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Administration of guidance and counselling among senior secondary schools in Taraba state, Nigeria: Prospects and challenges

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Abstract

Background: Guidance and counseling (G&C) in schools help students in taking and making appropriate decisions and behavior in a well-determined, proactive and preventive manner that will ensure the achievement of school's success through academic, personal and career development.

Objective: This study seeks to evaluate the prospects and challenges of administration of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools in Taraba State.

Methodology: This study utilized a survey design, using a 2 stage sampling technique which ensures that each of the sixteen (16) LGAs in the State is selected and five (5) senior secondary schools were randomly. The data collected were coded and analyse using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation.

Results/Findings: The G&C services provided in senior secondary schools in Taraba State focus on students' academics needs and students' personal problems; there is a very low level of preparedness and; G&C programs has prospect in the schools especially in the areas of improving students' academic achievement.

Conclusion: This study concludes that there significant number of challenges facing the guidance and counseling programme in schools which include teachers' heavy workload, little support from school administration; lack of parental support; lack of good place and equipment and; students lack interest.

Recommendation: This study recommends that the counselors should be provided with necessary training, facilities, support and funds by the concerned authorities in government and the schools' administration.

Keywords: Guidance, counseling, schools, prospects, challenges

Introduction

Guidance and counseling (G&C) as a process that help students in taking and making appropriate decisions and behavior is meant to impart certain skills and specific learning opportunities in a well-determined, proactive and preventive manner that will ensure that all the students are able to achieve school's success through academic, personal and career development (Paolini, 2019)^[13]. This can be achieved by resolving physical, social, emotional and academic difficulties of the students and by assisting them in understanding their weaknesses and strengths; thereby improving academic achievement and overall development as well (Boitt, 2016)^[6]. Schools' G&C services prepare learners and students to assume responsibility for their academic and moral decisions and to also grow in their capability to understanding and accepting the consequences of their choices. The services of G&C in schools give positive room for student(s) to understand and cope with the learning needs and personality development (Buchanan, Blair & Woodside, 2017)^[7].

In the context of secondary schools in Nigeria, appreciable progress has been recorded in setting up administrative and functional structures for the provision of services in G&C in order to enhance educational, personal and vocational progress of the students (Mwangi & Habil 2015)^[10]. This is as a result of the growing knowledge on the benefits of the services of G&C to the overall development of the students and learners within schools. This growing awareness has offered so many prospects for the sustainable development of the G&C units and structures (Paolini, 2019)^[13]. However, there are still challenges as well prospects abound to G&C services in secondary schools that need to be considered to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in its provision. Concerning the challenges of counseling services in schools' setting, there are four dimensions to it namely; external, internal, personal and systems challenges (Arfasa & Weldmeskel, 2020)^[5]. Suleiman, Muraina and Suleiman (2019)^[9] advanced that in secondary schools, there are problems related with low

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counselor-to-students ratio, non-professionalization of schools' counselors and the lack of recognition of the importance for G&C services.

Taraba State like other states in North-Eastern Nigeria are very challenged with school's success through academic, personal and career development especially among senior secondary schools where the students are very vulnerable and also decisions-bound (that is, career and personal) as a result of their age, peer/societal pressure and societal expectations. It is in this regard therefore that this current study focus on the prospects and challenges of G&C services in secondary schools in Taraba State focusing more on the factors surrounding the availabilities of G&C services/programs and professionals; level of preparedness of schools' counselors, nature of G&C service offered and the major challenges associated with the provision of G&C services.

Statement of the problem

The provisions of professional G&C services by trained counselors and/or other allied professionals cannot be over-emphasized in senior secondary schools. As Suleiman, Muraina and Suleiman (2019)^[9] stated, adolescents in senior schools are often suffering from dropout, withdrawal, psychological imbalance, delusions among other economic and personal problems which affects their overall wellbeing and development. This is due to the absence professionally trained or not functional G&C personnel in the senior secondary schools. Besides, lack of appropriate infrastructural facilities (administration support and office), attitudinal direction of the society, schools' community and students to the services among other influential and non-deliberate challenges (Paolini, 2019)^[13].

Some studies on the effects of schools' G&C have shown positive results on student's achievement, grades, reducing classroom disruptions and also enhancing teachers' capabilities to manage the classroom behaviour effectively. Eventhough, qualitative schools' G&C services address students' mental health needs, there are some other studies that did not indicate a significant effect of G&C services on academic achievement of the studies. To this extent therefore, there are indications that certain challenges influence the provision of schools' G&C. Also, these inconsistencies in the analysis of the reviews create a gap in knowledge to which this study is concerned with to help streamline the prospects of secondary schools' G&C on students' academic, personal and career development in Taraba State.

