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COUNSELLING
AND BEHAVIOURAL
STUDIES JOURNAL



ISSN 2315-7518, Vol. 5, No 2, July 2015

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ISSN: 2315-7518

Published by the

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE & COUNSELLING,
Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

For

COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA
(Oyo State Chapter)

Printed by:



HIS LINEAGE PUBLISHING HOUSE
26, Okunmade Street, Mokola Ibadan, Nigeria.

GSM: 08033596818

E-mail: awemakin@gmail.com

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ROLE OF COUNSELLING SERVICES IN ERADICATING SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF UNDERACHIEVING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBADAN

Ogundokun, M. O.

Department Of Guidance and Counselling

University of Ibadan.

Femtopng@Gmail.Com

07031374047

Obisanya Funmilayo Ruth

Fobis2005@Yahoo.Com

07062295141

Abstract

Social exclusion is a form of depriving an individual/ group of people from participating or benefiting from some factors /activities of which they have the right to partake from. This study therefore, examined the role of counselling services in eradicating social exclusion of underachieving students. A descriptive survey research design of an ex-post facto type was adopted. A total of 500 participants were randomly selected from underachieving secondary school students in Ibadan. 228 (45.6%) were males while 272 (54.4%) were females. The instruments used for the study were School Counselling services scale (SCSS) and Social Inclusion Scale (SIS). Data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and t-test tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that counselling has been perceived to be an effective tool in eradicating social exclusion among underachieving students in schools. It was therefore recommended that Counsellors should ensure to help students who may feel excluded or who show signs of isolation and truancy to ensure they are assisted to develop courage and determination to improve.

Key words: Social exclusion, Counseling services, Underachieving students

Introduction

In every society, it has been discovered that there exist inequality of various forms and in different areas, which has led to some forms of discrimination of people. In the school environment, student are graded on the basis of performance in test and examination, this indicates that some students' performance are high while some are at the mid-point and some performed poorly. The poorly performed ones are labelled as underachieving students. As a result of these underachieving students' performance, there can arise some forms of discrimination from peers, teachers, and even parents that may ultimately lead to what is termed here as social exclusion.

There has been much debate in the literature about exactly what social exclusion means and how it should be defined. According to Pierson (2002), social exclusion is referred to as a process that prevent families, groups and neighbourhoods the resources they need to participate fully in social, economic and political life. Also, social exclusion may be defined as an extreme consequence of what happens when people do not get a fair deal throughout their lives and find themselves in difficult situations (Social Exclusion Task Force, 2009). This definition thus include a wide varieties of social disadvantages which was reported to fail in embodying the central feature of social exclusion, which is its failure to participate in key economic, social and civic activities. Reflecting these limitations, researchers at the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) have proposed the following definition:

'An individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities in the society in which he or she lives. (Burchardt, Le Grand & Piachaud, 2002, p.30)

This definition emphasizes that social exclusion reflects a lack of connectedness that is multi-dimensional, and whose elements relate not only to the characteristics of individuals but also to the communities, social and physical environments in which people live. One limitation is that it fails to emphasize that it is the opportunity to participate that matters, since some will choose not to take up the opportunities they have and they should not be considered excluded if their lack of participation reflects a choice not to do so, as opposed to a

constraint that people are unable to overcome (Wong, Peter, Wong, Mariana & Chua, 2012),

An alternative definition, proposed by a group of leading British as a 'composite working definition' after having reviewed the 'wide range of definitions used in the literature' is more explicit about what exclusion actually is, arguing that:

Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in society, whether in economic, social, cultural, or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.' (Levitas, Pantazis, Fahmy, Gordon, Lloyd & Patsios, 2007, p. 9)

From the definitions above, relating social exclusion to the school and classroom setting, it could be defined as the denial of some set of students the opportunity to participate in some classroom/school activities and also the access to some resources within the school.

Social exclusion focuses attention on relational issues that is rupturing social relationships as reflected in inadequate social participation. In the school an underachieving student may experience discrimination, rejection and neglect from their teacher who may manifest these in form of not allowing the student to respond to questions even when he/she is raising his/her hands, shout at the student when he/she makes a slight mistake, make him/her only watch during practical aspect of the teaching process when other students are fully involve in working on and in manipulating the practical objects, makes mockery when he/she attempts to contribute during brainstorming etc. As a result of this, classmate and peers may start refusing to associate with such students, parent can as well refuse to allow such a child to participate in decision making at home while other siblings do so, they may refuse to get involved in the progress of such a child most especially the academic endeavours.

