
**COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR CONTROLLING FEMALE
STUDENT PRONE TO DROPOUT FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL IN
NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA ENUGU STATE**

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Abstract

This study investigated counselling strategies for controlling female student that are prone to dropout from secondary school in Nsukka Local Government Area, of Enugu state. Based on the purpose of the study three research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 6,295 SS1-SS3 public secondary school students. A sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) students was used for the study. The face validity of the instruments were done by three experts, two from educational foundations and one from measurement and evaluation. The reliability coefficient (r) of 0.87 and 0.93, 0.98, and 0.99, were obtained for SPLSQ and CSQ- individual counselling, group counseling, and cognitive restructuring strategies respectively. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings showed that individual counselling, group counselling, and cognitive restructuring strategies were accepted as effective for controlling female student who are prone to dropout. Based on the outcome, the researchers emphasize the need to address the individual needs of each female student using individual counselling strategy. Provide appropriate guidance and counselling services using group counselling and cognitive restructuring strategies, and encourage parental support for their daughters in order to reduce the rate of female student dropout.

Keywords: Counselling, strategies, controlling, female, student, Prone, Dropout, secondary school.

Introduction

Secondary school education is a link between elementary educations, tertiary education and higher education. It is evident that improved enrolment at the elementary stage which has led to increased access to secondary schools which in turn has influenced demands for tertiary and higher education. Secondary school education thus, is of special importance in the education ladder in as much as its successful completion is a requirement for admission into institutions of higher education and at the same time being a terminal stage. It caters to the needs of those who enter the world of works and broad goals of secondary education is to prepare the individual for useful living within the society; and higher education. According to Theodore (2010), secondary education is the successor to a slightly order system that is assigned to students at age 11 to 13 and ending usually at age 15 to 18 years. According to Osakwe and Osagie (2010), the importance of secondary school education in socio-economic transformation of any nation whether, developed, developing and underdeveloped cannot be underestimated. Secondary school education exist for the purpose of imparting knowledge and skills to students in order for them to serve socio-economic and political needs of ever changing society through active participation and involvement in all round activities. Hence, it is pertinent that a group of people bounded by a territorial boundary such as Nigeria should ensure that its educational goals are properly set and attained to make it abreast of educational developments among the committee of nations so that it will not be relegated to the background (Arowolo ., Arowolo, and Adaja, 2016). Specifically, secondary school education is aimed at raising a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under the broad national goals, and live as good citizens and providing technical knowledge and vocational skills, necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economical development Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2004). In the context of this study, secondary school education can be defined as that education for children which commence after primary education, and this can lead to either employment or higher education. It is also an institution

that reforms and package the beneficiaries with basic information that will make one a successful being to one's self and as well to the society.

The goal of secondary education as documented in the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) is essentially to prepare and equip students to enter the world of work. During secondary education, students develop positive attitude cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally to face the challenges of life, Theodore (2010). Despite the obvious benefits of education to national development, research findings of Rumberger, (2010) indicate that female dropout rate from secondary school is increasing. There may be other reasons for female dropout in Nsukka Local Government and they are varied and may include securing an employment, poor grade, avoiding bullying, family emergency, depression and other mental illness, unexpected pregnancy and boredom from lack of lessons relevant to their desired occupations. Personal characteristic, home, finance and society were found by Ikechukwu (2000) as predisposing factors to school dropout among female students. Socio-economic status is one important universal trait determining a student's decision to drop out from school, impact both in developed and developing countries (United States Agency for International Development USAID, 2012). This is corroborated by Coleman (2009), which found that students from low-income or single-parent households are more likely to opt out of school than any other students. Other studies further suggest that children from families with single parents or stepmothers (which is also linked to lower socioeconomic status), are less likely to find the family encouragement and support they need to keep them in school (Edwards 2005; Rumberger, 2010). It can result in lower skilled work force and reduced human capital for a society that focuses on learning, knowledge, acquisition and education. The probability of prostitution behaviour can increase when female student dropout of school (Guleck and Guleck, 2008). This is because of the unrestricted mad rush for material wealth, rich husband and get rich quick syndrome. If the school dropout rate continues to be on the increase and unchecked, there is the likelihood that Nsukka Local Government Area will face a serious problem in terms of lack of manpower, thereby resulting in low human capital strength for a society with emphasis on education and acquisition of education for national development. Social consequences associated with female dropout are related to illiteracy, unemployment, stealing, unwanted pregnancy and child abortion. Thus, these implications are directly linked with one another affecting the people, community, society, the family, school and the country as a whole. The study further understands that such actions by the female dropout student are as result of their low level of literacy which affects the ability to secure a good job thereby luring them into any form of a job for survival. Dropping out of school is never a solution to social issues but rather a problem to the person and also to social development in the community. This affects their skills in production and pursuit of a meaningful job. Since these students are illiterate, they found it very difficult to secure any good work that can sustain them comfortably rather they end up with pity jobs or without any. This also affects their behavior thereby pushing them to stress and frustration. As a result of unemployment leading to frustration, this group of students can lure themselves into any form of work or activities for survival such as criminal activities like prostitution and child abortion. Their act in the form of prostitution and child abortion has become a serious threat to people, the community, and society in general. There is a need for policymakers, students, parents, and teachers to understand the harmful consequences of female dropouts to save the country for the betterment of future generations.

