

**COUNSELLING SERVICES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS  
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN UMUAHIA NORTH LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AREA OF ABIA STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the problem of failure in English language still prevalent among Nigerian students, despite the number of years English language has been in existence in Nigeria. A quasi experimental design was adopted to test the three postulated hypotheses carried out in three stages using intact groups. The population comprised Junior Secondary school three students in all public schools in Umuahia North local government area of Abia State. The researcher used a researcher – made 48-item instrument on Counselling services and students' Academic Performance Questionnaire validated by three experts. The reliability co-efficient was established at .87, it was analyzed and interpreted using analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) statistical tool. The findings indicated that counselling improves students' academic performance in English Language. It was recommended that Schools should always employ counsellors readily equipped to carry out their statutory functions, in order to help students perform better in English language. There is need for media awareness on the need to improve English Language through proper counselling. Students should seek counselling not only when confused about subject combinations, but also with help in improving their academic performance in subject areas, especially English language. Lastly, The government at all levels- Federal, state and Local governments, the federal and state ministries of education and other educational stakeholders should set up machineries to ensure that all these improvement strategies are put into work and monitored for effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** *Counselling Services; Academic Performance*

**Introduction**

English Language as a Lingua Franca in Nigeria was one of the legacies that the Nigerian colonialists, the Great Britain bequeathed to this great nation. By this act, Nigeria joined the league of Anglophone (English speaking) countries and the Commonwealth of nations, which is made up of about 54 countries, including the United States of America (Steve,2002). English language became a unifying language of communication and Nigeria's official language; this is so because Nigeria is not only endowed with heterogeneous peoples and cultures, but people with diversity of language too. Presently, there is an estimate of 510 living languages in Nigeria, of which nine are extinct and two are second languages without native speakers (Blench & Roger, 2002). Having been made a compulsory school subject at all levels, starting from pre-school, through to the tertiary institution for students at all levels, as noted by West African Examination Council's annual report (WAEC,2010), students still perform poorly in English language generally and written English specifically. The problem is not only prevalent in primary schools but also in high schools and higher institutions.

The Junior Secondary School, just like every other social milieu is characterized by students representing diverse cultures, different parental upbringings, different genetic and biological givings, different personalities, interests, drives, background, personal issues and even differences in appearance. At this point of diversities and differences, the teacher being the centre point whose job it is to transfer knowledge, develop skills, modify behaviour, harness talents and play mediating roles between parents is left with only one option-Communication (Ozuzu,2003). Communication is expected to be a means to pass on knowledge and skills in a classroom situation. Through effective communication, Ozuzu (2003) clearly outlined the far

reaching effect on students. Consequently, the need for a Lingua Franca arises, which provides a common frame of reference and eventual communication in the classroom situation.

Having been made a compulsory subject, English Language is expected to be passed at credit level at every point, during external and internal examinations to be considered a worthy pass. Though English language has been with us for a long time, even by the early missionaries who used it in teaching and spreading Christianity, the 1882 Education ordinance also made the teaching/learning of English language a compulsory condition for the award of grants to proprietors of private schools. The American ordinance of 1883 also encouraged teachers by giving them grants based on the success of their pupils in English language. (Tomori,1997). It remained so, even after independence.

Counselling, according to Uwe (2005), is seen as a process which takes the form of a contractual helping relationship between the counsellor, the congruent individual in the relationship and the counsellee, being the incongruent member (the helped). Uwe(2005), citing Williams (1957), describes counselling as a design to help the individual to learn school subject matters, citizenship traits, social and personal values and habits and all other habits, skills, attitudes and beliefs which go to make up a normal adjusting being. Broadly speaking, it is the function of counselling, to assist the adolescent in high school and college to learn effective ways of identifying and then achieving desired and desirable goals, albeit to aid students surmount learning difficulties and certain obstacles of learning. From the above assertion, the importance of counselling cannot be over emphasized. Counselling equips students, not only in their school subjects, but offers overall importance to the development of the child and his life goals' attainment. It enlightens the child about the society and underscores positive habits, skills and beliefs which it impacts on the child.

