

Student Perception of the role of Counsellors in the Choice of A Career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Education is often conceived as a systematic action of imparting relevant knowledge, skills and habits to the learners in their preparation for meaningful life and contribution to better society. The absence of school counselling of students by any counsellor in the school was noted to have created ignorance among students about counselling. The study examined students' perception of the role of counsellors in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. The objectives of the study include: to establish the influence of counsellors' genders on the students' perception of counselors' role and functions, determine the influence of counsellors' age on the students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career and examine the influence of skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. A descriptive survey research design was used to carry out this study. Six public secondary schools were randomly selected for the study. A self constructed questionnaire, titled Student's Perception of Career Guidance Programme Questionnaire was used to collect information for the study. The study revealed the following: that the influence of counsellors' genders on the students' perception of counsellors' role and functions, that the influence of counsellors' age on the students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career, that the influence of skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. It therefore recommended that government should provide funds for the effective implementations of career counselling activities. Teachers should relate their subjects' areas to relevant careers.

Keywords: Students perception, Counsellors and Choice of a Career

INTRODUCTION

Education is often conceived as a systematic action of imparting relevant knowledge, skills and habits to the learners in their preparation for meaningful life and contribution to better society [1]. This action is however, usually delivered through skillful exposure to a number of academic disciplines. The kind of career an individual is involved in determines the

kind of life style, choice of friends, place of abode, income, status in the society. Therefore, for the student to make appropriate career decision, the student must have adequate career education or perception of the nature of career he/she wants to, embark-on.

Consequently, perception is the process through which the information from outside environment is selected, received,

organized and interpreted to make it meaningful to individual. This input of meaningful information results in decisions and actions. Perception varies from person to person. Perception is the process by which we select, organize, and interpret information inputs to create meaningful picture of the world [2]. It is the meaning an individual attaches to a given situation and this is based on accumulated past experiences of the individual involved. Perception is also seen and described as the consciousness of an object or an event. It is very important because it affects individual's actual behaviour. This is a concept that is constantly arising when trying to evaluate individual's satisfaction [3].

Ubom (2017) [4] defined attitude as an individual perception and reaction to a task which is expected to be carried out or executed in a group, institution, school setting or an organization. Attitude can be said to be positive or high when individual response to the task or programme is favourable and when they show commitment to their duties. It can be negative or low when the students express a nonchalant response, with regard to what is expected of them in the given situation.

Accordingly, guidance and counseling as the third force in education along with instruction, is an integral part of educational system. Guidance

programmes for school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational and academic difficulties of adolescent students. This is to complement learning in the classroom and also enhance academic performance/achievements of students. Guidance plays a vital role in preventing educational, personal, social, mental, emotional and other similar problems among secondary school students.

Denga (2001) [5] stressed that the principals who know little about counselling will not in any way appreciate the need for the counsellor to be relieved of heavy teaching load and other co-curricular duties. Such principals will stifle the counsellors' work by withholding budgetary allocation for guidance services. Achebe (1986) [2] stated that some principals are rigid and traditional and would not welcome new ideas. She said even when principals are aware that modern schools require the practice of the counselor, they may deliberately bark at the idea of implementing the guidance services in the school practice for the erroneous argument that historically, the school has operated successfully without formal guidance (P2). Edet (2018) [6] on her research with 99 subjects, on parents' and teachers' perception of vocational guidance in secondary schools in Calabar metropolis discovered that teachers

perception/attitude towards vocational guidance services was significantly negative ($\pm = - 4.672$; $p = 0.000$)

Little (2009) [7] identifies two levels of perception: immediate perception and interpretative perception. Immediate perception according to him "is totally physical, the operation of the physical universe following its mechanistic pathways, some of which happen to occur as neutral events in our brains". One can easily identify the physiological activities involved in this level of perception. A lot of cues and input stimuli barrage our senses twenty-four hours in a day. At this level, the information received is raw. The mental process of alluding meaning to the stimuli has not yet been carried out. This first level of perception is directed and mediated by the physiology of the individual. This is like an enrollee visiting the premises of a service provider for the first time. He is just seeing the buildings, medical staff, hearing sounds - just a snappy stimuli inflow.

