

ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

The Study investigated the attitude of secondary students towards guidance and counselling services. Descriptive research design of the survey type was used. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A total of 400 secondary school students were selected from ten (10) schools through stratified random sampling technique. A validated questionnaire vetted by experts in measurement and research was used as an instrument for data collection. Independent t-test statistic was used for data analysis. The study revealed that students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services were significantly positive; that gender and school location significantly influenced students' attitude towards guidance services. The results further revealed that there are significant differences between attitude of male and female students in rural and urban schools towards guidance and counselling services. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that secondary education board should open well equipped counselling units in both urban and rural schools and qualified counsellors should be posted to practice and create awareness of guidance and counselling services.

Introduction

Guidance and counselling as the third force in education along with instruction, is an integral part of educational system. Guidance programmes for secondary school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational and academic difficulties of adolescent students. This is to complement learning in the classroom and also enhance academic performance/achievements of students.

Guidance plays a vital role in preventing educational, personal, social, mental emotional and other similar problems among secondary school students.

Ministry of education and principals of schools are aware of the heavy reliance placed on guidance and counselling services for most aspects of the new 6-3-3-4 system to actually succeed. These services are presented by Nwachukwu (2007) as information services, placement services, appraisal services, vocational guidance services, counselling services, referral services, evaluation, follow-up, consultancy and research services. As a vital component of any type and any level of education the absence of non utilization of these services in the present day school system has led to the unprecedented rise in the crime wave, violence among students, fuelled cultism, wrong career choice, and wrong subject combination among other issues.

Attitudes are predispositions which have developed through long and complex process. Anasasi (1990) defined attitude as "a tendency to react favourably or unfavourably towards a designed class of stimuli". It is evident that attitude cannot be directly observed, but must be inferred from avert behaviour, both verbal and non verbal. Validya (1989) explains attitude as a condition of readiness for a certain type of activity. Attitudes held by individuals may be simple or complex, stable or unstable, temporary or permanent and superficial or fundamental. Judgments based upon insufficient facts are likely to yield wrong results and, thereby, develop biased attitudes. According to Crow and Crow (1979), a child's attitude towards his work affects his worth in his activity.

An investigation of the attitude of students towards guidance and counselling services has derived impetus from the assumption that students are the major recipients of guidance and counselling services in the secondary school setting. It is believed that the success of any programme in school lies on the students' attitude towards it. The way students respond and perceive guidance and counselling services will, to a great extent, determine whether or not guidance and counselling services are needed or will be effectively utilized in schools.

Conceptual Framework/Literature Review

Guidance and counselling has been conceptualized as a programme of activities which has provided us with the gateway out of the existing numerous problems in our present age of complex scientific and technological development (Okobiah and Okorodudu 2004).

The UNESCO module on guidance and counselling (2000a) also posited that Guidance is a programme of services to individuals based on their needs and the influence of environmental factors. Guidance and counselling is a professional field which has a broad range of activities, programmes and services geared toward assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment and their world and also to develop adequate capacity for making wise choices and decisions.

There is agreement among experts that there are three major components of guidance and counselling. These are educational guidance, vocational guidance and personal social guidance (UNESCO module 2000a). Under these three major areas, there are several guidance and counselling services such as appraisal, information, placement, orientation, evaluation, referral, and follow-up (Denga 2001) Each of these major components of guidance and counselling along with their services address students needs, challenges and problems.

The goal of guidance and counselling services is to enable each learner in institutions of learning to derive optimal educational benefits so as to actualize his/her potentialities. Thus, the highlights of the National Policy on Education (1998) states "in view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality adjustments among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post-primary institutions and tertiary levels. Unfortunately the practice of these services in our institutions of learning is nothing to write home about. The programme is not encouraging at the secondary school level and even at the university level.

Anwana (1984) and Abiri (1996) argued that if the society is not to be plagued by a band/group of disgruntled, frustrated and unrealistic individuals, it is desirable that adequate guidance and counselling and career information be provided, to enable the school and society arrive at a realistic vocational choice for their children/wards with due realization of their potentialities.

Ubom (2001) defined attitude as an individual perception and reaction to a task which is expected to be carried out or executed in a group, institution, school setting or an organisation. Attitude can be said to be positive or high when individual response to the task or programme is favourable and when they show commitment to their duties. It can be negative or low when the students express a nonchalant response, with regard to what is expected of them in the given situation.

