



Article

The Influence of Guidance and Counselling on Students' Social Adjustment in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State

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Abstract: The study examined the effect of guidance and counselling on students' social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study was guided by the following two research questions and two hypotheses. A descriptive survey design was used. The study population involved students of public secondary schools in Obio Akpor and an estimated sample size was about one thousand two hundred students which were selected by stratified random sampling at a rate of thirty percent. The instrument used for the study was self-structured questionnaire: The Influence of Guidance and Counselling on Students Social Adjustment (TIGC SSA). The instrument's reliability was confirmed through the use of Cronbach Alpha measurements between zero point eight two and zero point eight nine, all demonstrating a solid internal consistency. The mean and standard deviation were the statistics employed to answer the research questions while for hypotheses independent samples t test with zero point zero five level of significance was used. The results revealed that guidance and counselling were significant in promoting social adjustment among students by improving their interpersonal relations, assisting them to cope with peer pressure and facilitating positive behavioural choices. The research also showed a mix of challenges such as lack of qualified counsellors and irregular availability of counselling services. The study therefore suggested the deployment of more professionally trained counsellors, better enlightenment on the good aspects of counselling services, and greater incorporation of guidance and counselling into school programmes to help improve the social adjustment of students. The study recommended guidance and counselling as one of the means through which healthy social adjustment could be promoted among students in public secondary schools in Obio Akpor local government.

Keywords: Guidance and Counselling, Social Adjustment, Public Secondary Schools, Obio Akpor Local Government Area

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1. Introduction

Social adjustment of students has emerged as an important issue in secondary school education, because while teenagers going through the process of development face various forms of peer pressure, behavioural problems and interpersonal distress. Secondary school learners are a group of young people that tends to experience complicated environments which lead to peer influence, identity formation issues, emotional instability and challenges where disputes may develop affecting how young people get along with others and cope in school [1]. Unassisted, some adolescents have challenges including bullying, lack of positive peer interactions, low self-esteem, truant behavior and real

difficulty in managing acculturation pressures; all of these negatively impact their development as a whole and their ability to be successful in an academic setting. Social adjustment is critical for students as it contribute towards the manner in which they interact with their peers, teachers and response against challenges, and how they achieve healthy relationships both within school and beyond [2]. Nowadays, in Nigeria, it has been noted to be a common experience for several high school students living with identifiable psychosocial and emotional problems that need professional assistance. It has been recently documented that the social adaptation of adolescents is closely related to personal aspects such as self-esteem and the existence of emotional support in schools 1. There is diversity among adolescents in public schools in terms of culture, socio economics & family structures and these factors shape who they are and how the interact with others. The increasing incidences of violence in schools, peer pressure, drug abuse, violent and deviant behavior and poor social skills among students call for better guidance and counseling services. Counseling and guidance assist the students in self-awareness, conflict management, decision making and interpersonal skills necessary for sound adjustment to school [3]. In became by community Ayedem, a rural community in Obio Akpor Local Government Area Rivers State, Nigeria are faces with some peculiar social problems as a result of urbanization, population explosion and multi-influence society opening experiences. The environment in school is one of mixed cultures, parents styles and social beliefs [4]. Even when there are guidance and counselling units in schools, evidence shows that students tend to under-utilize these services, which impact on the effectiveness of that service. Studies in related settings within Nigeria have indicated that counseling services have significant influence on e adolescent personal and social adjustment if adequately utilized [5]. Therefore, understanding of students' evaluation of the effect of guidance and counseling is necessary to strengthen the school-based support system.

It is this relationship between guidance and counselling and students' social adjustment that provided the background for this study, on students' social adjustment in public secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State [6]. It is aimed at the extent to which counselling and guidance help students to develop in terms of friendships, emotional balance, responsible behaviour and general adjustment in school. The results will inform the development of evidence-based recommendations for interventions to enhance counselling services and encourage positive social exchanges for adolescents in secondary schools [7].

