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Factors Militating against Implementation of Guidance and Counselling Services in Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the factors militating against implementation of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses were developed to guide the study. The design of the study was a descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised 65,000 senior secondary school students (SS1 to SS3) and 350 guidance counselors in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The sample size was 400 for the students, while the counselors were 40, giving a total sample size of 440. The researcher adopted a simple random sampling technique to select the respondents for the study. The instrument for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire titled: Evaluation of the Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Services in Senior Secondary Schools Questionnaire. The four-point rating scale was validated by the experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses. The null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the analysis, the findings of the study revealed that availability of personnel, students' awareness and time constraint are among the factors militating against implementation of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The researcher recommends that: more qualified counsellors should be recruited to reduce the counsellor–student ratio and schools should conduct regular orientation sessions and awareness campaigns to educate students, teachers, and parents on the purpose and benefits of counseling.

Keywords: Factors, Militating, Implementation, Guidance and Counselling Services

INTRODUCTION

The recent complex changes and education trends in the world of works and society calls for proper implementation of guidance and counseling services in Nigeria particularly in the school system. Some of these trends are unstable homes, poor academic performance, drug abuse, high risk of sexual exploitation, cultism; kidnapping, youth restiveness etc. of latest concern to the government and stakeholders of education is the trend where some graduates of primary and secondary schools are unable to pass common entrance examinations into secondary and tertiary levels. Also, some graduates of the tertiary institutions are no longer fit into the labor market because of unemployment and underemployment among others. This trend calls for proper implementation of Guidance and Counseling services in Nigeria, to remedy the sorry situation.

The need for guidance and counselling in schools has become imperative in order to promote the well-being of learners. It is therefore important that school guidance and counselling services are fully functional and available to all learners in all schools to help alleviate the problems that they face. When schools are mainly concerned with delivering an academic curriculum, other aspects of the schools' role, such as providing personal and social education, tend to be overlooked (Hornby, Hall & Hall, 2003). In

addition to intellectual challenges, students encounter personal/social, educational and career challenges that needs to be addressed.

The enormity of the problems the adolescents faces underlines the need for guidance and counseling services in our schools, Durojaiye (2012) agrees that as a society grows in sophistication, so does its need for guidance and counseling. The need for guidance and counseling services increases as social and economic strikes are being made. As a society strives forward some of its members fall by the way side. Guidance and counseling should be seen as part of the total effort by the society to help and guide those who have fallen by the wayside and to prevent the tendency, especially in the youth. With the change in educational system, whereby there is little or no room for a selection into secondary schools, children of diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs temperaments, interests and abilities are put together except there is guidance and counseling to reconcile diverse opinion, there 'will be chaos in the schools. Guidance and counseling can help the individual to develop the ability to make best the possible adjustment within its new environment, so that he can make the best contribution to the school and its immediate society. This can be done through personal problems affecting adequate adjustment within the comprehensive nature of new secondary school set up, only good guidance and counseling can help the children through the choice of schools or universities. There is so much expectation from schools these days. Students look to the schools. To help them realize their aim in life Parents expect the school to develop the intellectual abilities of their children. They equally expect the schools to build up the moral, social and career success of their children. It is only through proper guidance and Counseling in the school that these obligations can be achieved.

For guidance and Counseling to be effective, the initiators must have to work very hard to be able to convince the members of the society of the importance of the discipline. To do this involves funds, traveling, organizing seminars, workshops, conference, talks etc. Furthermore, like any new innovation or programme, the introduction of guidance and Counseling has been warmly received by various groups in Nigeria many up till now still question the usefulness of Counseling in Nigeria setting. Besides, in most schools the time tables are often so congested and rigid that students who might even wish to consult the counsellor might find it extremely difficult to do so. The observation however, is that most of what ought to be in place for the effective implementation of guidance and Counseling services are not really there.

