

## **Hitches in the Administration of Guidance and Counselling Services in Nigeria Secondary Schools**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Secondary school students are facing several problems that require guidance and counselling services. Unfortunately, the various services rendered in secondary schools such as counselling, orientation, appraisal, follow-up, referral etc. have been facing a lot of problems, thereby making it difficult for the services to adequately and effectively reach out to students. As the result, many are left without guidance and the consequence is much. This paper therefore examines the hitches in the administration of guidance services in Nigerian secondary schools, some of which include; Lack of adequate and trained professional counsellors, Poor remuneration/ incentives, Lack of adequate and relevant psychological tests, and Poor expertise in the administration of psychological tests. Recommendations offered suggest the establishment of a viable counselling center in schools with professional counsellors deployed to manage the centers as well as embarking on public enlightenment campaign to sensitize school administrators, parents, teachers, and students on the significance of guidance programme and functions of school counsellors.*

**Keywords:** *Guidance services, Hitches, Secondary School Students.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Secondary school period is characterized with adolescence i.e. the period which lies between the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood (Masha, 2003). Majority of Nigerian secondary school students are in the stage of rapid development (Saye, 2002), as such are facing a life and death crises on many issues and they need to be rescued. This is because, if they are ignored and unguided, such problems and dilemmas may distort their characteristics as well as potentialities of the individual students. Since majority of secondary school students are within adolescence stage, they are also prone to developmental challenges experienced by many adolescents.

Studies have shown that early adolescent boys are more likely to be sexually active and are more likely to participate in risky behaviors (Tanner, 1972). For girls, early maturation can sometimes lead to increased self-consciousness, though a typical aspect in maturing females (Larson & Wilson, 2004). Because of their bodies' developing in advance, Larson & Wilson added that pubescent girls can become more insecure. Consequently, girls that reach sexual maturation early are more likely than their peers to develop eating disorders. In addition, girls may have to deal with sexual advances from older boys before they are emotionally and mentally mature (Tanner, 1972).

Similarly, early maturing girls are more exposed to alcohol and drug abuse (Moffitt, 2006). Those who have had such experiences tend to perform not as well in school as their "in-experienced" peers (Larson & Wilson, 2004). Girls usually reached full physical development by ages 15–17 (Kaplowitz, 2001), while boys usually complete puberty by ages 16–17 (Larson & Wilson, 2004). Girls attain reproductive maturity about four years after the first physical changes of puberty appear (Haruna, Gambo, Mebu & Mua'zu, 2012). In contrast, boys accelerate more slowly but continue to grow for about six years after the first visible pubertal changes (Kolo, 1992).

The aforementioned challenges of adolescents are also common among secondary school students in Nigeria, the seriousness of the problems cannot be over-exaggerated. To fully comprehend the trend of thought in this paper, the article is presented under the following subheadings: problems and counselling needs of secondary school students; guidance services in secondary school; hitches in the administration of guidance services; conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. PROBLEMS AND COUNSELLING NEEDS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

Secondary school students being mostly adolescents encounter problems in the transition to adulthood. According to Kolo (1992), such problems include;

- (1) Developmental, which include physical changes
- (2) Societal expectations
- (3) Inner personality needs, such as need for status, independence, achievement as well as satisfying philosophy of life.

Abdullah (2003), pinpoints the specific problems to be educational, vocational, personal or emotional as such require guidance services in the following principal areas;

- (1) Educational Guidance, this will help students develop their potentials in the areas in which they are found competent and interested. They should be assisted to acquire effective study habits and practices which would enable them to achieve desirable levels of academic success.
- (2) Vocational Guidance, this would assist individual students to select future occupations through acquiring knowledge of characteristics and functions, duties and rewards of the group of occupations within which his/ her choice will likely be made.
- (3) Personal or Emotional Guidance, this would help the students understand himself, his world and to learn how to meet life's demands (pp. 21-23).