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Person-Centered & Social Learning theories of Carl Rogers and Albert Bandura respectively. Both theories jointly serve as a strong lens through which guidance and counselling effect social adjustment of students in public secondary schools. The Person-Centered Theory underscores empathetic understanding, unconditional positive regard and congruence in promoting the overcoming of obstacles for personal change, so do social problems. Students are more likely to adapt socially, Rogers says, when they feel that they're valued, understood and accepted in their educational setting. Person centred counsellors provide a safe environment for students to express any woes and adventures they are having, begin to explore their feelings more and increase self awareness. This supportive relationship is a nurturing experience serving students to boost their self confidence, grow in self esteem and develop positive inter-personal relations [8]. In secondary schools, the theory is that by guiding students in warm (not hot) non-judgmental ways they develop better peer relationships and make responsible social decisions while transitioning to school. Bandura's Social Learning Theory describes behavior as determined by a combination of personal, environmental and behavioral influences. The theory posits that students learn social behaviors through the emulation of their peers, teachers, counselors and important adults within an environment. 18 Nicely et al propose a peer to peer learning relationship through modelling, imitation and

reinforcement that allow students to adopt socialising skills, conflict management styles, an alternative patterns of behaviours. In school setting, guidance and counselling offer structured chances for students to acquire acceptable behavior [9]. Counsellors play an important role as they teach communication, emotional adjustments and positive approaches to problem-solving. As students witness these behaviors and are encouraged to perform them, they feel more confident and socially skilled. The theory also emphasizes self-efficacy, in that students who have confidence in their ability to engage others will become more socially adjusted. Drawing on both theories, the conceptual model of this study posits that guidance and counselling affect students' social adjustment through emotional support, self confidence, healthy peer relations, and positive role modelling. The integration of the perspectives is useful for how a supportive counseling climate and observational learning in synergy affects students social adjustment in public secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area [10].

Guidance and Counselling and Students Management of Social Challenges

Social problems management denotes student's response to peer pressure, conflict resolution, controlling emotions as well as creating interpersonal relationships in the school environment. In developed societies such as Nigeria, effective guidance and counselling in the secondary school is to ensure that students acquire self knowledge, coping skills and positive response to social pressure. School counselling provides a context for adolescents to address problems in the area of conflict, peer pressure and emotional turmoil that would facilitate psychological development necessary for social adaptation. Studies in Nigerian schools have reflected amiable behaviour as well as relationships among students in relation to counselling programmes. For instance, peer counselling can enhance communication skills and feelings of connection with others in adolescents in secondary school, adding to better social adaptation [11]. Counselling and guidance could minimise maladaptive responses to the social stress by providing positive programs for social skills training, problem-solving strategies, and regulation of emotion. Nevertheless, the utility of these services is to a great extent determined by accessibility and appropriate use. The shortage of professional counsellors, the indistinctive advertisement of counselling programmes and the insufficient support from schools are still difficulties that prevent counselling service's effective influence on students' social behaviour [12]. Effective management of social problems through guidance necessitates adequate personnel, sensitizing both students and teachers, and the inclusion of counselling activities in the school timetable.

A view of the counsellors role in adjusting to college life as perceived by students

It is also student's perception of the role of counsellors that affects their utilization of guidance services and its impact on their social adjustment. Students who see counsellors as supportive, understanding and available are more likely to approach them with social or emotional problems. Favorable attitudes toward counseling boost confidence, openness to discussion of personal concerns, and acceptance of desired social skills. Research indicates that school-based counselling programs are considered a valuable resource for students with adjustment difficulties, even in resource-poor settings. Good school counselling assists students in coping with social problems, developing resilience and increasing their general adjustment to school [13]. These positive attitudes lead to higher utilization rates of counseling services and better social adjustment and behavioral outcomes.