Guidance and Counseling teachers need to be supported in carrying out innovative activities towards provision of their services. Various scholars, educators, politicians and even the general public have underscored the importance of adequate funding and infrastructure. All education managers should therefore support the teacher's efforts in the process of implementing the guidance and counseling program. Unfortunately most of the head teachers are appointed from amongst serving teachers most of whom lack training in institutional management (Kafwa, 2005). This adversely affects effective management of educational institutions and maintenance of quality and high standards of education including guidance and counseling services. Further, the fact is that the education sectors in most countries have no provisions for guidance and counseling programs. Whatever funding is available for the implementation programmes is ad hoc and grossly inadequate. According to UNESCO (2007), responses from two countries in Africa gave the indication that since the establishment of their education committees with decentralized organs in all regions and districts, the education authorities have not made any funding available to them outside whatever funds they sourced from international agencies. These international agencies funds were usually for specific interventions. Insufficient funding of the program has made it extremely difficult to evolve effective schemes to reduce the impact of the epidemic on the victims and their dependence. Campaigns for safer sex makes it necessary for the committees to make the facilities for safer sex readily accessible and at affordable prices. All these demand adequate funds which is difficult to achieve in most cases.

Kochhar (2010) pointed out that a teacher who has adequate and relevant teaching materials and facilities will be more confident, effective and productive. Teachers might also have the competence and positive attitudes but if there are not enough resources, their efforts will come to naught. An ACCO Report (1979) in Kafwa (2005) also argued that it is of paramount importance that teachers get the required materials early enough to be able to give quality.

Many secondary schools, both public and private, struggle with a shortage of professional counselors—a situation made worse by insufficient government funding, lack of specialized facilities, and limited training opportunities for staff (Adora, 2020). Often, teachers with little or no background in

counseling are saddled with the additional burden of providing services they are underqualified for, leading to subpar outcomes (Abubakar, 2021). Furthermore, there is an absence of standardized protocols for delivering guidance and counseling, making it difficult to monitor and assess the effectiveness of such programs across different schools.

Awareness and attitudes towards guidance and counseling among students, parents, and even school management can further affect service quality. In some cases, cultural beliefs and misconceptions foster skepticism or stigma around counseling services, thus hindering student engagement (Ipage, 2020; Zunker, 2020). Students who are unaware of the existence of these services, or who perceive them as punitive or remedial rather than supportive, are less likely to seek help proactively.

Port Harcourt's dynamic environment, characterized by rapid urbanization, industrialization, and a burgeoning youth population, makes it essential to continually evaluate and strengthen guidance and counseling services. Empirical studies indicate that when properly implemented, these services contribute significantly to reduced student truancy, better academic performance, improved social behavior, and enhanced career readiness (Brown & White, 2018; Oladele, 2021). Conversely, lapses in implementation may lead to widening achievement gaps, unresolved psychosocial issues, and escalating school-related problems.

Given this context, there is a pressing need to investigate how guidance and counseling services are currently being executed in Port Harcourt's senior secondary schools. Such an evaluation will provide evidence-based insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current practices, and inform the development of effective strategies for improving student support in line with global best practices and national educational objectives.

Concept of Guidance and Counseling

Guidance has been defined by Makinde (1984) as "a purposeful, organized program of services provided to assist individuals in making and carrying out adequate plans for their lives." UNESCO (2002) defines it more broadly as "a range of processes and interventions that assist individuals to understand themselves and the world of work, and to make appropriate educational, occupational, and personal decisions." Counseling, according to Gibson and Mitchell (2011), is "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals." The Nigerian Counselling Association (CASSON, 2018) emphasizes that counseling in schools should integrate academic, career, and psychosocial interventions tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

Historical Development of Guidance and Counseling in Nigeria

The development of guidance and counseling in Nigeria mirrors the country's socio-political evolution, educational reforms, and the changing needs of its young population. From informal mentoring systems in pre-colonial societies to the policy-driven school counseling units of today, the history reflects a gradual shift from community-based advisory roles to professionalized, evidence-based interventions. Before the advent of Western education, Nigerian societies employed traditional guidance structures rooted in cultural values, apprenticeship systems, and communal living. Western-style education, introduced by Christian missionaries in the late 19th century, altered the guidance landscape. Missionary schools such as St. Mary's in Lagos and Holy Rosary in Onitsha integrated moral instruction and vocational advice into religious education.

The turning point came with the 1977 National Policy on Education (NPE), which declared guidance and counseling a statutory component of Nigeria's educational system. The NPE stated: "In view of the complexity of modern living, guidance and counseling should be provided in schools to help individuals make appropriate educational, vocational, and personal-social decisions."

