

PROBLEMS CONFRONTING COUNSELLING SERVICES IN SCHOOLS AS PERCEIVED BY PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLORS IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors in Kwara State. The study looked at the effect of gender, marital status and educational qualifications on the perception of the respondent. The study used the descriptive survey method, and 200 participants were chosen through the use of an accidental sampling technique. The instrument used to gather the required information was a questionnaire type called the Problems Confronting Counselling Services Questionnaire (PCCSQ). The reliability coefficient for the PCCSQ was 0.81, which was obtained through the test-retest method. To direct the course of the investigation, one research question and three null hypotheses were raised to guide the conduct of the study. The findings revealed many problems confronting counselling services which include time constraints, uncooperative clients, and a lack of assistance from parents and insufficient facilities, the t-test and ANOVA statistics were used to test the hypotheses, with a significance level of 0.05. The findings indicated that gender, marital status, and educational qualification were all significantly different on how professional counsellors in Kwara State perceived problems confronting counselling services. Based on the findings, it is then advised that schools give enough time for counselling so that the counsellor and students can have adequate interaction, and that the Government should provide funds for counselling initiatives to ensure prompt implementation.

Keywords: Problems, confronting, counselling, professional counsellors

Introduction

Counselling and guidance is considered as the third important force. in the educational environment, given its complimentary functions in teaching and administration. Many young boys and girls enter school without any sense of what they should do and then drop out of school without knowing what they should do in terms of their careers due to the little knowledge provided to them during education and administrative activities, they have a limited grasp of themselves and their socioeconomic and political environment. It is essential that the required structures and conditions be put in place for developing a comprehensive and successful educational system to generate individuals with the requisite abilities to minimize increases in unrest and crime rates, to which young are most prone and other services through programs for guidance and counseling in schools. However, it appears that a number of issues are impeding the efficient implementation of guidance services in schools, restricting access to valuable information and numerous program advantages.

The goal of guidance and counselling programs in schools is to support students' growth, and secondary school programs are designed to help adolescents with their physical, emotional, social, career, and academic issues (Idowu, 2016). As a result, Guidance and Counselling is a crucial component of the overall program of instruction with the goal of providing services that are centered on students' overall development.

Guidance and Counseling, the third force in education, is crucial in prevention of similar problems among secondary school pupils in terms of education, personal, social, mental, emotional, and other areas. The new 6-3-3-4 system's majority of its components, as well as the Education Board and school administrators, are sensitive to the importance of guidance and counseling services. These services are obtainable by Ogunmola (2017) as placement services, vocational guidance services, follow-up, appraisal services counselling services, referral services, orientation services, information services, evaluation, consultancy and research services. The absence or underutilization of these services in the current school system could result in an unprecedented increase in crime, student violence; cultism, the incorrect profession decision, and the incorrect curriculum combination are only a few issues. All forms and levels of education must include these services.

Counselling, an integral component of guidance programmes in schools, is an art and science in which two or more individuals participate in a helpful relationship, with one of them (the counsellor) serving as the helper and the other(s) serving as the client(s) seeking help (Idowu, 2016). The relationship's goal is for the counsellor to support one or more clients as they work to address challenges, worries, or problems that come from coping with life in an increasingly complex world (Santrock, 2016). The American Counselling Association offered a succinct explanation of counselling's goals, stating that it is a partnership between professionals which enables various persons, families, and organizations to realize their objectives in terms of mental health, wellness, education, and employment. A nonjudgmental, supportive counsellor works with a client to share his or her narrative, set reasonable goals, and create the methods and plans required to reach these goals as part of counseling, which is a collaborative process based on shared goals. Counselling involves assisting people in making necessary changes in their ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. (Jovie Tan Aventis Graduate School, 2021).

A recent development in schools is the provision of counselling services. Students in basic and

higher education as well as those in secondary school have been given access to this service. The term school counselling service refers to the services offered by guidance counsellors with formal training. The school counsellor is a professional psychologist with a license who, if needed, provides individual treatment to student clients. The school system incorporates school counselling. Every teacher conducts classroom counselling, which is a part of the curriculum (i.e moral education) and of the extracurricular activities at the schools. To assist the classroom instructors in primary schools, there are teachers in charge of particular guidance areas. According to Sdorow and Rickabaugh (2017), in some regions of the world, there is a teacher chosen to assist classroom teachers with children who may experience personal or social issues, a teacher appointed to assist classroom teachers with grade-level children who may experience issues, and a teacher assigned to support classroom teachers with the discipline and educational life of the children. These teachers, who are in charge of the overall student guidance in elementary school, consult with the classroom teachers. The complete burden of managing all guidance programs in a way that supports the components of education falls on the school counsellor.

