

## CHALLENGES OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES AS EXPRESSED BY STUDENTS IN ARMED FORCES SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*The study was conducted to determine the challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices as expressed by Students in Armed Forces Schools in Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study is the descriptive survey, which was conducted using a multistage sampling procedure to draw a sample of 200 from all armed forces schools in Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that all hypotheses tested were accepted, as no significant difference exists among the variables. Based on the findings, it was recommended that students in armed forces schools require further orientation to improve their awareness of various counselling services. It was also recommended that counsellors in armed forces schools should be encouraged to organize periodic educational programmes across their schools to enhance public awareness of Guidance and Counselling services.*

**Keywords:** Armed forces, challenges, counselling, guidance, services, student

### INTRODUCTION

The term guidance has several definitions because it is an encompassing discipline that influences every aspect of human endeavour. Bedu (2007) also asserts that guidance is a term with several meanings: a group or service, a field of study, and a discipline. It can thus be concluded that guidance seeks to help individuals understand themselves, the environment, and its demands, and to bring a reasonable harmony between themselves and their environment. Counselling, on the other hand, is defined by Mitchell (2015) as a “one-to-one” relationship that focuses on personal

growth and adjustment, problem solving, and decision making.

In the view of Egbule (2004), counselling is a definitely structured permissive relationship which allows a client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him/her to take positive steps in the light of a new orientation. It is also regarded as a relationship between professionally trained personnel and an individual seeking help in gaining better self-understanding, improved decision-making skills, behaviour change, and skills for problem-solving. Akinade (2005), on the other hand, described guidance and counselling as a process of helping an individual become fully

aware of themselves and their environment, enabling them to understand their behaviours and develop future goals.

From these definitions, it can be concluded that guidance and counselling seek to focus on problem-solving and assisting individuals in adjusting properly to his/her environment, bringing about increased understanding of self, abilities, attitudes, interests, strengths, weaknesses, etc., which facilitates intelligent choices and maximized personal development. These processes are achievable through the implementation of guidance and counselling services, which focus basically on education, information, and personal-social aspects of living.

Nigeria Armed Forces Schools were established through the orders of the various military services (Army, Navy, and Air Force) as the case may be, with the primary objective of providing a broad-based academic and technical education to post-primary school children. The institutions are in different categories; some are co-educators, all-boys, all-girls day, and fully residential. The administrative and operational control of the school rests with the headquarters of the respective services. The schools have Boards of Governors (BOGs) that meet from time to time with a view to deliberating on issues affecting the schools. However, the day-to-day administration of the school is handled by the commander who serves as the school head. Furthermore, the organizational structure of the school is slightly different from that of conventional secondary schools. The schools are structured in such a way that all the specialized areas in the school work in vision to achieve the objectives of the school. Admission into the schools is through a competitive common entrance examination, selection of candidates is basically on merit but in some cases, it is also determined by quota system, this is to ensure high standard as

well as to afford equal as well as to afford equal representation of all states in the federation (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2016).

Past studies related to the study include the work of Akingbulu (2023), who worked on the challenges of the counselling profession as perceived by school counsellors in Ondo State, Nigeria, and found that many counsellors claimed they experienced the problem of self-disclosure from their female clients, unlike the male clients. This indicates the influence of Gender on Counselling practices based on the study. Aremu (2024) also conducted a research study on sources and Patterns of challenges faced by school counsellors in Private secondary schools in Ilorin Metropolis. He found out that one of the challenges facing counsellors in some secondary schools is religiosity, which is also an indication of the role of religion in counselling practices based on the findings. However, none of these studies was carried out in any of the Armed Forces schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Lefton (1994) explained that training is an essential component of human development; according to Ocho (2015), education is an essential part of human training that prepares a child for the future. The Federal Ministry of Defense was established to cater for the well-being of the three sister forces, namely the Army, Navy, and Air Force (Ewuru, 2011). The primary role of the military is to protect the country from external aggression, maintain peace and order within and outside the country, and perform all other regimental duties. However, the military established schools to cater to the children of their personnel while on official duties or engagement.