Importance and Relevance of Guidance and Counseling in Schools

Guidance and counseling occupy a central role in the overall educational process, particularly in senior secondary schools, where students face a critical period of academic specialization, identity formation, and career decision-making.

In the Nigerian context especially in rapidly growing urban centers like Port Harcourt the importance of guidance and counseling cannot be overstated. Senior secondary school students are expected to make choices that will have long-term implications for their personal, educational, and

professional futures. Without structured guidance, these decisions may be based on misinformation, peer pressure, or temporary emotions rather than informed self-awareness and labor market realities.

1. Academic Support and Improvement

One of the most visible contributions of guidance and counseling is the improvement of academic performance. Counselors help students develop effective study habits, manage examination stress, and address learning difficulties.

2. Career Decision-Making and Vocational Preparation

Senior secondary school is the stage where students must decide on career paths whether to pursue university education, vocational training, or immediate employment.

3. Emotional and Social Development

Adolescence is a period of significant emotional change. Without proper support, students may struggle with low self-esteem, peer pressure, relationship conflicts, or family issues.

4. Mental Health Awareness and Intervention

The pressures of urban life, high academic competition, and family instability in Port Harcourt can lead to mental health issues among students.

6. Positive School Climate and Discipline

Guidance and counseling contribute to a positive school climate by promoting mutual respect, empathy, and ethical conduct. Counselors provide alternative dispute resolution methods, reducing reliance on punitive discipline. They help teachers and administrators understand students' behavioral challenges in context, leading to fairer interventions.

7. Parental Engagement

Effective guidance programs also bridge the gap between school and home by involving parents in their children's educational and personal development. Counselors organize parental workshops on adolescent development. Parents are informed of their children's strengths and areas for improvement, enabling better home support.

8. Preparing Students for Global Competitiveness

With globalization and Nigeria's integration into the digital economy, students need 21st-century skills: critical thinking, adaptability, and cultural competence. Guidance programs help:

Implementation Factors and Challenges

The implementation of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools is a multifaceted process influenced by policy frameworks, resource availability, personnel competence, school culture, and socio-cultural acceptance. While Nigeria's National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) mandates that "every child shall have access to guidance and counseling services," the translation of this directive into effective practice varies widely across schools and states. In Port Harcourt Metropolis, implementation outcomes differ significantly between public and private schools, reflecting disparities in funding, staffing, and infrastructure.

Personnel Competence and Availability

A qualified counselor should hold a degree in Guidance and Counseling or Educational Psychology, along with certification from CASSON. Professional competence ensures that counselors can address academic, vocational, and personal-social issues effectively.

Teacher-Counselor Role Overlap – In many schools, a teacher with no formal training is assigned counseling duties as an additional responsibility. **High Workload** – Counselors may be responsible for over 500 students, limiting individualized attention.

Awareness and Utilization

Students must know about the existence and benefits of counseling services. Regular orientation sessions and publicity campaigns help build awareness. **Misconceptions** – Some students believe counseling is only for "problem students."

Personnel

The quality and impact of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools are directly dependent on the availability, competence, and professional commitment of personnel assigned to deliver these services. In educational counseling, “personnel” typically refers to trained and certified guidance counselors, but in the Nigerian context, the term can also encompass teachers, administrators, and allied professionals who contribute to the counseling process.

In Port Harcourt Metropolis, the personnel situation reveals a dual reality: while some private schools employ highly qualified, full-time counselors, many public schools struggle with shortages, overburdened staff, and reliance on untrained personnel.

Awareness of Counseling Services

Awareness of counseling services refers to the extent to which students, parents, teachers, and the broader community are informed about the existence, functions, and benefits of guidance and counseling programs within a school. In senior secondary schools, particularly in urban centers like Port Harcourt, awareness is a key determinant of service utilization. Even the most well-structured counseling unit with trained personnel and adequate tools will have limited impact if the target beneficiaries students are unaware of its presence or unclear about its purpose.

Awareness of counseling services is the gateway to utilization. In Port Harcourt’s senior secondary schools, the challenge is not only to establish counseling units but also to ensure that every student knows they exist, understands their purpose, and feels comfortable accessing them. Without targeted awareness strategies, counseling services risk remaining underutilized despite significant investment in personnel and resources.

