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Awareness of Historical Development of Counselling and its Relevance among Nigerian Youth: Implications for Professional Counsellors

ABSTRACT: The relevance of counselling, as a helping profession, cannot hold without tracing its historical development, particularly among individuals whom the service is targeted. Hence, this study centered on revealing the perception of youth on the historical development and relevance of counselling in Nigeria. This article is a qualitative study with 20 youth, who were randomly sampled as the participants from Lagos State, Oyo State, Osun State, and Ekiti State in Nigeria. An interview guide was structured to collect information from the participants. The guide was validated by experts and pilot tested. The thematic analysis was used to tease out the main themes of the information gathered. The findings revealed that youth are aware of guidance and counselling, but they are not aware of the historical development. The participants are not aware of the relevance of counselling service in the Nigerian society. They believed that the services are meant for children and adolescents, especially those who have “problems” and those who are yet to have bearing in life. The participants are not aware that guidance and counselling is meant for all, old, young, male, and female. They are also not aware that the services also cover vocational, personal-social, marital among other areas. From this finding, professional counsellors should embark on mass publicity about the historical development of counselling and its relevance to human and societal development.

KEY WORDS: Historical Development; Relevance; Nigerian Youth; Guidance and Counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Counselling rarely exist without guidance as the two terms go hand in hand. This is why when counselling is discussed, guidance is also discussed. Similarly, the historical development of counselling cannot be done without tracing that of guidance.

Furthermore, guidance and counselling are used interchangeably; however, the terms cover assistance rendered to a group of people to ensure their overall development and they overlap (Wango, 2006; Omoniyi, 2016; and Oluremi, 2019).

Guidance, on one hand in the provision

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of services geared towards assisting pupils/individuals to acquire full potential, is preparing for adulthood and the future in general. It refers to a broad area of all educational activities and services, such as information, orientation, appraisal, placement, counselling, follow-up, and referral services aimed at assisting students to understand themselves and adjust to school life (Davis *et al.*, 2004; Okita, 2012; and Vasimalairaja, 2018). The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) module on guidance and counselling, in 2002, also posited that guidance is a programme of services to individuals based on their needs and the influence of environmental factors (*cf* UNESCO, 2002b; Chireshe, 2006; Wango, 2006; Mikaye, 2012; and Idowu, 2016).

On the other hand, counselling is a professional helping relationship between a counsellor and a counselee. It is “the heart” or “core” of the whole structure called *guidance*. The objective of counselling includes helping the client to understand him/herself better, which enables him/her to make a wise and realistic decision. It is designed to facilitate self-understanding and self-development through one-to-one or small group relationships. Counselling could be educational, vocational, personal-social, marital, etc. (Mary, 2014; Odebode & Adegboyega, 2016; and Oluremi, 2019).

Guidance and counselling has its root in the USA (United State of America). Guidance and counselling, as a movement in the early 20th century, was a response to industrialization. It was set up in the Department of Education in 1968, due to the recommendation of Louis, a consultant sent to Malta by Wanton’s Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (*cf* Mikaye, 2012; Omoniyi, 2016; and Esere, 2020).

Worldwide, guidance and counselling services, which comprise specialized services such as information, orientation, appraisal, placement, counselling, follow-up, and referral services, are essential elements in managing people. Thus, guidance and counselling has been introduced to assist students overcome the challenges they may

face in any area while schooling. Ever since, guidance and counselling has continue to grow globally (Denga, 2001; Bolu-Steve & Oredugba, 2017; and Esere, 2020).

Guidance has always been a part of African culture, in which traditional helpers provide guidance and give advice. Countries in Africa have the need to orientate and educate citizens for modernization, social, economic, and political growth. Guidance and counselling have been seen as a tool to achieving this goal; therefore, in many African nations, it is highly embraced. For instance, in Kenya, guidance and counselling was officially integrated in the education programme in 1967, with guidance and counselling policies being regarded as important for manpower development. In Nairobi, due to youth’s challenges, it was concluded that guidance and counselling be given prominence in schools (UNESCO, 2002b; Wango, 2006; and Omoniyi, 2016).

Guidance and counselling can be traced to the time of independence in Nigeria, due to series of challenges faced by individuals in the society. It was started by traditional guidance and counselling, where any challenge that individuals face was tabled before the family head or community head, where options were weighed and advise was given. However, there was constant change and technological development in the society, which led to the development of modern guidance and counselling in Nigeria (Egbo, 2015; Omoniyi, 2016; and Brown, 2018).