Previous studies such as those of Achebe (1986); Adenula (1988) Bulus (2001); Denga (2001); Edet (2008), have shown that principals and teachers constitute the greatest obstacle to the success of guidance and counselling services in schools. The report showed a negative attitude of school authorities to guidance services and to counsellors in particular.

Adimula (1988) also attributed the negative attitude to the ignorance of principals and teachers about the relevance of guidance services in schools. Achebe (1986) explained that the counsellor is being seen as a new comer to the school system who is still being regarded with some sense of suspicion and caution and distancing. According to her, some of the principals and teachers regarded the services of the counsellors as an unnecessary frill. Bulus (2001) believed that principals and teachers misconceived the counsellor's status, which often creates conflict between them and in most cases teachers and principals who believe in the need for counsellors in the school may see no reason why there should be full time counsellors in schools.

Denga (2001) stressed that the Principals who know little about counselling will not in any way appreciate the need for the counsellor to be relieved of heavy teaching load and other co-curricular duties. Such principals will stifle the counsellors' work by withholding budgetary allocation for guidance services. Achebe (1986) stated that some principals are rigid and traditional and would not welcome new ideas. She said even when principals are aware that modern schools require the practice of the counsellor, they may deliberately bark at the idea of implementing the guidance services in the school practice for the erroneous argument that historically, the school has operated successfully without formal guidance (p2).

Edet (2008) on her research with 99 subjects, on parents' and teachers' perception of vocational guidance in secondary schools in Calabar metropolis discovered that teachers perception/attitude towards vocational guidance services was significantly negative ($\pm = - 4.6 72$: $p = 0.000$)

Researches carried out by Musgrove 1973; Ubana 2008; Denga 1983; and Onyejiaku 1991 have discovered both positive and negative attitudes of students towards guidance and counselling services including influence of sex and school geographical location.

Musgrove, (1973) in the study of high school students' attitude toward guidance and counselling services discovered no significant differences in sex, and grade level, but a positive/favourable overall attitude toward their guidance offices. It was inferred that the needs and

expectations of the majority of the students were being met by the guidance and counselling services.

Ubana (2008) in her research study on the attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services in Yakurr local government area of Cross River State came out with the findings that students attitude towards guidance and counselling services was negative and that sex of the student and the geographical location of the school had no significant influence on students' attitudes toward guidance and counselling services.

Denga (1983), studied the attitude of 2000 students' towards the counsellor from the then 19 states of the federation of Nigeria and obtained the result that showed a 100 percent need for counselling and the readiness of the students to go to the counsellor for counselling. On the issue of gender, male and female students differ in many respects biologically and physically including their attitude towards guidance and counselling services (Onyejiaku 1991). He affirms the fact that "despite physiological, psychological, and prodional sex differences in vocational roles, the increasing equal educational opportunities for both sexes and quest for financial independence and security among present day families, indicate a definite change in male-female ration in various occupation" despite sex differences, the attitude of males and females to some extent are favourable towards counselling services.

Statement of Problem

The counsellor occupies a very strategic position in any educational system. The Federal Government is aware of this fact, this is why the reemphasis is on the need for guidance and counselling services in the new national policy on education (6-3-3-4) system. It is also clear from the Federal Ministry of Education that counsellors should operate on full-time basis. Also most principals and teachers are aware of the counsellor's functions/services. Despite this fact, it has been observed that the programme/services are not encouraged at the secondary school level.

Apart from academic problems of failure and dropout of students, from schools, other numerous psyc-social; vocational and personal-social problems abound among students in our secondary schools. Parents and significant others in recent times have been so concerned about academic problems of students. The control or resolution of these problems is always channelled to mainly school authorities and teachers while the seeking of counsellors' attention is always ignored. This study therefore attempts to look at students' attitude towards guidance and

counselling services which is primarily meant for them. Finding out their attitude may therefore point to areas of conflict, confusion, ignorance and differences that could be mirrored to enhance success in a student's academic life and general behaviour.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the nature of the attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services in Cross River State Nigeria. The study also sought to investigate how these students attitudes were influenced by certain variables such as sex (gender) and geographical location of the school.

Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses based on the purpose of the study were postulated and tested during the investigation.

Ho₁: The attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services is not significantly positive.

Ho₂: Students' attitude toward guidance and counselling services is not significantly influenced by sex (gender).

Ho₃: Attitude of secondary school students toward guidance and counselling services is not significantly influenced by the geographical location of the schools.

Methodology

The research study was essentially descriptive/survey in nature. Since students in secondary schools irrespective of sex and geographical location are involved in guidance and counselling services, the target or accessible population for the study therefore consisted of all the secondary school students in Cross River State.

Stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting four hundred (400) senior secondary SS1-2 students from ten (10) secondary schools in the state as sampling size for the study. There were two hundred (200) males and two hundred (200) females from both urban and rural secondary schools.

Secondary school students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services questionnaire (SSATGES) designed by the researchers was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument had two sections. Section A had four (4) items which elicited bio-data information while section B had sixteen items on students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services. To ensure the face and

content validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was vetted by three experts in measurement and evaluation and psychology unit of the university of Calabar, and Cross River University of Technology. The researchers equally established the reliability of the instrument through test-retest method. A reliability co-efficient of 0.73 was obtained and this was considered high enough therefore the instrument was judged reliable for data collection.

The instrument was administered by the researcher to 400 students and also retrieved from them on the spot; a 100% return was achieved.

The coding system was four point Likert type scale that had 4 to 1 in order of strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and strongly disagree (SD) 1 point in the positively worded items and the reverse in the negatively worded items.

The highest score any respondent could get on attitude towards guidance and counselling services was 64 while the average score was 32. Any respondent who scored above 32 was considered as having high/positive attitude towards guidance and counselling services, and any respondent who scored below 33 was considered as having low or negative attitude towards guidance and counselling services.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected were collated and analyzed using independent t-test statistic. This was done hypothesis by hypothesis. The result of the analysis provide answers to the three null hypotheses posed as presented in tables 1, 2 and 3.

Hypothesis 1. The attitude of secondary school students toward guidance and counselling services is not significantly positive.

Table 1 Independent t-test analysis of students' positive and negative attitude towards guidance and counselling services.

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	T- Calculated	T- Critical
Positive attitude	200	24.00	8.24	198		
Negative attitude	200	17.6	6.58		9.333	1.960

* Significant

Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value of 9.333 is greater than the table value of 1.960 i.e. $9.333 > 1.960$. Hence the result is significant and

the null hypotheses rejected. This implies that students have positive attitude towards guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: Students' attitude toward guidance and counselling services is not significantly influenced by their sex (gender).

Table 2 Independent t-test analysis of the difference between students gender toward guidance and counselling services.

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	T-Cal	T-Critical
Male attitude Toward of G&C services	200	19.00	4.48	198	-7.317	
Female attitudes toward G&C services	200	22.00	3.70			1.960

* Significant

The result in table 2 shows that the calculated t-value is greater than the table value i.e. $-7.317 > 1.960$ hence the null hypothesis tested is rejected. This implies that there is a significant gender difference in students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services. The table further indicate mean difference in male and female students attitudes toward guidance and counselling services, female having higher mean score of 22.00 than male students with 19.00 mean score.

Hypothesis 3. The attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services is not significantly influenced by the geographical location of the schools.

Table 3 Independent t-test analysis of the difference between students' attitude in urban and rural schools locations towards guidance and counselling services.

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	T-Calculated	T-Critical
Urban students attitude toward guidance and counselling service	200	18.00	5.17	198		
Rural students attitude toward guidance and counselling services	200	15.00	4.16		6.383	1.960

* Significant

The result presented in Table 3 shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. This is because the calculated t-value of 6.383 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.960 i.e. $6.383 > 1.960$. This implies that Geographical location of the schools (school location) exert greater influence on the students' attitudes toward guidance and counselling services. The table further shows significant difference in the mean scores of urban students 18.00 and that of rural students 15.00. This implies that students in urban schools have high positive attitude toward guidance and counselling services than students in rural schools.

Discussion

The result of the study revealed a significant positive attitude of students towards guidance and counselling services in the schools, since the calculated t-value of 9.333 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.960. This finding supports the finding of Musgrove (1973) who discovered a positive and favourable attitude of high school students towards the guidance office and services. This finding is in contrast with Ubana (2008) who discovered negative attitude of secondary school students in Yakurr towards guidance and counselling services.

