

AN ASSESSMENT OF COUNSELLORS' PERCEPTION ON COUNSELLING SERVICES PROVIDED IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study examined the assessment of counselors' perception on counselling services provided in public senior secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria and its implications for stakeholders. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. The research design adopted for the study was qualitative approach. Population consists of all counselors in public secondary school in Oyo State. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were employed to select five counsellors. An interview protocol titled "Interview Protocol on Counselling Services (IPCS)" was used to collect pertinent data. Thematic approach was employed for analyzing the data collected. Result revealed that various counselling services such as placement, appraisal, evaluation, information, orientation and referral were provided for students. It was found that services provided for students are not adequate. Also, findings point out to insufficient counselling personnel and inadequate counselling facilities as major hindrance to counseling services in school. In view of the findings, it was recommended that adequate facilities and funding should be provided for counsellors for them to be more effective in the areas of counseling. This will help students to solve their educational, vocational and social-personal challenges.*

Keywords: *Counsellor; Perception; Counselling Services; Qualitative Approach.*

Introduction

In educational system of developed nations there are successful implementations of guidance and counseling (Yusuf, Muraina & Suleiman,

2019). School guidance and counselling services get students ready to imagine rising dependability for their choices and develop in their talents to comprehend and acknowledge the consequences of their decisions. Guidance and counseling services at schools make available an excellent prospect for students to muddle through with the hassle of learning and personal improvement (Astuti, 2021). There is emergent figure of social predicaments which have an effect on the lives of adolescents. Competitiveness, harassment, isolation, racial discrimination, unwanted pregnancy among teenagers, family related problems, sibling enmity, low performance in the school, mistreatment, peer pressure and drug abuse are but a few of the challenges that school going children face every day (Karaman, 2021; Yusuf, Zahyah & Muhajir, 2019). The necessity for guidance and counseling services in schools has turned out to be very crucial in order to prop up the safety of learners (Hannon, 2021). It is for that reason that school guidance and counselling services are effusive purposeful and accessible to all learners in all schools to facilitate and assuage them of the problems they face. As soon as schools are primarily troubled with delivering an academic curriculum, other phase of the schools' function, such as providing individual and social education, have a propensity to be overlooked (Peter, Vipene & Nkpolu, 2021).

Students in Nigerian secondary schools are confronted with various intellectual challenges such as career challenges, educational and personal/social that require to be addressed (Egbo, 2015). Ross et al. (2021) sees counselling as a helping professional relationship which is the heart of the whole structure called guidance. Haruna (2015) opined that they are services that are established and managed basically to achieve the desired goals and objectives. Predominantly, the aim and objectives of secondary school cannot be achieved without fixing certain counselling facilities towards ensuring the triumph of counselling in such institutions. Parts of the essential nuts and bolts to be put in place towards the actualization of the educational goals and objectives requires adequate provision of counselling facilities, utmost exploitation of counseling gadgets and appropriate organization of counselling resources to evade wastages and improve the quality of the process in the academic environment. School guidance and counselling services play a crucial part in guiding against educational, personal, social and emotional troubles among secondary school students. These services as offered by Sima (2018) are information services, placement services, orientation services, referral services, evaluation services, follow-up services and consultancy/research services.

The school counselling services as posited by Mogbo (2011) distinctively should grip provision of support in the enhancement of student-to-student relationship, student to teacher relationship, student/ parent conflict resolution, students' study skill, academic amendment plus appropriate assortment of school subjects to point out a few. Arumugam (2021) opined that in spite of the essentiality of these services, many public schools in Nigeria do not have qualified school counsellors and where they subsist, they have no definite duties to execute as they are area under discussion to the principal's assigned role. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates counselors' perception on counseling services provided in public secondary schools in Oyo state, Nigeria.