Due to the nature of the school, which lays big emphasis on discipline and strictness as

opposed to the aims of counselling, which focuses on personal choice and persuasion, there could be a conflict that could affect counselling practices. More so because counsellors are trained to maintain a friendly attitude and atmosphere. Thus, counsellors could face challenges in discharging their professional duties; students may also find it difficult to access counselling services in their various schools. It is therefore the aim of this study to determine the challenges of Guidance and Counselling Services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools; this is with a view to providing solutions to the problems identified and to provide an improved counselling service which will not conflict with the aims and objectives of the Armed Forces Schools, and also enhance the development of students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools, with a view to providing solutions to the problems identified.

### **Research Questions**

To guide the conduct of the study, the following research questions are raised:

1. What are the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools?
2. Is there any difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools based on Gender?
3. Is there any difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools based on Religion?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated for testing in the course of the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools based on Gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools based on Religion.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted for the study is a descriptive survey. The descriptive survey method entails collecting data from a representative sample of a population, from which inferences can be drawn about the entire population. Based on this, the method was used to investigate the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools.

The target population for this study consists of all Students in Armed Forces Schools in Nigeria. However, because of constraints, two hundred respondents were selected using the multi-stage sampling technique; at the first stage, the researcher purposively selected two Armed Forces schools in Ibadan, out of which one hundred respondents were selected from the two schools. The purposive sampling procedure is a procedure where respondents are selected because of their relevance to the research work and because the respondents have the required characteristics of the population and can thus adequately represent the population (Daramola, 2006). The researcher then stratified the respondents based on the required variables at stage two; the simple random sampling procedure was used at the final stage to select the required number of respondents. The simple random sampling procedure is a sampling method that gives all members of a target population an equal opportunity to be selected for a study.

The psychometric properties of the instrument lie in its validity and reliability. An instrument is considered valid when it adequately measures what it was designed to measure (Oyebanji, 2013). To ensure the validity of the research instrument, it was given to experts in the field of counselling with a view to establishing the content validity of the research instrument. Reliability entails the consistency of a research instrument; a research instrument is termed reliable if it measures what it is designed to measure consistently. To ascertain the reliability of the research instrument, the test-retest method of reliability was adopted; it was done by administering the test instrument to forty respondents at an interval of three (3) weeks, the two test results were then correlated with a view to determining the reliability coefficient; it thus yielded a coefficient of 0.68. The instrument used in collecting data is a researcher developed instrument tagged “challenges of counselling practices questionnaire (CCPQ). The questionnaire has

two sections (A and B); section ‘A’ sought the demographic data of respondents while section ‘B’ contains items on the challenges of counselling practices. The questionnaire was scored on a four-point Likert-type scale.

In analyzing data collected for the study, both descriptive and inferential statistics were adopted. The t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical procedures were used to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

This section presents the results of data collected for the study.

**Research Question 1:** What are the challenges or guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools?

**Table 1:** Mean and Rank Order of Items on the Challenges of Guidance and Counselling Services

| S/N | Items                                                                                  | Mean | Rank             |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------------|
| 1.  | There are no competent counsellors in my school                                        | 3.19 | 20 <sup>th</sup> |
| 2.  | Counsellors in my school do not have an office                                         | 3.22 | 16 <sup>th</sup> |
| 3.  | The counsellor’s office in my school is not conducive                                  | 3.25 | 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| 4.  | There are no counsellors in my school                                                  | 3.18 | 21 <sup>st</sup> |
| 5.  | There are insufficient counsellors in my school                                        | 3.33 | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |
| 6.  | There is no awareness about the activities of counsellors in my school                 | 3.28 | 8 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 7.  | Counsellors in my school are busy with other school activities                         | 3.26 | 11 <sup>th</sup> |
| 8.  | Counsellors in my school require further training                                      | 3.40 | 1 <sup>st</sup>  |
| 9.  | We are not encouraged to visit counsellors in my school                                | 3.20 | 18 <sup>th</sup> |
| 10. | I am too engaged with other activities to visit a counsellor                           | 3.25 | 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| 11. | I prefer to seek spiritual help rather than to see a counsellor                        | 3.32 | 5 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 12. | My school counsellors are not friendly                                                 | 3.24 | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| 13. | My religion does not support seeking help from counselors                              | 3.24 | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| 14. | I do not believe counselling can proffer solutions to my challenges                    | 3.27 | 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| 15. | The location of the counselling office in my school does not encourage confidentiality | 3.28 | 8 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 16. | The impact of Guidance counsellors is not felt in my school                            | 3.22 | 16 <sup>th</sup> |
| 17. | We rarely have counselling programs in my school                                       | 3.30 | 6 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 18. | Career choice concerns among students are not addressed by the school authority        | 3.33 | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |
| 19. | Academic problems among students are not addressed by the school                       | 3.30 | 6 <sup>th</sup>  |