Underachieving students who experience social exclusion are likely to develop some problems that may increase the likelihood of mental health problems at a much greater risk of experiencing social

exclusion. This is partly due to the impact of mental health problems on social relationships and one's ability to work, but also because of the widespread stigma that is associated with mental illness (Wong, Peter, Wong, Mariana & Chua, 2012). They can also develop inferiority complex, isolation of self, truancy, drop out of school, disobedient to classroom/school rules and regulation, easily disruptive, increase academic poor performance, aggressive, develop bullying and violence tendencies, becoming drug addict, run away from home, and also get involve in other juvenile delinquencies (Sen, 1992).

In order to assist in controlling this social menace from the society, counselling services is considered as a tool in eradication social exclusion in the school and home settings of underachieving students. According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2006), Counselling is encompassed by activities of relevant services and also processes of helping persons within and outside the school, to achieve their full potentialities in their emotional, moral, social, academic and vocational developments. Counselling according to Akpan (2010) is an educational service that seeks to provide the school child opportunity to obtain holistic educational development that prepares him for functional life." Esen (1998) says that Guidance and Counselling is aimed primarily at assisting the receiver to discover his own hidden strengths and ultimately grow in independence and ability to take his own decisions, make choices or adjustment unaided. Counselling therefore could thus be said to be a human oriented programme which is based on helping the individual to define and redefined his goals and aspirations in life pursuits for greater performance and productivity. Tambawal (2007) stated that Counselling is concerned with the feelings, attitudes and emotional dispositions of an individual about himself and situations facing him. Counselling practice is mainly concerned with the ways of assisting the individuals to understand himself and the world around him, be able to utilize his potential to the fullest and live a normal and well-adjusted life.

Modo and Inaja (2010) defined the counsellor as one that is professionally trained in the field of counselling to help clients or students who may be in need of such help. Again Denga (2001) sees the counsellor as manager of a project called client. He says that the counsellor manages the client's educational, vocational and personal-social potentials in a way that the individual becomes useful to himself

and the society at large. To effectively manage a client, the counsellor employs some professional skills such as listening, responding, empathizing, probing, questioning, interpreting, confronting, restatement, silence, catharsis, assurance, 'immediacy, encouraging, clarifying, self-disclosing, concretizing, homework and summarizing (Okobiah, 2006).

In the counselling profession there are many services that the professional counsellor can render to the school and the host community. These services include; educational, vocational and personal social services, through processes such as orientation, information, appraisal, referral, counselling, placement and follow-up.

Counselling services in education involve taking care of all issues associated with education as they relate to the physical environment of the school, the structural make-up of the school, activities within the school, students in take, students' progress, and adaptability within the school. Olayinka (1999) said that educational counselling include assisting students make the most appropriate use of their educational opportunities. Also, Egbule (2006) defined educational counselling as assistance given to pupils and students that enable them function well in the school. He went further to explain that it assists them in understanding themselves and how their potentials could be developed.

Counselling in vocational aspect is the process of assisting the individuals to choose occupation, prepare to enter into it and make progress. The following are the reasons for vocational counselling in the school system. They are to:

- (a) help students understand themselves in terms of their abilities, aptitudes and interests.
- (b) provide students with broader views about the world of work.
- (c) enhance students awareness of the various options opened to them and given them the confidence that they can make a reasonable choice from the various options available.
- (d) develop in the students the concept of variety of roles in the society.
- (e) develop the spirit of job satisfaction and motivation as well as self-actualization in the students after a choice of career has been made. Egbule (2006).

In personal-social counselling is a service that helps the students to take care of socio-personal problems relating to personality maladjustments. This explains that its aim is to assist students understand themselves, other around them and how to react to perceived challenges around them appropriately Egbule (2006). Ugwuebulem and Igbokwe (1996) enumerated the following objectives of personal-social guidance and counselling service:

- (a) to make the school child happy, well-adjusted and self-confident.
- (b) identify students' feelings and attitudes towards others and improve on the feelings and attitude especially if they are negative.
- (c) identify the nature of students' relationship with friends and associates and ensure that it is a progressive and beneficial one.
- (d) help the student to assess and accept himself.

The purpose of all these is to help students understand themselves and to discover their abilities and limitation from their environment (Ndegwa, 2013).

