

Factors Hindering Students from Accessing Guidance and Counselling Services

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Abstract

This study is carried out in Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria and it adopts a survey research design in identifying factors hindering students from accessing guidance and counselling services. The study was guided by two research questions; and used a sample size of 150 SSS III students drawn through simple random sampling from public secondary schools. Factors Preventing Secondary School Students from Responding to Guidance and Counselling Services Questionnaire (FPSSSRGCSQ) is used for data collection. The reliability coefficient value of the instrument is 0.80. The data generated was analyzed using arithmetic weighted mean. The findings among other things revealed that carrying out counselling in staff room, unavailability of counsellors, lukewarm attitudes of some principals and teachers to counselling services are school related factors that prevent students from responding to guidance and counselling services while not being friendly enough, aggressiveness and unavailability of a counsellor are some of the counsellors related factors that prevent some secondary school students from responding to counselling services in school. The researchers recommended that school administrators should be giving their support for counselling services in school because the support is the backbone behind the effectiveness and efficiency of counselling programmes.

Keywords: factors, students, guidance, counselling, services

Introduction

Problems are part of human life. Everyday human endeavours and struggles are efforts geared towards seeking solutions to the numerous problems in life. Such problems range

from personal, social, educational, vocational to family oriented ones. In the educational setting, learners of all levels experience problems in the course of learning. Most especially, in secondary schools, the adolescent students are faced with emotional, educational, vocational and psychological problems. Based on the problems in the educational setting, Anagbogu, and Nwokolo (2015) reported that the National Policy of Education (2004) emphasizes the need for guidance and counselling to be an integral part of education. Songok et al. (2017) indicate that guidance contains a range of activities that is designed to assist individuals to make proper adjustment in life. Gok (2018) also indicates that guidance facilitates an individual's better understanding of himself or herself. Based on the above definitions, guidance can be defined as guide, help, pilot or assistance given to an individual to understand himself and his environment for proper adjustment. Hui (2016) expresses that the focus of guidance is to improve the capacity of the individual to understand self and environment and to deal with self-situational relations for greater personal satisfaction and social usefulness in the light of social and moral values. Knowledge of environment is a person's understanding of his entire surroundings including objects, events, experiences, social needs and people with whom he interacts with.

On the other hand, counselling is a professional relationship that enables people to develop self-understanding and make changes in their lives (Salgong et al., 2016). Also Hui (2016) defines counselling as the provision of professional assistance and guidance in resolving personal or psychological problems. Concentrating on the above definitions, counselling can be defined as the use of psychological principles, skills, techniques and strategies by a professionally trained personnel to help people who have problems in an interpersonal situation to arrive at solutions of their problems. Alemu (2013) opines that counselling as a programme is designed to provide an interacting relationship in which the counsellor attempts to help an individual to better himself in relation to his present and future problems. Wanjohi (2016) also posited that guidance and counselling is a programme of services to individuals based on their needs and their environment. It is a professional field which has a broad range of activities, programmes and services geared towards assisting an individual to understand himself, his problems, his school environment and his world and also develop adequate competency for wise decision. Guidance and counselling programmes in schools are geared towards promotion of the development of students. According to Eyo et al. (2010), guidance and counselling programmes for secondary school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational and academic difficulties of adolescent students. Guidance and counselling in schools is very vital to the extent that it enables every learner to derive optimal educational benefits so as to actualize their potential. The success of guidance and counselling in school depends on a number of factors. Among the factors are school administration, attitude of teachers, attitude of parents, qualities of counsellors or coordinator, environmental factors and the responsiveness of students to guidance and counselling services.

However, some schools face many challenges in setting up a practical programme of guidance and counselling services. Research has shown that effective counselling promotes students' academic performance, helps students in career choice and discipline management (Rashid, 2012). Some of the factors that hinder effective counselling set up include lack of formal training in counselling, lack of time for guidance and counselling activities, lack of support given to teacher counsellors and lack of resources (Orange, 2013). Rashid (2012) stated in his article on challenges in implementation of guidance and counselling in schools that low patronage and outright rebuff of counselling services by students is one of the major obstacles that impede guidance and counselling efforts in school. The way students respond to guidance and counselling services determines the extent guidance and counselling programmes are successfully carried out in schools. Many authors suggested some reasons that are the likely causes of students not accessing guidance and counselling services in schools.

