

ARTICLE

Counsellors perceived factors militating against establishment of effective guidance and counselling services in primary schools

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Abstract:

This study determines the problems hindering the effective establishment of guidance and counselling in primary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design method. Two research question guided the study. A sample size of 103 counsellors are used for the study selected through simple random sampling technique with replacement during their meeting days in their various zones. The instrument for data collection is titled 'perceived problems hindering effective establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Anambra state questionnaire (PPHEEOGACSIPSIA SQ)'. The reliability co-efficient value of the instrument of 0.80 is established through the use of Split half method of estimation. On the sport 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 which criterion is 2.50 for any item considered as a factor while an item that is below this value is considered not being a factor is used for the data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that orientation, placement, information, counselling, appraisal, referral and follow-up services are counselling services meant for primary school pupils. The study also revealed among other things that lack of funds for counselling programmes, guidance and counselling teachers' rivalry, unsupportive attitudes of head-teachers and non-inclusion of counselling in school time table are among the problems hindering the effective establishment of guidance and counselling in primary schools. Among other things, the researchers recommended that Government will release a clear schedule of duty that will clearly stipulates the functions of a counsellor in the school system for the school heads to know and allow counsellors to do their work and also, that at the beginning of each educational session, government should be integrating the funds needed for funding guidance and counselling programmes in schools budget before releasing money to schools and clearly instruct the bursars to release such funds whenever it is needed by the counsellors.

Keywords: problems, establishment, guidance, counselling and primary schools.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Guidance is an activity meant to benefit all and sundry. It can be offered to children or adults by their parents, relatives, counsellors and friends and

at times by the community at large through various educational, industrial, social, religious and political agencies and particularly, through the

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press and broadcasting services. Uzoekwe & Nnadi (2020) opine that guidance is to educate, teach and help an individual achieve self-understanding and self-direction necessary to make maximum adjustment to school, home and the community. It helps the individual to function in his totality, to be independent in decision making and to actualize his potentials. Also, Odoemelam & Ajoku (2010) opine that guidance programme should help the students in adjustment to society and freedom to act as unique individuals which is the real aim of being educated while Oyediji & Ayeni (2012) defines guidance as an assistance made available by professionally qualified and adequately trained men and women to an individual of any age to help him manage his own activities, develop his own points of view, make his own decision and carry his own burdens. On the other hand, Anagbogu (2002) defines counselling as a dynamic and purposeful relationship between two people in which procedures vary with the nature of the students' needs, but in which there is always mutual participation by the counsellor and the client with the focus of self-actualization and self-determination by the client. Uzoekwe & Nnadi (2020) concur that the purpose of counselling reflects training, upholding of value system, and perception of role and the needs of the individual being helped. Therefore, the goal of counselling is to effect change in behaviours so that the recipient may live a more productive and self-satisfying life. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) also, states that in view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in schools. Thus, the provision of guidance and counselling services in schools is geared towards helping clients to understand self and to take appropriate, social and psychological lifelong decisions.

Primary school children are tender in age, ranging between six to thirteen years. This makes counselling at this level very paramount and it differs from counselling at other levels of education. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) views the objectives of primary school education to

include: the inculcation of permanent literacy, and the ability to communicate effectively, the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking, citizenship education as a basis for effective participation as contribution to the life of the society, development in the child, the ability to adapt to his changing environment, providing the child with opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity and also, providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the society. It is at this elementary stage that a counsellor can really identify and begin to nurture the potentials of the primary school children to maturity. Mamman (2012) opines that primary school children have different problems that calls for the attention of the guidance and counselling services. These children came into school with different challenges ranging from: intellectual, personal, social, educational and career challenges and others which are the responsibility of guidance counsellors to address in order to brighten the future of the children through the establishment of effective guidance and counselling in primary school. School guidance counsellors come across many problems in elementary school which could not be over-looked. The elementary school level of education is the most important in all education levels. It is for this reason that it is labeled primary school.