According to Gibson et al (2015), counselling services are focused with a person's emotions, attitudes, and emotional dispositions toward himself and the problems he is facing. It was emphasized that the major goal of counselling services is to help clients better understand themselves and the world around them so they can maximize their potential and lead normal, happy lives. It is a method of offering educational services to students in order to meet their demands about their studies.

The school counsellor must be aware of the needs of the clients and provide counselling aides to assist in problem-solving (Ajiboye & Adebayo, 2020). Counsellors assist students in choosing classes, creating reading lists, and deciding on a study discipline, all of which are important parts of secondary school education. In a helping relationship known as counselling, the counsellor helps the client get a greater understanding of both himself and the world around him. The American Counselling Association (ACA), cited in Oladele (2017), defines counselling services as a career that calls for completion of a predetermined course of study that frequently leads to a master's degree or a doctorate. Counsellors belong to associations that define professional and ethical standards, support state licensing, and support national association accreditation. The public is ensured that the counsellor satisfies minimum educational and professional standards through the certification and licensing processes, as well as by adherence to ethical codes. Counsellors must have the maturity, sensitivity, and warmth as part of their personality.

Concerns about the self, others, employment, empowerment, and education are addressed by counselling services. Counsellors only engage in work in fields in which they are experts. Interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges pertaining to adjusting to school or college, aging, mental health, marital or family issues, employment, and rehabilitation are a few examples of these domains. People who are thought to function within the "normal range" receive counseling. Clients need immediate assistance because they are experiencing issues with adjustment, development, or situational difficulties. They are viewed as "suck" rather than "sick". They occasionally only require information, but more often than not, they are trying to make sense of and put to use the knowledge they already have. Counseling is theory-based and conducted in a controlled environment (Oladele, 2017).

The practice of counselling in schools appears to be plagued by specific issues, despite the Nigerian educational system's 6-3-3-4 structure, has recognized the necessity of advice. According to Jack (2015), counsellors are not consistently given the necessary professional recognition but are frequently forced to accept entire responsibility for teaching, which usually interferes with their statutory tasks in schools. The fact that many of these counsellors are hand-selected by the principal from among the teachers who had little or no experience of counselling practice is another issue with the competency of the counsellors in the school system. Therefore, these counsellors lack the necessary skills to perform the professional duties of providing guidance and counselling services. As a result, many counsellors are unable to fulfill their intended tasks. Parental interference is another issue that counselling services must deal with. The validity and trustworthiness of the placement procedures and instruments used by the counsellor are frequently contested by some parents, especially when the placement of their children does not meet their expectations. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the biggest obstacles facing school counsellors in providing counselling services in today's technologically advanced society, according to McAdams (2013). Further emphasis was placed on the fact that, in comparison to their counterparts in other regions of the world, just 40% of counsellors are computer proficient.

There are four main obstacles that secondary school counselling services must overcome: internal, external, systemic, and personal obstacles (Low, 2019). The internal issues relate to how professors feel about counselling services and how reluctant students are to use counselling services. While system challenges are internal to the program and include things like the legislation establishing its use in schools, processes for referral, and resource planning, personal problems also include skills and techniques of the counsellor in areas like; training, supervision, and attitude towards the education system. On the other hand, external challenges involve issues outside the school, such as culture and globalization. It was also brought out that most school administrators, teachers, and parents have misconceptions regarding the job of school counsellors and have the incorrect notion that schools can run smoothly without them. Some teachers view the guidance counsellors assigned to their schools as their competitors or threats, and they come up with ways to undermine or discredit their services by creating the false impression that the schools lack the resources, such as a suitable counselling office, insufficient funding, and tape records, to support counselling work. Some parents would rather have their kids receive guidance services from the principal than a school guidance counselor. They might think this way because the principal is a more qualified and seasoned professional than the school counsellor. Thus, this study investigated problems confronting counselling services in schools as perceived by professional counsellors in Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