Thus, this study formulated the following research questions to guide the objective of this study

- i. What are the natures of the guidance and counseling programs available in senior secondary schools in Taraba State?
- ii. What is the level of preparedness of schools' counselors for guidance and counseling services/programs in senior secondary schools in Taraba State?
- iii. What are the prospects of guidance and counseling services/programs in senior secondary schools in Taraba State?
- iv. What are the major challenges associated with the provision of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools in Taraba State?

Objectives of the study

The central aim of this study is evaluate the prospects and challenges of administration of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools in Taraba State. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- i. Determine the nature of the guidance and counseling programs available in senior secondary schools in Taraba State
- ii. Evaluate the level of preparedness of schools' counselors for guidance and counseling services/programs in senior secondary schools in Taraba State
- iii. Find out the prospects of guidance and counseling services/programs in senior secondary schools in Taraba State
- iv. Analyse the major challenges associated with the provision of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools in Taraba State?

Conceptual review

The concepts reviewed in this study include guidance, counseling and; the conjointly use of the terms: guidance and counseling.

Guidance

The concept of guidance is described as the total programme of numerous and highly specialized activities that is implementable by counselors to help the individual to make a more wise, intelligent choices and decisions which would make him/her understands his/her abilities, weaknesses, attitudes and interests (Agi, 2013). According to Suleiman, Muraina and Suleiman (2019)^[9] the term guidance refers to clusters of formalized and regularized services that is meant to provide help to given individuals that requires adjustment, interpretation of information, planning and choice. Guidance involves providing assistants to individuals or a group of individuals to provide them the ability to for self-direction and to effectively relate their basic and/or special needs to requirement; demand and; opportunities of educational, occupational, social and psychological situations.

Counseling

Counseling is often described as a face-to-face interpersonal interaction and/or communication between people, usually two or more, in which one person usually refers to as 'the counselor' helps another usually refers as 'the counselee' to make an informed decision(s) and to be able to act upon them. Counseling is also an issue of guidance, which many authors have separate and distinctive views about (Suleiman, Muraina & Suleiman 2019)^[9]. According to Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020)^[5], counseling, overtime, has been used to represent extensive varying strategies that include giving of recommendation, assistance in the instance of hassle and/or needs, giving of data, encouragement, and check interpretation. Counseling is further considered as a manner by means of ability and capacity of which the counselor (helper) expresses care and subject towards the individual with a problem; it helps that individual's non-public increase and brings about the adjustments through self-knowledge (Neyland-Brown, John, Reynolds, Kozlowski & Piazza, 2019).

Counselling is established as a relationship between an involved individual and a person with need(s). This

relationship is commonly a person to man or woman, though sometimes it might also involve more than two people (Paolini, 2019)^[13]. Counseling is regarded as a face-to-face interpersonal communication and/interaction between two or more people/group in which one person/group (the counselor) helps the other person/group (the counselee) to make rationally informed decisions and to work in that direction to achieve a pre-determined goal (Suleiman, Muraina & Suleiman 2019)^[9].

G&C have at several points been used synonymously and conjointly. The conjointly use of G&C means that it is a process of assisting individual or group to understand and cope with their problems.

Administration G&C services senior secondary schools

In considering the administration of G&C at senior secondary school level, the counselee are assumed to be more matured, in these services therefore, appropriate career and educational planning, general attitudes to the ever-changing social relations and environments, learning and adopting good study habits and obvious preparation of the eventual future adulthood are the focus at that level (Buchanan, Blair & Woodside, 2017)^[7]. Senior students in secondary schools have certain specific problem of "personal growth" in their social development that needs help so as to adjust to the adult society. The G&C programmes are targeted at developing appreciable positive philosophy to life, and adopt rational approaches as to how leisure time would be wisely utilized. G&C services in senior secondary schools setting are usually heavily oriented towards helping the students to adjust to the environment and the demands that are typically assumed by young adolescents (Adewuyi & Muraina, 2019)^[9].