Literature review

Decade of research indicates that studies have been carried out on counseling services using quantitative approach. For instance, Ifeoma, Abanihe and Odeniyi (2011) conducted a study on evaluation of guidance and counselling resources in secondary schools in Oyo State. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study used a sample of 30 public secondary schools and thirteen private secondary schools. Data was collected for guidance and counseling inventory. The data analysis was done using chi-square and percentages. Findings of the study revealed that counsellor's office, client's chair and educational files were available, while information board, socio-personal files, occupational files and career album were inadequate. These have far-reaching implication for guidance and counselling practice in Oyo State Schools. Recommendations were made based on the findings. Principals of schools should make funds available to the guidance counsellors for the procurement of counselling resources. Arumugam (2021) examined the accessibility and use of information communication technology resources for counselling University students in South East States, Nigeria. The illustration extent was 10,800 students from the nine Universities. The gadget was a planned questionnaire urbanized by the experts. The statistics composed was analyzed using percentage and mean scores. The study discovered that information communication and technology (ICT) facilities in the South East States, Nigeria were insufficient. The fallout also points out that the level of information communication and Technology was very stumpy. Based on the conclusion of the study, it was suggested that the administration should create available of ICT amenities in counselling laboratories in all Universities in order to assist smooth the progress of counselling and learning. The study investigated by Inaja and Abang (2015) concluded that counseling services are very vital in the school system. In other to see the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services, counselling facilities such as counsellors' office,

office furniture, books on counselling, guidance and counselling manual, electricity, psychological tests among others must be put in place. All the aforementioned conveniences help to smooth the progress of performance of guidance counsellors in the school or outside school settings.

Study carried out by Peter, Vipene and Nkpolu (2021) on counsellor's effectiveness in the school system and established that guidance and counselling services is enhanced and determined by individuals who gain from it unswervingly or circuitously. Relating to the difficulties confronting counselling services. Poi Kee Low (2009) established that there are many challenges of counseling services. They include internal and external challenges. He concluded that the stakeholders to work together as a team in ensuring the effective and efficient of the services so that students can benefit greatly from the objectives set. Egbo (2015) in his own study found that there are problems related with non-professionalization of counselors, low counselor/student ratio and the lack of recognition from the school administrators toward guidance and counseling services in secondary school settings. Adane (2015) found that lack of commitment and creativity by professionals to promote the profession in the school is mentioned as one of the major challenges to the service.

Yusuf et. al (2019) concluded that the purpose of guidance and counseling services is to convey precise expertise and learning prospects in an upbeat and defensive approach which make sure that all students can accomplish triumph all the way through intellectual, professional, and social/personal/ growth. The study by Yirgalem (2013) discovered that most school guidance and counseling officers did not have personal counseling rooms. In a related investigation carried by Kelkay (2019), the major challenges facing school guidance and counseling services were found to be short of regular assistance from school administrators and other para-counselors' deficiency of necessary amenities, counsellors being overloaded with work, unavailability of competent trained guidance and counseling officers in the schools, need of preparation for the service providers, deprived alertness campaign on the benefits of guidance and counseling service from educational human resources and authorities as well as students unenthusiastic to talk about their amendment problems.

Egbo (2015) established that school guidance and counseling officers identified pessimistic attitude of the public and awkward attitude of principals and teachers as the main challenges to counseling service in Nigeria secondary schools. The work of Mushaandja et al. (2013) submitted that school counselors were not given sufficient hold up by the school administrators and teachers. They attributed this to the lack of sufficient information in counseling on the part of the counselor and school administrators. The study

conducted by Nyamwange et al. (2013) revealed that the support to counselors by their school administrators is very negligible, as consequences of which the service of guidance and counseling at secondary schools is often jeopardized. The situation made it difficult for guidance and counseling officers to provide the essential services devoid of support of the school administration and other conscientious personnel in the learning system. In view of the above studies, it appears that there is lack of qualitative studies to substantiate if counselling services are actually available, being utilized and also facing challenges of facilities. This reason birthed this study to find out the perceived counseling services in public senior secondary schools in Oyo state, Nigeria via interview.

Research Questions

1. What are the counseling services and equipments available in secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges associated with counseling services in secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria?
3. What are the measures that can be used to address the challenges of counseling services in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Methodology

Research Design/Population

The research design adopted for the study was qualitative approach. The population of the study consists of all secondary school counsellors in Oyo State, Nigeria. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were adopted to draw the participants. Firstly, purpose technique was used to limit the study to all school counselors in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State while convenient technique was used to select five participants (counsellors) that are needed for the study. Specifically, the convenient technique was used to select one counsellor each from the five selected secondary schools.