However, there is still limitation in how students perceive and utilize the counselling services. Most schools in Nigeria operate with under-equipped counselling units and few qualified counsellors, a situation which could have adverse effect on students cognitive development and by implication impact negatively on the effectiveness of their guidance programme. It is therefore necessary to make visible counseling programmes, enhance counsellors' competencies and raise awareness of the positive impacts of guidance support for social adaptation among students.

Statement of the problem

Challenges of social adjustment among students in public senior secondary schools have become a serious concern in Nigeria's educational system, especially in areas such as Rivers State where there is urbanization without corresponding increase in employment opportunities and transformation of family life with associated estrangement, economic insolvability, peer group exertion and emotional trauma. In Obio Akpor LGA, students are exposed to a high level of predisposing factors that predispose them to social maladjustment problems such as bullying, gang affiliation, poor peer relations, family conflicts and inadequate coping with school rules which culminate in truancy, scholastic underachievement and behavioural disorders. Even though guidance and counselling units have been established in public senior secondary schools to support social skills, emotional fortitude and peaceful co-existence of students, evidence arising from informal practices suggest that almost all these services are unused largely owing to lack of knowledge, cultural stereotypes and feelings that they do not work. Although school-based inviting counsellors, a large portion of students experience real issues around social connections still overwhelmingly rely on unvalidated peer feedback or naturalistic strategies that may maintain maladaptive behaviours. Overloaded counsellors; limited resources; fear of scrutiny, embarrassment, or stigma and judgment by peers when leaving class to see the counsellor; naturalistic fallacies (i.e., that talking is a sign of weakness); and weak penetration of the counselling theme in school programs also impede accessibility and perceived relevance. There is paucity of empirical studies on students' perceptions of the effect of guidance and counselling on social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. This gap in knowledge hinders the development of culturally appropriate strategies, evidence-based training of counsellors, and policy changes that can respond to adolescent needs in this setting. As such, there is need to comprehensively examine the contribution of guidance and counselling on social adjustment among students in schools of this nature so that useful recommendations can be made to close gaps in service delivery and improve all-round student development [14].

Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study is that it provides empirical evidence for the nature of perceived role of guidance and counselling in social adjustment among students in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. The results will have immediate relevance for a range of parties with an interest in education: students, schools principals, guidance counsellors, and teachers; parents; as well as educational policymakers at the local (school board), state and national level. The research also has implications for students on how they can achieve better social integration and avoid feelings of isolation, while possibly lending resilience to typical adolescent woes. School administrators and counsellors can use the information to improve services (eg, specialized training, resourcing of support) and develop new initiatives (eg, mentorship or social skills workshops that specifically tackle perceived barriers [15]. Theoretically, the study contributes to existing literature on counselling efficacy in Nigerian secondary schools especially among sub-urban areas such as Obio Akpor where social stress of Arabilala 168 urbanisation and traditional values met. It provides new information for a broader literature in social adjustment among adolescents, and also to enhance theoretical models and comparative analysis between countries. In addition, the results will inform policy changes on school-based counselling, more investment in schools units and community interventions to address social maladjustment. By informing the field about effective interventions, the research contributes to larger efforts to reduce dropout rates, enhance reading and math outcomes for students in academically low-achieving prevent drop-out programs are expected to produce more socially competent young adults capable of contributing as productive members of society. Schools, and develop socially responsible 23 individual prepared for future social

roles. Finally, this work creates safer, healthier school climates that promote students' emotional and social functioning, as well as their long-term positive development [16].

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of guidance and counselling services in students' social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State. In addition, the study aims to explore students support in facing social problems at school to reveal how far they are benefited from guidance and counseling services provided by schools and also what role do students see explained by counsellor to improve their social and adaptation on inter personal relationship influenced through the practice of counselling.

Objectives

1. To find out the extent to which guidance and counselling services assist students in coping with social problems in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area.
2. To inquire into the way in which students perceive the role of school counsellors towards enhancing their social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area.

