

COUNSELLING NEEDS OF FIRST YEAR SCIENCE STUDENTS OF COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, MINNA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Many first year students in colleges of education in general experienced challenging academic, personal, emotional, psychological, and social skills issues. The study examined counselling needs of first year science students of College Of Education, Minna, Niger State. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study. Ex-post factor research design was employed. Population is 8,254 first year students of college of education, Minna. A sample of 375 students was selected via simple random, stratified and proportionate sampling procedures. A researchers-designed questionnaire tagged "Student Counselling Needs Questionnaire" (SCNQ) was used. Data collected were analysed using independent t-test and One-Way ANOVA. Results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs, there is a significant difference in the counselling needs of first year science students based on location and finally, there is a significant difference in the first year science students counselling needs based on age. It was recommended among others that, there is a need to carry out needs assessment on a continuous basis in order to develop or modify counselling programmes that are in line with the ever changing student needs, and counselling unit of college should provide counselling support through interventions for the students and lastly prevention programme should be intensified through enlightenment channels by the college counselling unit.

Keywords: Counselling Needs, College of Education, First Year Science Students

Introduction

Humans encounter several difficulties as they engage with their physical, social, cultural, and economic environments. According to Aluede et al., (2005) these difficulties differ from person to person depending on things like age, gender, interests, social economic standing, culture, and degree of education. For instance, Wangeri et al., (2012) believed that first-time students entering higher education institutions would have adjustment challenges, worries and anxiety, and academic and professional issues. However, because they must balance a variety of roles, including romantic and professional ones, in order to find their true self, teenagers will struggle to determine who they are, what they are all about, and where they are heading in life (Santrock, 2005). Similarly, to young adults, middle-aged people have midlife crises and struggle with issues of intimacy and selecting life mates (Santrock, 2005). A continual needs assessment is crucial to helping people fulfill their counselling needs at different phases of life so that guidance and counselling programmes that are appropriate for their needs can be created to help address such needs.

However, according to Nayak (2007) education has given rise to new requirements such as career decisions, changes in academic level, work placements, economic troubles, technology problems, mental health problems, social and personal development issues. In the same vein, Muola and Migosi (2012) stated that students are subjected to issues with transition, orientation, career choice, adjustment and disciplinary constraints when they enroll in colleges and universities for the first time. Gysbers and Henderson (2006) opined that the challenges that have a significant negative impact on all students' personal, social, career and academic development include the rapid change in the work world and labour force, violence in homes, schools and communities, divorce, teenage suicide and sexual experimentation are some of the difficulties that have a significant detrimental impact on each student's personal, social, professional and academic growth.

Okumu as cited in Karimi et al., (2014) adds that there are many who claim that the changes are alienating and confusing young people and leaving them unsure of what to do. However, college counselling unit may benefit from knowing the needs of the students in order to build methods to meet those needs. Therefore, determining a student's counselling needs offers several advantages for various stakeholders both inside and outside the educational setting. Thus, these advantages include their usefulness in creating large and small group guidance and counselling programmes centred on the needs expressed by students, especially for students who are hesitant to seek individual counselling, training of guidance counsellors could be by local research on counselling needs of students, and it is an effective way to identify students' concerns (Aluede, 2001; Nicholas, 1995). Agatha (2006) noted that surveys can be utilized to make decisions and to enhance or adjust programmes accordingly. Astromovich (2011) observed that information gleaned through needs assessments may aid professional counsellors in different specialties in identifying pressing needs of the population they serve.

Consequently, counsellors should use counselling needs assessments to improve already-existing programmes or develop new services that will specifically address the requirements of the student population (Astromovich, 2011). However, American School Counselling Association (1997) asserts that all students should receive life success skills as part of a complete guidance and counselling programme. The educational, professional, self-awareness and interpersonal communication abilities that students develop through participation in these programmes should help them acquire and employ lifelong skills (Nayak, 2007). Students at college of education, Minna continue to engage in maladaptive behaviours like stealing, drug and alcohol misuse, secret cult, and criminal acts like kidnappings, murder, and prostitution despite the availability of counselling facilities at the college of education, Minna. Why the unsuitable behaviours, is the question at hand. Are the college students' maladaptive behaviours the result of unmet counselling needs? In light of this, the researchers set out to determine the counselling needs of first year science students of college of education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that guidance and counselling services are available in Nigerian universities and colleges of education, numerous issues involving counselling needs are still reported among students, including relationship problems, poor academic performance, drug and alcohol abuse, financial difficulties, prostitution, murder, kidnappings, and theft, as well as adjustment issues and psychological and behavioural problems as large number of both new and existing students were observed and realized to be battling with serious counselling needs and this can make students perform below average in their academic achievement, resulting from inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the college counselling unit.