The pivot of this work being adolescents in the junior secondary schools are specifically considered because counselling enables the students to gain self-direction, facilitates students' quest for identity, their striving for self-understanding and the expression of their aspiration. (Uwe,2005). The author further asserts that through counselling, adolescents are helped in achieving their desired and desirable goals. Often times in education, obstacles lend themselves basically to communication and effective communication-related issues. Therefore, English Language being the medium of communication during the teaching and learning process most times, must be clearly understood, not only as a subject matter but as a means of achieving greater feats even in other subjects, since textbooks and lessons are delivered in English Language.

Moreover, if the importance of English language in Nigeria is not underscored by the use of counselling in emphasizing its importance in the learning years of adolescents, lack of understanding of the basic means of communication in the classroom situation, would lend itself to a learning obstacle. This could affect the child adversely, to produce a malfunctional adult in later years. Therefore, counselling or professional help must be in consonance with the educational needs of the child. Thus, having established this backdrop, it is sad that being long enough in the Nigerian curricula, both formal and informal, failure in English language is still being recorded. Over the years, students have recorded a drastic decline in their performance in external examinations in English language (WAEC Annual report; 2010). This decline has led to so many twists in the actualization of individual goals, as individuals cannot aspire above certain levels in Nigeria without higher education, of which credit pass in English language is pre-requisite. This is so because one must have at least a credit pass in English language before being admitted into any Nigerian higher institution. It is even more so, for studies outside Nigeria in English speaking countries. There are fewer emphases on why students embark on some subject matters and this makes learning to be seen as burden to students. There has not been any meaningful avenue to get students aware of why they undertake some subjects, or a set of subject combinations. This apparent lack of information or inadequacy of information on why English language is

given paramount importance has resulted in consequent failure of students. Where there are counsellors, their work is barely beyond punitive personnel, who are seen as mere tools to punish deviant and delinquent students. Others fail to employ counsellors while others feel a counsellor should also be a teacher, instead of 'sitting idle' all day. (Onyejiaku,1987). While parents and teachers alike focus on complaining about students' poor interests and attitudes to work, no further steps have been followed to engage counselling to aid them and reverse the trend of lack of motivation, failure and lackadaisical attitude expressed towards their academic work. The researcher delved into the study to investigate the impact of Counselling services in improving students' academic performance in English Language in Abia State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of Counselling Services on students' Academic Performance in written English in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, this work was an attempt to:

- i. Investigate the effect of information service on students' academic performance in English language in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.
- ii. Determine the effect of Group Counselling service on Students' Academic Performance in English Language in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.
- iii. Ascertain if there is a significant effect of Consultancy service on the Academic Performance of Students in English Language in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.

### **Hypotheses**

To guide the study, three null hypotheses were formulated and tested.

1. There is no significant effect of information service on students' academic performance in English language in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.
2. There is no significant effect of Group Counselling service on Students' Academic Performance in English Language in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.
3. There is no significant effect of Consultancy service on the Academic Performance of Students in English Language in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State.

### **Methodology**

Quasi experimental research design was adopted for the purpose of this study. The purpose of the quantitative matched group quasi experimental study was to ensure that the intact classes were not disrupted, since randomization was not possible. It involved the demarcation of three experimental groups and one control group. The study was important because little research exist that predicted the impact of counselling on students' achievements in English language. The research used three intact classes of JSS3 students for experimental counselling while one intact class was used for control. The experimental groups were exposed to counselling treatments, for a period of eight weeks, after a pretest was carried out across all the groups. The control group was not counseled or treated after the pretest. A researcher-made questionnaire containing 48 items entitled "Counselling Services and Academic Performance of Students in English Language" were duly answered and collected accordingly. The questionnaire was divided into two sections- Section A contains demographic items like sex, age, level of education, marital status, religion and class and parent/guidance information. Section B contains the 48 items on different learning difficulties related to English language that could constitute learning barrier. A test-retest method was used to establish its reliability co-efficient and the reliability stood at .87. the post test items were collected on the spot and collated afterwards, ready for analysis.

### Method of Statistical Analysis

The scores from the instrument were computed and statistically analyzed using the Analysis of covariance to measure the level of significance at 0.05.

### Testing of Hypotheses

1. In testing the hypotheses which states that there is no significant effect of counseling on students' academic performance in English languages in Umuahia North Local Government Area of Abia State, the following results were recorded..