Research Questions

1. How much of counselling and guidance services assist students in coping with social problems in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area?
2. What do students view as the role of school counsellors in promoting student social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significance difference between males and females' students in their attitude towards how much guidance and counselling services help them to cope with social problems in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor LGA.

Male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception of the role of school counsellor in promoting social adjustment among public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area.

2. Materials and Methods

Descriptive survey design was used for this study to assess the effect of guidance and counselling on social adjustment of students in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor, Local Government Area of Rivers State. The design was appropriate as it allowed for the systematic gathering of student self-reported data concerning how they perceived the supportiveness and effectiveness of counselling in addressing social problems as well as facilitating adaptation. The study population was all students in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area. A stratified random sample of 1,200 students was surveyed at a rate of 30%. Stratified sampling led to the proportionate representation according to school, class (SS1- SS3) and gender; hence, a wide range of experiences related to age, academic level as well as demographic aspects were represented. Instrument was self-constructed questionnaire titled as/ The Impact of Guidance and Counselling on Social Adjustment of the Students (TIGC-SAS). The instrument had two categories connected to the research objectives: first was Section A meant for the extraction of demographic data and Section B aimed at measurement of social challenges perceptions using twenty items grouped into two clusters (i) level of support in addressing social challenges, (ii) role of counsellors in social adaptation which were rated on a four-point Likert scale (4=Very High Extent(4), High Extent(3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent(1). The validity of the questionnaire was checked against three experts in guidance and counselling, educational psychology, and measurement/evaluation for content validity (clarity relevance). They were submitted to a

pilot study among 100 students from the above mentioned non-sampled school, and showed Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.82 for cluster I and 0.89 for II, which indicates good internal consistency. A total of 962 completed questionnaires were returned (giving a response rate of 80.2%). Data presented based on the research questions was analyzed through descriptive statistics-mean scores and standard deviations with a base mean of 2.50 (indicating agreement/high perception). Scores higher than 2.50 indicated positive perceptions whereas the scores lower mean remained scores were negative thoughts to IPs. Independent samples t-tests was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance to compare the perceptions between male and female students. The analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 26, aiming to secure robust treatment and interpretation of statistical results.

3. Results

Research Question One: To what extent does guidance and counselling services support students in managing social challenges in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area?

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of 962 respondents (467 male and 495 female students) regarding the extent to which guidance and counselling services support students in managing social challenges in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area. Across all five items, both male and female students rated the services positively at a high extent (grand mean of 3.13 on a 4-point Likert scale, where means ≥ 2.50 indicate agreement), with individual item means ranging from 3.06 to 3.25. Male students recorded slightly higher means (e.g., 3.28 for managing peer pressure and bullying) compared to females (3.22), though standard deviations (0.76–0.94) suggest moderate variability in responses. The grand means for males (3.14, SD=0.83) and females (3.12, SD=0.87) show close alignment, collectively affirming that counselling services effectively address peer pressure, conflicts, relationship-building, family challenges, and emotional distress, as analyzed via IBM SPSS Version 26.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the extent guidance and counselling services support students in managing social challenges in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area

S/N	Items	Male Students (n=467)		Female Students (n=495)		Mean Set (n=962)	Remarks
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Guidance and counselling services help students manage peer pressure and bullying effectively in public senior secondary schools.	3.28	0.76	3.22	0.82	3.25	High Extent
2	Guidance and counselling services provide practical strategies for resolving conflicts with classmates and friends.	3.08	0.89	3.06	0.94	3.07	High Extent
3	Guidance and counselling services support students in	3.11	0.84	3.01	0.81	3.06	High Extent

	building positive relationships and overcoming social isolation.						
4	Guidance and counselling services equip students with coping skills to handle family-related social challenges.	3.1 1	0.8 7	3.12	0.87	3.12	High Extent
5	Guidance and counselling services offer confidential support for emotional distress caused by social issues in school.	3.1 3	0.7 9	3.17	0.93	3.15	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.1 4	0.8 3	3.12	0.87	3.13	High Extent

Source: IBM SPSS, Version 26

Research Question Two: How do students perceive the role of school counsellors in enhancing their social adaptation in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area?