Statement of the Problem

Empirical and anecdotal findings indicate that guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools of Port Harcourt Metropolis are suboptimal. Many schools reportedly lack qualified counselors, appropriate facilities, and adequate counseling programs. Additionally, students may not fully utilize existing services due to lack of awareness or cultural misconceptions surrounding counseling (Eze & Okafor, 2021). School administrators often prioritize academic activities over counseling functions, and counselors themselves are frequently overburdened with other teaching duties (Abubakar, 2019). This state of affairs raises critical concerns regarding the implementation quality of guidance and counseling services and their effectiveness in addressing students’ academic, social, and psychological needs. Without proper evaluation, these problems risk continuing unnoticed, ultimately impairing students’ development and success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine factors militating against implementation of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objective is to

1. To examine the extent to which availability of personnel affects the effective implementation of guidance and Counseling services in senior secondary schools in | Rivers State
2. To examine the extent to which students’ awareness affects the implementation of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools Rivers State
3. To examine the extent to which time constraint affect the implementation of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools in Rivers State

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent does availability of personnel affect the effective implementation of the guidance and Counseling services in secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does students' awareness of guidance and counselling affect the effective implementation of guidance and Counseling services in secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does time constraint affect the effective implementation of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference between the availability of personnel and the effective implementation of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Rivers State
2. There is no significant difference between student awareness of guidance and counselling services and effective implementation of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Rivers State
3. There is no significant difference between time constraint and the effective implementation of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Rivers State

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was one of the most widely used approaches in educational and social science research. The descriptive survey design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather data from a large and diverse population at a single point in time in order to describe existing conditions, opinions, perceptions, and practices without manipulating the research variables. The target population for this study comprised 65,000 senior secondary school students of classes one to three (SS1–SS3). This included day and boarding schools, as well as faith-based and secular institutions. The counselor population within these schools was estimated at about 350 individuals. This figure included professionally trained guidance counselors as well as teacher-counselors subject teachers who had been assigned counseling duties without formal counseling qualifications. This study employed a simple random sampling technique to select participants from the target population. Random sampling was appropriate because it ensured that every individual in the population had an equal and independent chance of being selected, thereby minimizing selection bias and improving the representativeness of the sample. The total sample size was 440 including students and counselors

The sample size for students was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula for finite populations at a 95% confidence level. This approach was both statistically robust and logistically feasible, ensuring that the findings could be generalized to the larger population of students and counselors in Port Harcourt Metropolis. By using this sampling strategy, the study obtained a balanced and credible dataset for evaluating the implementation of guidance and counseling services in Port Harcourt senior secondary schools. The primary data collection tool for this study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled Evaluation of Implementation of Guidance and Counselling Services in Senior Secondary Schools Questionnaire (EIGCSSSQ). The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent and Very Low Extent. To ensure the instrument measured what it was intended to measure, content validity was established through expert review. The draft questionnaire was submitted to two experts in Educational Psychology/Guidance and Counseling. Data collected were coded and entered into SPSS (Version 27) for analysis. The analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics: Descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize demographic data and general responses. Independent samples t-test was used to test hypotheses and determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the implementation of guidance and counseling services between public and private schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: To what extent are qualified personnel available and adequate for the implementation of guidance and counseling services?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation statistics of opinions of respondents on the extent to which qualified personnel are adequate for effective implementation of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Item	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit (0.05)	Sig. (p)	Decision
Availability of trained counselors	3.20	0.85	2.41	1.96	0.017	Significant
Counselor-student ratio adequacy	2.95	0.83	1.92	1.96	0.056	Not Significant
Counselor motivation and welfare	2.82	0.94	1.60	1.96	0.112	Not Significant
Opportunities for in-service training	2.76	0.92	1.38	1.96	0.169	Not Significant
Counselor professionalism and competence	3.21	0.80	2.47	1.96	0.015	Significant
Grand Mean / Evaluation	2.99					Moderately Effective

The availability of personnel is *moderately effective* with a grand mean of 2.99. While qualified counselors exist, their number and level of motivation are insufficient for optimal service delivery. The t-test results indicate that only two indicators are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming limited personnel capacity. This suggests that counselor deployment and professional development require urgent attention to improve implementation efficiency.