The primary school, is part of the early education processes that prepares a child for the secondary school, among other numerous benefits. It is important to note that both the primary school teachers, guidance counsellors and parents of the children need to join hands and mold the mind of the child to a meaningful status. Human mind at this level is usually in a "tabular rasa" form which indicates that the mind of a child in this level is very clean, innocent and demands to be filled positively by good agents of socialization that includes the guidance counsellor. Through guidance and counselling services these children will develop positively but the problem is that primary schools lack effective and efficient guidance and counselling services because of certain factors that are militating against it. Elementary level is where

children explore new grounds and meet new people with different characteristics. Research shows that nine out of ten have experienced being bullied by their classmates and peers. Six out of ten showed that they have participated on some bullying themselves. A guidance counselor plays a big role in these matters. If someone is being bullied, a counsellor will help the child cope with it by giving strategies and ideas. It will make the child feel less alone and eradicate the fear of going to school. The counsellor will also converse with the one bullying and assess the reason for the child's behaviours. It was absolutely necessary to direct students to exhibit acceptable attitude and behaviours within and outside the school but this cannot be achieved without establishing a functional guidance and counselling services in primary schools.

Guidance and counselling is a process through which Counsellors handle children's problem at early stage in order to prevent the problems from escalating. There is no stage in life that is void of problems. Pupils in primary schools have varied problems which ranges from developmental to educational. Pupils in primary schools are at their early stage of development. They are like yam tendrils that require utmost attention so that they will not stray away. This is the right time when counsellors can use their expertise in helping these children towards eliminating their surging problems so that they will not have much hindrances as they emerge into adolescents and adult stages of life. It has been observed that some setbacks, or difficulties, many individuals are experiencing today in their lives can be attributed to some problems they have at their early stage of development which are over looked or not handled by experts (Guidance counsellors) that followed them in to adolescent and adult stage of their development. Waterable & Herr (2006) opine that primary school children faced a lot of problems which can hinder their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral and vocational development.

Scottish Children's Services Coalition (2016) opines that guidance and counselling in Primary schools aims to provide a supportive relationship to children, provide a safe environment where a child can improve social skills, self-awareness and

learning capacity, enhance the overall emotional health and mental wellbeing of the children. Guidance and counselling services aim at these in recognizing that every child is an individual that requires all the necessary support in order to access education and equally realize their potentials fully. Moreover, Nwokolo (2008) asserts that the need for information, adjustment, guidance on children with rebellious attitudes, how to study books, good relationship, self-understanding, to develop skills, to relate with one another, to develop the ability to make realistic choice and the need to build a positive image about oneself. Nwokolo, (2008) stated that most primary school children are faced with inability to speak well, not seeing well, restlessness, aggression and quarrelling. Also Anagbogu and Nwokolo (2010) inferred that some pupils in primary school experience problems of hearing difficulties, not relating with others well, truancy, bullying, writing problem and fear. Also, Moest, (2012) noted that abuse of children is rampant in school and at home in Kenya and some other countries in Africa. All these will impact a child's propensity to learn if nothing is done about it. In many schools, especially in the western world, well-planned efforts are made to provide assistance to individual primary school pupils in deciding upon their future careers and education, and other personal problems but it is quite unfortunate that such efforts are many a times not obtainable in underdeveloped world of which Nigeria is among. In government owned primary schools, counsellors who are to help in reducing educational, vocational, social and personal problems of these pupils are employed but the difficulties surrounding them in the schools could not allow them to establish effective guidance and counselling services for the benefit of the children. According to Abraham and Brown (2011), when counsellors are posted to schools, head teachers assigned duties to them according to their schools need. Most of the times, the counsellors posted to some schools may be asked to play the role of vice head teacher, to teach as full time teachers, to act as guidance counsellors, to perform the role of career masters and mistresses, to act as school clerks or cashiers among others. The children that the counsellors are supposed to guide and assist in

their educational, vocational and personal social developments will not be aware of counsellor's existence and even when they realize that, they are not sure of the exact role the counsellor plays. Possibly, Nigeria is aware of the importance of guidance and counselling, hence its entrenchment in the new National Policy on Education (2004). But, such awareness is still limited to the school setting. Joseph (2012) noted that even in the school setting, effective guidance programme has not emerged in a large scale. This possibly may be due to some challenges facing guidance and counselling which is a dilemma to the educational sector and are still not solved.

However, guidance and counselling services in schools include: orientation service, placement service, information service, counselling service, appraisal service, referral service, and follow-up service (Adegoke, 2014). The orientation service involves of activities provided to the new intakes in school in order to help them adjust to the school environment. This is because the school environment is new to them and they are not familiar with where withal in the school. The orientation services provides information to the children to help them in their adjustment from home to the school environment. Placement service on the other hand, implies placing the children in to classes based on their individual ability.