According to Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu and Umezulike (2013) guidance and counselling programmes for senior secondary school students are prepared and designed to address some physical, social, emotional, vocational and academic difficulties face by students in adolescent stage. The purpose of guidance and counselling programmes, therefore are to help the students to meet a variety of needs ranging from sociological and psychological to academic re-adjustment. However, the provision of guidance and counselling services is often considered a luxury in schools that should only be made available to choice of subjects largely (Paolini, 2019)^[13]. In many parts of Nigeria, and especially public schools, guidance counselling is provided by the classroom teacher, who either has such duty added to his/her usual teaching load or teach only limited load that includes counselling also. More often than not, secondary schools counsellors function as career masters (which is just a segment of guidance and counselling) and they may also have teaching responsibilities which take away valuable time from their counselling responsibilities (Mghweno & Mghweno 2014).

Literature review

Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020)^[5] examine the challenges of G&C services with the intent to understand the position of secondary schools' G&C and provide ways of improvement in the services. The study employed a descriptive survey design that involves participants; (392 students and 108 teachers). The data were collected through the administration of questionnaires and oral interviews. The

data were analyzed using the frequency of students' visitation to G&C offices. The results indicated that majority of secondary school students never visits G&C offices. However, the study further revealed that even though services of G&C are influenced by several challenges such as lack of professionals and the necessary facilities, there are still prospect that it can achieve its objectives if more commitment is deployed. It is therefore concluded that the implications of G&C services and the characterized challenges to considerably influence schools' students learning and personal development and wellbeing.

Muraina, Musa and Muhammad (2020) provide the advantages of online world counseling, its implications, challenges and prospects for counselors and counselees in Nigeria. It was stated that applied sciences can improve the face-to-face counseling thereby lowering the stress on each counselor and consumer in the realm of counseling. This is an indication that, the traditional face-to-face channel of G&C is a challenge in itself to the provision of the services. Similarly, Boitt (2016)^[6] evaluates the challenges associated with the implementation of G&C programmes secondary schools in Baringo county and employed a survey design. The study focused 23 extra county schools, with 23 counselors. In selecting the number of schools and teacher counselors, purposive sampling was used, that is, total of 23 respondents formed the study's sample. The data were retrieved through an open-ended questionnaire. In analyzing the data collected, descriptive statistics was utilized with the aid of SPSS v. 20 for windows. Analysis of the findings showed that lack of funding and time, uncooperative clients, inadequate facilities and lack of well-trained personnel were among the major challenges facing the G&C programme implementation. It was therefore concluded that there are myriad of challenges facing the implementation of the programme in secondary schools in Baringo County.

According to Momanyi, (2015) the major and general challenges facing G&C in schools and colleges include; too few tools for counselors to work with; lack or inadequate office accommodation for counselors; absence or inadequate qualified guidance counselors at schools; rivalries, little/no cooperation, suspicion, between/among counselors; lack of full recognition for the post of guidance counselors by schools; inadequate funding for the services in schools; issues of indiscipline in schools; absence of stated plans, goals, objectives and strategies; lack of commitment on the parts of the guidance counselors to their profession and; limitation of guidance school setting or academics only.

Methodology

This study utilized a survey design. This study concerned itself with determining "what is" and the affairs as they exist in senior secondary schools in Taraba State. The survey design seeks to achieve information that provides a pre-existing situation. The population of this study consists of secondary schools in the state, however the study used 2 stage sampling technique which ensure that each of the sixteen (16) Local Government Areas in the State is selected and five (5) schools were further randomly selected bring the total sample of senior secondary schools to eighty (80). Therefore, this study targeted 80 teacher counselors from the 80 senior secondary schools selected. This study also adopted the Boitt, (2016)^[6] of addressing the challenges and prospects in the G&C programme. In the course of this

study, piloting of the adopted instrument was carried in order to improve the validity and to also examine the reliability of the instrument.

Based on the objectives of this study, the researcher identified the teacher counselors or career masters of the selected schools and administered the instruments through Google form and physical contact. The data collected from the field survey were coded and analyse using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation through the computing software (Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS v 25)). The mean score of 3 was used to make decision to agree or disagree; this is because the instrument is designed using 5-scale Likert scales. From the eighty (80) questionnaires administered, sixty (60) were completed and validly returned representing seventy-five (75%) upon which the data analysis for this study was carried out.

Results and Discussion

In the presentation of the results of this study, the reliability analysis was carried to ensure that the instrument is fit to determine the problem of this study. Hence, descriptive

statistics of central tendency using mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) are used to analyse the results.

