



Administrators Rating of School Counsellor's Competencies in Information, Counselling and Follow-up Service Delivery

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author LIA wrote the first and second draft of the manuscript, managed the literature search, performed the statistical analysis and did the data analysis of the study. Author VNN designed the study and wrote the protocol. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: This study examined administrators rating of school counsellor's competencies in information, counselling and follow-up service delivery. Three purpose statements, three research questions guided the study, while one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level.

Study Design: Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study.

Methodology: The population for the study comprised of 2076 administrators (head-teacher and principals). The sample drawn for the study is 208. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured on a 4-point scale. The instrument was validated by two experts with a Cronbach reliability coefficient of .641. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level.

Results: The results from the study revealed that moderate level of competence of school counsellors in information service delivery; school counsellors are moderately competent in follow-up service delivery. The findings also revealed that administrators (head-teachers and principals)

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differ significantly in their mean ratings on school counsellor's competencies in guidance and counselling (information, counselling and follow-up) service delivery.

Conclusions: Core areas in guidance and counselling should be included in all colleges and universities curricula, routine inspection and review on the progress reports of school counsellors should be conducted and in-service training and retraining programmes for school counsellors should be organized.

Keywords: School; counsellors; competency; information; counselling; follow-up.

1. INTRODUCTION

The school environment is an institutional setting wherein people acquire knowledge through teaching, guidance and learning processes and nearly all individuals anticipate healthy growth in terms of developmental growth, educational, and vocational experiences. More so, one of the core missions of schools is stimulating and shaping the new generation for the great experiences of life. Failures in proper adjustment to these facets could affect the education of young people and expose them to environmental crises ranging from truancy and a host of other social vices. However, to achieve these healthy lifelong educational developmental processes and experiences, the role of different stakeholders in the school environment cannot be undermined. One of such stakeholders in an educational setting is the school vocational guidance counsellor. The activities of the vocational guidance counsellor who aids in the accomplishment of school missions and visions and in turn prepare and produce competent, healthy and productive graduates for the world of work remains unchanging.

Supporting this affirmation, Heyden [1] posited that the aims of school guidance and counselling service in schools are similar to the purposes of education in general which is targeted to assist students in fulfilling their understanding about oneself and acceptance of others, developing associations with peers, balancing between permissiveness and controls in the educational setting, realizing successful achievement, and providing opportunities to gain independence among others. School guidance or vocational counselling services prepare students to assume increasing responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices. The ability to make such intelligent choices is not innate but, must be developed. When guidance and vocational counselling services are missing in schools, students' adaptation becomes difficult thus

leading to low performance, misbehaviour and academic dropout [2].

School guidance and counselling have been introduced in school setting to assist students overcome the number of challenges they experience at home and at school. Primarily, guidance and counselling services provided at any level is aimed at assisting the client student discover their own hidden strengths and ultimately grow in independence and ability to take decisions, make choices or adjustments in future unaided, the relevance of guidance services cannot be side lined [3]. These services could vary from counselling services, individual inventory, routine interview, vocational guidance, follow-up, and information services. In the context of this study, administrators rating will be based on the information, counselling and follow-up service delivery in schools.

Accordingly, information services rendered in schools is a form of guidance service in which the students are provided with updated information on educational, occupational, social and personal matters through seminar-workshops, symposia, newsletters, bulletin board announcements and others, which will promote personal development [3]. Furthermore, counselling services are offered to oversee that students have someone (counsellors) to share their experiences with as regards personal/academic/family and other problems and concerns. Egbo [4] defined 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 students with the focus of self-clarification and self-determination by the students. It is a personalized process of guidance programmes. Buttressing further, [5] described counselling as a relationship characterized by mutual respect, effective communication, genuine and complete acceptance of the client by the counsellor, and concentration on the ideals, problems and

feelings of the client. Counselling service helps the students to develop their ability to explore the problem, consider possible solutions, make important decisions, and plan out a course of action. This service is conducted either individually or in group. More so, follow-up services rendered by counsellors to clients are systematic procedures carried out by the counsellor to examine the client's progressive change towards a particular construct.