Despite the effort of college administrators and other stakeholders' claims of providing all the necessary required facilities and resources towards ensuring effective and efficient learning among students of college of education the counselling needs are still not adequately address.

Additionally, going by daily reports by different stakeholders lamenting on students recently performing poorly in science related courses in college of education Minna, which guidance counsellors in the college guidance and counselling unit should have assisted in addressing such numerous challenges faced by the students. In line with the above, students can be motivated by school counsellors to improve on their work and dedication toward improving the students' counselling needs, but not much improvement is realised in first year science students of college of education, Minna. Researchers such as Muola and Migosi (2012); Astromovich (2011); Egbochuku and Akpan (2008); Nayak (2007); Agatha (2006); Egbochuku (2006), Berk (2005); Arco et al., (2005); Chartuvedi (2004); Mutie and Ndambuki (2004); Guneri et al., (2003); Aluede (2001) and Nicholas (1995) have carried out various studies on counselling needs of students with undergraduate and secondary school students as the respondents, but none have done studies using college of education students as the respondents. All these phenomena prompted the researchers curiosity to carry out a study that seek to determine the counselling needs of first year science students of college of education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the specific objectives of the study and they are to:

1. Find out whether there is any significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs.
2. Determine if there is any significant difference in the counselling needs of first year science students based on location.
3. Examine whether there is significant difference in the first year science students counselling needs based on age.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study. They are:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the counselling needs of first year science students based on location.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the first year science students counselling needs based on age.

Review of Literature

Humans encounter a variety of requirements during the course of growth and development, all of which must be satisfied for the best possible growth and development (Berk, 2005). According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2004), a lot of young people around the world deal with a variety of personal issues as they grow up. Thus, during adolescence and the early years of life, the drive to discover and comprehend oneself grows. Human life span is said to unfold in phases, and as a result, the demands that a growing person faces shift from one stage to another, according to theorists who have contributed concepts to the study of human growth and development like Erickson, Piaget, and Freud. For instance, in the psychosexual theory, the anal stage (1-3 years) is Freud's second stage of development, and toilet training is a major need. The caretaker is responsible for teaching the child at the most appropriate time and in the most appropriate way to avoid fixation, which results in a very messy and disorderly person (Berk, 2005, Santrock, 2005). According to Ericson's psychosocial theory, each developmental stage has a unique developmental problem, such as identity vs role uncertainty during the adolescent period (Berk, 2005 & Santrock, 2005). The adolescents must decide who they are, what they stand for, and where they want to

go in life. They must also deal with a variety of new roles, including romantic and professional ones, as they work to discover their true selves (Berk, 2005).

In the same vein, teenagers who manage these competing roles and identities successfully develop a new sense of self that is both acceptable and refreshing (Berk, 2005). Thus, teenagers who fail to overcome their identity crises experience role uncertainty (Berk, 2005; Santrock, 2005). Education and schooling both have stages and every level of study comes with its own set of difficulties. Some higher institution students are still in their teen years and are attempting to figure out who they are, what they are supposed to be doing in the higher institution, and where they are heading. They may encounter a variety of difficulties as they adjust to university life, including problems with their identity, their careers, their relationships, their ability to manage their academic workloads, and their financial situation. Lack of counselling and guidance in dealing with needs may prevent pupils from developing holistically. This study set out to determine the counselling needs of university students because guidance and counselling are provided in universities to assist students in resolving problems.