The significance of counselling services in schools cannot be overemphasised considering various interventions embedded in the programme; asides from involvement in solving academic problems, counselling services focus on aspects where that traditional classroom instruction does not emphasise. As the third force in education, counselling focus more on emotional healing, behaviour modification and social interactions. This focus of the counselling services helps to produce a balanced personality among students. However, many factors constitute impediments to the smooth discharge of counselling services in schools. Such factors may include poor financing, negative attitude towards counselling, students' unfriendly attitude, and ill-skilled personnel to mention a few. Lenhardt (2015) reported that both married and single teachers were not different in their

perception of hindrances to counselling intervention. This could suggest that people will always be similar in their view about constraints to counselling programmes. Thus, it becomes important to investigate the perception of professional counsellors on problems confronting counselling because they are the front liners in the provision of counselling services.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors in Kwara State Nigeria. The study also investigated the impact of gender, marital status and educational qualification on the perception of respondents on problems confronting counselling services.

Research Question

What are the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors in Kwara State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on gender
2. There is no significant difference in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on marital status
3. There is no difference in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on educational qualifications.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research was used as the method of choice for this investigation. Professional counsellors in Kwara State participated in the study. A sample of 200 professional counsellors were selected using an accidental sampling procedure. The respondents were selected during the periodic meetings of the Kwara State branch of the Association of Professional Counsellors of Nigeria (APROCON). Using a stratified random sampling approach, respondents were selected from among the study's variables. The primary tool used to gather data for this study was a questionnaire titled "Problems Confronting Counselling Services Questionnaire" (PCCSQ). The questionnaire was split into two primary components in this regard. Information on problems confronting counselling services was gathered through the questionnaire. The items were designed using the Likert scale, which has four (4) points: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The test-retest method was used to determine how reliable the instrument is. A value of $r=0.81$ was obtained. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to professional counsellors who showed a willingness to participate in the study. In order to analyze the demographic information of the respondents and respond to the research question, frequency counts, percentages, and means were employed. The null hypotheses were evaluated using the t- test and ANOVA at the 0.05 significance level.

Results

Demographic Data

Table 1: Respondents' Distribution by Marital status and Educational Qualification

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	88	44.0
Female	112	56.0
Total	200	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	34	17.0
Married	166	83.0
Total	200	100.0
Educational Qualification		
First Degree	26	13.0
Master's Degree	169	84.5
PhD Degree	5	2.5
Total	200	100.0

The indication in table one shows that 200 respondents took part in the study, 88 (44.0%) of them were male while 112 (56.0 %) female responded. This demonstrates that the majority of the study's responses were female. Further, 34 (17.0%) were single while 166 (83%) were married respondents. This implies that married respondents constituted the majority who participated in the study. Also, 26 (13.0%) has First Degree, 169 (84.5%) has Masters' and 5 (2.5%) has PhD degree. This implies that HND/First-degree holders constituted the majority who participated in the study.

Research Question: What are the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors?

Table 2: Mean and rank order of the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors

	<i>I think the problem confronting counselling:</i>	Mean	Ranking
1	inadequate time	3.22	1
5	lack of finances	3.20	2
8	little support from school administration	3.18	3
2	poor attitudes of students towards counselling	3.14	4
6	unresponsive from the students	3.10	5
11	lack of disciplinary committees in school	3.08	6
4	ill-equipped and counselling laboratories	3.07	7
9	counsellors' lack of opportunities to play their roles	3.05	8
3	too many clients to attend to	3.01	9
14	negative attitudes of teachers towards counselling	2.97	10
13	ignorance outside the school which include culture	2.94	11
15	unwillingness of parents to attend to counsellors' invitation	2.91	12
17	lack of support from the government	2.90	13
18	counsellors and inadequate skills	2.89	14
10	lack of disciplinary committees in school	2.88	15
7	too much workload on counsellors	2.85	16
12	inadequate provision of counselling services	2.80	17

This Table presents the problems confronting counselling services as seen by professional counsellors. The table indicates that Items 1, 5 and 8 ranked highest with mean values of 3.22, 3.20 and 3.18. The statements stated that inadequate time, lack of finances and little support from school administration respectively are perceived problems confronting counselling services. Items 10, 7 and 12 ranked 115th, 16th and 17th with a mean score of 2.88, 2.85 and 2.80 respectively. The items stated that lack of disciplinary committees in school, too much workload on counsellors and inadequate provision of counselling services are perceived problems confronting counselling services. All the items are perceived problems confronting counselling services since they have mean scores above 2.50, which is the benchmark.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the problem confronting Counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on gender*