Ministry of education and principals of schools are aware of the heavy reliance placed on guidance and counseling services for most aspects of the new 6-3-3-4 system to actually succeed. These services are presented by Nwachukwu (2017) [8] as information services, placement services, appraisal services, vocational guidance services, counseling services, referral services, evaluation,

follow-up, consultancy and research services. As a vital component of any type and any level of education the absence of non utilization of these services in the present day school system has led to the unprecedented rise in the crime wave, violence among students, fuelled cultism, wrong career choice, and wrong subject combination among other issues.

Guidance and counselling has been conceptualized as a programme of activities which has provided us with the gateway out of the existing numerous problems in our 'present age of complex scientific and technological development [9]. The UNESCO module on guidance and counselling (2010) also posited that Guidance is a programme of services to individuals based on their needs and the influence of environmental factors. Guidance and counseling is a professional field which has a broad range of activities, programmes and services geared toward assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment and their world and also to develop adequate capacity for making wise choices and decisions. There is agreement among experts that there are three major components of guidance and counseling. These are educational guidance, vocational guidance and personal social guidance [10]. Under these three major areas, there are several guidance and counseling services such as

appraisal, information, placement, orientation, evaluation, referral, and follow-up [5]. Each of these major components of guidance and counseling alone with their services address students needs, challenges and problems.

Accordingly, students are the major benefactor of the career guidance programme. The programme assists students gain awareness of various occupations in their immediate environment, providing necessary information that expose students to vocational knowledge, preference and choice. These functions are inevitable in students' career choice. As such the ultimate aim of both teaching, and guidance and counseling is to prepare and guide students into a better future.

The goal of guidance and counseling services is to enable each learner in institutions of learning to derive optimal educational benefits so as to actualize his/her potentialities. Thus, the highlights of the National Policy on Education (2013) [9] states "in view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality adjustments among school children, career officers and counselors will be appointed in post-primary institutions and tertiary levels. Unfortunately the practice of these services in our institutions of learning is nothing to write home about. The

programme is not encouraging at the secondary school level and even at the university level.

The failure to offer or effectively provide guidance services has often led to wrong career path decisions that have adversely affected the victims and the nation. Lack of enthusiasm in a chosen field, low productivity at work, emotional depression, and lack of focus in life are some of the consequences of bad career decisions made by students [11]. The need to maximize the benefits of school-based services like guidance and counseling therefore becomes ever important. But getting students to talk to counselors remains unrealistic given the varying perceptions students hold about counselors which hinder the natural human conversation process between both parties [11]. Without such a conversation, good career decisions, which are a product of the conversational process, will not be possible. And since counselors hold great secrets and information in store, these treasures are lost forever to these students.

According to Oladele (2010) [12], teachers and school administrators hold different perception about the roles school counsellors play as regards to adolescent reproductive life, academic life, relationship issues, and most of all, career guidance. Hence, the image of counselors held by most participants was that of an academic advisor. The teachers,

for instance, expected the counsellor to be abreast with school courses, curricula, and educational matters as well as personal and social issues. Unfortunately, they did not expect the counselor to solely deal with

career choice. It is on this premise that students' perception of the role of counselors in the choice of a career is investigated in Enugu North local, Enugu State.

Statement of the problem

The absence of school counseling of students by any counselor in the school was noted to have created ignorance among students about counseling [13] in a Nigerian study discovered that services for academic guidance and counselling were not available in schools. Of five states that were studied, two states including Ebonyi and Enugu - had no guidance and counselling centres in most of their schools. This was attributed to the lack of deepened awareness of the relevance of counselling. They report that group counseling, which can be effective in large school districts, was not carried out.

Apart from academic problems of failure and dropout of students, from, schools, other numerous psychosocial; vocational and personal-social problems abound among students in our secondary schools. Parents and significant others in recent times have been so concerned about academic problems of students. The control or resolution of these problems is

always channeled to mainly school authorities and teachers while the seeking of counselors' attention is always ignored. This study therefore attempts to look at students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services which is primarily meant for them.