In other words, young adults have difficulties establishing relationships. Whether one is prepared to spend their life with someone and what qualities to search for in a partner can be overwhelming. The majority of the students are in their early 20s, and their past interactions with their families of origin greatly influence the answers to these questions. Changes in family duties come with adulthood. Many young individuals delay marriage until their late twenties and early thirties in order to grow their professions because of the availability of new job possibilities for women, increasing educational requirements in the workplace, and increased focus on personal autonomy (Weiten, 2005). Those that don't delay are overburdened by their tasks as spouses, parents, and career builders, leaving them fatigued.

The introduction of formal education, technological advancement, and the influence of other cultures are all contributing factors to the massive changes that are occurring in the 21st century (Nayak, 2007; Okumu as cited in Karimi et al., 2014) new demands have arisen as a result of education, including those related to career decisions, stepping up academic levels, job placements, economic troubles, technology challenges, mental health issues, and social and personal development issues. Nevertheless, when students join universities and colleges for the first time, they are exposed to problems related to transition, orientation, career choice, adjustment and disciplinary restrictions (Muola & Migosi, 2012).

Rapid change in work world and labour force, violence in the homes, schools and community, divorce, teenage suicide, sexual experimentation are all challenges that have great negative effects on the personal, social, career and academic development of all learners (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Okumu as cited in Karimi et al., (2014) concurs with this by saying that the changes are leaving the young people in a state of confusion, uncertain of what to do and alienated.

According to Nayak (2007), Egbochuku (2006), Chartuvedi (2004) and Sindabi as cited in Karimi et al., (2014) the areas that university students seek counselling include; public speaking anxiety, improvement in their study skills, career uncertainty, self confidence problems, lack of motivation, fear of failure, depression, lack of purpose in life, anxiety and nervousness, love and relationships, physical health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, weight, eating problems, time management, overcoming fear about taking exams, meeting career and educational needs; psychological issues such as suicidal and homicidal thoughts, mood changes, phobias, problem solving, marital issues, traumatic life events and life transitions.

In their study to assess and compare the counselling needs of several sub groups of students at middle East Technical University in Turkey and to investigate the perspectives of the counselling staff about counselling needs of the students and the counselling services, Guneri et al., (2003) found in their study that managing ones time, was rated highest in the list of student needs, identifying and planning goals for one's life and concentrating on studies followed next, followed by ending a relationship which took a share of 51% while, getting a job after college took a 50% portion. Knowing self better came lowest in the listing with 35%. The problem of time management among students may be a contributing factor to the increasing incidents of student unrest in the universities.

Aluede (2001) states that academic stress among students which is largely brought about by mounting examination fears and academic pressures is a significant factor in most incidents of student unrest not only in Nigerian universities but also in other universities in other countries. In a study of the profile of students attending university in Granada of Spain, Arco et al., (2005) reported that students rated academic needs; getting easily distracted, need to improve their study skills, problem of time management and problem of test taking anxiety as the areas desiring significant attention.

Students are faced by a variety of career/educational needs as they strive to achieve their academic goals. Some of these career needs are; problems in the choice of careers, fear of failing examinations which leads to anxiety, worries about getting a job related to ones career choice, financing ones education, content overload, poor study habits and skills, poor concentration and understanding of subject content and concerns about some inconsiderate and insensitive lecturers (Egbochuku & Akpan, 2008; Agatha, 2006; Berk, 2005). Egbochuku and Akpan (2008); Agatha (2006) further add that due to scarcity of jobs in the job markets, students, especially the adult students, may tend to pursue different careers from their original careers, they need to be aware of the world of jobs and their rewards; selecting and planning job/occupational choices is a great need among students, they face the challenge of making realistic job/occupational choices, identifying the requirements of appropriate and available jobs and identifying main occupational interests and needs.

These personal needs are critical in keeping relationships and maintaining friendships with other people. Nayak (2007) states that personal needs involves students learning about themselves and others: it includes learning to understand, accept and respect self, developing positive attitudes through identifying, prioritizing and evaluating values, understanding and making appropriate decisions regarding drug and alcohol abuse, tobacco and abuse of other harmful substances, developing respect for cultural diversity, learning how to behave responsibly in the family, school and community at large, develop relationship skills to resolve conflicts in a safe and responsible manner and develop effective ways to cope with violence in order to ensure personal safety (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Personal needs are diverse and therefore, impact on the student as an individual, the student and the immediate community in which he/she lives (the family, peers, college and the place of work).