Table 3: t-test on the Problems Confronting Counselling Services As Perceived by Professional Counsellors based on Gender

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Cal. value	Crit. value
Male	88	41.52	2.29	198	2.51	1.96
Female	112	44.28	3.35			

The result of the t-test above showed that the calculated t-value of 2.51 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96. Thus, the difference was 0.05 significant level. The null hypothesis, which showed no significant difference was found in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on gender, was rejected. Therefore, significant difference in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on gender was found.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the problem confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on marital status*

Table 4: Result of t-test on the problems Confronting Counselling Services as Perceived by professional Counsellors based on Marital Status

M. S	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-val	p
Single	34	45.88	1.07	198	2.14	1.96	.001
Married	166	48.49	4.42				

*Significance, $p < 0.05$

The t-test in Table 4 indicates that the calculated t-value of 2.14 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 with $p = .001$ which is less than 0.05 significance level. Therefore, significant difference was found in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on marital status.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the problem confronting Counselling services as perceived by Professional Counsellors*

Table 5: ANOVA results in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by Professional Counsellors based on Educational Qualifications

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Meaan Squares	Ca l. F- value	Crit. F- value	P.
Bet ween groups	21.18	2	10.59	0.19	3.00	0.211
Within groups	10882.3	197	55.24			
Total	10903.48	199				

The table above indicated the calculated F- value of 0.19 and a critical F-value of 3.00 with $p=0.211$ greater than 0.05 significance level. The hypothesis was accepted since the estimated F-value was below the threshold F-value and the p-value was above the level of significance. Consequently, no significant difference in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on educational qualifications.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed that problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors are: time, uncooperative customers, a paternal support deficit, and inadequate facilities, and insufficient funds, shortage of qualified personnel, too much workload on counsellors, little support from school administration, unresponsive from the students, lack of disciplinary committees in school, ill-equipped and counselling laboratories, counsellors' lack of opportunities to play their roles, too many clients to attend to, negative attitude of teachers towards counselling, ignorance outside the school which include culture, the unwillingness of parents to attend to counsellors' invitation, poor attitude of students towards counselling, lack of support from the government and counsellors and inadequate skills. These findings corroborate Okon (2014) who reported problems hindering counselling to include, negative attitude of teachers towards counselling, lack of finances, ill-equipped counselling laboratories, too much workload on counselors, non-cooperating clients and inadequate time among others.

Findings from hypothesis one showed that a significant dfference was found in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on gender. T-test statistical procedure revealed that both gender responses differed in their perception of problems confronting counselling services. The findings agree with the study carried out by Okon (2014) where a significant difference was found between the responses of both male and female that participated in the study. This implies that the way females perceive problems confronting counselling services is different from their male counterparts. Thus, this difference in perception may equally influence the interest of both male and female counsellors while rendering services to students.

Findings from this study indicates that significant difference was found in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on marital status. The hypothesis was not accepted. The finding of the study supports Lenhardt (2015) who found no difference in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by teachers based on

marital status. Married respondents perceived more problems confronting counselling services than single. The reason could be that married practising counsellors might have experienced more problems in the discharge of counselling services than those not married (single) owing to the combination of marriage responsibilities with professional obligations.

According to Hypothesis three, it was discovered that no significant difference was found in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors based on educational qualifications. The hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, the finding is in tandem with Okon (2014) who found that significant difference was not found in the responses of clients based on educational attainment. Since professional counsellors provide similar counselling services and could observe similar hindrances regardless of educational qualifications, their perception about problems confronting counselling services is likely to always be similar.

Conclusion

Study findings showed that there are numerous problems confronting counselling services but the most prominent are inadequate time, lack of finances, and insufficient support from school administration. These problems are capable of limiting the level of service provision by professional counsellors. Significant difference in the problems confronting counselling services as perceived by professional counsellors on the basis of gender and marital status but no significant difference was found based on educational qualification.

Recommendations

1. Schools should allocate sufficient time for counselling so that the counsellor and students could have adequate interaction;
2. Government should provide funds for counselling programmes to ensure adequate implementation;
3. Government should provide adequate training for counsellors to develop their capacity;
4. Teachers should endeavour to improve their attitude towards counselling Services; and
5. Parents should endeavour to cultivate a positive attitude towards counselling services.

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