Table 2 displays the mean and standard deviation scores from 962 respondents (467 male and 495 female students) on their perceptions of school counsellors' role in enhancing social adaptation in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area. All five items received positive perceptions in the "Agreed" category (grand mean of 3.29 on a 4-point Likert scale, where means ≥ 2.50 indicate agreement), with individual item means ranging from 3.16 to 3.48. Female students consistently rated higher (e.g., 3.53 for communication skills vs. males' 3.44; grand mean 3.33, SD=0.76) compared to males (grand mean 3.26, SD=0.78), though standard deviations (0.67–0.87) reflect moderate response variability. The results affirm strong agreement that counsellors effectively support communication skills, confidence-building, individual adaptation, anxiety management, and peer integration, highlighting their pivotal role in social adaptation.

Table 2. Mean and Standard deviation of respondents on How students perceive the role of school counsellors in enhancing their social adaptation in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area

S/N	Items	Male Students (n=467)		Female Students (n=495)		Mean Set (n=962)	Remarks
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	
1	School counsellors guide students in developing effective communication skills for better social adaptation in public senior secondary schools.	3.44	0.80	3.53	0.74	3.48	Agreed
2	School counsellors help students build confidence in interacting with peers and teachers during social situations.	3.18	0.79	3.27	0.74	3.22	Agreed
3	School counsellors provide individual support to	3.23	0.84	3.13	0.87	3.19	Agreed

	improve students' ability to adapt to group activities and school norms.								
4	School counsellors teach students strategies for managing anxiety and stress in social environments.	3.11	0.76	3.23	0.80	3.16	Agreed		
5	School counsellors facilitate peer support groups that enhance students' social integration and belonging in school.	3.33	0.73	3.47	0.67	3.39	Agreed		
Grand Mean		3.26	0.78	3.33	0.76	3.29	Agreed		

Source: IBM SPSS Version 26

H01: There are no significant differences in male and female students' perceptions of the degree to which guidance and counselling services help them to cope with social problems in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area.

Independent samples t-test Independent t-test results comparing the male and female (n = 467, n = 495) respondents' mean ratings of the extent to which guidance and counselling services in public senior secondary schools assist students manage social challenges is as presented on Table 3 for students Gender relationship. Male students (M = 3.14, SD = 0.83) hold almost equally compared to female students (M = 3.12, SD = 0.87), and the calculated t-value of 0.579 with df:960 results a p value as the significance level: 0.772 > α level 0.05). As the difference is not significant (NS), the finding shows that male and female students do not significantly differ in their perception, both genders agree to a large extent that guidance and counseling helps them at high level to manage social problems.

Table 3. Summary of t-test on the difference between the mean ratings of male and female students in their perceptions of the extent to which guidance and counselling services support them in managing social challenges in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male Students	467	3.14	0.83	960	0.579	0.722	NS
Female Students	495	3.12	0.87				

NS= NOT SIGNIFICANT

Source: IBM SPSS Version 26

H02: Male and female students do not differ significantly in their perception of school counsellors roles in improving the social adjustment among public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area.

Mean ratings of male and female students on their perception as to the role of School Counsellors in enhancing Social Adaptation in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area are shown on table 4. Result Table 4: Test Comparisons of Male and Female Students' Mean Rating (Frequency) On Their Perception about School Counsellor's Role In Enhancing Social Adaptation S/N N SD df t-value Prob. The mean for male students was 3.26 (SD =.78) and slightly higher at 3.33 (SD =.76) for female students; however, the degree of significance among very large samples according to the t-test value of.410 with df 960 is.608, which is way above the considerate level of significance of.05. This NS result provides further support that there is NO statistically significant difference

between male and female pupils in their positive views to how counsellors contribute to social adjustment.