Reliability Analysis

This study established the reliability of the TCEQ by using of Cronbach's alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained as presented in table 1. This value indicates that the instrument is reliable to measure the objectives of this study.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Variables	Values
Nature of G&C	0.822
Level of preparedness by schools	0.786
Prospects of G&C services	0.862
Major challenges facing provision of G&C services	0.816
Mean	0.822

Nature of the guidance and counseling programs

The data on the nature of G&C services available in senior secondary schools in Taraba State are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Nature of the guidance and counseling programs

S.no	Items	N	Mean	Std
1	G&C addresses personal problems of students	60	3.52	1.01
2	G&C is provided based on students' academics' need assessment	60	3.82	1.32
3	G&C addresses complex psychological problems of students	60	1.53	0.82
4	G&C addresses students' empowerment and decision making	60	2.01	1.22
5	G&C addresses students' on future career	60	2.34	1.06
6	G&C deals with students on social development	60	2.45	0.69
	Mean	60	2.61	1.02

The results on table 2 reveal the nature of the G&C services provided in senior secondary schools in Taraba State. The analysis indicate that the G&C services in the schools focus on students' academics needs ($x = 3.82$; $SD = 1.32$) and students' personal problems ($x = 3.52$; 1.01). These findings agree with the studies of Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020)^[5]; Muraina, Musa and Muhammad (2020) who also believe that G&C programmes should include students' academic and social needs. But unlike the finding of this study, Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020)^[5]; Muraina, Musa and Muhammad

(2020); Paolini, (2019); Agi (2013)^[13] indicates that G&C programs should also include career development, psychological development and social/emotional wellbeing of the students.

Level of preparedness of schools' counselors

The level of preparedness of schools' counselors for G&C services/programs in senior secondary schools in Taraba State is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Level of preparedness of schools' counselors

S.no	Items	N	Mean	Std
1	School counselors get regular training on G&C	60	1.78	0.55
2	Guidance counselor exists independently of other academic activities	60	2.07	0.89
3	Separate offices and equipment for G&C services	60	1.88	0.65
4	Allotted time for G&C programmes	60	1.66	0.45
5	Referral system for G&C lesson	60	1.85	0.34
6	Orientation and awareness program for G&C services	60	2.55	1.03
7	Financial and material provision for G&C services	60	1.36	0.48
	Mean	60	1.88	0.63

In determine the level of preparedness of schools' counselors in senior secondary schools in Taraba State to carry out their G&C services, the table 3 reveals that there is a very low level of preparedness going by the average score ($x = 1.88$; $SD = 0.63$) of the items used to measure the level of preparedness. The findings of this study is supported by similar studies conducted by Suleiman, Muraina and Suleiman, (2019); Agi (2013)^[9] in Nigeria secondary

schools. However, Paolini, (2019) and Adane (2015)^[13] indicate some level of readiness of counselors in their study areas which are peculiar to the case study they reviewed.

Prospects of guidance and counseling programs

The prospects of G&C services in senior secondary schools in Taraba State are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Prospects of guidance and counseling programs

S.no	Items	N	Mean	Std
1	G&C can help improve students' academic achievement	60	4.10	1.17
2	G&C are likely to improve as a result of its increasing benefits to students	60	2.98	1.25
3	G&C services may help reduce social vices and other related offences in schools	60	3.04	1.21
4	G&C services may assist in health and overall wellness of the students	60	1.99	0.67
5	G&C services may create social harmony in schools	60	3.37	1.21
	Mean	60	3.10	1.10

Table 4 presents the prospect of G&C programs in senior secondary schools in Taraba State. The data analysis indicates that G&C programs has prospect in the schools especially in the areas of improving students' academic achievement ($x = 4.10$; $SD = 1.17$); creating social harmony in schools ($x = 3.37$; $SD = 1.21$) and reducing social vices and related offences ($x = 3.04$; $SD = 1.21$). This finding agrees with Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020) [5]; Suleiman, Muraina and Suleiman, (2019); Wambu and Fisher (2015); Adane (2015) [9] who also posited that with the right

commitment to G&C programs there are several prospects and benefits to not just the counselees but the society at large.

Major challenges with guidance and counseling programs

The major challenges associated with the provision of G&C services in senior secondary schools in Taraba State are presented in table 5.