Hui (2016) adduced that lack of professionally trained counsellors sets counselling services back in schools. Due to the fact that schools are mandated to carry out guidance and counselling services, teachers who are not trained counsellors are sometimes appointed as guidance and counselling coordinators. They cannot effectively and competently deliver guidance and counselling services to the students and school because they lack the essential elements and core conditions of counselling Hui (2016). Ngumi et al. (2007) opines that indifferent attitude of some school heads to guidance and counselling services' funding may limit the effectiveness of counselling services in schools thereby discouraging students from accessing them. Also, Orange (2013) adduces that the inability of a counsellor to portray some personality qualities that include maturity, discretion, confidentiality and flexibility in interpersonal relationships may discourage students from accessing counselling services. For these researchers, counsellors need to be well disposed, positive in conversation and avoid remarks and actions that might irritate their clients.

Mbongo et al. (2016) state that in schools where counsellors are subject teachers, guidance and counselling programmes will not be effective but will be relegated to the background as counsellors have to attend to teaching and other responsibilities to the detriment of counselling duties. Again, Wanjohi (2016) stated that missing link is discovered in understanding of the real value that students attach to guidance and counselling services. They are sometimes afraid to be identified with the counsellor, and fear that their confidential concerns would not be respected in the school. She also maintained that effective implementation of guidance and counselling programmes could not be attained since the students who need the services are not interested because they lack the knowledge of the need for guidance and counselling services in their educational affairs.

According to Gok (2018), assisting students in reaching their full potential requires the cooperative effort of the whole stakeholders: school administrator, teachers, community representatives, government official, parents, and the students themselves as well as the trained school counsellors who are able to facilitate student's psychological development

and ability. Again, carrying out counselling services in the public or obscure places is a serious factor to poor responsiveness of students to guidance and counselling services. Lack of comfortable accommodation for counsellors to carry out their duties is a threat to counselling services. It must be noted that private and confidential matters are often compromised to the public when counselling is done in public places. Students find it difficult to go there; those that pick up courage find it uncomfortable to disclose their problems (Rashid, 2012). This indicates that there is still a need for a concerted effort towards a meaningful and efficient implementation of guidance and counselling in secondary schools.

Nyamwaka et al. (2013) conducted a study on the assessment of implementation levels of guidance and counselling programmes in Kenyan secondary schools, a case of Sotik district Bomet County, Kenya. The study used ex-post facto design. The sample size for the study was 125 respondents. Questionnaire and schedule of interviews were used as instruments for collecting data. Results from the study revealed that as a result of inadequate resources and time, lack of accommodation, poor students' perception of guidance and counselling, and lack of administrative support for counselling programmes in Sotik District, that guidance and counselling was well implemented.

Furthermore, Haruna (2015) conducted a research on hitches in the administration of guidance and counselling services in Nigeria secondary schools. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study adopts descriptive survey research design and twenty (20) items questionnaire was developed and administered to the respondents. The result of the findings revealed that there is a misconception that the roles taken by the counsellors are duplication of teaching and administrative functions of the teachers and the principals. It also indicates that some principals do not support the function of guidance and counselling.

There is the need that emphasis should be made on the effect that all and sundry should join hands with the counsellors for effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in schools so that the society could be transformed into a better place for all. It is true that guidance is no longer new in secondary schools in Nigeria, but the rate of its development has been at a snail pace. It is evident that for the undesirable elements to be wiped from the society, more serious attention should be given to the counsellors and the implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools. This review of literature is done on related studies on factors necessary for the effective implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in schools, while the present study is on factors preventing secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services in school. Therefore, this study determines the school-factors, and counsellors-related factors that prevent secondary school students from responding to guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.

Research questions

The following two research questions guided the study:

1. What school-related factors prevent secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services?
2. What counsellors-related qualities prevent secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design is adopted by the researchers for the study. The study is carried out in Anambra state. The sample size for the study is 150 students drawn through simple random sampling technique. Factors Preventing Secondary School Students from Responding to Guidance and Counselling Services Questionnaire (FPSSSRGCSQ) is used for data collection. A reliability coefficient value of 0.80 is established through the use of Split half method of estimation. On the spot method of administration of the instrument on the respondents is used by the researchers for the study to ensure a hundred percent return of the questionnaire. Arithmetic weighted mean is used for the data analysis. 2.50 is used as the criterion value. Any item within or above this value is considered as a factor while an item that is below this value is considered not being a factor.

