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EDITORIAL

This academic publication of the defunct Department of Educational Foundations has come a long way. It was almost going moribund but for the deliberately steps taken by the current Editorial Board with the cooperation of all academic staff of the former Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education. Innovative article generation and peer review programmes were initiated and doggedly implemented to enable the return of Nigerian Journal of Educational Foundations to the envious academic status it had always enjoyed.

Improving the quality of the journal and bringing an international angle and status to it has engaged the attention of the Editorial Board. Phased in stages of achieving national and international focus has produced special edition based on selected themes. These themes pay attention to issues and needs currently engaging the attention of specialists in educational foundations in Nigeria and the rest of the world.

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN ILORIN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS, ILORIN

OKESINA F.A.

Abstract

The study was conducted in order to investigate the perception of secondary school students on the functions of school counsellors. The study was carried out in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. Two hundred (200) secondary school students participated in the study. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents that were randomly selected for the study. Face and content validity were used to validate the instrument. Test re-test method of reliability was used to test the instrument which was subjected to Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Formula and coefficient 0.70 was obtained. The respondents included in this study showed an average knowledge of perception on the functions of school counsellors due to the average mean scores of respondents. Four null hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The hypotheses were not rejected. It was concluded that secondary school students from Ilorin west local government area of Kwara State have similar perception on the functions of school counsellors irrespective of their gender, age, school type and class. It was recommended that stakeholders in the education sector should keep up their monitoring of school guidance programmes nationwide. This should involve that all schools have competent guidance counsellors. They must also occasionally meet with counsellors to discuss their guidance duties and diversely motivate those found to be working hard.

Key words: School Counsellors, school counselling, guidance counsellor.

Introduction

Guidance is a process, it involves personal help given by someone (guidance counsellor); designed to assist person to decide where he want to go, what he wants to do, or how he can best accomplish his purpose. Many writers are of the opinion that guidance is neither direction nor dictation (Dogar; Azeem; Majoka; Mahmood & Latif, 2011). 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 school, vocational and academic

difficulties of adolescent students. This is to complement learning in the classroom and also enhance academic performance/achievements of the students (Eyo; Joshua; Esuong, 2010). Guidance enables the guide to understand his problems and to overcome his hurdles. Inadequate guidance is liable to leading an individual to inadequate thought and behaviour, wrong decisions and maladjustment (AbdulRauf, 2002). Mapfumo (2001) added that students' experience immense psychological pressures in today's world. Thus, besides academic problem of failure and dropout from schools, students face numerous psycho-social, vocational and personal-social problems (Eyo; Joshua & Esuong, 2010). In order words, the growing number of social, economic and family problems have resulted in an increased need for school guidance and counselling services (Chireshe, 2011). A counsellor is in a position where he or she can support a student's long term desire for higher education or vocation. Counsellors are able to do this in a way that teachers who are confined to a certain grade level or subject, for example, are unable to. According to Scarborough & Culbreth (2008), "comprehensive, developmental school counselling programming has been associated with numerous benefits for students and is considered current best practice". Students' outcomes are highly mutable and are shaped by many aspects of students' lives that do not occur in the classroom. Trying to ascertain how to best deal with those out-of-school factors and how to best help a student who needs additional help is one of the most significant ways in which counselling can be most effective. The educational counselling service of the counsellor takes care of all aspects of educational matters as applicable to secondary school adolescents. The perception of male and female students towards counselling are to some extent favourable despite the physiological, psychological and prodional sex differences in vocational roles (Onyejiaku, 1991).

Counsellors help and encourage the students to identify their primary academic needs and solve their problems through consultation. Counsellors also help in preventing normal problems from becoming more serious and resulting in delinquency, failure and emotional disturbance. Students seek counselling for the following needs: educational need, cognitive and learning disorders, behaviour, emotional and social needs. As a result of the importance of guidance and counselling in the Nigerian educational sector, Adegoke, Carew, Maisamari and Ejah (2004) came up with counselling curriculum for schools in Nigeria which include the major functions of the school counsellor which are as follows: orientation of new students, educational counselling, vocational counselling, personal counselling, referral service, following services liaison and placement services, keeping students records, references and transcripts services, research, planning, students statistics and

consultancy services, school examinations and community services. The essence of these services is to make for academic excellence.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school years are full of growth, promise, excitement, frustration, disappointment and hope. It is the time when students begin to discover what the future holds for them. The counsellor occupies a very strategic position in any educational system. The counsellor enhance the learning process and promote academic achievement. Parents and significant others including students in recent times have been so concerned about academic problems. Seeking of counsellors' attention is always ignored. School counselling programmes are essentially for students to achieve optimal personal growth, acquire position social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive in life. This study therefore, attempts to look at students' perception on the functions of school counsellors. Finding out the functions of counsellors may therefore point to areas of conflicts, confusion, ignorance and difference that could be mirrored to enhance success in a student's academic life and general behavior. This will also help in filling the gap left by other researchers.