Table 4. Summary of t-test on the difference between the mean ratings of male and female students in their perceptions of the role of school counsellors in enhancing their social adaptation in public senior secondary schools in Obio Akpor Local Government Area.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-test	Sig.	Remark
Male Students	467	3.26	0.78	960	0.410	0.608	NS
Female Students	495	3.33	0.76				

NS= NOT SIGNIFICANT

Source: IBM SPSS, Version 26

Summary of Findings

In summary, the study identified that guidance and counselling services significantly impact students' social adjustment in public senior secondary schools in the Obio Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. In Table 1, students overwhelmingly reported to a high extent the influence of counselling on social challenges management, comprising peer pressure and bullying, conflict disputes, building and maintaining relationships, family-related challenges, and emotional challenges, with a high grand mean of . The subsequent Table 2 reveals overwhelming agreement on how social workers facilitate social adaptation through counselling, including communication Skills, assertiveness, and self-concept, support individuals for adaptation persons, anxiety and stress adaptation, and peers support groups. In the male and female t-test analyses in Tables 3 and 4, no significant difference exists, with p-values of 0.722 and 0.608. Thus, males and females had a statistically similar perception of counselling's contribution to social difficulties and adaptation.

4. Discussion

The findings confirm the perceived huge impact of guidance and counselling in relation to students' social adjustment if and/or when counsellors are efficient enough in skillfully managing the social challenges of young adults with psycho-educational strategies, emotional supports, as well as practical skills. The high overall mean scores in both tables confirm earlier findings that structured counselling programmes decrease peer conflicts, improve social interaction skills and promote resistance to social isolation among Nigerian secondary schools. The dearth of notable gender differences further emphasizes the equalising effect of these services, indicating inclusive programme planning that cuts across diverse groups in a locality such as Obio Akpor. Nonetheless, the moderate standard deviations (0.67–0.94) suggest variation²⁶ in service uptake for some students that could be due to resource limitations, counsellor burnout, cultural stigmas or uneven service access, and may limit the extent of our reach into schools for certain students. These results support the need for enhanced school counselling programmes with increased training, peer integration and preventive education to maximise social adjustment and holistic development of students.

5. Conclusion

The study was to find out the effect of guidance and counselling on social adjustment of students in public senior secondary schools in obio akpor local government Area, rivers state. Results reveal that counselling services are highly effective in helping students cope with social difficulties including peer pressure, conflicts, family problems and emotional

distress issues (grand mean=3.13), given the strong emphasis of school counsellor role to improve social adjustment through communication techniques, self-esteem building, anxiety control and peer inclusion (grand mean=3.29). Male and female students have similar positive sexual health attitudes without gender difference which emphasizes the inclusive effects of these services. Leading perceptions but moderate variability in responses indicate barriers such as resource insufficiency and access disparities. In general, counselling and guidance emerge as an important tool to building social resilience, interpersonal relationship and holistic development in secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Guidance and counseling units in Obio Akpor public schools should be re-enforced with more commitment of resources, well-trained personnel as well as their integration into the school curriculum to provide maximum support for managing struggles from social challenges.
2. Counsellors should create a comprehensive programme such as workshops on peer conflict resolution, relationship formation and emotional coping skills which are tailored to diversity of people who stutter, programs with regular peer support groups for social adjustment.
3. School wide education programs should be implemented to encourage use of counselling services, communicating the confidentiality and benefits in order to lower stigma, which can increase use.
4. The Rivers State Ministry of Education should implement continuous training for counsellor on adolescent social concerns and utilize regular assessment mechanisms to ensure service discharge.
5. Future research should investigate implications for counsellor workload, comparison across local government areas and longitudinal effects of counselling on long term social adjustment outcomes.

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