Life skills needs include a wide range of knowledge and skill interactions believed to be essential for adult independent living (Santrock, 2005). Some of the life skills needs according to Santrock (2005) include; managing personal finances; this may include simple things such as; managing ones savings, managing personal budget and keeping records, demonstrating personal finance decision making skills, making responsible expenditures and paying bills among others.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. In this design the researchers does not manipulate the variables under study but examines them in their natural state (Orodho, 2003). Population of the study comprise of eight thousand two hundred and fifty-four (8,254) first year science students of college of education,

Minna (Directorate of Academic Planning and Development, College of Education, Minna, 2022). The population comprise of Five thousand six hundred and thirty-three (5,633) male students and three thousand one hundred and thirty (3,130) female students. Simple random, stratified and proportionate sampling procedures were used to draw a sample of 375 students. Using Kathuri and Pals (1993) table, a population of over 5,000 and above, researcher can select a minimum 375 sample size. The simple random sampling technique was used to select ten (10) departments out of nineteen (19). Thus, stratified sampling is used in situations where the researchers' knows some of the variables in the population that are critical to achieving representativeness (Burns & Groove, 1995). Gender of students of college of education, Minna was used for stratification. The male and female formed the two strata comprising of 208 male and 176 female students respectively. For representativeness, proportionate sampling procedure was used to distribute the students by gender to the ten (10) randomly selected departments in school sciences. This made a total sample size of 375 first year science students. A researchers-designed instrument titled "Student Counselling Needs Questionnaire" (SCNQ) to be rated on a modified four point Likert scale of strongly agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, disagree (D) 2, and strongly disagree (SD) 1 was used to collect data. The instrument was face and content validated by four (4) experts from the field of Counselling Psychology, test and measurement while the reliability of the instrument was established via test re-test method. The instrument was sample on twenty (20) students from two departments in School of Sciences College of Education, Minna twice within two (2) weeks interval, after which the two (2) set of scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and a reliability index of 0.68 was obtained. The copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researchers and four research-assistants. Data collected were analysed using frequency count, percentage for bio-data of the respondents while independent t-test and One-Way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to test hypotheses formulated.

Presentation of Results

Data collected were analysed in accordance with research hypotheses. The results were presented below:

Table 1: Showing the Frequency Counts and Percentage of the First Year Science Students

Item Grouping	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	241	64.3
Female	134	35.7
Total	375	100
Age Range		
15 – 25 Years	272	72.5
26 – 35 Years	62	16.5
36 and Above	41	10.9
Total	375	100
Religion		
Muslim	231	61.6
Christian	144	38.4
Total	375	100
Location		
Urban	257	68.5
Rural	118	32.5

Total

375

100

Table 1 above shows that 241 (64.3%) were males while 134 (35.7%) were females. From the total respondents, 272 (72.5%), 62 (16.5%), and 41 (10.9%) were between ages 15 – 25 years, 26 – 35 years and 36 years and above respectively. More so, 231 (61.6%) were Muslims while 144 (38.4%) were Christians. From the overall total, 257 (68.5%) and 118 (32.5%) of the respondents were from urban and rural areas respectively.

H01: There is no significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs.

Table 2: Showing t-test Analysis for Difference between Male and Female First Year Science Students Counselling Needs

Groups N SD t- P- Decision Mean Df cal. value

Groups	N	SD	t-	P-	Decision	Mean	Df	cal. value
Male	241	76.81	18.57	373	1.21	2.30		Accepted
	134	83.37	14.61					
Female								

The result in table 2 above indicates that the calculated t-value 1.21 is less than P-value 2.30 ($1.21 < 0.05$). Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs was retained, meaning that there is no significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs. On this note, it can be deduce that, male and female students are not different in their counselling needs even at college level.

H02: There is no significant difference in the counselling needs of first year science students based on location.

Table 3: Showing t-test Analysis for Difference between First Year Science Students Counselling Needs based on location

Groups	N	SD	Df	t-	P-	Decision	Mean	cal.
		79.91					0.04	Rejected
Urban	257	19.62	373		2.03			
	118	89.67	15.73					
Rural								

The result in table 3 above indicates that the P-value 0.04 is less than 0.05 ($0.04 < 0.05$). Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between first year science students counselling needs based on location was rejected and alternate hypothesis was retained, meaning

that there is significant difference between first year science students counselling needs based on location. On this note, it can be deduce that, students from urban and rural are mostly differed in their counselling needs.