Interview Protocol

In order to ensure comprehensive information on perceived challenges associated with counselling services in public senior secondary schools are collected in this study, a protocol titled “Interview Protocol on Counselling Services (IPCS) was designed based on the research questions and objectives of the study. The protocol has two sections (section A and B). Section A consists of the demographic information of the participants (e.g. Sex, Gender, Religion, Marital Status, Rank, Highest Qualification and Length of Service).

Section B consists of interviews sections that are to be posted to the participants.

Credibility of the Protocol

Credibility is the assurance of the truth of the results, whereas transferability is about applicability of the findings in different contexts. It helps to show that the findings are consistent and could be repeated, and conformability ensures that the outcomes are shaped by the participants and are not influenced by researcher bias or interests (Creswell, 2013). The protocol was given to two lecturers in Department of Educational Management and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin for corrections and omission. All corrections and suggestions were strictly adhered to and final copy was used for data collection.

Trustworthiness of the Protocol

Trustworthiness of the interview in qualitative research increases the value and strength of a research study and assures the reliability of qualitative research. It also ensures that research findings are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable. To ensure the trustworthiness of the interview protocol in this study, pilot study was conducted with one of the counsellors in Islamic High School. The outcome of the pilot study revealed thus:

“Counselling services are ingredients that are needed for the overall development of students that are confronted with various challenges in the school system. However, school counselors are faced with barrage of problems which range from inadequate of inadequate fund, counselling equipment’s, and decent counseling office.”

Procedure for Data Collection

Before data collection, an introduction letter was given to all participants for their approval before the commencement of the interview session. Also, objectives of the study on perceived challenges associated with counselling services in public senior secondary schools in Oyo state, Nigeria: implications for stakeholders were explained to participants for them to have full knowledge of the study. Also, the interview was conducted using digital audio tape, camera, pencil, biro and jotter. Finally, the interview session shall last for 30 minutes or less as suggested by (Creswell, 2013). All data collected from the participants was transcribed with the use of laptop, headphone, biro and jotter. After the transcription of the data, data codification was done in line with the research questions and objectives of the study. Lastly, data was analyzed via thematic method.

Analysis

After the interviews conducted with the participants, and subsequent transcription, data codification was performed via thematic approach to identify the major themes and their sub-themes based on three research questions that were generated to guide the study. Before that, the breakdown of participants' codification, participants' profile and synopsis of the emerging themes can be found in the tables below.

S/N	Schools Visited	Participant	Code Assigned
1	Aroro community Grammar School, Kole Ibadan.	Counselor	C1
2	Sameul Adegbite Memorial Grammar School, Igbi-oloyin, Ibadan.	Counselor	C2
3	Community Grammar School Kajorepo, Ibadan.	Counselor	C3
4	Ojoo High School, Alaka Ojoo, Ibadan.	Counselor	C4
5	Orogun Grammar School, Ibadan.	Counselor	C5

Table 1: Codification of the Participants

Synopsis of Data Codification

The data codification was based on three research questions of the study, which generated three themes and five sub-themes. The table below depicts the assessment of counselors' perception on counselling services in public senior secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Theme One: Counselling Services in Secondary Schools

Sub-Theme One: Meaning of Counselling Services

Sub-Theme Two: Availability of Counselling Services

- Placement
- Orientation
- Information
- Appraisal
- Follow-up
- Referral
- Evaluation

Sub-theme Three: Adequacy of Counselling Services

<p>Theme Two: Challenges Associated with Counseling Services</p> <p>Sub-theme One: 1. Funding Issue 2. Inadequate Facilities 3. Insufficient Personnel</p>
<p>Theme Three: Measures that can be used to address the Challenges of Counseling Services</p> <p>Sub-theme One: 1. Adequate Funding 2. Availability of Facilities 3. Employment of Counselling Personnel</p>

Table 2: Theme and Sub-themes of the Study

Response to Research Questions

In view of the data collected and transcription, three main themes and five sub-themes emerged based on the research questions that were generated to guide the study. The themes are drawn and also explained below based on three research questions.

Research Question One: What are the counseling services and equipment available in secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Firstly, based on the interviews conducted with the participants that participated in the study and subsequent transcription of the interviews, majority of the participants agreed that counseling services are services rendered by professionals in providing solutions to the problems of students. According to C1, opined that:

“Counselling services is offered by a counsellor and it is an act of assisting and helping students to be a good person in life. It can come in form of educational counseling, career counseling i.e., the choice of a career and se have marital counseling and so on. So, if these services are put in place /order. It will better the life of a student and people generally.”