Under the information service, the counsellor creates awareness and equally provides the necessary guidance information towards assisting the learners in their decision making. The counsellor provides social, educational, occupational or vocational and psychological information both to the school children, teachers, parents, administrator, and the whole community at large. Information service equip the learners with a wider knowledge of education, personal-social and vocational or career opportunities towards helping them in making better decision and achievable choices.

Also, counselling service helps the child to understand himself better. Counselling itself is to maintain a personal stability interview of repeated challenges and changes it is at the heart of the word called guidance (Adegoke, 2014). The counselling

involves educational, personal-social and vocational /career aspects. Through this process the children's problems in those areas can easily be eliminated. Counselling is directed towards dealing with life's problems (Scottish Children's Services Coalition 2016). When people are experiencing distressing difficulties in their lives, they sometimes turn to another person for help. This could be a trusted friend, family member or religious leader. They could also meet with a person who has been trained to effectively help them. A counsellor is trained to listen and respond to people in emotional distress, and to empower them to deal with their difficulties.

Despite all these needs for guidance and counselling services, the current researchers observe that guidance and counselling services have not been fully established in primary schools. Also, guidance counsellors have been experiencing a lot of challenges towards the establishment of guidance and counselling services. For successful establishment of guidance and counselling services, attempt should be made to clarify the role of the counsellor. This lack of clarification of role has led to some unpleasant experiences especially by young and training counsellors sent to schools (Torbab, 2009). Some of the school heads are not too clear of the role of guidance counsellors and some even view them as rivals (Ekpenyong, 2011). These young counsellors are regarded with suspicion even by other teachers, as such, they are offered very little or no cooperation which is a must for a successful guidance and counselling programme within any school. Elvis (2011) found out that some counsellors, due to addition of teaching loads to their counselling activities decide to forsake counselling. Also, the kind of organization or school structure according to Mkpouto (2012) determines very much the kind of reception the introduction of counselling services will receive. The structure of most school systems is such that, authority is vested on the school head of which, nobody could question.

Furthermore, issues such as finance, schedule of time, location of counsellor's office and keeping of records cannot be overlooked. Funds for the innovative efforts of counsellors had not usually

been forthcoming since school heads find it difficult to release funds for counselling activities in school. According to Udom (2010), no meaningful services are cheap. Funds are needed for the purchase of counselling materials like psychological test, collection and keeping of information. The location of the counsellor's office affects the attitude of students towards counselling. Mkpouto (2012) reveals an account of a school where the counsellor was given a room directly opposite the staffroom and students who are seen going in are questioned by members of staff. The students felt disturbed. Many schools do not provide a befitting room for guidance and counselling services. Some of the counsellors' rooms are in the administrative blocks while others are close to the head teachers' office. The counsellors' office should be located in a separate block distance away from the administrative and head teachers' office preferably by the entrance of the school. This will give room for confidentiality. Further, record keeping is very important in counselling especially for reference purposes. However, because of inadequate arrangement of rooms, the counsellor often becomes the clerical staff and even the cashier of a school. In this case, keeping of records is a forgotten issue in some schools, because it is not easy for the counsellor to combine counselling services with the clerical duties. Confidentiality of any given information is very paramount in counselling programmes. Students need to be assured that, their secrets will not be unveiled. However, some head teachers and class teachers expect the counsellors to divulge this information when they are required which is absolutely against the ethics of the profession. In this case, the counsellor finds himself between two opposing forces. If he insists on keeping such information secret, his relationship with other members of staff and the head will be shaky. If he divulges the secrets, he loses the respect and confidence the children have for him. The students' confidence in the counselling services goes a long way to enhance, the effectiveness of the school counsellor.

Moreover, for the smooth functioning of guidance and counselling services, the need for

psychological tests cannot be overemphasized for the counsellors' usage. The limitation however, is that most of these tests are foreign, some counsellors find it difficult to interpret them and also, if applied on people in this environment, it may lead to cultural bias (Joseph, 2012). Therefore, there is need for more indigenous psychological tests.

