

## **Guidance and Counseling Services in Secondary School as Coping Strategy for Improved Academic Performance of Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

This study focused on Guidance and Counselling services among secondary school adolescents as coping strategy for improved academic performance. The population comprised of all SS3 students in public secondary schools in Uyo municipality, Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. A sample size of 252 students responded to the instruments. Three null hypotheses were raised and tested for the study. Data were collected using researchers designed structured questionnaire tagged “Guidance and Counselling services and school academic performance questionnaire’ (GCSAPA), and using the respondents SS2 promotion result which was a standardized state wide examination, to get their academic performance. The data were analyzed at 0.05 alpha level using t-test. After computation, the result revealed that students who utilized the counselling services performed better than those who did not. It was recommended that all schools should be provided with professional counsellors to help the students.

**Keywords:** Guidance, Counselling, coping strategy, academic performance.

### **Introduction**

Guidance and Counselling is one of the educational services. Educational services as contained in the National Policy of Education (2004:51) are to “facilitate the implementation of the educational policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of educational system”. Again the third goal of the educational services is to “make learning experiences more meaningful for children”. Based on these goals, the guidance and counselling activities in schools are beneficial because what the counsellors working with students in secondary schools guide them thoroughly to help them succeed in their educational pursuit.

According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2006) Guidance and Counselling is encompassed by activities of relevant services and also processes of helping persons within and outside the school, to achieve their full potentialities in their emotional, moral, social, academic and vocational developments. In this paper, the focus is on the achievement of full academic potentials through the proper utilization of the services of guidance and counselling programmes by in secondary schools.

Based on the need by government of the day to see that as much as possible that the SS3 students take their National Examination Council (NECO) or West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) examination unhindered the Akwa Ibom State government sponsors its students for the WAEC or NECO examinations. It is as a result of this that the authors of this paper sought to find out whether the government’s objectives are being achieved in schools with or without counsellors in order to help make necessary recommendations for greater achievement in the educational sector of the state especially, with the free and compulsory education scheme in place.

### **Literature Review**

For better understanding of this write up, literature was reviewed under the following outlines; what is guidance and counselling? The services of guidance and counselling; who is in charge of guidance and counselling unit and the adolescence?

Guidance and Counselling according to Akpan (2010:98) is “an educational service that seeks to provide the school child opportunity to obtain holistic educational development that prepares him for functional life.” Ipaye (1990) sees guidance and counselling from educational perspective as those experiences that help pupils to understand themselves, accept themselves and live effectively in their society. Esen (1998) says that guidance and counselling is aimed primarily at assisting the receiver to discover his own hidden strengths and ultimately grow in independence and ability to take his own decisions, make choices or adjustments unaided. Furthermore Nwachuku (2007:22) summarizes the definition of guidance and counselling as

*a systematic and organized educational helping service, professionally given by a professionally trained counsellor or therapists to a learner of any age, within or outside the school walls at appropriate level. The essence is to assist him understand himself, situation and environment, discover his interests, potentialities and opportunities in life and learn how best to effectively utilize his assets as well as minimize his weaknesses, to live a maximum productive life.*

As a result of these definitions by these scholars, guidance and counselling therefore is a human oriented programme which is based on helping the individual to define and redefined his goals and aspirations in life pursuits for greater productivity.

In guidance and counselling profession there are many services that the professional counsellor renders to the school and the host community but in this paper, the three major services would be discussed. The services are; educational, vocational and personal social services. The educational service in guidance and counselling is a service which takes care of all issues associated with education as they relate to the physical environment of the school, the structural make up of the school, activities within the school, students in take, students progress, and adaptability within the school. To this end Olayinka (1999) says that academic counselling is assisting students make the most appropriate use of their educational opportunities. Also Egbule (2006) defines educational guidance as assistance given to pupils and students that enable them function well in the school. He continues by saying that it assists them in understanding themselves and how their potentials could be developed. With these definitions, educational guidance and counselling for the adolescents is *sin-qua-non* if they must achieve maximally.

Vocational service in guidance and counselling according to Egbule (2006) is the process of assisting the individuals to choose occupation, prepare to enter into it and make progress. Egbule (2006:84) goes further to list the following as the reasons for vocational guidance and counselling in the school system. They are

- (a) To help students understand themselves in terms of their abilities, aptitudes and interests.
- (b) To provide students with broader views about the world of work.
- (c) To enhance students awareness of the various options opened to them and given them the confidence that they can make a reasonable choice from the various options available.
- (d) To develop in the students the concept of variety of roles in the society.
- (e) To develop the spirit of job satisfaction and motivation as well as self actualization in the students after a choice of career has been made.

Following the elaborate explanation of vocational guidance and counselling by Egbule (2006) vocational guidance and counselling therefore is the service provided by the counsellor to assist students start early enough to plan for proper vocation in terms of their interest, abilities, aptitude, duration of training, sponsors, family and societal needs.