It is expected that by the time a student leaves Senior High School, they should have decided on the occupation or career they intend to pursue. In contrast, it has been observed that most students complete second-cycle schooling without having an idea as to the occupation to pursue [14], [15]. Students do not make informed career choice because they are largely influenced by their peers and parents' preference for certain careers. School counsellors are not, significant in the decision making process because students may have some perception about these counselors which prevents them from seeking guidance and counselling on career choices.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to critically examine students' perception of the role of counsellors in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Establish the influence of counsellors' gender on the students' perception of counsellors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.
2. Determine the influence of counselors' age on the students' perception of the counselors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.
3. Examine the influence of skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counselors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions would answer by the study:

1. What is the influence of counselors' gender on perception of students' regarding counselors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?
2. What is the influence of counsellors' age on the students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?
3. What is the influence of skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counselors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses would be tested:

- H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of counsellors' gender' and perception of students' regarding counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.
- H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of counsellors' age and students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North

Local Government Area of Enugu State.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of skill and competence and students'

perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

METHODS

A descriptive survey research design was used to carry out this study. The study was carried out in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. The population consist of all secondary school students in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. Six public secondary schools were randomly selected for the study-In each of the selected schools, 48 students were selected for the study. A total of two hundred and eighty eight students participated in the study. A self constructed questionnaire, titled students Perception of Career Guidance Programme-Questionnaire was used to collect information for the study. The items in the questionnaire elicited information on the students' perception

of career guidance programme in secondary schools. The instrument was validated by showing it to experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, Enugu State University who certified its validity. The reliability was established by a test re-test method of reliability with a correlation co-efficient of 0.74. The subjects were asked to indicate if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree to each item in a four point format scale. These were scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The study utilized the t-test for data analyses at 0.05 level of significance. Any item, with a mean of 2.50 or above was regarded as agree while any item with a mean score below 2.50 was regarded as disagree.

RESULTS

The results of the study were obtained from the two research questions answered by the

study and two hypotheses tested and analyzed

Research Question One:

What is the -influence of counsellors' gender on perception of students' regarding counsellors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Data collected in respect of this research question is presented in the Table 1

Table 1: Mean ratings of the influence of counselors' genders on the students' perception of counsellors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

S/N	Item	Rating scale				Total Score	Mean	Decision
		4	3	2	1			
		SA	A	D	SD			
1	Prefer seeking counselling services from persons of a particular gender.	194	92	0	02	288	3.7	A
2	Do not mind being counselled by persons of any gender	210	52	10	16	288	3.6	A
3	Persons of a particular gender give better counselling services than the other	27	0	171	90	288	1.8	D
4	Perceive secretes will only be kept by counselors of a particular gender.	148	82	52	6	288	3.3	A

Table 1 indicates that 3 out of 4 items on the influence of counsellors' genders on the students' perception of counselors' role and functions agree on the statement item.

gender' and perception of students' regarding counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of counsellors'

Table 2: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of counsellors' gender and perception of students' regarding counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Variable	N	X	SD	t.cal	Crit. t	Decision
Counsellors' Genders	288	3.1	1.02	0.24	1.96	Do not reject

Table 2 shows that the t.cal is 0.24 while t-Table is 1.96. Since the t.cal is less than

the t-Table, the null hypothesis is not upheld. Therefore there is significant

difference in the mean ratings of counsellors' gender and perception of students' regarding counsellors' role and

functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Question three:

What is the influence of counsellors' age on the students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 3: Mean ratings of the influence of counsellors' age on the students' perception of counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State

S/N	Item	Rating scale				Total Score	Mean	Decision
		4	3	2	1			
		SA	A	D	SD			
5	Comfortable with my counsellor's age.	194	92	0	02	288	3.7	A
6	Prefer an elderly counsellor gender	210	52	10	16	288	3.6	A
7	Counsellors age does not in any way influence my perception of the counsellor's role and functions	204	74	08	02	288	3.7	A
8	Counselling services are better provided by older counsellors.	84	170	22	12	288	3.3	A