Table 5: Associated with the provision of G&C service in senior secondary schools in Taraba State

S.no	Challenges with guidance and counseling programs	N	Mean	Std
1	Lack of good place and equipment	60	3.21	1.04
2	Lack of qualified counselor	60	2.42	0.89
3	Limitation of places for group counseling	60	2.79	1.33
4	Absent of clear direction from the guidelines	60	1.98	0.78
5	Students lack interest	60	3.21	1.11
6	Little support from school administration	60	3.67	1.23
7	Teachers have heavy workload	60	3.89	1.45
8	Lack of parental supports	60	3.62	1.38
	Mean	60	3.10	1.15

On the challenges to G&C services in senior secondary schools in Taraba State, table 5 presents the results of the data. The analysis indicates that: teachers' heavy workload ($x = 3.89$; $SD = 1.45$), little support from school administration ($x = 3.67$; $SD = 1.23$); lack of parental support ($x = 3.62$; $SD = 1.38$); lack of good place and equipment ($x = 3.21$; $SD = 1.04$) and; students lack interest ($x = 3.21$; $SD = 1.11$) in that orders are the major challenges facing G&C programs in senior secondary schools. The general analysis of the results indicates that G&C programs are significantly challenged in senior secondary schools. This finding of this study is overwhelming supported by various studies. The challenges of G&C include too few tools for counselors to work with (Arfasa & Weldmeskel 2020; Mwangi & Habil 2015) [10, 5]; lack or inadequate office accommodation for counselors (Boitt, 2016; Adane, 2015) [6]; absence or inadequate qualified guidance counselors at schools (Momanyi, 2015; Mwangi & Habil 2015) [10]; rivalries, little/no cooperation, suspicion, between/among counselors (Suleiman, Muraina & Suleiman, 2019) [9]; lack of full recognition for the post of guidance counselors by schools; inadequate funding for the services in schools; issues of indiscipline in schools (Mwangi & Habil 2015) [10]; absence of stated plans, goals, objectives and strategies (Wambu & Fisher 2015); lack of commitment on the parts of the guidance counselors to their profession (Boitt, 2016) [6] and; limitation of guidance school setting or academics (Adane, 2015; Mwangi & Habil 2015) [10].

schools where they are available are mainly those targeted at academic achievement and social development. However, a whole lot of other areas such as psychological, emotional, career development and social values and harmony are neglected. This level of negligence indicates a low level of preparedness by schools in providing G&C services to students who need them. Despite, the highly level of prospects in the programs and services, there are several challenges that hinder its effective implementation among senior secondary schools. This study concludes that there significant number of challenges facing the guidance and counseling programme in schools which include teachers' heavy workload, little support from school administration; lack of parental support; lack of good place and equipment and; students lack interest. In this effect therefore, until and unless these challenges among others are addressed the positive impact of G&C programs where they exist may not be felt in the students overall social, educational and psychological development.

Furthermore, based on the challenges identified above, this study therefore recommends that the teacher counselors or whatever designation they may carry should be provided with necessary training, facilities, support and funds by the concerned authorities in government and the schools' administration. This study also recommends that independent counselors should be employed for counseling purposes, time allocated for G&C sessions and the workload of such counselors be spread and reduced to address specific challenges facing the counselees.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The primary nature of G&C services in senior secondary

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Appendix: Instrument of Data Collection

A.	Nature of the guidance and counseling programs	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	G&C addresses personal problems of students					
2	G&C is provided based on students' academics' need assessment					
3	G&C addresses complex psychological problems of students					
4	G&C addresses students' empowerment and decision making					
5	G&C addresses students' on future career					
6	G&C deals with students on social development					
B	Level of preparedness of schools' counselors					
1	School counselors get regular training on G&C					
2	Guidance counselor exists independently of other academic activities					
3	Separate offices and equipment for G&C services					
4	Allotted time for G&C programmes					
5	Referral system for G&C lesson					
6	Orientation and awareness program for G&C services					
7	Financial and material provision for G&C services					
C.	Prospects of guidance and counseling programs					
1	G&C can help improve students' academic achievement					
2	G&C are likely to improve as a result of its increasing benefits to students					
3	G&C services may help reduce social vices and other related offences in schools					
4	G&C services may assist in health and overall wellness of the students					
5	G&C services may create social harmony in schools					
D	Challenges with guidance and counseling programs					
1	Lack of good place and equipment					
2	Lack of qualified counselor					
3	Limitation of places for group counseling					
4	Absent of clear direction from MOE					
5	students lack interest					
6	Little support from school administration					
7	Teachers have heavy workload					
8	Lack of parental supports					

Note: SA = Strongly Agree = 5; A = Agree = 4; N = Neutral = 3; D = Disagree = 2; SD = Strongly Disagree = 1