The initial expansion of guidance and counselling started in secondary schools, precisely St. Theresa College in Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1959, when the first set of Reverend Sisters were graduating. They were given guidance on human relations and the career path they will like to follow. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education supported the development of schools through establishment of the Guidance and Counselling Unit in 1961. The action ceased during the civil war and kicked back after the war. This was the time that the 6-3-3-4 educational system was introduced. The Federal Government of Nigeria recognized the need for guidance and counselling in

late 1970s (Okocha & Alike, 2012; Omoniyi, 2016; Esere, 2020).

In the 3rd National Development Plan, the main aim was to focus on the development of manpower. In order to achieve this, the Counselling Association of Nigeria was established, an organization that was connected to the American Personnel and Guidance Association. The need to establish an expansion in the enrolment of students in schools, skilled workforce, technological development, meeting needs of youth, repeated changes in educational system, changes in homes and families, and drugs and alcohol. All these led to the development of guidance and counselling in Nigeria (Nwabuisi, 2002; Idowu, 2004; and Umoh, 2016).

In 1981, the Federal Government of Nigeria recognized the need for guidance and counselling services and it was incorporated in the NPE (National Policy on Education). Counselling units are, then, established in Schools, Universities, and Ministries of Education. Ever since, guidance and counselling has been recognized as full profession/programme. In addition, a blue print on guidance and counselling was produced which contained the objectives, scope, activities, and strategies for implementing the programme right from pre-primary schools to tertiary institutions, certification and license to professionals, and minimum standard for counsellor training to control the quality of counsellors produced in Universities. Guidance and counselling has been having a section in NPE and registering the Association among other developments (Alao, 2009; Idowu, 2016; and Omoniyi, 2016).

Guidance and counselling in any society cannot be overemphasized. Both terms entails services that enhance personal growth, social development, educational progress, and career development. Many organizations often render guidance and counselling as part of their aims to promote human development (McCarthy, 2001; Leung, 2016; and Bolu-Steve & Oredugba, 2017).

Generally, guidance can assist individuals to tackle challenges and channel a path that matches his/her abilities. Helps to

find the right personnel, resources, and activities solely for an individual within any institution. It is relevant as it helps individuals/students adjust to their new environment and preventing or minimizing challenges as a result. They address challenges that could hinder academic development. It is relevant as it helps individuals assess their in-depth feelings and examine their choices out of alternatives. They help address situations that affect school, home, and work (Nweze & Okolie, 2014; Bobga, 2016; and Omoniyi, 2016).

It could be almost impossible for any organization/society to function without orderliness and discipline. Many people in Nigeria seems not to be aware of the functions of counsellors and what the programme entails not to talk of the historical development of guidance and counselling (Wango, 2006; Chire, 2011; and Oluremi, 2019).

Similarly, many people believe that guidance and counselling services are limited to school. However, guidance and counselling function in all sectors of organizations and societies, there are different specializations of guidance and counselling. They include school counselling, marital counselling, adolescent counselling, retirement counselling, and personal/social counselling to mention but a few (Lapan, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2017; and Atsuwe & Albert, 2018).

In essence, the two terms prepare citizens for the challenges of the 21st century through academic, career, and personal/social development. Guidance and counselling refer to a professional field, which has many activities of programmes and services directed toward helping people/students to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment, and their world; and also to develop good capacity for making wise choices and decisions (Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2004; Egbo, 2015; and Egentl, 2016).

There is agreement among experts that there are three major components of guidance and counselling. These are: educational guidance, vocational guidance, and personal-social guidance (UNESCO,

2002a; Eyo, Joshua & Esuong, 2010; and Esere, 2020).

In Nigeria as at today, guidance and counselling lack the needed recognition. There is negative attitude of Nigerians, government official, school authorities, teachers, students, and the entire populace towards guidance and counselling. This could be why little or no fund is here marked for the services. It is, therefore, conceived that without tracing and being aware of the historical development of guidance and counselling, the future of guidance and counselling in Nigeria is blur. It is on this premise that this study focused on the awareness of historical development and relevance of guidance and counselling among Nigerian youth (cf Eyo, Joshua & Esuong, 2010; Okocha & Alike, 2012; Egbo, 2015; Omoniyi, 2016; and Esere, 2020).

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions. As important as guidance and counselling are in any society, the concept of guidance and counselling and the services rendered by counsellors seem to be unclear to all and sundry in Nigeria. This could be why there is low patronage and popularity of the profession in schools, among youth, and the entire society. People often prefer to seek the advice from elders and family members, even peers; this could be due to low knowledge of history and relevance of the services. This is why there are lots of vices in the country as the services are underutilized (cf Egbochuku & Alike, 2010; Oguzie, 2014; Omoniyi, 2016; Oluremi, 2019; and Esere, 2020).