In support of the above, C2 and C5 claimed that;

” Counselling services are services carrying out in a school in order to helping students that are facing challenges (e.g., social-personal and emotional). Secondly, on the availability of counseling services in secondary schools, most of the participants are of the view that many services are available in the school.”

C4 and C3 are of the view that the services provided are...” placement, orientation, evaluation and appraisal services.” Also, C3 and C1 submitted that...

” The services they normally provide include referral and follow up services.”

The figure below explains the nature of counseling services provided for students.

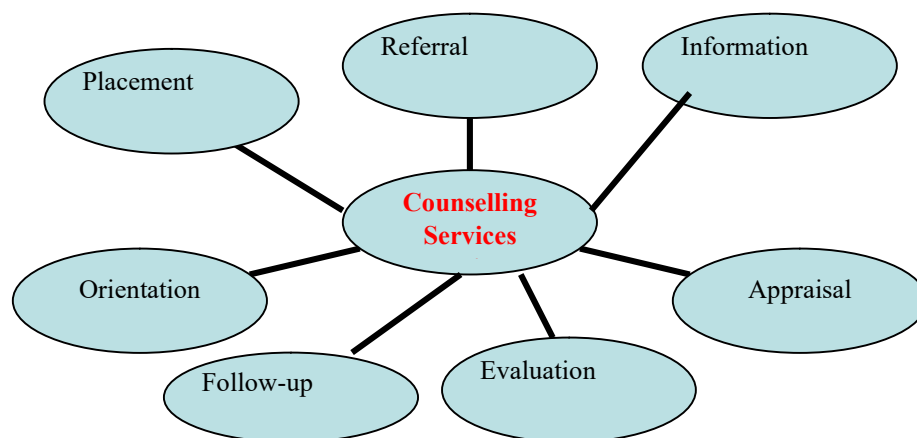


Figure 1: Counselling services provided in Public Secondary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria

Furthermore, on the adequacy of counseling services, all the participants claimed that services given to students are not adequate due to some itches which affected adequate provision of services to students. Additionally, based on observation checklist used in eliciting information regarding availability of counseling equipment's in secondary schools, the table below indicates availability or otherwise.

S/N	Items	Available	Not Available
1	Counselling Unit	✓	
2	Qualify Counselling Personnel		✓
3	Counselling Supporting Staff	✓	
	Receptionist		✓
4	Television and Radio		✓
5	Internet		✓
6	Psychological Test Instruments		✓

7	Career library and information catalogue		✓
8	Funding		✓
9	Tables and Chairs	✓	
10	Air condition		✓
11	Notice Board	✓	
12	Tape Recorder		✓
13	Internet Access		✓
14	Telephones and Intercoms,		✓
15	Refrigerators		✓
16	Index Card System for Keeping Student Past Records		✓
17	Computer and Printer		✓
18	Generating Set		✓
19	Labeling Kits		✓
20	Loud Speaker		✓

Table 3: Availability of Counselling Inventory

Out of 20 items on the checklist, it was observed during the course of the interview that only the four marked items above are the available items in all the public schools visited.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges associated with counseling services in secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria?

The outcome of the interviews carried out with the participants point towards the challenges associated with counseling, which formed the second theme of the study. To be specific, the participants expressed their opinions concerning the challenges that are associated with counseling services such as poor funding, inadequate facilities, insufficient personnel, non-provision of counselling units among others. Some of the participants' views on the challenges are expressed below:

C1 of the opinion that:

There is limit to what counsellors can do in school because the counsellors available are just mere by certificate, they are no more practicing counseling as they have been given teaching subjects which invariably have replaced counselling service they supposed to be rendering for students. Also, some of the challenges of counseling services in school can be attributed to inadequate counseling personnel, paucity of fund and insufficient counseling facilities that are needed for effective counseling in the school system.''