Presentation of results

Research question 1: What school-related factors prevent secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services?

The data obtained in respect of research question one is presented in the table 1.

Table 1: School-related factors preventing secondary school students from accessing counselling services

S/N	Items	Mean	Remarks
1	Carrying out counselling in staff room	3.5	Agreed
2	Unavailability of counsellors	3.1	Agreed
3	Lukewarm attitudes of principal and teachers to counselling services	3.5	Agreed
4	Feeling of being seen always with the counsellor	3.3	Agreed
5	Lack of office accommodation for the counsellors	2.6	Agreed
6	Non-allocation of time to counselling services	3.3	Agreed

The analysis of data in table 1 indicates that all the items on the table are school-related factors that prevent secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services. The items have the mean values of 3.5, 3.1, 3.5, 3.3, 2.6 and 3.3 respectively. They are considered factors because their mean scores are above 2.50.

Research question 2: What counsellors-related qualities prevent secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services?

The data obtained in respect of research question two is analyzed in table 2 and the result presented accordingly.

Table 2: Counsellors' qualities preventing secondary school students from accessing counselling services

S/N	Items	Mean	Remarks
1	The counsellor is not friendly enough	3.2	Agreed
2	The counsellor is not reliable	3.5	Agreed
3	The counsellor appears aggressive	3.4	Agreed
4	The counsellor does not give attention to students	3.1	Agreed
5	The counsellor is not always available	2.9	Agreed
6	The counsellor is a friend to all students	1.5	Disagreed

The result of the analysis in table 2 reveals that items 1 to 6 had mean values of 3.2, 3.5, 3.4, 3.1 and 2.9 respectively which are above the criterion mean value of 2.50. They are also considered as counsellors-related factors preventing students from accessing counselling services in secondary schools while the counsellor is a friend to all students is considered as not being a factor because its mean score is 1.5 which is below 2.50 criterion value.

Discussion of the findings

This research and the analysis of the findings show that school factors and counsellors' factors are militating secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services.

Findings show that school-related factors such as unavailability of counsellors, lukewarm attitudes of principal and teachers to counselling services, feeling of being seen always with the counsellor, lack of office accommodation for counsellors and non-allocation of time for counselling services prevent secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services in schools. The above findings are in line with what Rashid (2012) noted that it is crystal clear that counselling is a one to one affair and should be held in an enclosed office. According to him, it must be noted that private and confidential matters are often compromised to the public when counselling is done in obscure places. In such places, counsellors find it difficult to elicit the much needed information from students since students will not be comfortable giving it out. The findings of the study on non-allocation of time to counselling services is in line with that of Odhiambo (2016) who reported that counsellors are assigned classroom work; and with such busy schedule, both students and counsellors are left with little time for effective counselling to take place. And this attitude is detrimental to the counsellors' duties in school.

On the counsellors-related qualities preventing students from accessing counselling services, the findings indicate that not being friendly enough, not being reliable, appearing

aggressive, not giving attention to students, unavailability of the counsellor and inexperience are factors preventing students from accessing counselling services in schools. These findings agree with that of Songok et al. (2017) who reported that the counsellor needs to portray personality qualities that include maturity, discretion and flexibility in interpersonal relationship. Also the finding supports the finding of Haruna (2015) who found that counsellors need to be emotionally stable and able to foster sincere wish to fellow human beings. Also, one of the counsellors-related qualities which is not being reliable is in line with the findings of Alemu (2013) that some students have wrong notion about guidance and counselling and as a result become afraid that their confidential concerns will not be respected.

Conclusion

Guidance and counselling services are essential for the educational growth and development of secondary school students more especially in the area of career choice and moral upbringing. Though, many factors have been identified as preventing some secondary school students from accessing guidance and counselling services, school administrators, teachers, counsellors, students and parents should rise to the expectations needed of them to make guidance and counselling services meaningful and effective so that the required goal is achieved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that:

1. School administrators should understand and give their support to counsellors' services in school because the support is the backbone behind effectiveness and efficiency of counselling programmes.
2. Counsellors on their own should live up to their ethical code of conduct and portray qualities that will enhance students approaching them in school.
3. The government should provide adequate funds for counselling services and provide accommodation for counsellors to enhance their works in the school community.
4. There is need that seminars and workshop should be held for counsellors regularly for updating their knowledge.

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