Objective of the study

The study seeks to investigate the relationship between social exclusion and counselling services as a tool in eradicating it among underachieving students. It also aims at establishing the gender influence in eradication of social exclusion.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to be tested in this study;

1. Will there be any significant relationship between counselling services and eradication of social exclusion of underachieving students?
2. What is the significant influence of gender on the perception of counselling services in eradicating social exclusion among underachieving students?

Methodology

Research design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of an ex-post facto type to establish the extent to which counselling services can serve as a tool to eradicate social exclusion of underachieving students.

Participants

A total of 500 respondents were randomly selected from 10 schools using the result obtained from the school to select 50 students that score less than 40 in more than 6 subjects being taken. 2 schools were purposively selected from each of the 5 local government randomly selected from the 11 local government in Ibadan. The respondents were made up of 228 (45.6%) males and 272 (54.4%) females.

Measures

The instrument used has two sections; the section A seeks the demographic information of the respondents while section B seeks information on the variables (social exclusion and counselling services. The instruments used include;

- School Counselling Services Scale (SCSS)
- Social Inclusion Scale (SIS)

School Counselling Services Scale (SCSS)

School Counselling services scale was adopted from Student Perceptions of School Counsellor Functions Scale used in measuring perceptions of the school counsellor's roles and services. It was developed by Erford (2003). The scale contains 20 items and are structured in a 5-point Likert format with responses ranging from 1-Not Important to 5-Extremely Important. It test retest reliability result in a coefficient alpha of 0.87.

Social Inclusion Scale (SIS)

The scale was developed by Secker, Hacking, Kent, Shenton and Spandler (2009). It was adopted and modified. The scale was designed to measure the different ways an individual can be socially excluded. The scale consist of 21 items and is scored on four point Likert scale

ranging strongly agree=1 to strongly disagree=4. The internal consistency of the scale=0.77 and the test-retest=0.81.

Procedure

Selected schools were approached by the researcher and permission was obtained from the school principal to access results which were used to screen participants. The questionnaire was administered to the selected respondents within four weeks. The aim of the research was explained to the respondents and they were also educated on how to fill the questionnaire after which they filled it and were duly collected for analysis.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The result obtained based on the research questions were presented below:

Table 1: Correlational table showing the significant relationship between Social exclusion and Counselling Services

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	r	P	Remark
Social exclusion	13.2600	6.5302	50	.684*	.000	Sig.
Counseling services	13.2120	6.7240	0			

** Sig. at .05 level

The table indicated that there is significant relationship between social exclusion and counseling services ($r = .684, P < .05$).

Table 2: Showing the significant influence of gender on the eradication of social exclusion among underachieving students.

Attitude	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal-t.	P
Male	228	49.7500	13.6436	498	.643	.521
Female	272	51.1284	11.7883			

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between male and female perception of counselling services in eradication of social exclusion ($t=.643$; $df=498$; $p>.05$).

Discussion

The result indicated that there is a significant relationship between counselling services and the eradication of social exclusion of underachieving students. This is in consonance with the findings of Pierson (2002) who found that there is a significant relationship between counselling services and the eradication of social exclusion. This result is explainable bearing in mind that counselling services are educative tools that can make the individual understands the consequences of his/her actions thereby making them realize the fact that the exclusion of another individual unfairly could cause more problems for them rather than improving them.

Gender does not have significant influence on the social exclusion; this is in line with the findings of Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud (2002), Odinko and Adeyemo (1999) who found that gender do not significantly influence academic performance even if other variables do. This result is so because the sex of a student does not determine his/her academic achievement, so the individual cannot be socially excluded based on that.

Implication of the findings of the study for counselling

The result of the study has shown that counselling as a tool has been perceived to be an effective tool in eradicating social exclusion of underachieving students in school. Therefore, students need to create awareness in the appropriate quarters, such as to the school counsellor if they perceive they are being excluded from participating in academic and social activities in the classroom/school. Teachers should beware of the way they treat this group of students so as not to further discourage them, rather they should strategize means of assisting them become a better students. Counsellors should ensure to help students who may feel excluded or show signs of isolation and truancy to develop courage and determination to improve. They should also try to develop means of identifying the act of socially excluding underachieving students by classmate, peers, parents and teachers. Government and school authorities should provide, monitor and

improve counselling services in schools so as to enable the students understand themselves and their world.

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