C5 claimed that:

“There is no provision for counselling unit where students can be counselled due to the mentality of school managers (superiority complex) especially the school principal who believe that once the counselor has an office like the him, he may grow wings and be challenging the authority of the managers which also is one of the challenges facing counselling service”

Taken together, the participants’ views on challenges associated with counseling services are graphically represented below:

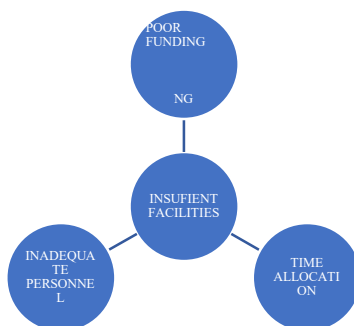


Figure 2: Perceived challenges associated with counseling services secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What are the measures that can be used to address the challenges of counselling services in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Based on the interviews conducted, measures that can be used to address the challenges of counseling services emerged as the third theme of the study. The theme explained how solution can be provided to the challenges facing effective counselling services in schools. The view of C5 is explained thus:

“Government should provide necessary facilities such as befitting counseling office because counseling room should be a place where the students can be comfortable to discuss his/her challenge. It must be a conducive place that is very secure to avoid heave-dropping.” Also, the accessibility of counselling facilities which will permit counsellors to execute counselling services remarkably by ensuring that they achieve both long- and short-term goals. In reality, availability of resources is the most excellent approach to guarantee counseling service efficiency.”

Substantiating the above measure for tackling the challenges of counselling services in schools, the extract of C3 is given below:

“Allocation of separate funds to counsellors for the smooth running of the counseling service should be prioritized. However, Students studying counseling in higher institutions should be encouraged and have hope that

they would secure job as soon as they finish schooling, so government should employ more counselors.”

According to C2, she opined that:

“Counselors in school should team up and brainstorm on how to bring something meaningful out. If one diagnoses, the other will check before they can reach final conclusion just like Medical Doctors and other tasks should not be added to counseling work in schools. Moreover, professionalism of counseling is also very important; government should help in that regard. Counselling facilities should be adequately provided by the government and other stakeholders.”

In buttressing the above assertion, C4 claimed that;

“Poor parenting is another major problem for counselors in this school. For instance, a child was noticed of bleaching and she told the counselor that it was her mother who bought the cream for her. Nonchalant attitude of parents is a big problem in this era. They don’t have time to cater and follow up what the counsellors are doing in the school.”

The figure below illustrates the graphical representation on the measures that can be used to address the challenges of counseling services.

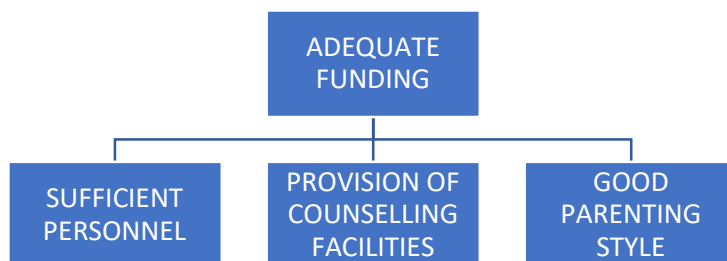


Figure 3: The measures that can be used to address the challenges of counselling services in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Discussion

Based on first research question of the study, which is on counseling services that are available in secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria. Evidence from the interviews conducted with the participants; point out the counseling services available in schools. In particular, the counseling services available in schools comprised of career services, placement services, orientation services, appraisal services, follow up services, evaluation service and referral services. However, our observation in counseling inventory of the schools visited indicates the little availability of the counseling equipment’s.

Equipment's available include; counseling unit, counseling supporting staff, tables, chair and notice board as contained in table 3. Also, the equipment's that were not there based on the counseling inventory used are; qualify counselling personnel, receptionist, television and radio, internet, psychological test instruments, career library and information catalogue, funding, air condition, tape recorder, internet access, telephones and intercoms, refrigerators, index card system for keeping students past records, computer and printer, generating set, labeling kits, and loud speaker. The findings are in consonance with the study of Fitria (2018) who established that counseling services are an integral part of the school system and are needed to assess the multifaceted problems of the students. Similarly, Pedroso (2022) concluded that providing counseling services for students as a method of catering for the needs of the school system. This helps to ensure the correctness of adolescent and negative behavior that is often exhibited by the thoughts. Inaja and Abang (2015) concluded that counseling services are incredibly essential in the school system. In ensuring the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services, counselling facilities such as counsellors office, office furniture, books on counselling, guidance and counselling manual, internet access, psychological tests instruments among others should be adequately provided. Peter, Vipene and Nkpolu (2021) on counsellor's efficiency in the school system established that guidance and counselling services is enhanced and determined by individuals who gain from it indirectly. Also, the present findings are in sync with the work of Arumugam (2021) who examined the accessibility and use of information communication technology resources for counselling University students. The conclusion of the study suggested that the administration should create available of ICT amenities in counselling laboratories in all Universities in order to assist smooth the progress of counselling and learning.