In previous studies, South African girls do not engage in help seeking behaviours (Riet & Knoetze, 2005; Finlayson & Downe, 2013; and Otwombe *et al.*, 2015). Meanwhile, B. Lasode *et al.* (2017), and other scholars, found that 74.6% students were aware of guidance and counselling, even though its use is low. Similarly, R. Chire (2011), and other scholars, found in the studies that students are aware of the benefits of counselling (cf Chire, 2011; Purnama & Rahman, 2014; Lasode *et al.*, 2017; and Oluremi, 2019).

The cited studies employed a quantitative approach and the result may not be a true representation of the respondents' opinions. More so, guidance and counselling are not optimally assessed in the Nigerian society. It is on this basis that this study focused on the awareness of historical development and relevance of guidance and counselling among Nigerian youth using qualitative approach (cf Omoniyi, 2016; Adegboyega, 2020; Esere, 2020; and Fareo, 2020).

The following questions were raised and answered in the course of this study: (1) Are Nigerian youth aware of guidance and counselling services?; (2) Are Nigerian youth aware of the historical development of guidance and counselling?; and (3) Are Nigerian youth aware of the relevance of guidance and counselling services?

METHODS

Qualitative research design was adopted for this study. Qualitative research methods enables to collect authentic/firsthand information from the participants. There are six geopolitical zones in Nigeria out which the researcher randomly selected a geo-political zone (South-West). The simple random technique was also employed to select four States in the South-West zone. Of these zones, the State capital was purposively selected, in which 5 (five) youth were randomly chosen. These procedures led to the selection of 20 (twenty) consented youth that participated in the study. The sample comprised participants of both gender, ages 22-32 years, and are learned (Creswell, 2014; Sutton & Austin, 2015; and Mohajan, 2018).

An interview guide consisting of five questions was used to collect information from these youth. The guide was validated by experts and pilot tested. The participants were explained to about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. Only consenting youth formed the participants and the individual interview lasted for an hour each. The interview was done, so that it was convenient for each of the participants in terms of place and time. The thematic analysis was adopted to tease out the main

points of the interview (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Quad, 2016; and Mohajan, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results. For anonymity, alphabets are used to denote names of the participants. LA is used to denote participants in Lagos State; OY for participants in Oyo State; OS for participants in Osun State; and EK for those in Ekiti State. The themes are as follows:

Question 1: “Have you ever heard of guidance and counselling services before, and where did you hear about it?”. The responses of participants are as follows:

P1-OY: “Yes, I have heard about guidance and counselling many times in my school, where they will say we should go for counselling whenever we don’t behave right”.

P2-LA: “Yes. In schools, especially secondary schools”.

P4-EK: “Yes severally, but it is mainly in secondary schools”.¹

Question 2: “What do you know guidance and counselling to be, and who are the practitioners?”. The responses of participants are as follows:

P3-OS: “I know it to be some people giving advice to other people. They are called counsellors”.

P1-EK: “It is giving of advice. They are councilors”.

P3-OY: “They are often called guidance counsellors”.²

Question 3: “Are you aware of the genesis, the historical development of guidance and counselling?”. The responses of participants are as follows:

P3-EK: “Ha! I am not aware of how guidance and counselling got here. I just know that it is given to young people in schools”.

P1-LA: “I am not interested since it is not my field, I studied Engineering. But I feel it came up in 1990”.

¹Interview with P1-OY (Participant 1 of Oyo State) in Nigeria, on 5th May 2019; Interview with P2-LA (Participant 2 of Lagos State) in Nigeria, on 12th May 2019; and Interview with P4-EK (Participant 4 of Ekiti State) in Nigeria, on 19th May 2019.

²Interview with P3-OS (Participant 3 of Osun State) in Nigeria, on 26th May 2019; Interview with P1-EK (Participant 1 of Ekiti State) in Nigeria, on 19th May 2019; and Interview with P3-OY (Participant 3 of Oyo State) in Nigeria, on 5th May 2019.

P3-OY: “Yes I know, it emanated from secondary schools in the 1990s”.³

Question 4: “Do you know areas that guidance and counselling cover/or counsellors function?”. The responses of participants are as follows:

P2-OY: “I know that it is mainly rendered in schools to adolescents. They help students with their academic problems”.

P2-OS: “Yes, it is given to students, who have problems may be disciplinary issues”.

P5-LA: “I know they are part of the staff employed in schools, but not as many as teachers”.⁴

Question 5: “In what ways do you think guidance and counselling services are relevant to you?”. The responses of participants are as follows:

P3-OS: “Not all, will anyone advise me at my age? It is meant for adolescents”.

P5-EK: “It is not relevant to me, but it can go well in schools, especially those who are just coming up so that they can get good advice”.

P4-OY: “I am an adult, counselling is relevant to young ones”.

