

**THE CHALLENGES OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PRACTICES AS
PERCEIVED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN ENUGU
STATE NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study sought to find out Challenges to effective Guidance and Counselling as perceived by Counsellors in Secondary Schools in Enugu State Nigeria. The study was restricted to the views of counsellors and Teacher counsellors in public Secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. To carry out this study, two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey design was used. A sample of 400 Counsellors and Teacher Counselors were selected through Simple random counselling technique. The instrument was questionnaire; Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to answer the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings were that Counsellors in Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria perceived negative attitude of people and lack of funds as challenges to Counselling Services. Based on the findings recommendations were made, among which are Government intervention in provision of funds for counselling and urgent need for the general orientation of every beneficiary of counselling.

KEYWORDS: Challenge, Guidance, Counselling, Practice, Perception, Secondary, School, Counsellor

Introduction

Guidance and counselling is a meaningful nomenclature for a double edged functional academic and professional discipline. Akinade (2012) sees guidance and counselling as an applied psychology to human endeavours be it educational, vocational and social personal in dimension.

A vision for the future of counselling an initiative co-sponsored by American counselling Association (ACA) and the American Association of state counselling Board (ASSCB) formulated a Universal definition of counselling. It defined "counselling as a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness and education and career goals". American counselling Association (1997) defines counselling as "the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, effective, behavioural or systematic intervention strategies that address wellness, personal growth or career development as well as pathology. Durojaiye (1999) described counselling as involving the development of interaction through the relationship between a trained therapist (counselor) and a troubled person (client or counselee) in a perceived temporary state of indecision, confusion, malfunction, habit disorder, distress or despair.

According to Tyler (1969) the central purpose of counselling is to facilitate wise choices and decisions. Its central purpose is to promote adjustment or mental health. The Nigerian National policy of Education (2014) says inter alia that "in view of the fact that students do not choose courses and jobs realistically and also because of the evident maladjustment exhibited by students, it was necessary to introduce guidance and counselling services in our schools. The same document stated that Guidance and Counselling Courses should be introduced into our Teacher-Training Institutions. These statements suggested that government has realized the importance of Counselling and is interested in injecting it into all learners. It is an obvious fact that not only learners need Counselling services, adults, teachers, administrators, parents, and all members of the society need it. The below average, average, above average, gifted and talented, those who require one form of rehabilitation or the other need it too. Now, Society and education have become so complex that human relations can no longer be handled as an additional or incidental duty of the teacher. The personnel human needs of the student require specialized attention. Several schools struggle to impart knowledge or improve the

cognitive competences of learners. This is often done with notable neglect of the affective development of the learners in their care where Counselling has not been established, to correct all these deficiencies, Counselling is emerging gradually in our School System. Just like any new thing, reception and development of guidance and counselling still face some challenges as perceived by counsellors. The problems it faces according to Akinade, (2012) could be grouped as those caused by man, materials or money. He noted that although the rationale for the introduction of guidance and counselling is inserted in the National policy of Education (2004), one would have expected the nation to embrace the discipline enthusiastically. However, the reverse is the case, its reception is with suspicion and a wait and see attitude.

Formal guidance and counselling services are more than three decades old in Nigeria, it is pathetic to note that guidance services in Nigeria are still in their embryonic stage of development in spite of the over three decades of its existence. The services are still plagued by such problems as lack of adequate trained personnel, poor attitude of parents, principals, teachers, students , government e.t.c. (Egbo, 2012); She noted that many individuals and Governments have recognized the need for and importance of guidance services in the nations educational system especially in view of recent socio-economic changes of the age. What remains is to match this recognition with concrete steps and actions that would make guidance services both functional and central in the educational system. Hence, the need to find out the perception of counselors on the challenges facing them in the course of practice.

Research Question

Two research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do counsellors in secondary schools in Enugu state perceive peoples' attitude towards counseling as a challenge to counselling practice?
2. How do secondary school counsellors perceive lack of funds for counselling as a challenge to counselling practice?