H03: There is no significant difference in the first year students counselling needs based age

Table 4: Showing One-Way ANOVA Analysis on the Difference of First Year Science Students Counselling Needs Based on Age

Source of Variation	SS	MS	Df	Fvalue	Pvalue	Decision
Between Groups	0.17	5.06	2	3.98	2.64	Rejected
Within Groups	79.62	1.27	372			
Total	79.79		374			

The result in table 4 above revealed that the calculated F-value 3.98 is greater than P-value 2.64 ($2.64 < 0.05$). Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between first year science students counselling needs based on age was rejected and alternate hypothesis was retained, meaning that there is significant difference between first year science students counselling needs based on age. This implies that the first year science students differed based on their age groups.

Discussion of Results

The result in table 2 showed that the calculated t-value of 1.21 is less than P-value 2.30. This is an indication that there is no significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs in college of education, Minna, Niger State. One, therefore, adopts the position that counselling needs among male and female students in the study area are similar. This finding is in consonance with that of Agatha (2006), and Berk (2005) who found out those young undergraduate university students had the same counselling needs as perceived by students themselves. Furthermore, researchers such as Barnsley (2009); Egbochuku and Akpan (2008) and Santrock (2005) have ascertained that counselling needs is increasing in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria with the possibilities of depression, anxiety and performing below average that can result into a vicious cycle of negative outcomes to the society at large. On the contrary, Agatha (2006) found a significant difference among male and female respondents in the study carried out with many university students. However, the lack of no significant difference recorded may not be far from that fact that some colleges and universities counselling units/service only existed in name, but in reality some have inadequate personnel that would carry out necessary programmes that can address the counselling needs of the students.

The result in table 3 indicated that the calculated t-value of 2.03 was greater than P-value of 0.04. This is an indication that there is a significant difference in the counselling needs of first year science students based on location. The finding of this study was in congruent with Santrock (2005) and Berk (2005) found

that there is a significant difference between the two categories of their respondents regarding counselling needs of students. However, the finding of this study was in disagreement with that of Barnsley (2009) in which the findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the responses of respondents regarding the counselling needs of students from urban and rural area. One may adopt the assertion that location can account for a significant difference among respondents, since the experience in urban and rural area differs in Nigeria and most especially in some Africa countries. This result is expected since the urban areas are given adequate attention by the government than the rural areas one should expect the responses of the respondents may differ.

The result in table 4 showed that the calculated F-value of 3.98 is greater than P-value of 2.64 at degree freedoms of 374 with significance level of 0.05. Hence, there is a significant difference between the mean responses based on age of students. Therefore, hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the first year science students counselling needs based age was rejected. The finding of this study corroborated with that of Aluede et al., (2005) which shows that their respondents reported a significant difference in their responses regarding counselling needs of students among different ages used in the study. The finding of this study supports earlier assertion of Santrock (2005) that age range can account for a significant difference among respondents, since the experience each age group faced differs. However, times have changed, more and more students' academic performance has been affected as result of inefficiency and ineffective functional guidance and counselling units/services in higher institutions of learning. Nonetheless, this finding is expected since most of the respondents' falls within adolescents' age group, this might have accounted for the significant difference recorded.

Conclusion

The study examined the counselling needs of first year science students of college of education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. Thus, the following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study. However, the study concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female first year science students on their counselling needs. The study also concludes that there is a significant difference in the counselling needs of first year science students based on location and lastly, the study finds out that there is a significant difference in the first year science students counselling needs based age in college of education, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

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

1. There is a need to carry out needs assessment on a continuous basis in order to develop or modify counselling programmes that are in line with the ever changing students needs.
2. Counselling unit of college should provide counselling support through interventions for the students having counselling needs challenges.
3. Prevention programmes should be intensified through enlightenment channels by the college counselling unit.
4. Finally, the college counselling unit should work collaboratively with schools deans so as to provide awareness and educate students on issues related counselling needs during orientation.

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