The result further showed a marked difference between the mean scores of the respondent on the positive attitude 24.00 and mean of the negative attitude 17.6, which indicate that in some schools students have negative attitude towards guidance service. The possible reason for the difference in the positive attitude could be that students in the schools in Calabar are already aware of the functional guidance and counselling services and are also motivated by the guidance counsellors on the need to utilize the services. It could also be exposure of the students to media

information on guidance and counselling services. while in some schools they are no adequate awareness and exposure to the services.

The next finding of this study is that sex (gender) has significant influence on the attitude of the students towards guidance and counselling services. It further revealed gender difference in the students attitude with the mean score of 22.00 for female and the lower mean score of 19.00 for male. This implies that female students are favourably disposed to school guidance and counselling services, than their male counterparts. This is an interesting finding which reflects femininity.

The result is not surprising in that naturally female students are good in interpersonal relationship, self-disclosure and openness than male students who are rigid and reserved in their relationships, hence cannot interact often with the guidance counsellors nor seek their services. This finding is in agreement with Onyejiaku (1991) who asserted that despite sex differences, the attitude of males and females to some extent are favourable towards counselling services. This finding contradicts the finding of Musgrove (1973) who discovered no significant sex difference in high school students attitude towards guidance and counselling services. The difference could be due to cultural differences.

The analysis on table 3 showed that geographical location of the school exerts significant influence on students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services. The result further revealed a significant difference between urban and rural students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services. Looking at their mean scores, the urban students had mean of 18.00 while the rural students had a mean of 15.00, indicating or meaning that students in urban school showed higher positive attitude to guidance and counselling services than students in rural secondary schools.

This finding is not surprising in that it confirms a research work done by Ubana (2008) who discovered negative attitude among students in Yakurr (rural secondary school in Yakurr, Cross River State) towards guidance and counselling services. It could be argued that students in the urban schools must have had more awareness of the guidance and counselling services through workshops, seminars and the media (TV radio and newspapers). Moreover, almost all the schools in the towns are equipped with counselling units and school counsellors as compared to rural secondary schools who may not have adequate counsellors in the schools.

The situation in the village secondary schools is not encouraging, the awareness is very poor and the activities of the few guidance and

counselling centres are so limited due to lack of equipment and financial aid. To a reasonable extent, majority of students in the rural secondary schools feel that the programme is only for students with physical problems, hence little patronage from most student.

Finally, the result of this study implies that professional counsellors under the umbrella of CASSON Cross River State chapter should appeal and Liaise with the State Ministry of Education to post enough/more guidance counsellors to rural schools in the state and also establish befitting counselling unit centre in the school. This will create awareness of guidance and counselling services for academic enhancement of the citizens of Cross River State.

Summary

Summary of the results of the findings show that:

1. Secondary school students' attitudes toward guidance and counselling services are positive.
2. Sex (gender) has a significant influence on students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services
3. School geographical location influence students' attitudes toward guidance and counselling services.

Conclusion

Based on the findings summarized above the following conclusions are drawn from the study.

1. That secondary school students in Cross River State have positive attitude towards guidance and counselling services
2. Male and female students differ in their attitude towards guidance and counselling services. Female students show high positive attitude towards guidance and counselling services than their male counterparts.
3. Geographical location is a strong determinant of students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services in schools. Students in urban schools are predisposed to guidance and counselling services than student in rural schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

1. Guidance and counselling unit should be created in all the schools in the rural areas in Cross River state and more professional counsellors should be posted to those schools.

2. The existing school counsellors should create awareness of the existing counselling services by giving it a wider publicity in rural schools so as to improve students' attitude towards the services.
3. The male students should be motivated through conferences, seminars and workshop on the need to participate in guidance and counselling activities for proper self and academic adjustment and development of healthy and positive attitude.
4. Principals should relief guidance counsellors of heavy teaching loads so as to allow them to practice effectively.

The school Counsellors themselves should be prepared to impress on the general public that their services are essential. They should be ready to sell their services to the principals, teachers and even parents most of who are yet to fully grasp the role of the counsellor within the school system. Through these agents students' positive attitude can be developed towards the guidance and counselling services

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