Supporting the aforementioned, [6] posited that these guidance and counselling services address students' needs, challenges and problems. The goal of guidance and counselling services is to enable each learner in institutions of learning derive optimal educational benefits so as to actualize their potentialities. On that note, it is expected that counsellors be able to demonstrate competencies in understanding human development in term of physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains. More so, theories of cognitive development describe how individuals enact meaning from their experiences by using thought processes [7]. In the helping profession, such as counselling, there are certain developmental requirements that an effective counsellor must possess to perform his or her functions effectively. The most effective counsellor is one who has achieved a balance of interpersonal and technical competence.

On this note, [7] further asserted that competencies in the areas of human growth and development, professional orientation and ethical practice, assessment, and the helping relationships are very paramount. Professional orientation and ethical practice include much of the counselling curriculum. Professional counsellors in schools or non-school settings must become very knowledgeable with ethical and legal practice in Nigeria and other parts of the world [7]. Counsellors are also expected to understand the roles of professional organizations and several specialties in counselling practice.

On the contrary, [8] stated that the roles and activities of professional school counsellors are frequently misunderstood by stakeholders. These stakeholders include school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community agencies. The result of this is that school counsellor's unique skills and abilities can often be misused in the school setting. Nevertheless, studies have it that school counsellors are typically becoming members of district and state

teachers' unions, they are viewed by some (teachers, administrators, students, and parents) as members of the administrative team. Through which the level of understanding the role of counsellors can be met. Furthermore, through trainings, seminars and conferences on standards for counselling profession provided by the American School Counsellors Association (ASCA) [9] and the Council for Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the standard in education, counselling and training, as well as professional role expectations could vary greatly from one graduate program to the other. Hence, individuals understand the role of counsellors in the school setting. Numerous states have adopted school counselling program models, which provide uniformity in standards within those states and provides school counsellors with specific roles within the schools. These models also vary from one state to another, and there are approximately a few states that do not have an adopted program model or curriculum (American School Counsellors Association, 2010).

Similarly, the counselling profession covers a number of distinct specializations, of which, each is concerned with addressing the special needs of a particular group of individuals. These specializations include: clinical mental health counselling, college admissions counselling, college and university counselling, rehabilitations counselling and school counselling. In addition to the above, counsellors are expected to demonstrate competencies in the areas of assessment and helping relationship. Competency is very crucial for gathering and documenting information pertaining to client's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and preferences. According to Eremie [7] competency is a household word in the written text and spoken words of students in the school environment professionals in various field of human endeavour often asses the competency of individuals.

Nevertheless, counsellors in the school and non-school settings are professionals in the field of counselling, and are expected to have competencies in the areas of helping relationship, client assessment, human growth and development, and professional orientations and ethical practice. Bearing this in mind, a studies carried out by Okonkwo [9,10] on competency among school counsellors on the following areas: Competencies on curriculum,

responsive services, and system support was reviewed. The findings of the study revealed that counsellors possessed minimal competencies in these areas. It becomes glaring that despite these diverse roles of counsellors, most counsellors lack the prerequisite competency level in certain areas related to the delivery of counselling, information and follow-up services, and this has created a gap in the area of guidance and counselling. Based on this, this study examined administrators rating of school counsellor's competencies in counselling, information, and follow-up service delivery. In view of this, the study determined.

1. The mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in information service delivery.
2. The mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in counselling service delivery.
3. The mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in follow-up service delivery.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in information service delivery?
2. What is the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in counselling service delivery?
3. What is the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in follow-up service delivery?

1.2 Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in guidance and counselling (information, counselling and follow-up) service delivery.

2. METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for the study is the descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Asaba Metropolis of Delta State, Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of 2076 administrators (head-teacher and principals) in government owned secondary schools in Asaba metropolis of Delta state. Employing the systematic sampling technique, a sample size of

208 was drawn, representing 10% of the total population. The instrument for data collection was a 15 items questionnaire titled "Administrators Rating of School Counsellors Competency Questionnaire (ARSCQ)" and structured on a 4-point scale. The real limits of numbers for judging the respondent's responses was thus; Competent = 3.50 – 4.00, moderately competent = 2.50 – 3.49, incompetent = 1.50 – 2.49, very incompetent = 1.00 – 1.49. The instrument was validated by two experts with a Cronbach reliability coefficient of .641. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in information service delivery?

Analysis on Table 1 reveals the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in information service delivery. On the whole, the grand mean rating score of 2.85 revealed a moderate level of competence of school counsellors in information service delivery. The standard deviation scores also reveal that the respondents had divergent opinion in their ratings.