The second research question of the study, which is based on the challenges associated with counseling services, evidence from the participants indicate that there are several challenges militating against effective counseling services in schools. The challenges are poor funding, insufficient personnel and inadequate facilities. These findings are in tandem with the study investigated by Arfasa et. al (2020) who concluded that there is plethora of problems that are comforting counseling services in Nigeria. They are poor funding, untrained counseling personnel and inadequate counseling facilities. Onyango et. al (2018) found that the problems of counseling in Nigeria secondary schools ranged from inadequate of counseling personnel to poor funding for the procurement of counselling equipment's. Jacob et. al (2021) concurred that the major problem that is inhibition at all level of education is

inadequate counseling personnel and facilities. The work of Poi Kee Low (2009) established that there are many challenges of counseling services. They include internal and external challenges. He concluded that the stakeholders to work together as a team in ensuring the effective and efficient of the services so that students can benefit greatly from the objectives set. Egbo (2015) in his own study found that there are problems related with non-professionalization of counselors, low counselor/student ratio and the lack of recognition from the school administrators toward guidance and counseling services in secondary school settings. Also, Adane (2015) found that lack of commitment and creativity by professionals to promote the profession in the school is mentioned as one of the major challenges to the service. The study by Yirgalem (2013) discovered that most school guidance and counseling officers did not have personal counseling rooms. In a related investigation carried by Kelkay (2019), the major challenges facing school guidance and counseling services were found to be short of regular assistance from school administrators and other para-counselors' deficiency of necessary amenities, counsellors being overloaded with work, unavailability of competent trained guidance and counseling officers in the schools, need of preparation for the service providers, deprived alertness campaign on the benefits of guidance and counseling service from educational human resources and authorities as well as students unenthusiastic to talk about their amendment problems. The work of Mushaandja et. al (2013) submitted that school counselors were not given sufficient hold up by the school administrators and teachers. They attributed this to the lack of sufficient information in counseling on the part of the counselor and school administrators. Nyamwange et al. (2013) revealed that the support to counselors by their school administrators is very negligible, as consequences of which the service of guidance and counseling at secondary schools is often jeopardized. Egbo (2015) established that school guidance and counseling officers identified pessimistic attitude of the public and awkward attitude of principals and teachers as the main challenges to counseling service in Nigeria secondary schools.

Based on the third research question, which is based on measures for addressing the challenges of counseling in schools, participants suggested that adequate funding and counseling personnel should be provided often in secondary schools. Also, other measures are good parenting style and provision of counseling facilities. This is in congruent with the study of Ohunene e tal (2021) who opined that counseling units in schools should be well furnished with modern facilities so as to ensure efficient and effective delivery of counseling services to the students. Ojeme (2019) suggested that there is need for policy program that will drive the counseling activities with a view to achieving the goals and objectives of counseling as enshrined in the

national policy on education. Yusuf et. al (2019) concluded that the purpose of guidance and counseling services is to convey precise expertise and learning prospects in an optimistic and defensive approach which make sure that all students can accomplish triumph all the way through intellectual, professional, and social/personal/ growth via the provision of adequate counseling services.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study on counsellors' perception on counseling services provided in schools in public secondary school in Oyo State, Nigeria, the findings of the study revealed that counselling services are services carried out by a professional in a school in order to helping students facing social-personal, educational and vocational challenges. The services provided are placement service, orientation service, information service, appraisal service, follow-up service, referral service and evaluation service. Also, the challenges facing counseling services in schools were identified such as poor funding by the government, inadequate of facilities and personnel etc. In view of the foregoing, therefore, the importance of counseling services cannot be under estimated because it places a vital role in shaping the behavior of students in the school system.

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