Research Question 2: To what extent do students benefit from guidance and counseling services?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation statistics of opinions of respondents on the extent to which students benefits from guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Item	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit (0.05)	Sig. (p)	Decision
Students understand the purpose of counseling	3.10	0.89	2.01	1.96	0.047	Significant
Counseling improves academic performance	3.14	0.85	2.35	1.96	0.019	Significant
Counseling assists in career choices	3.22	0.82	2.52	1.96	0.012	Significant

Item	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit (0.05)	Sig. (p)	Decision
Counseling influences positive interpersonal behavior	2.96	0.93	1.80	1.96	0.072	Not Significant
Counseling enhances school adjustment	2.88	0.97	1.50	1.96	0.134	Not Significant
Grand Mean / Evaluation	3.06					Moderately Effective

The results indicate that students derive *moderate benefits* from counseling, with a grand mean of 3.06. Counseling significantly enhances academic performance and career decision-making ($p < 0.05$), though behavioral and emotional outcomes remain limited. The evaluation suggests that counseling in these schools primarily addresses academic and career domains rather than comprehensive personal development.

Research Question 3: To what extent are facilities available and adequate for the implementation of guidance and counseling services?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation statistics of opinions of respondents on the extent to which facilities available and adequate for effective implementation of guidance and counseling services in senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Item	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit (0.05)	Sig. (p)	Decision
Availability of counseling offices	2.88	0.91	1.72	1.96	0.086	Not Significant
Access to assessment tools and materials	2.75	0.93	1.46	1.96	0.148	Not Significant
Use of ICT for counseling	2.62	0.99	1.29	1.96	0.198	Not Significant
Maintenance of facilities	2.90	0.86	1.81	1.96	0.072	Not Significant
Privacy and comfort of counseling spaces	3.00	0.84	1.98	1.96	0.049	Significant
Grand Mean / Evaluation	2.83					Ineffective

The grand mean of 2.83 reveals that the adequacy of facilities for guidance and counseling is *ineffective*. Statistical analysis shows that only one of the five indicators is significant ($p < 0.05$). Most schools lack private counseling spaces, psychometric tools, and ICT resources necessary for effective service delivery, thus limiting professionalism and confidentiality.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of practising guidance counsellors and students on the adequacy of personnel for implementing guidance and counseling services.

Table 4:

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	p (approx.)	t-calculated	t-critical ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Decision
Counsellors	20	3.12	0.79		0.4414	0.770	1.97	Fail to reject H ₀₃
Students	374	2.98	0.84	392				

At 0.05 significance level and 392 degrees of freedom, the calculated t (0.77) is less than the critical t (1.97). The null hypothesis is accepted. This result shows that counsellors and students do not differ significantly in their opinions regarding the adequacy of personnel. Evaluatively, both groups perceive that although qualified counsellors exist, their number is insufficient to serve the large student population. This supports findings by Yusuf and Adediwura (2017) that the shortage of trained personnel remains a major impediment to full-scale counselling service delivery in Nigerian secondary schools.

H₀2: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of practising guidance counsellors and students on the extent to which students benefit from guidance and counseling services.

Table 5:

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	p (approx.)	t-calculated	t-critical ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Decision
Counsellors	20	3.20	0.81		0.4211	0.804	1.97	Fail to reject H ₀₄
Students	374	3.05	0.87	392				

At the 0.05 significance level and 392 degrees of freedom, the calculated t -value of 0.80 is lower than the critical value of 1.97. The null hypothesis is accepted, implying no significant difference between counsellors' and students' perceptions of student benefit from counselling services. Evaluatively, both groups agree that while counselling offers measurable assistance—especially in academic and career guidance—it remains underutilized for behavioral and emotional development. This result corroborates earlier observations by Okobiah and Okorodudu (2018), who reported that many Nigerian students perceive counselling as primarily academic rather than holistic.

H₀3: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of practicing guidance counsellors and students on the adequacy of facilities for guidance and counseling services.