**There is no significant effect of Information Service on Students' Academic Performance English language.**

**Table 1**

SOURCES OF VARIANCE	SS	DF	MS	Fcal	Fcri
Covariate pretest	311.38	1	311.38	21.58	
Main effect					4.08
Between group	343.19	1	343.19	23.78	
Residual	1240.98	86	14.43		
Total	1969.06	87			

**N=88      \*significant      P<0.5      DF=1      Fcal=23.78      Fcri=4.08**

From table 1 above, the data analysis presented indicates a greater computed Fcal of 23.78 as against the critical F value of 4.08 at degree of freedom (DF) 1 of and 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant effect of information service on students' academic performance in English language.

**There is no significant effect of Group Counselling service on Students' Academic Performance in English Language.**

**Table 2**

SOURCES OF VARIANCE	SS	DF	MS	Fcal	Fcri
Covariate pretest	403.73	1	403.73	26.11	
Main effect					4.08
Between group	447.83	1	447.83	28.97	
Residual	1422.32	92	15.46		
Total	1870.15	93			

**N=94      \*significant      P< 0.05      DF=1      F-cal=28.97      F-cri=4.08**

In table 2 above, the data analysis indicates a greater computed F-cal of 28.97 as against the critical F value of 4.08 at degree of freedom (DF) of 1 and 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant effect of group counselling on students' academic performance in English Language.

**There is no significant effect of Consultancy Service on students' academic performance in English Language.**

**Table 3**

SOURCE OF VARIANCE	SS	DF	MS	Fcal	Fcri
Covariate pretest	397.23	1	397.23	23.70	
Main effect					4.08
Between group	426.37	1	426.37	25.44	
Residual	776.96	90	16.76		
Total	1197.33	91			

**N=92      \*significant      P <0.05      DF=1      Fcal=25.44      Fcri=4.08**

From the ANCOVA test that was carried out as shown of table 3 above, the data analysis presented indicates a greater computed fcal of 25.44 as against the critical F value of 4.08 at degree of freedom (DF) 1 and 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant effect of consultancy service on students' academic performance in English Language.

### Summary of findings

The study was carried out to determine the effect of counselling on students' academic performance in English Language. After students were subjected to a Pretest-Treatment-Posttest Quasi experiment, the findings showed that counseling services were effective in improving students' academic performance in English Language.

### Discussion of findings

The first hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of information service on students' academic performance was rejected. This means that information service plays a vital role in the enhancement of students' academic performance in English Language. This is supported by the works of Nwachukwu (2000), who states that students need to be opened up to international and local information needed for their further development.

The second hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of group counselling was rejected. Through group counselling students are sharpened better towards improving their performance. They understand their peculiarities and appreciate each other's needs. Ukaegbu (2004), asserts that it is through group counselling that students may appreciate the peculiarities of their problems in the light of others' problems, in order to seek out solutions.

Furthermore, the third hypothesis was rejected through the findings. There is a significant effect of consultancy service on students' academic performance in English language. Through consulting widely and seeking out solutions, students are better placed in understanding English better which in turn contributes to the overall positive performance of students. Ekpo (1996) in her views, insist that consultancy is of importance to the teacher, the counsellor, the students as well as the immediate community, to improve knowledge and reinstate quality education and skills through factual findings in counselling.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Schools should always employ counsellors readily equipped to carry out their statutory functions, in order to help students perform better in English language.
2. There is need for media awareness on the need to improve English Language through proper counselling.
3. Students should seek counselling not only when confused about subject combinations, but also with help in improving their academic performance in subject areas, especially English language.
4. The government at all levels- Federal, state and Local governments, the federal and state ministries of education and other educational stakeholders should set up machineries to ensure that all these improvement strategies are put into work and monitored for effectiveness.
5. Counsellors should understand their all encompassing role in helping students to improve their academic performances.

### **Conclusion**

Counselling is life long and all encompassing, touching the different aspects of the educational life of the child. Thus, to enable students to be at their best, especially in English language, through which teaching and learning occurs, the counsellor must design appropriate remedial and therapeutic techniques to tackle students' negative traits and behaviours that impede the successful teaching and learning exercise within the classroom. This exercise must be regular and timely, to create a conducive learning environment both externally (physically) and internally (psychologically) in order to produce students who perform maximally through better understanding of English language.

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