Research Questions 2: What is the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in counselling service delivery?

Analysis on Table 2 reveals the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in counselling service delivery. On the whole, the grand mean rating score of 3.81 revealed that school counsellors are competent in counselling service delivery. The standard deviation scores also reveal that the respondents had similar opinion in their ratings.

Research Question 3: What is the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in follow-up service delivery?

Analysis on Table 3 reveals the mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in follow-up service delivery. On the whole, the grand mean rating score of 2.68 revealed that school counsellors are moderately competent in follow-up service delivery. The standard deviation scores also reveal that the respondents had divergent opinion in their rating.

Table 1. Mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in information service delivery (N=208)

S/N	Item statements	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Create self-assessment notice/opportunities	2.52	.89	Moderately competent
2	Create awareness exercise for clients	1.63	.62	Incompetent
3	Schedule psychometric test for clients	3.00	.57	Moderately competent
4	Facilitate retrieval of information about health-related articles	3.43	.63	Moderately competent
5	Inform related training or distance learning materials for job seekers	3.65	.78	Competent
Grand mean		2.85		Moderately competent

Table 2. Mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in counselling service delivery (N=208)

S/N	Item statements	Mean	SD	Decision
6	Create a relax environment during counselling session	3.82	.89	Competent
7	Elaborate and give more explanations on issues on discussion	3.63	.62	Competent
8	Helping client openly express themselves in terms of their challenges	4.00	.57	Competent
9	Motivate and inspire clients to discover their inner potentials	3.93	.63	Competent
10	Helping clients plan out their course of action	3.81	.78	Competent
Grand mean		3.81		Competent

Table 3. Mean rating of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in follow-up service delivery (N=208)

S/N	Item statements	Mean	SD	Decision
11	Monitoring of clients after counselling	3.35	.89	Moderately Competent
12	Recommendation for further counselling session	2.63	.62	Moderately competent
13	Observe behavioural change and modification	1.30	.57	Incompetent
14	Check students' progress report	3.31	.63	Moderately competent
15	Refers clients during extreme cases	2.81	.78	Moderately competent
Grand mean		2.68		Moderately competent

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in guidance and counselling (information, counselling and follow-up) service delivery.

Analysis on Table 4 reports an analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics on the mean ratings of administrators on school counsellor's competencies in guidance and counselling (information, counselling and follow-up) service delivery. The results revealed a significant difference in the mean ratings of administrators (teachers, head-teachers and principals) on school counsellor's competencies in guidance and counselling service delivery (N = 308, p = .05 > sig = .015).

Results on Table 1 reveals that school counsellors possess moderate level of

competency in information service delivery. This is evident in the arithmetic mean score which is below the benchmark for competent. Also, statistics on Table 2 revealed a grand mean rating score of 3.81 revealed that school counsellors are competent in counselling service delivery and on the other hand, statistics on Table 3 revealed that school counsellors are moderately competent in follow-up service delivery. On the whole, Table 4 shows a significant difference in the mean ratings of administrators on school counsellors competencies in guidance and counselling service delivery. These findings align with [7], who asserted that competencies in the areas of human growth and development, professional orientation and ethical practice, assessment, and the helping relationships are very paramount. More so, findings from the competency level of school counsellors conforms with Mikaye [6] who

Table 4. ANOVA summary table on mean ratings of administrators on school counsellor’s competencies in guidance and counselling (information, counselling and follow-up) service delivery (N=208)

Sources of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean sum of squares	Sig. value	Alpha value	Decision
Between group	12.75	123	11,30	.015	.05	Significant
Within group	12.30	185	7.80			
Total	25.05	308	19.10			

was of the opinion that it is expected of counsellors be able to demonstrate competencies in understanding human development in term of physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher was poised to conclude that school counsellors are competent in handling student clients at different secondary schools. Guidance and counselling sessions conducted in schools could lead to behaviour adjustment, which in turn leads to improve academic achievement among school students. Also, certain criteria for recruitment of school counsellors should be made available to recruiters, this will reduce the rate of incompetent school counsellors being employed and save the face of guidance and counselling. Through this conclusion it was recommended that there is need for awareness creation exercise for clients, also behavioural change among clients should be observed for modification.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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