In personal social guidance and counselling Egbule (2006) says that it is a service that helps the students to take care of socio-personal problems relating to personality maladjustments. Ugwuebulem and Igbokwe (1996:32-33) enumerated the following as the objectives of personal-social guidance and counselling service:

- (a) To make the school child happy, well adjusted and self confident.
- (b) Identify students' feelings and attitudes towards others and improve on the feelings and attitude especially if they are negative.
- (c) Identify the nature of students' relationship with friends and associates and ensure that it is a progressive and beneficial one.
- (d) Help the student to assess and accept himself.

In guidance and counselling programmes and events there is a pilot, who is the counsellor. This counsellor has been trained academically to render the services in school and out of school settings, to help his beneficiaries achieve maximally in spite of all limitations. Modo and Inaja (2010) have defined the counsellor as one that is professionally trained in the field of counselling to help clients or students who may be in need of such help. Again Denga (2001) sees the counsellor as manager of a project called client. He says that the counsellor manages the client's educational, vocational and personal-social potentials in a way that the individual becomes useful to himself and the society at large. To effectively manage his clients, the counsellor employs some professional skills such as listening, responding, empathizing, probing, questioning, interpreting, confronting, restatement, silence, catharsis, assurance, immediacy, encouraging, clarifying, self-disclosing, concretizing, homework and summarizing (Okobiah 2006).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this research was to determine the influence of guidance and counseling services in secondary school on academic performance of students in Uyo municipality, Akwa Ibom State. Other purposes include:

- (i) To determine the influence of educational guidance and counselling service on the academic performance of secondary school students exposed to it and those not exposed.
- (ii) To examine the influence of vocational guidance and counselling service on the academic performance of secondary school students exposed to it and those not exposed to it.
- (iii) To x-ray the influence of personal-social guidance and counselling service on the academic performance of secondary school students exposed to the service and those not exposed to it.

### **Research Hypotheses**

Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested to generate data for this study thus;

- (i) There is no significant difference between secondary school students exposed to educational guidance and counselling service and those not exposed to it in their academic performance.
- (ii) Secondary school students are not influenced significantly in their academic performance whether they are exposed to vocational guidance and counselling service or not.
- (iii) Secondary school students do not differ statistically in their academic performance whether they enjoy personal-social guidance and counselling service or not.

### **Research Method**

This study adopted the ex-post-facto design which enabled the researchers draw inferences about the relationships that exist among variables without direct interaction from concomitant variables. Put in another way, the researchers were interested in determining the influence guidance and counselling services have on students in secondary schools' when exposed to counselling services and when they are not; without any manipulation from the researchers. Results were generalized on the sample size investigated; portraying the differences in the entire population. The target population for this study consisted of 2,520 senior secondary school students from 14 public secondary schools in Uyo municipality in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

Stratified and purposive random sampling techniques were used to select the sample. The sample was randomly stratified into two major schools, school with professional counsellor and the utilization of guidance and counselling services by the senior secondary school students and another school without a professional counsellor and without the availability of guidance and counselling services to the senior secondary school students.

A purposive random selection was made of only senior secondary III students (SSIII) who had previously taken the state centrally conducted SSII qualifying examination and the results made available in all schools. From the 14 schools, two secondary schools; one with a counsellor and the other without were picked. 10 per cent of the entire population of 2,520 formed the sample size, which are the 252 respondents. The 252 sample selected was then shared into two, 126 per school respectively.

A validated instrument called the "Guidance and Counselling services and school academic performance instrument" (GCSAPI) was adopted for this study and this was pilot-tested with a reliability co-efficient of 0.95. It consisted of two sections "A" and "B". 'A' part took care of the bio-data while the 'B', segmented the items into three; educational, vocational and personal-social issues. The 15 items listed educational issues, vocational matters, as well as the adolescents' personal-social concerns with five in each case.

The questionnaire was administered simultaneously on secondary school adolescents in SS III in the two research schools with two research assistants in each school and one of the two researchers supervised and facilitated the exercise at each school. The 126 copies of the questionnaire administered in each school were retrieved at 100 per cent level and from the two schools we had total copies retrieved at 252. The state central examination for SSII scores from both schools received in form of grades A<sup>1</sup>, B<sup>2 and 3</sup>, C<sup>4, 5, and 6</sup>, D<sup>7 and 8</sup>, and F<sup>9</sup> were converted into continuous data, whereby A was multiplied by 9, B by 8 and 7, C by 6, 5 and 4 and D by 3 and 2, F by 1 and absent by 0. All the data were analyzed using t-test statistical analysis.