|     |                                                                                        |      |                  |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------------------|
|     | authority                                                                              |      |                  |
| 20. | Students don't know where to seek help in solving their academic and personal problems | 3.20 | 18 <sup>th</sup> |
| 21. | Students seek help from fellow students to solve their problems and concerns           | 3.14 | 22 <sup>nd</sup> |
| 22. | I cannot discuss personal issues with my school counsellors                            | 3.11 | 23 <sup>rd</sup> |
| 23. | Counsellors in my school don't organize programmes for students                        | 3.39 | 2 <sup>nd</sup>  |

Table 1 depicts the results of the items in the questionnaire, which are ranked according to their mean scores. It shows that item 8 which states that "Counsellors in my school requires further training" has the highest mean score of 3.40 and ranked first; item 23 which states that "Counsellors in my school don't organize programmes for students" has a mean score of 3.39 and ranked second, while item 5 with a mean score of 3.33 ranked third, the item states that "There are no sufficient counsellors in my school".

However, item 4 which states that "there are no counsellors in my school" has a mean score of 3.18 and ranked 21<sup>st</sup>, item 21 which states that "students seek help from fellow students to solve their problems and concerns" has a mean score of 3.14 and ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> while item 22<sup>nd</sup> which states that "I cannot discuss personal issues with my school counsellors" has the lowest mean score of 3.11 and ranked last.

From this study, the main challenge of Counselling Practices as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools is counsellors needing further training. This underscores the need to organise further training for counsellors with a view to enhancing qualitative output. Another major challenge of counselling practices from the study is counsellors not being able to organise programmes for students; this could be due to paucity of funds by relevant authorities or counsellors not well trained or enlightened enough to organise the required training for students; this was corroborated by Durojaiye,

(2002), who posited that a major constraint or clog in the wheels of effective counselling

services are the unavailability of funds, which limits the activities of guidance counsellors. An insufficient number of counsellors is another challenge of counselling practice identified from the study. It was found that most of the Armed Forces schools have insufficient counsellors. This has affected counselling practices in various ways, such as the ratio of counsellor to students; it has also made counsellors have excessive workload.

**Research Question 2:** Is there any difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools based on Gender?

Research Question 2 lends itself to hypothesis testing, which states that there is no significant difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in NAFs based on Gender.

**Table 2:** Mean, standard deviation, and t-value of respondents on the challenges of counselling services

| Gender | N   | x     | SD     | df | t-critic | t-cal |
|--------|-----|-------|--------|----|----------|-------|
| Male   | 78  | 35.24 | 6.1684 | 58 | 1.96     | 2.12  |
| Female | 122 | 65.32 | 8.2165 |    |          |       |

From Table 2, the mean score of males was 35.24 while that of females was 65.32, an indication that females had a higher mean than their male counterparts did. This shows that differences existed in the challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices as expressed by both male and female students.

The difference in the mean scores was established using the t-test. The result shows that the calculated t-value of 2.12 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Based on this result, hypothesis 1 is rejected because a significant difference exists in the challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices as expressed by students in NAFs based on Gender. This result is supported by the findings of Akingbulu (2023), who asserted that counsellors claimed that they experienced the problem of self-disclosure from their female clients, unlike the male clients. This implies that gender impacts counselling practices, as it was reported by practitioners.