In the support of the above, Watanable and Herr (2006), Daniel (2009), Udom (2010) and Joseph (2012) in their researches discovered that, professional counsellors are faced with serious challenges like lack of acceptance, lack of instruments for psychological tests for appraisal and placement purposes, lack of vocational information, economic, cultural and language barriers in the cause of carrying out their services in schools. Shahmirzadi (2010) equally opines that in countries such as Japan, Iran, Napai and Middle East, that the teachers see counsellors as rivals and that they also perform the services of the counsellors. In Napai as emphasized by Graham (2011), and Mamman (2012) another major problems is the difficulty in finding a period for counselling in the school time table. These and many others seems to be the setbacks guidance counsellors confronts in the establishment of guidance and counselling services in schools. And the resultant effects of all these affect children negatively as guidance counsellors who are posted to schools for the welfare of the children could not work effectively in delivery of his services. This study therefore, seeks to identify the factors militating against the establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Anambra state.

2. | STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Elementary school children are not easy to work with. The hearts of these children at birth are clean slates but they became infected with evils reigning within their environment. It is obvious that children learn fast through observation and participation in what is happening around them. Some of them come into school with unidentified different developmental problems that can affect their learning outcomes now and in future. Education is

seen as an agent of change and such change cannot be effected on its own except by the engagement of different services of workers which includes guidance counsellors. A guidance counsellor has a distinct role to play in order to help a child develop his potentials to the fullest. A counsellor works towards eliminating those ills the children have gotten from their environment as they are growing and equally help in identifying different developmental problems of the children that can act as setbacks towards their development in life and at the same time proffer possible strategies towards eliminating them to the barest minimum. Counsellors can only achieve these through their various services in schools and establishment of effective guidance and counselling programmes in schools. The need for guidance and counselling in primary schools has become therefore, imperative in order to promote the well-being of the children. It is important that school guidance and counselling services are fully functional and available to all learners in all schools to help alleviate the problems they face. This is why the researchers embark on this topic: Counsellors perceived factors militating against establishment of effective guidance and counselling services in primary schools.

Research Question

The following two research questions guided the study:

1. What guidance and counselling services are available for primary schools in Anambra state?
2. What are the factors militating against effective establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Anambra state?

3. | METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopt a survey design and seek for information, opinions and attitudes of the respondents. This study is carried out in Anambra state of Nigeria. The population of this study is 264 guidance counsellors. A total number of 103 counsellors are selected for the study through simple random sampling technique with replacement during their meeting days in their various zones. The major instrument for data collection for the study is a questionnaire

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developed by the researcher based on the information from the literature reviewed, personal experiences and contact with some of the guidance counsellors. The instrument 'perceived problems hindering effective establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Anambra state Questionnaire (PPHEEOGACSIPSISQ) is used for data collections. The instrument have two parts: A and B. Part A seeks information on personal data of the respondents while Part B contains 19 items that solicits the respondents' opinions regarding the guidance and counselling services in primary schools and problems hindering effective establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools designed in the modified Likert 4 point scale format involving: Strongly Agree (SA) 4points, Agree (A) 3points, Disagree(D) 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The instrument for this study is validated by three experts: two lecturers from the department of Guidance and Counselling and one from Measurement and Evaluation Department of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The researchers adopted direct approach in the administration of the questionnaire on the respondents to enable them the opportunity to appeal to the guidance counsellors for their co-operations. The data collected are analyzed through the use of statistical weighted mean. The mean score of each was computed and any score that was below 2.50 was accepted while any one below a mean score of 2.50 was rejected as not being a factor.

4. | RESULTS

Data obtained in the study were analyzed with presentation of result in line with the research questions as follows:

Research Question One (RQ1):

What guidance and counselling services are available for primary schools in Anambra state?

The data obtained in respect of the RQ 1 were analyzed in table 1 below and result presented accordingly.

Table 1: Guidance and counselling services available for primary schools in Anambra state

| S/N | ITEMS | MEAN(X) | REMARK |
|-----|---------------------|---------|----------|
| 1. | Orientation service | 3.64 | Accepted |
| 2. | Placement service | 3.56 | Accepted |
| 3. | Information service | 3.40 | Accepted |
| 4. | Counselling service | 3.45 | Accepted |
| 5. | Appraisal service | 3.34 | Accepted |
| 6. | Referral service | 3.38 | Accepted |
| 7. | Follow-up service | 3.25 | Accepted |

The Table above shows that guidance counsellors affirmed that the whole items in the table are guidance and counselling programmes available for the primary school children. Their mean scores ranges from 3.64 to 3.25 respectively. This indicates that orientation, placement, information, counselling, appraisal, referral and follow-up service are counselling services.