### **Data Presentation**

#### **Hypothesis 1:**

There is no significant difference between secondary school adolescents exposed to educational guidance and counselling service and those not exposed to it in their academic performance

**Table 1: t-test for Difference in Academic Achievement between Students Exposed to Educational Guidance and Counselling Service and those not Exposed**

Group	$\bar{x}$	SD	$t_{cal}$
Students exposed to educational guidance & counselling service.	69.89	13.09	2.03*
Students not exposed to educational guidance and counselling service.	43.14	10.67	

\*Significant at  $P > 0.05$ ,  $t_{cal.} = 2.03$ ,  $t_{critical} = 1.96$ .

From Table 1, the calculated t-test of 2.03 which is greater than the table value of 1.96 is significant at 0.05 levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis which holds that there is significant difference between adolescents exposed to educational guidance and counselling Service and those not exposed to it is upheld. It was also observed that those exposed to educational guidance and counselling have a mean score of 69.89, while those that were not exposed to educational guidance and counselling Service had 43.14, hence, the group exposed to Educational guidance and counselling performed significantly better than those not exposed.

**Hypothesis II:**

Secondary school adolescents are not influenced significantly in their academic performance whether they are exposed to vocational guidance and counselling service or not.

**Table II: t-test Table of Difference in Academic Achievement between Students Exposed to Vocational Guidance and Counselling and those not Exposed**

Group	$\bar{x}$	SD	$t_{cal}$
Students exposed to vocational guidance and counselling services.	65.91	15.06	2.28*
Students not exposed to vocational guidance and counselling service.	43.14	10.67	

\*Significant at  $P > 0.05$ ,  $t_{cal.} = 2.03$ ,  $t_{critical} = 1.96$ .

From table 2, it is evident that the calculated t-test of 2.28 is greater than the table value of 1.96 is significant at 0.05 levels. The null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis which holds that there is significant difference between adolescents exposed to vocational guidance and counselling service and those not exposed to it is upheld. The table also revealed that the group exposed to vocational guidance and counselling service has a mean of 65.91, while the group not exposed to vocational guidance and counselling service had 43.14, which means that the group exposed to vocational counselling performed better in their academic performance.

**Hypothesis III**

Secondary school students' do not differ statistically in their academic performance whether they enjoy personal-social guidance and counselling service or not.

**Table III: t-test Table of Difference in Academic Achievement between Students Exposed to Personal-Social Guidance and Counselling and those not Exposed**

Group	$\bar{x}$	SD	$t_{cal}$
Students exposed to personal-social guidance and counselling service.	65.12	14.60	12.16*
Students not exposed to educational guidance and counselling service.	43.14	10.67	

\*Significant at  $P > 0.05$ ,  $t_{cal.} = 12.6^*$ ,  $t_{critical} = 1.96$ .

Table 3 revealed that the calculated t-test of 12.16 is greater than the critical t-test value of 1.96 which is significant at 0.05 levels. The null hypothesis was rejected while the null hypothesis which holds that there is significant difference between the two groups in their exposure to personal-social guidance and counselling service is upheld. It was also discovered that the group exposed to personal social guidance and counselling service had a mean score of 65.12 but the non-exposed group scored 43.14, which is an indication that the group exposed to personal social guidance and counselling had improved academic performance that the other group.

**Discussion of Findings**

The result of the statistical analysis on the performance of students exposed to educational guidance and counselling from those not exposed revealed that those exposed to educational guidance and counselling performed better than those not exposed. This finding is in line with what different authors have in literature. Olayinka (1999) and Egbule

(2006) noted that educational guidance and counselling helps students make the most appropriate use of their educational opportunities. This accounts for the better performance of students in schools with counsellors than the schools without.

Again, the result showed that the students in the school where vocational guidance and counselling service was provided performed better in their academic performance than those without such provision. This is worthy of note because it shows the importance of guidance and counselling services in the school system as opined by Egbule (2006) that vocational guidance and counselling helps students to understand themselves in terms of their abilities, aptitudes and interests. When the concepts, ability, aptitude and interest are defined by an individual, academic performance will be very effective and this is what guidance and counselling tries to expose the clients to.

Furthermore, the finding indicated that those students in the school with personal-social guidance and counselling performed better than those without. This finding is supported by what Egbule (2006) takes as the benefit of personal-social guidance and counselling service among students as helping students take care of their socio-personal problems. When a student personal and social problem is taken care of early then academic activities cannot be hindered.

### Conclusion

As a result of the findings from this research, the place of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools, it then stand to reason that if students are to cope with the challenges of academic activities guidance and counselling as an educational service should be properly implemented to the letter in schools, as proposed by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (National Policy on Education, 2004).

### Recommendations

From the findings of this research the following recommendations were made;

1. For better academic performance of students in secondary schools, every school should have a functional guidance and counselling unit with the services of professional counsellors as the heads.
2. All aspects of guidance and counselling services should not be neglected by the counsellor for they all combine to make perfect students' academic performance.
3. Government should employ more professionally trained counsellors to fill the current gaps in schools.

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