**Research Question 3:** Is there any difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in Nigerian Armed Forces Schools based on Religion?

Research Question 3 lends itself to hypothesis testing, which states that there is no significant difference in the challenges of guidance and counselling services as expressed by students in NAFs based on Religion. The hypothesis was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), as religion was classified as Christianity, Muslim, and Traditional religion.

**Table 3:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Result Comparing Responses on the Challenges of Counselling Services by Respondents Based on Religion

| Source of variance | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | Critical f-value | Calculated f-ratio |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Between Groups     | 2491.37        | 2   | 1245.69     | 3.00             | 2.46               |
| Within Group       | 46875.38       | 197 | 23437.69    |                  |                    |
| Total              | 49366.75       | 199 |             |                  |                    |

The result in Table 3 shows that the calculated f-value of 2.46 is lower than the critical f-value of 3.00; based on this, hypothesis 2 is accepted because a significant difference does not exist in the challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices as expressed by students in NAFs based on Religion. This result disagrees with the findings of Aremu (2024), who found that one of the challenges of counsellors in some schools is religiosity.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

It is evident from the study that students encounter various challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices in Armed Forces Schools, which may eventually negate the tenet for the establishment of the unit, as its operations may not help students shape their behaviour as well as instil discipline in them. It may also retard their achievement of goals and their ability to live in peace and harmony with others in the school community.

This is not in line with the view of Egbule (2004), who opines that counselling is a structured permissive relationship, which allows a client (student) to gain an understanding of themselves to a degree that enables them to take positive steps in the light of a new orientation. To gain better self-understanding, improved decision-making skills, behaviour change, and problem-solving skills for problem solving. In the same vein, according to Akinade (2005), guidance and counselling are to help students become fully aware of themselves and their environment, enabling them to understand their behaviours and develop future goals.

The study shows that differences existed in the challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices as expressed by both male and female students, with the females expressing more challenges as revealed by the mean scores. This result might be because, apart from various challenges that may require counselling by students, female students

sometimes have issues such as gender-based violence, sexual violence, and harassment, for which disclosure might be difficult. Akingbulu (2023) asserted that counsellors claimed that they do experience the problem of self-disclosure from their female clients, unlike their male counterparts. This is an indication of a need for gender consideration in the appointment of counsellors for schools.

On religiosity, it is evident from the study that no significant difference exists in the challenges of Guidance and Counselling Practices as expressed by students. This is an indication that students, irrespective of their religious affiliations, expressed the existence of counselling challenges in Armed Forces schools in Nigeria. This result disagrees with the findings of Aremu (2024), who found that one of the challenges of counsellors in some schools is religiosity.

The above discussions, therefore, reveal the need to pay proper attention to guidance and counselling in schools to achieve the purpose for which the unit has been established.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

It can be concluded from this research that the main challenges of guidance and counselling services, as expressed by students, include a lack of further training for counsellors, failure of counsellors to organize programmes for students, and the lack of sufficient counsellors in schools. To mitigate these key challenges, sustaining effective counselling programs in schools is key to ensuring that students have access to continuous support; therefore, investment in regular professional development for counsellors and educators is paramount. Professional development, which may involve workshops, seminars, and conferences at which school counselors and staff can learn about emerging issues and new counseling interventions, and explore

innovative approaches to student support. With this knowledge, educators and counselors can remain responsive to the shifting needs within their student populations.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors in Nigerian Armed Forces schools need to be retrained in the rudiments and current trends in modern counselling practices with a view to improving their activities.
2. Counsellors in Nigerian Armed Forces schools should be encouraged to organize periodic programmes for students and should be trained on how to do the same.
3. Awareness of counselling services should be created more in Nigerian Armed Forces schools.
4. School administrators should be encouraged and educated on the need to relieve school counsellors from other duties to be able to face counselling activities squarely.

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