress relative to. In connection with this, Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) and Egbule (2013) also noted that guidance counselors should offer a range of services to help students, such as assistance with academic, social, emotional, and behavioral issues, in order to promote academic achievement.

As a result, it is crucial that instructors and counselors are aware of and understand one other's impressions of the other. To achieve the profession's objectives, awareness and comprehension are necessary. Again, in order to obtain a deeper grasp of how modern guidance work functions, guidance professionals must study the history of school counseling. It's also important to consider how instructors see the supervision of school counselors. In order for guidance programs to be successful, instructors and counselors must have a consistent understanding of the duties of school counselors (Odojin, 2019). School counselors are viewed as important contributors to reestablishing values in secondary schools, and as a result, they are held accountable for the profession's ongoing development and expansion. Teamwork serves as the cornerstone for counseling. By ensuring that children get the essential programming to address their needs today, the pair will work together and with more focus to sustain counselors' strong position in the field (Lenhardt & Young, 2001).

The researchers also pointed out that failing to address teachers' and parents' concerns about the efficacy of guidance and counseling services in secondary school education may have a detrimental impact on students' academic performance. This study, which assesses the function of school counseling services in secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria, is necessary as a result of the aforementioned issues.

Review of Related Literature

Counseling, according to Tambawal (2007), is concerned with how a person feels, thinks, and behaves about himself and the problems he faces. The author emphasizes that counseling practice is primarily concerned with strategies to help people understand themselves and the world around them in order to fully maximize

their potential and lead normal, well-adjusted lives. According to Eze (2006), therapy is "a helping relationship in which the counselor helps the client better understand him and the world." According to the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2010), "counseling is a professional relationship that enables diverse people from all walks of life to achieve their mental health, wellness, educational, and career goals." The authors describe counseling as a way to offer educational services to students in order to assist them in meeting their academic needs. The school counselor must comprehend the student's needs and provide counseling aides to assist the student in resolving issues. The researchers claim that counselors play a crucial role in secondary school education by assisting students in making course selections, creating reading plans, and assisting them in deciding on a field of study. Numerous academics have attempted to define counseling accurately, but they have done so in a variety of ways that make comprehension of the concept more difficult. All of the definitions put out by various writers are appropriate for this study and excellent.

Other roles of the guidance counselors amongst others includes but not limited to taking charge of establishing school guidance programme; coordinating the guidance programme in schools; defining objectives of the school guidance programme for the benefit of the principals, teachers parents and the students; helping to disseminate career information of the students; supervising the building and maintenance of students' cumulative records in schools; providing relevant data for the placement of students in the transition from junior to senior secondary schools; providing counseling service to the students regarding their educational, vocational and personal social concern' perform preventive role of anticipating, circumventing and, preventing difficulties which may arise in the future.

Challenges Counselors Face in Secondary School Education

Information and communication technology (ICT) is one of the biggest obstacles that school counselors have in their counseling practice, according to a recent study by Modo and George (2013). In addition, the authors note that compared to counselors in other regions of the world, just 40% of them are computer proficient. It is essential to refocus counseling and broaden its scope to meet the problems of the modern society, especially in Nigerian secondary schools, given the present trends in technological growth and globalization.

The usage of ICT, including the internet, intranet, Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms, plays a significant role in information exchange and communication between counselors and students during the learning process, according to the researchers' intuitive understanding. Projectors, PowerPoint presentations,

and other digital tools are used by counselors for a variety of teaching and learning activities as well as for research. Because it can be used to enhance guidance counselors' work and educational programs, as well as human capacity in other fields of human endeavor, such as business transactions and industrial operations, among others, the use of ICT in secondary education should be encouraged (Ofodu, 2007; Bandele, 2006).

In a separate research, Low (2009) highlighted internal, external, systemic, and personal issues as the four main difficulties facing secondary school counselors. Internal problems, in the author's opinion, have to do with how professors feel about counseling and how eager students are to seek counseling. On the other hand, system problems include items within the program, such as law establishing its implementation in schools, referral method, and resource planning. External obstacles, on the other hand, encompass concerns beyond the school, such as culture and globalization. Personal problems also include the counselor's abilities and strategies in relation to training, supervision, and attitude toward the educational system.

The majority of school administrators, teachers, and parents have misconceptions regarding the function of school counselors, according to studies by Nwaokolo (2006). These individuals, as previously indicated, think that schools can run effectively without school counselors. Some teachers consider the guidance counselors assigned to their schools to be their competitors, and they plan ways to discourage students from using their services by creating the false impression that the schools lack the resources, such as a suitable counseling office, insufficient funding, and tape records, to support counseling work. When it comes to parents' attitudes toward guidance counselors, some of them prefer to send their kids to the principle due to poor behavior and attitude instead of the guidance counselor at school.

The fact that the administrator is more knowledgeable and experienced than the school counselor may have affected their mindset. Due to the need for and potential for employment in this field, guidance counseling has been included in the new National Policy on Education. The aforementioned statistic makes it clear that principals, instructors, and parents have an erroneous understanding of the significance of guidance and counseling programs. The researchers contend that such narrow-minded view or forecast should be disregarded since it cannot benefit the teaching and learning process in the educational system.