## 3. GUIDANCE SERVICES IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A number of guidance services that could be frequently found in Nigeria secondary schools include;

- (1) Counselling Services, a personalize dialogue or interview between the counsellor and counsellee or client during which the client seeks expert's assistance from the counsellor regarding the solution to his/ her problems. The counselling service is the heart of guidance programme and the most important central service of guidance (Abdullah, 2003: 23).
- (2) Information Services, which is aimed at providing students with the knowledge of educational decisions. Such decision might include whether to go for further education or not, what institution to attend, what courses to offer, which social association to belong (Haruna, Gambo, Mebu & Mua'zu, 2012).
- (3) Appraisal Services, which involves the use of psychometric instruments to gather data on individuals to enable both the counsellor and counsellee understand the problem in question. According to Hammill & Bryant (1998), using appropriate appraisal procedure i.e. be it test or non-test techniques, the individual can be opened up to himself. He/ she can then understand his strength and weakness, and consequently can make more realistic and effective choices.
- (4) Placement Services, given to secondary school students who need assistance in order to make adjustment to the next stage of life development. In secondary schools, placement may mean, adjustment after junior secondary school. It may also refer to post-secondary school adjustment in further education or adjustment in job after secondary education.
- (5) Referral Services, an act of transferring an individual to another person or agency providing different kind of assistance (Kolo, 1992). Referrals are made for the purpose of specialized assistance.
- (6) Orientation Services, rendered to students who often encounter difficulties in adjusting to new environment, programme, or system. They may feel lost socially and psychologically (Masha, 2003). Thus, orientation services tend to help them adjust during this critical transition period.
- (7) Follow up Services, designed to assess the extent to which the guidance programme is meeting the need for which it was established. In order word, to determine the effectiveness of planning and placement, there is the need to find out how the individuals are developing in their own place of work and school (Masha, 2003).
- (8) Evaluation Services, carried out to evaluate the entire guidance programme in the school in order to see how the stated objectives and goals have been realized and whether the programmes meet the developmental need of the students (Saye, 2002).

#### **4. HITCHES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF GUIDANCE SERVICES IN NIGERIA SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Most guidance programmes in Nigeria secondary schools are facing several problems which hinder their effective and smooth administration. Some of such problems include;

- (1) Lack of adequate and trained professional counsellors. Most secondary schools in Nigeria lack professional counsellor. Those who act as counsellors are in most cases ‘quacks’ and lack the technicalities of the profession (Saye, 2002: 54). So that rather than helping the students to discover their world, they end up in frustrating them.
- (2) Poor remuneration/ incentives. There are no incentives allocated for trained counsellors in Nigeria secondary schools (Masha, 2003). Most counsellors are not recognized by most school administrators. According to Denga (1977), many of our counsellors have decided to take jobs with factories and other establishments as personnel officers.
- (3) Misconception. Many do not seem to understand the principle behind guidance and counselling. According to Saye (1988), counsellors are often at logger head with most school administrators; as such the programme is not well assimilated amongst the larger Nigerian population. Only few educated elites are aware and willing to partake in its services.
- (4) Lack of adequate and relevant psychological tests. The job of guidance and counselling depend critically on the availability of valid and reliable tests. Practicing counsellors can hardly function effectively in any situation without constant recourse seeking information either directly or indirectly about the clients. This is a major short fall in our secondary schools (Akinboye, 1996: 48).
- (5) Poor expertise in the administration of psychological tests. Most counsellors in Nigeria do not offer adequate practical training in psychological testing procedures (Kolo, 1992). Thus, many qualified counsellors lack the expertise in the usage especially in terms of collation and interpretation of data for the counselling purposes.
- (6) Lack of good office accommodation and counselling clinics. Most secondary school counsellors in Nigeria lack good office accommodation and clinics for effective counselling practices (Saye, 2002). This may be partly due to the perception of the school principals about the counsellors. They are often regarded by some principals as spies as such are relegated to the class as subject teachers (Saye, 1988: 54). In this kind of condition, counsellors are given just an office space in the general staff room making it difficult for clients to have access to them for counselling.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

The perception of the various societal organs towards the counsellor is characterized by love - hate feelings. It is true that guidance and counselling programme is relatively new in Nigeria, which is why several people do not really seem to know what it entails. Along the same line, parents and the general public may be pardoned for the wrong perception about counselling and the counsellor i.e. for not knowing the relevance and values of the programme. However, principals and teachers may hardly be forgiven for their hostility towards the counsellor. Therefore, the counsellor should be effective in discharging his/ her duties so as to convince others of the value of the programme. He should be mindful of the cultural sensitivities of their immediate environment and be level headed in order to establish and maintain a cordial working relationship with his colleagues.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) Government should employ professional counsellors and deploy them to schools only for counselling purposes.
- (2) There should be community involvement in guidance and counselling programmes.
- (3) School counsellors should be provided with a good and enabling working accommodation necessary for effective counselling.
- (4) There should be provision of adequate incentives for counsellors to avoid brain drain.
- (5) There should be adequate and effective public enlightenment programmes to sensitize the general public on the significance of guidance and counselling services.

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