PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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ABSTRACT: With the use of empirical data, this paper highlights the place of Counselling in coping with [50] the poor performance of students in our school system. Using two co-educational schools in Owerri, Imo State, students were randomly selected and assigned to experimental control groups each consisting of 40 students. A pretest in English Language was given to the students for the study, guide-lines for effective study habits were developed from Bakare's (1977) Study Habits Inventory and given to the experimental group only. English language lessons were taught to the experimental and control groups for a period of six weeks. Result showed that there is a significant difference between students in the school that received educational counselling on effective study habits and students in the school that did not receive counselling. The findings confirmed that counselling is very important and effective with respect to students' study habits and academic performance. It will also serve as a motivating factor to school guidance counsellors

INTRODUCTION

Academic performance in our educational system has long been a concern to parents, guardians and the society at large. Moreso, the Nigerian society is becoming highly academic and this requires high academic attainment for upward social mobility. Similarly, the junior and senior secondary school children are in a critical stage of their development. It is a period of self-concept formation, establishing an identity and developing an awareness and encountering challenges in the world of educational achievement. It is necessary that educators should provide the right and timely assistance to enable youths not only to survive this critical stage, but also to develop in them effective skills that will enhance better academic performance so that they can face this competitive academic country and the challenging world at large. The role therefore that guidance services can play through counselling intervention to facilitate self-understanding, self-discovery, self-direction, self-reliance and self-actualization by assisting [51] the students to make the most of their educational opportunities, should not be under-estimated. Here, counselling is called into play to try all within its realm to remove and control all obstacles and introduce effective study techniques, so that academic performances can excel. It is against this background that an empirical research is necessary to bring to limelight the influence of counselling on the performance of secondary school students academically.

Hard work presuppose success, students it has been observed do not sufficiently apply them-

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selves to academics and do not have the motivation to study, as such they develop poor attitudes towards learning. Most of them have no set goals and objectives, they are highly disorganized and lack persistence in their study. They cannot settle down and plan how to face examinations confidently and when a child fails constantly in school, he begins to loose interest in learning, some of them even go to the extent of dropping out of school and they end up to be problems to their parents and a menace to the society.

Once a child is delinquent, moulding his self-concept becomes extremely difficult. But with the introduction of counselling in schools, we are going to find the possible ways in which counselling can effectively help students overcome these problems and enhance academic performances.

In view of this, the null hypothesis (Ho) tested in this study is that there is no significant difference in English Language performance between students who received educational counselling on effective study habits and those who did not receive counselling.

Various studies have been carried out in this area notably, Krangzler et.al (1966) worked with eight fourth grades, and counselled them twice a week for six weeks. It was noticed that the eight students improved and maintained their growth in a follow-up study more than students in the class.

In another study carried out by Obler et.al (1977) to test how counselling can enhance academic performance. An experimental class was isolated from the control class and counselled. After the experiment, it was found that the experimental group did better than the control group.

In an empirical research carried out by Andrey et.al (1975) in which matching groups of experimental and control were used to investigate improvement in the students first semester academic adjustment. They compared pre-counselling and post-counselling test scores for the two groups and also compared their academic achievement records. From the results obtained, it was seen that counselled students improved their test scores in the post-test, while the uncounselled students did not.

Finally, Denga (1985) in an experimental research investigated the effects of a counselling intervention on students' academic performance. He used 75 students comprising 40 males and [52] 35 females in both experimental and control groups respectively. The treatment lasted for six months. At the end of the investigation, it was observed that the counselled group achieved a significantly higher G.P.A. than the control

METHOD

This study was limited to two government secondary schools in Owerri Urban Area. The schools were Community Comprehensive Secondary School Egbu and Naze Secondary School, Naze. The subjects consisted of class three junior secondary. 40 students were used in each school, 20 boys and 20 girls.

The research randomly chose 60 students in each school and administered a pre-test in English Language to them. After the scoring of the test, 40 students were randomly selected for the study in each school. The two schools through randomization were assigned to experimental and control groups.

The students were given a pre-experimental instruction to make them aware of the importance of their cooperation in this experimental study. It was given to both the experimental and control group.

The instructional material was designed by the researcher, and comprised English Language topics that was taken from the students' scheme of work for the second term and was broken

down by the researcher into lesson plans. The topics were chosen on the basis that they have not been taught to the students involved in the experiment by their teachers. The lessons were taught to both groups by the researcher, detailed lesson notes were developed by the researcher.

This study was delimited to academic counselling on study habits. The guidelines for effective study habits was designed by the researcher. Hints developed in the guidelines, were borrowed from Bakare's (1970) Study Habits Inventory.

The pre-test was designed and administered by the researcher to the experimental and control groups. The test consisted of twelve questions that tested what was to be taught to the students. The purpose of the test was to ensure that the students involved in the experiment were of equal academic achievement level before the experiment

Counselling sessions on effective study habits were held with the experimental group only. It was held in the classroom setting. The purpose of the sessions was to see if they would have any impact on the students' academic performance.

The pre-and-post-test scripts were marked and scored by the researcher. The two tests were validated by two resource persons who are experts in the field.

The result of the pretest administered to both the experimental and control groups showed no significant difference in academic achievement. [53]

English Language lessons were taught by the researcher to the experimental and control groups twice in a week.

Counselling sessions on effective study habits was held with the experimental group only. Each session lasted for 40 minutes and there were 12 sessions on the whole. Two sessions were held every week.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The major dependent variable in this study is academic performance, while the main independent variable is the educational counselling on study habits.

The result of the data analysis is shown in table 1. There is no significant difference in English Language performance between students who received educational counselling on effective study habits and those who did not receive counselling.

Table 1. Students Independent t-Test on the Performance of Students who received Educational Counselling and those who did not.

SCHOOL	VARIABLE	N	X	SD
A	Experimental group	40	51.5	10.30
B	Control group	40	41.5	14.93

Significant Level = .05, df = 78, t-calculated = 2.68, t-critical value = 1.980
t-calculated is greater than critical t value.

The result shows that there is a significant statistical difference between students in the school that received educational counselling on effective study habits, and students in the school that did not receive counselling. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

A major implication of the result of this study to Nigerian educational practitioners in schools and guidance counsellors in particular is that guidance and counselling is very effective in the

academic performance of secondary school students.

Educational counselling organized into a formalized schools system will enhance the poor academic performance of secondary school students.

Counselling curricula incorporated into a regular school curriculum should be expanded to include such topics as how to develop effective study skills, how to acquire fruitful decision-making skills, how to solve problems and set realistic goals. [54]

Educational counselling helps students to explore and develop their potentials to the fullest. It makes them aware of their capabilities and limitations. It helps them understand themselves very well, and have an insight into their problems. With this awareness, they can strive towards self-fulfilment, which is directed toward plans and activities to enhance academic performance.

The findings of this study re-affirms the place of counselling in the educational system. It is observed that counselling, though, introduced into schools in Nigeria, is largely ineffective in practice, this is because it has not been accorded a proper place in the provision of facilities.

In conclusion it is strongly recommended that counselling be accorded priority role by educational planners and policy makers in the provision of trained personnel and appropriate facilities in our school system and relevant educational ministries.

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