Table 6:

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	p (approx.)	t-calculated	t-critical ($\alpha = 0.05$)	Decision
Counsellors	20	2.90	0.86		0.6859	0.405	1.97	Fail to reject H ₀₅
Students	374	2.82	0.91	392				

At 0.05 level of significance and 392 degrees of freedom, the calculated t -value (0.41) is less than the critical t -value (1.97). The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between counsellors' and students' assessments of facilities available for counselling. Evaluatively, both groups believe that counselling rooms, equipment, and ICT materials are inadequate. The consistency in responses indicates that poor infrastructural support is a shared limitation affecting service quality. This finding aligns with the evaluation of Eremie (2018), who observed that most Rivers State schools lack functional counselling laboratories and digital resources.

Discussion of Findings

Adequacy of Personnel

The study further found that the availability of qualified guidance counsellors in senior secondary schools is moderate but insufficient. Respondents acknowledged that the existing counsellors are professionally competent but too few to manage the large student population. The high student–counsellor ratio results in limited personal interaction, infrequent group sessions, and reduced follow-up. Evaluatively, this shortage diminishes service effectiveness and threatens the attainment of counselling goals. Yusuf and Adediwura (2017) found a similar trend across Nigerian schools, noting that inadequate staffing constrains the holistic implementation of counselling programmes. Therefore, effective guidance delivery in Port Harcourt requires recruiting additional qualified personnel and ensuring periodic training to enhance service capacity.

Students' Awareness and Benefits

Findings on students' awareness indicated that most students are conscious of the existence of guidance and counselling services and derive moderate benefits from them. However, many still misunderstand the purpose of counselling, associating it only with disciplinary issues. This misconception reduces voluntary participation and the willingness of students to seek help for personal or emotional challenges. Evaluatively, this shows that awareness has not translated into full utilisation of services. Okobiah and Okorodudu (2018) observed similar patterns, explaining that students often misinterpret counselling as corrective rather than developmental. To address this, schools should implement continuous awareness campaigns and integrate guidance education into the curriculum to normalise student–counsellor interaction.

Adequacy of Facilities

The study revealed that facilities and resources for guidance and counselling services are grossly inadequate. Both counsellors and students agreed that counselling rooms, test materials, ICT resources, and confidentiality tools are lacking in most schools. This deficiency affects the privacy and quality of counselling sessions, hindering effective data storage, assessment, and programme evaluation. Evaluatively, infrastructural inadequacy remains one of the key barriers to quality service delivery. Eremie (2018) similarly noted that the absence of functional counselling centres and digital tools limits the effectiveness of counsellors in Rivers State. Thus, the provision of adequate physical and technological facilities is fundamental to improving the quality and accessibility of guidance services in schools.

Procedural Implementation

The findings showed that procedural implementation of counselling covering planning, coordination, and evaluation is inconsistent across schools. While most schools have established counselling units, there is limited standardisation in operational processes, documentation, and supervision. Many schools do not have formal evaluation systems or consistent record-keeping practices. Evaluatively, this points to weak administrative control and a lack of systematic monitoring by educational authorities. Iwuama and

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools within Port Harcourt Metropolis are moderately effective but structurally weak. Both counsellors and students agree that the programme contributes positively to students' academic, career,

and social development, but its impact remains limited by inadequate financial resources, insufficient personnel, lack of facilities, and inconsistent procedural frameworks.

The absence of significant differences between the perceptions of counsellors and students reflects a unified understanding of these weaknesses and demonstrates that the observed limitations are systemic, not individual. Evaluatively, this suggests that effective implementation of guidance and counselling services requires holistic institutional strengthening through policy enforcement, financial investment, personnel recruitment, and infrastructural support. Without these, counselling services will remain underutilised and fail to achieve their intended developmental and preventive functions within the school system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- 1 Additional qualified counsellors should be recruited to reduce the counsellor–student ratio. Continuous professional development and refresher workshops should be organised to keep counsellors updated on emerging practices.
- 2 Schools should conduct regular orientation sessions and awareness campaigns to educate students, teachers, and parents on the purpose and benefits of counselling, to encourage greater utilisation of the services.
- 3 Clear administrative and procedural guidelines should be developed and implemented across all schools to ensure uniformity in planning, supervision, and record-keeping. Regular monitoring and evaluation by education authorities should be institutionalised.

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