P3-LA: “Counselling is relevant only to young people, who are yet to have any bearing in life”.⁵

Discussion. From the finding of this study, it is evident that participants got to know about counselling as a service usually giving advice; as a service meant to help others with their problems. This is in line with the finding of R. Chire (2011), and other scholars, which revealed that people have heard about guidance and counselling (Chire, 2011; Nkala, 2014; and Adegboyega, 2020).

Similarly, the finding is in line with that of B. Lasode *et al.* (2017), and other scholars,

³Interview with P3-EK (Participant 3 of Ekiti State) in Nigeria, on 19th May 2019; Interview with P1-LA (Participant 1 of Lagos State) in Nigeria, on 12th May 2019; and Interview with P3-OY (Participant 3 of Oyo State) in Nigeria, on 5th May 2019.

⁴Interview with P2-OY (Participant 2 of Oyo State) in Nigeria, on 5th May 2019; Interview with P2-OS (Participant 2 of Osun State) in Nigeria, on 26th May 2019; and Interview with P5-LA (Participant 5 of Lagos State) in Nigeria, on 12th May 2019.

⁵Interview with P3-OS (Participant 3 of Osun State) in Nigeria, on 26th May 2019; Interview with P5-EK (Participant 5 of Ekiti State) in Nigeria, on 19th May 2019; Interview with P4-OY (Participant 4 of Oyo State) in Nigeria, on 5th May 2019; and Interview with P3-LA (Participant 3 of Lagos State) in Nigeria, on 12th May 2019.

who revealed that participants are aware of guidance and counselling. These could be that guidance and counselling is common in secondary schools and virtually all learned adults passed through secondary schools. This led to their awareness of guidance and counselling as an advise giving service (cf Boitt, 2016; Salgong, Ngumi & Chege, 2016; Gysbers & Henderson, 2017; Lasode *et al.*, 2017; and Adegboyega, 2020).

The finding also revealed that participants are not aware of the historical development of counselling. Many thought it emanated from secondary schools. They felt it came up during the 1990s. Participants are not aware that guidance and counselling can be traced back to 1959 in Ibadan, when some Catholic sisters were graduating their students and they needed to be guided on their career path. Many believed that it is not their field; hence, they do not have to know the genesis (cf Egbochuku & Alika, 2010; Malikiosi-Loizos, 2013; Omoniyi, 2016; Adegboyega, 2020; and Esere, 2020).

This finding is in line with the findings of D.J. Denga (2001); O.C. Okobiah & R.I. Okorodudu (2004); and other scholars, whose studies showed that people are not aware of the historical development of guidance and counselling. This could also be that youth are not interested in guidance and counselling services as they feel, it is not a profession that directly affect them; therefore, they will not be able to say precisely what and what led to the development of the services (cf Denga, 2001; Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2004; Oguzie, 2014; Egbo, 2015; and Esuabana, 2019).

The finding of this study also revealed that participants are not aware of the relevance of counselling. They believed that the services are meant for children and adolescents, especially those who have “problems” and those who are yet to have bearing in life. They also felt that the services are pinned down to schools. Participants are not aware that guidance and counselling is meant for all, old, young, male, and female. They are also not aware that the services also cover vocational, personal-social, marital among other areas.

The finding of this study is in line with that of Mary Banke Iyabo Omoniyi (2016), and other scholars, whose finding revealed that people are not aware of the relevance of guidance and counselling, which led to low access of the services. This could be that there is low publicity of guidance and counselling in the Nigerian society. This, therefore, explains why participants are not aware of the historical development, scope, and relevance of guidance and counselling in Nigeria (cf Alao, 2009; Omoniyi, 2016; Oluremi, 2019; Adegboyega, 2020; and Esere, 2020).

CONCLUSION ⁶

It can be concluded that youth are not aware of the historical development and relevance of counselling in Nigeria. Based on this, professional counsellors should embark on mass publicity about the historical development of counselling and its relevance to human and societal development.⁷

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⁷**Statement:** This paper, with all its contents and interpretations, is my own academic work. So, this paper is not the result of plagiarism, because the sources that I have cited and quoted are very clearly indicated in the Bibliography or References. This paper has also not been sent, reviewed, and published by other journals. I am willing to be given appropriate academic sanctions or penalties, if what I declare turns out to be, in the future, is not in accordance with reality.

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Counselling and the Awareness of Nigerian Youth
(Source: <https://sample.vision2020-ng.org/>, 24/3/2020)

The finding of this study revealed that participants are not aware of the relevance of counselling. They believed that the services are meant for children and adolescents, especially those who have “problems” and those who are yet to have bearing in life. They also felt that the services are pinned down to schools. Participants are not aware that guidance and counselling is meant for all, old, young, male, and female. They are also not aware that the services also cover vocational, personal-social, marital among other areas.