Research Questions

Five research questions were generated for the study:

1. What are the major functions of guidance and counselling in secondary school system as perceived by students?

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses tested are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of students of Ilorin West Local Government Area on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of students of Ilorin West Local Government Area on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of age.
3. There is no significant difference in the perception of students of Ilorin West Local Government Area on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of class.
4. There is no significant difference in the perception of students of Ilorin West Local Government Area on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of school type.

Methodology

The study was essentially descriptive survey in nature. Since students in secondary schools irrespective of their gender, age, class and school type are involved with counsellors, The population for the study therefore consisted of all the secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting two hundred (200) secondary school students from four (4) secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State as sampling size for the study. There were one hundred males and one hundred (100) females from both public and private secondary schools.

Students' Perception of Functions of School Counsellors Questionnaire (SPFSCQ) designed by the researcher was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument had two sections, A and B. Section A had four (4) items which elicited bio-data information while section B had twenty (20) items on students' perception of functions of school counsellors in the schools.

To ensure content-validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was content validated by three experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The researcher equally established the reliability of the instrument through test – retest method. A reliability co-efficient of 0.70 was obtained and this was considered high enough for the study. Therefore, the instrument was judged reliable for data collection.

The instrument was administered by the researcher to two hundred (200) students and were retrieved from them on the spot, after permission was sought for from their different school principals.

The scoring system was four point Likert type scale that had four to one in order of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The highest score any could get on the perception on the functions of counsellors in schools was 80. Any respondent who scored 50 and above was considered as having high/positive perception of the functions of school counsellors in schools and any respondent who scored below 50 was considered as having low or negative perception of the functions of school counsellors.

Data Analysis and Results:

Research Question 1: What are the major functions of counsellors in the Secondary School System as perceived by students?

Table 1: Mean scores and Rank order of functions of school counsellors:

S/N	Item No	A school counsellor should:	Mean	SD	Rank
1	1	assist students in understanding their problems	2.53	.68	1 st
2	4	help students solve their maladjustment problems	2.52	.77	2 nd
3	15	help with students psycho-social problems	2.38	.62	3 rd
4	11	help students with career planning activities	2.38	.87	4 th
5	3	help students with mental or physical disabilities	2.22	.85	5 th
6	10	mediate in student-school-parent communication	2.20	.97	6 th
7	18	help students develop problem-solving and decision making skills	2.16	.95	7 th
8	2	help in conflict reduction in schools	2.12	.85	8 th
9	7	be involved in recruitment or admission process of students	2.11	.76	9 th
10	17	serve in the disciplinary committee for student offenders	2.08	.84	10 th
11	13	involve in job shadowing, work-based learning, part-time jobs for students.	2.04	1.10	11 th
12	12	assists students with problems encountered within and outside the school system	2.02	.85	12 th
13	20	facilitates consultations and professional referrals	2.00	.99	13 th
14	9	engages in individual/family/school crisis intervention	1.96	1.004	14 th
15	8	organizes awareness programmes and campaign against social vices such as drug abuse, premarital sex and unwanted pregnancies	1.93	1.89	15 th
16	19	orientates students in understanding others around them	1.92	.95	16 th
17	5	helps in keeping records of day to day activities of students	1.87	1.19	17 th
18	14	helps develop positive peer relationship and development of effective social skills	1.85	.97	18 th
19	6	helps organize guidance activities in the school	1.78	1.46	19 th
20	16	inculcates in students good and effective study habit skills	1.52	1.03	20 th

Table 1 shows the respondents' view as regards the functions of school counsellors in secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. The table indicates that item 1 was ranked 1st with a mean score of 2.53 and SD of .68 which states that "assists students in understanding their problems". Item 4 was ranked 2nd with a mean score of 2.52 and SD of .77 also states that "helps the students to solve their maladjustment problems". While item 15 was ranked 3rd with a mean score of 2.38 and SD of .62 it states that "helps in students' psycho-social problems". However, item 14 was ranked 18th with a mean score of 1.85 and SD of .97 and states that "helps develop positive peer relationship and development of effective social skills". Item 6

was ranked 19th with mean score of 1.78 and SD of 1.46 and states "helps organize guidance activities, while item 16 was ranked last (20) with mean score of 1.52 and SD 1.03 and states "inculcates in students good and efficient study habit skills".