In order to satisfy the expectations of children's needs, collation is established via collaboration and collaborative efforts with others in counseling (Lenhardt & Young, 2001). In today's world, there is an urgent need for guidance and counseling in the Nigerian educational system. The choices available to young people in life include those related to their health, their choice of academic courses, their choice of university study

program, and more. Many individuals go to counselors to provide them with solutions to their issues. Such a pupil needs some form of therapy in order to improve their capacity, make sensible decisions, and deal with issues they may face in society.

Student Outcome and Performance

According to Chang and Baum's definition from 2007, performance is a gauge of an individual's ability to achieve stated goals. Jennifer and Quah (2012) underlined once again that performance includes both quantitative and qualitative evaluations of a person's attempts to accomplish a goal. Performance also includes activities like goal-setting, evaluation, feedback, rewarding for great results, and using remedial actions when results are subpar (Akpokiniovo, 2022). Once more, Lawrie and Gobbold (2004) noted that performance is a crucial indicator of what should be expected of an individual's goals in general.

Simply said, performance indicators outline what the student hopes to gain from their participation in a particular set of programs. The student should be able to recognize coping strategies (that is, the knowledge and abilities) required for mastering the program outcomes as soon as the schedules for the programs are made public. The following should be measured through performance indicators: students' capacity to define the problem-solving process, their knowledge of their professional code of ethics, and their ability to use scientific procedures while addressing problems (McBeath, 1992).

Empirical Review

Numerous academics and professionals have contributed to the understanding of how teachers and students view the function of school counselors. In a study done in Kwara State, Nigeria, Bojuwoye (1983) compared how students and instructors perceived students' problems with career development. Only four hundred and eighty (408) of the five hundred (500) questionnaires that were given to the study's participants - students and teachers - were returned in a sincere manner. The Student Personal Problems Assessment Inventory (SPPAI) was the survey tool utilized for the study, and responses were graded using a five-point Likert scale. To determine if the responses of the children and each instructor subgroup varied, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted. Regarding how seriously students' difficulties with career development were taken, the author remarked that there were disagreements between instructors and students. On the other side, Agi (2014) examined how students in Rivers State, Nigeria, perceived school counseling and their views toward its programs. The pupils Perception and Attitude Questionnaire (SPAQ) approach was used to deliver 640 questionnaires to the pupils. Simple percentage and Pearson Product-Moment Analysis were used to assess

the study's primary variables, and the t-test approach was used to examine the mean scores for sex, class, location of the school, and socioeconomic status. Results indicated that perceptions of and attitudes about school counseling are significantly correlated. All of the study's variables, with the exception of sex, were shown to have significant influences on perception and attitudes toward counseling, despite the fact that there was a general lack of perception that was mirrored in attitudes.

In addition, Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu, and Umezulike (2013) looked at the professional difficulties that counseling practitioners faced in Anambra State, Nigeria's elementary schools. To gather data for analysis, the study used a descriptive survey research design. Only four hundred and fifteen (415) of the four hundred forty one (441) questionnaires that were given to the study's participants were honestly returned. The T-test was used to analyze the data, and the results showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores for the professional difficulties to counseling practice between desk officers at the office and school counselors. Similar to this, advice and counseling in Nigerian secondary schools and the impact of information, communication, and technology (ICT) were evaluated by Oye, Obi, Mohd, and Bernice (2012). In order to evaluate how ICT affects guidance and counseling in secondary schools, the study used secondary sources. According to the report, ICT played a big part in guiding and counseling services in three different ways: as a tool, as a replacement, or as a change agent.

Similar to this, Oye, Obi, Mohd, and Bernice (2012) assessed the effects of information, communication, and technology (ICT) on guidance and counseling in secondary schools in Nigeria. The study analyzed secondary sources to assess how ICT impacts guidance and counseling in secondary schools. In three separate ways, the paper claims that ICT had a significant role in guiding and counseling services: as a tool, as a substitute, or as a change agent. This study can be distinguished from earlier studies by the aforementioned information gap.

Conclusion

The efficiency of school counseling services in secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria, is evaluated in this study, as was already indicated. A study revealed a beneficial association between student performance and the success of school counseling programs. The findings are consistent with the existing literature, which claims that school counselors serve three key functions: remedial or rehabilitation (assisting students who are currently having learning difficulties); preventive (foreseeing, avoiding, and preventing difficulties that may arise in the future); and educational and developmental (assisting students in making plans and realizing their

potentials). According to the study, both students and instructors thought that school counseling services were supportive and helpful. However, the study also found that owing to differences in knowledge and mindset, both students and instructors had differing perceptions of the job of counselors.

Recommendation

The study made the following recommendations in light of its results and conclusion: school administrators should be better informed about the duties of counselors; these roles must also be defined in the context of the educational system; and the counselors' functions must be distinct from those of teachers. This will help dispel misconceptions about the function and duties of school counselors, who are frequently mistaken for administrative assistants; teachers and students should be informed about the roles of school counselors to prevent duplication of tasks and resource waste; both teachers and school counselors should develop the habit of attending to the needs of all students, not just those who have extreme needs or challenging behaviors; and school counselors should be educated on their roles.

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