Table 3 indicates that 3 out of 4 items on the influence of counsellors' age on the students' perception of counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State agree on the statement item.

and students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of counsellors' age

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of counsellors' age and students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Variable	N	X	SD	t.cal	Crit. t	Decision
Counsellors' Age						
Students' Age	288	3.53	1.02	0.04	1.96	Do not reject

Table 4 shows that the t.cal is 0.04 while t-Table is 1.96. Since the t.cal is less than the t-Table, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings

of counsellors' age and students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Question three:

What is the influence of skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in

Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 5: Mean ratings of the influence of functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State on the skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counsellors' role and

S/N	Item	Rating scale				Total Score	Mean	Decision
		4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD			
9	Perceive the counsellor to be competent.	193	80	06	09	288	3.6	A
10	Counselors skills and competence influence perception of the counsellors role and function	162	88	28	10	288	3.4	A
11	Counselors with many years of experience give better counselling services	76	156	30	26	288	3.0	A
12	Recognize the counsellor to be capable in counselling functions.	86	102	64	36	288	2.8	A

Table 5 shows that all the 4 items with corresponding mean are influenced of skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counsellors role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of skill and competence of students' perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Table 6: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of skill and competence of students' perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Variable	N	X	SD	t.cal	Crit. t	Decision
Counsellors' Students'	288	3.2	1.00	0.02	1.96	Do not reject

Table 6 shows that the t_{cal} is 0.02 while t_{Table} is 1.96. Since the t_{cal} is less than the t_{Table} , the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings

of skill and competence of students' perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed the following: Table 1 indicates the influence of counsellors' gender on perception of students' regarding counsellors' role and functions in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. Their responses agreed that counsellors prefer seeking counselling services from persons of a particular gender with the highest mean scores of 3.7; students do not mind being counselled by persons of any gender. They also believed that persons of a particular gender give better counselling services than the other and they also perceived that secrets will only be kept by counsellors of a particular gender. This is also shown in hypothesis of Table 2 which shows that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of counsellors' gender and perception of students' regarding counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State since $t_{cal} 0.24 < t_{Table} 1.96$. The findings in Table 2 in affirmation with Table 3 showed that there is a significant influence of counsellors' age on the students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career

include: comfortable with my counsellor's age, prefer an elderly counsellors, counsellors age does not in any way influence my perception of the counsellor's role and functions and counselling services are better provided by older counsellors. With comfortable with my counselor's age and counselors age does not in any way influence my perception of the counsellor's role and functions ranked highest with 3.7. This is also shown in tested hypothesis in Table 4 that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of counsellors' age and students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State since $t_{cal} 0.04 < t_{Table} 1.96$. The findings in Table 3 shows 5 that the influence of skill and competence of the students' perceptions of counsellors' role and 'functions include: perception of the counsellors to be competent ranked highest with 3.6, counselors skills and competence influence the perception of the counsellors role and function, recognize the counsellor to be capable in counselling functions and counselors with many years of experience give better

counselling services. The hypothesis in Table 6 confirms it by indicating that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of skill and competence and

students' perceptions of counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State with $t_{cal} 0.02 < t_{table} 1.96$.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the students' perception of the role of counselors in the choice of a career in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State., whether they are effective and if students' school location affects the perception of career counseling activities. From the findings of this study, it is concluded that counsellors' genders have influence on

the students' perception of counsellors' role and functions, counselors' age has no influence on the students' perception of the counsellors' role and functions in the choice of a career and finally skill and competence does not influence the students' perceptions of counselors' role and functions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study offers the following recommendations:

1. Government should provide funds for the effective implementations of career counselling activities. Teachers should relate their subjects' areas to relevant careers.
2. Counsellors should be creative in carrying out career programmes by

spicing them up (bringing drama presentations and rendition of songs, dances and a comedian who could be one of the students).

3. Counsellors should be provided with office accommodation necessary for the performance of their duties.

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