Null Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance. They are:

1. The mean ratings of counsellors on the attitude of people towards counselling challenge to counselling practice.

2. Years of counselling experience will not be a significant factor in the mean ratings of the perception of lack of finance for counselling as a challenge to counselling practice.

Research Design

This study was a descriptive survey research. This design is appropriate because this study was concerned with collecting data from secondary school counsellors in order to determine their perceptions in the challenges of counselling services in counselling practice (Nworgu, 2004).

Population for the Study

The population for the study consisted of the entire counsellors and teacher counsellors in all the state Government owned secondary schools in the area of study. Statistics from the State Education Commission Enugu state Nigeria they were 1,024 counsellors and teacher counsellors in Enugu Education Zone as at the time of this study.

Sample for the study

Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 400 respondents comprising both counsellors and teachers counsellors for the study. This was done through random sample of 20 out of the 49 secondary schools in Enugu education zone and then selecting 20 counsellors from the sampled schools.

Instrument for Data Collection

The researcher constructed a questionnaire titled “Challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices Questionnaire (CGCPQ)”. The instrument is divided into three sections. Section A comprises of 2 open ended questions that elicit information on the counsellors, gender and the location of the schools. Sections B and C comprise of 6 statements each that sought information on counsellors perception of challenges of counselling. The statements were structured on a 4 point scale that ranges from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

Validation and Reliability of Instrument

The instrument was face validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling and one in Measurement and Evaluation both in Enugu state University of science and technology (ESUT). To test the reliability of the instrument, 20 counsellors in secondary schools in Anambra state were made to respond to the questionnaire. Thus Cronbach alpha method was applied to their scores to yield a satisfactory coefficient alpha of 0.77 for the instrument.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher with the help of four trained research assistants visited the selected schools, distributed and retrieved the filled copies of the questionnaires to the respondents inside the staff rooms and Counselling offices. This ensured that the 400 copies of questionnaires distributed were returned giving it a 100% return.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation scores were used in analyzing the data for the research questions. The responses to items in the questionnaire were assigned the following points

(SA) 4.00 points

(A) 3.00 points

(DA) 2.00 points

(SDA) 1.00 point.

Mean scores up to and above 2.50 were accepted as agreed attitude while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as not accepted. The two null hypotheses were tested with the t-test at the 0.05 level of significance.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question:

To what extent do secondary school counsellors in Enugu state perceive peoples negative attitude as a challenge to counselling services?

Table 1:

Counsellors' mean ratings of their perception of peoples negative attitude to counselling as a challenge to counselling services.

S/N	PEOPLES NEGATIVE ATTITUDE	X	SD
1	Lack of awareness on the part of students.	2.37	Disagree
2	Principal's uncooperative attitude to counselling	2.85	Agree
3	Interference by parents	2.34	Disagree
4	Teachers uncooperative attitude	2.56	Agree
5	Uncooperative attitude of vice principals.	2.45	Disagree
6	Counsellors' attitude to counselling.	2.39	Disagree

Table 1 reveals that items 2 and 4 obtained means ratings above 2.50 while items 1, 3, 5 and 6 scored below 2.50. It could be deduced that the activities in items 1,3,5 and 6 are no acceptable while those in 2 and 4 are acceptable.

Table 2:

Counsellors mean ratings of lack of funds as a perceived challenge to counselling service.

S/N	LACK OF FUND	X	SD
7	Lack of counselors control of counselling funds	3.44	Agree
8	Lack of counselling materials	2.51	Agree
9	Lack of accommodation or office	2.34	Disagree
10	Lack of motivation of counsellors.	2.39	Disagree
11	Principals not releasing money for counselling	2.45	Disagree
12	Government inability to employ qualified counselors	2.56	Disagree

As shown in table 2, items 7, 9, 10 and 11 have mean ratings that are below the 2.50 level of agreement indicating that the respondents agreed that the above actions listed in those items are not perceived to be challenges to counselling services instead, those actions in 8 and 12.