Hypothesis Testing

This section presents the results on the four null hypotheses that were generated and tested using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical method.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the perception of students in Ilorin West Local Government Area on the basis of gender

Table 2: The t-test Analysis showing students' perception on functions of counsellors in schools Based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Calculated t-value	Sig
Male	110	61.11	6.598	198		
Female	90	62.02	7.312		.93	0.153

Table 2 shows that the P value of 0.153 is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, there is no significant difference in the perception of students on functions of school counsellors based on gender. Hence, hypothesis one is not rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the perception of students of Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of age.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing the Perception of Respondents on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of age.

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Calculated f-ratio	Sig
Between Groups	182.406	2	91.203		
Within Groups	23427.549	197	118.922	.77	0.615
Total	23609.955	199			

Table 3 indicates that the P value of 0.615 is greater than 0.05 level of

significance ($P > 0.615$). Therefore, there is no significant difference in the perception of students on the functions of school counsellors based on age difference of the students. Hence hypothesis 2 is not rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the Perception of Students of Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of class.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on respondents perception of the functions of school counsellors on the basis of class

Class	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated t-value	Sig
S.S.S	100	51.81	10.917	198	0.14	0.172
J.S.S	100	51.50	10.932			

Table 4 reveals that P value 0.172 is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, there is no significant difference in the perception of students on the functions of school counsellors based on class level. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the perception of students of Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State on the functions of school counsellors on the basis of school type.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on respondents perception of the functions of school counsellors on the basis of school type.

School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	Calculated t-value	Sig
Public	120	51.64	10.901	198	0.90	0.093
Private	80	51.85	10.932			

Table 5 shows that the p value of 0.093 is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($P > 0.05$). Therefore, there is no significant difference in the perception of students on the functions of school counsellor based on school type. Hence, hypothesis 4 is not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

This research was conducted to determine the perception of secondary school students on the functions of school counsellors. The first finding showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of male and female students in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara

State on the functions of counsellors in secondary schools. This result revealed that gender difference in the students perception on counsellors with the mean score 62.02 for female and the lower mean score of 61.11 for male. This implies that female students are favourably disposed to school counsellors than their male counterparts. This result is not surprising in that naturally female students have good interpersonal relationship and more open than male students who you to be rigid and reserved. This finding is in line with Onyejiaku (1991) who ascertained that despite sex differences, male and female students favoured counsellors and their services in schools.

The result on the second finding indicated that no significant difference existed between the ages of respondents on the function of school counsellors. The result is not surprising in that most of the students within the age range studies are adolescents. Adegoke et al (2004) came up with write ups on the duties and usefulness of school counsellors and counselling services to the students especially those at the adolescence stage that are known to be experimentalist. This stage is facilitated through cooperation with other individuals such as counsellor.

The third finding showed that there is no significant difference among junior and senior secondary school students in their perception of counsellors in their schools. The result therefore, proved that a class level has no influence on their perception of the functions of counsellors in their schools. This means that majority of the students irrespective of their class are conversant with roles of Guidance Counsellors in schools and their roles are reassuring.

The next finding of this study is that school type has no significant difference on the perception the functions of school counsellors. As a result of the importance of guidance and counselling in the Nigerian educational sector, Adegoke, Carew, Maisamari and Ezeh (2004) came up with counselling curriculum for schools in Nigeria which included the major functions of the school counsellor which are as follows; Orientation of new students, educational counselling, vocational counselling, personal counselling, referral service, follow-up services, liaison and placement services, keeping students records, references and transcripts services, research, planning, students statistics and consultancy services, school examinations and community services. The essence of these services is to make up for academic excellence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions made in it can be the study concluded that: Secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State have similar perception on the functions of school counsellors irrespective of their gender, age, class and type of school.

Recommendations

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

1. Stakeholders in the education sector should keep up their monitoring of school guidance programmes nation wide. This should involve ensuring that all schools have competent guidance counsellors. They must also occasionally meet with counsellors to discuss their guidance duties and diversely motivate those found to be working hard.
2. Male students should be motivated through conferences, seminars and workshops on the need to participate in guidance and counselling activities for proper self and academic adjustment and development of healthy and positive attitude.
3. Counsellors should utilize the results of this study when providing counselling services to students whether in junior or senior secondary schools, their type of schools, age differences and gender.
4. The school counsellors themselves should be prepared to impress on the general public that their services are essential.

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