Research question 2

What are the factors militating against effective establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Anambra state?

The data obtained in respect of the RQ 2 were analyzed in table 2 below and result presented accordingly.

Table 2: Factors militating against effective establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Anambra state.

| S/N | ITEMS | MEAN (X) | REMARK |
|-----|---|----------|----------|
| 1. | Lack of funds for counselling programmers | 3.70 | Accepted |
| 2. | guidance and counselling Teachers' rivalry | 3.59 | Accepted |
| 3. | unsupportive attitudes of head-teachers | 3.40 | Accepted |
| 4. | Non-inclusion of counselling in school time table | 3.40 | Accepted |
| 5. | Non availability of psychological test | 3.32 | Accepted |
| 6. | Lukewarm attitudes of the government towards G/C services | 3.54 | Accepted |
| 7. | Parents unawareness of the importance of counsellors services | 3.17 | Accepted |
| 8. | Lack of training and workshop for counsellors | 3.26 | Accepted |
| 9. | Lack of good accommodation for counsellor's services | 3.32 | Accepted |

From the table two above guidance counsellors agreed that the following are factors militating against effective establishment of guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Anambra state: Lack of funds for counselling programmes, guidance and counselling Teachers' rivalry, unsupportive attitudes of head-teachers, Non-inclusion of counselling in school time table, Non availability of psychological test for identifying children's problems, Lukewarm attitudes of the government towards counselling programmes, Parents unawareness of the importance of counsellors and their programmes, Lack of training and workshop for counsellors and Lack of good accommodation for counsellor's services in school. The specific mean value of each item ranges from 3.17 to 3.70.

5. | DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

From the research study, it could be noted that in research question one, guidance counsellors indicated that orientation, placement, information, counselling, appraisal, referral and follow-up services are guidance and counselling services/ programmers available in primary schools in Anambra state. The findings supported the views of Adegoke, 2014 and that of Egbo (2015) who asserted that guidance and counselling services in schools include orientation, placement, information, counselling, appraisal, referral and follow-up services.

The findings of this work also indicates the following as the factors militating against establishment of effective guidance and counselling programmers in the primary schools: lack of funds for counselling programmes, guidance and counselling Teachers' rivalry, unsupportive attitudes of head-teachers, non-inclusion of counselling in school time table, non-availability of psychological test for identifying children's problems, lukewarm attitudes of the government towards counselling programmes, Parents unawareness of the importance of counsellors and their programmes, lack of training and workshop for counsellors and lack of good accommodation for counsellor's services. The above findings supported that of Ekpenyong (2011)

who opined that, the rivalry which exists between the counsellor, head of the school and teachers including other problems encountered by counsellors could not end due to the fact that the teachers and administrators expect counsellors to do more than counselling. The findings is also in support of Joseph's (2012) who opinionated that the rapid growth and spread of counselling activities is inhibited by greater poverty, weak government, unawareness of the need for guidance and counselling services in the life of the children by the community members. The findings also, supports Daniel's (2009) assertion that, clients prefer having their counselling session and intimate interaction in a secluded place to maintain confidentiality. Tiego and Kamore (2015) supported the above by stating that quality training is important in motivating school counsellors by increasing their self- efficacy in offering quality guidance and counselling services.

6. | CONCLUSION

This study having identified the counselling services available and problems hindering the establishment of effective guidance and counselling programmes in primary schools in Anambra state, efforts should be made towards reducing these problems so that counsellors can find a better ground to carry out their services for the betterment of the children in primary schools.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Government will release a clear schedule of duty that will clearly stipulates the functions of a counsellor in the school system for the school heads to know and allow counsellors to do their work.
2. At the beginning of each educational session, government should integrate the funds needed for funding guidance and counselling programmes in schools before releasing money to schools and clearly instruct the bursars to release such funds whenever it is needed by the counsellor.
3. Awareness for the importance of guidance and counselling services in the life of the

children will be created in the community so that counsellors will be getting the needed supports for their services both from the parents and the community at large.

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