HOI: The mean ratings of counsellors on their perception of lack of cooperative attitude from the public as a challenge to counselling service will not differ significantly based on the location of the schools.

Table 3:

T-test comparison of mean ratings of urban and rural counsellors on their level of perception of peoples' attitudes As a challenge to counselling services ($p < .05$)

Location	N	\bar{X}	SD	AF	T-cal	T-crit	DECISION
URBAN COUNSELLORS	100	2.85	1.18				HO Accepted
RURAL COUNSELLORS	300	2.73	1.10	398	0.92	1.96	

In table 3, the calculated t value of 0.92 is less than the table (critical) value of 1.96 at 0.05 confidence level. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. It then shows that the perception of counsellors on the level of perception of people's attitude to counselling as challenge to counselling service did not differ significantly based on the location of the schools.

HO2: Years of counselling experience will not be a significant factor in the mean ratings of the perceptions of counsellors on lack of funds as a factor or challenge to counselling service.

Table 4:

T-test comparisons of perception of counsellors on the lack funds as a challenge to counselling service ($P < 0.05$)

Years of experience	N	\bar{X}	SD	AF	T-cal	T-cal	DECISION
Experienced counsellors	100	2.34	1.28				HO Accepted
Less experience counsellors	300	2.30	1.22	398	0.5	1.96	

The result presented in table 4 reveals that the calculated t value of 0.5 is less than the table (critical) value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of confidence. The null hypothesis is thus accepted. The decision is that years of experience in counselling were not factors in the mean ratings of the perceptions of counsellors on lack of fund as a challenge to counselling service.

Discussion of findings:

The response to research question one revealed that the counsellors perceived negative attitude of public as a challenge to counselling service, uncooperative attitude of principals and negative attitude of teachers. Adding weight to the findings, the test of hypothesis one showed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of counsellors in different locations concerning the people's attitude as a challenge to counselling services. Iwuanna (1999) and Ogunyemi (2003) made a similar observation and concluded that it is one of the reasons why counsellors choose to teach instead of doing their counselling job. In a similar vein, Akinade (2012) noted that uncooperative attitude of the public is a major problem hindering counselling services in schools.

Research question two revealed that lack of funds was a factor challenging counsellors in secondary schools. For instance, Government does not make financial provision for counseling services in schools. Years of experience did not influence counsellors mean ratings as shown in null hypothesis two. This problem shows that no fund is budgeted for the counselling services in schools. One therefore joins Oladele (2007) to speculate that principals seldom provide funds for counselling service. If they do, counsellors would have agreed that funds are adequately provided for counselling services. Nursing similar fears, Egbo, (2012) noted that any principal who knows the worth of counselling should make funds available for such services. This will ensure that counsellors live up to their counselling expectations there by discharging their duties as expected.

Recommendations

In the view of these findings, it is recommended that:

1. There is need for Government intervention in provision of funds for counselling.
2. Government should employ qualified counsellors.
3. Counsellors should not be made to teach in addition to counselling.
4. There should be enough awareness creation of the roles of counsellors and counselling.
5. Principals should release funds when needed to enable counsellors carry out their duties.
6. Principals, vice principals and teachers should change their negative attitude towards counselors and Counselling.

7. Parents should also be made part of counselling as they have roles to play in counselling.
8. There is need for the general orientation of every beneficiary of counselling.

Conclusion

The results obtained from the data analyzed made the researcher to conclude that secondary school counsellors in Enugu state perceived the negative attitude of the public and lack of funds as challenges to counselling services. By implication if principals fail to support counselling, the counsellors will fail in the discharge of their counselling responsibilities. A situation where the attitude of the public towards the counsellor is of the negative will not augur well for counselling.

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