A dropout is defined as any student, who for one reason or the other leaves school prematurely before graduation, without transferring to another school Kamla-Raj (2007). This is most common in rural areas where there is abject poverty, ignorance and children form a recognizable part of the family labour force. De Cos (2005) also stated that dropout is the ultimate withdrawal from school as student who withdraw from senior secondary school prematurely end up not obtaining any certificate of graduation. The term "dropout" qualifies those students who could not complete their education programme at any level of education due to one reason or the other, as posited by Lee and Burkam (2003). In the context of this study, dropout will be defined as any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another elementary or secondary school.

In Nsukka Local Government Area, it is sad to note that it is not every child who starts schooling at primary, secondary or tertiary level that completes his or her education. In Nsukka the dropout rate among secondary school students is estimated to 27.8% Anyanwu, (2005). It is estimated that 7.3 million students annually dropout of school in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2004). It is no more an assumption that many female students no longer have interest in education because of parents socio-economic status, early marriage, attitude of teachers to female students, domestic work, culture of the people, and parents literacy level, (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007), and the resultant of it has led to high rate of dropout. This is regrettable as many female students in Nsukka local government area have been

observed dropping out of school only to be often seen in the market doing sales girls, hawking, hookup and living in a man's house without their bride prize been paid.

In spite of the efforts of successful governments of Nigeria to provide free education by introducing Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976, Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 and State Universal Basic Education (SUBE) in 2000, students are still dropping out of school for various reasons which may be psychological, emotional and intellectual, academic failure problems (Bolu-Steve and Adeboye, 2015). However to reduce dropout tendency among female students and other behaviour problems, counselling strategies may become the way out. This is because counselling strategies have seen to solved many maladaptive behavior of students.

Counselling Is a personal relationship between a counsellor and a counselee with the aim of assisting the client in self understanding, decision making and problem solving, Durosaro, (2016). He went further to state that counselling is oriented towards facilitating effective learning skills, acceptable habits and appropriate behavior.

It is also oriented towards facilitating effective learning skills, acceptable habits and appropriate behaviors in the individual. Anagbogu (2010), referred to counselling as the process of helping an individual to understand himself and his world. Therefore, counselling does not just deal with problems, problematic situations, and troubled individual but rather, it sharpens the individual understanding of self and his environment. Counselling is crucial in minimizing behavioural problems and proper counselling requires counselling strategies to tackle the problem. Alutu and Aluede (2013), referred to counselling strategies as the theories, techniques and skills needed by a counsellor to achieve a certain goal and objectives. To go through the process of assisting clients to modify their behaviors. In the context of this study, counselling can be defined as the professional services offered by a counselor to help the counselee to adjust in his or her environment effectively by manifesting desirable behavior patterns.

The importance of counselling strategies in secondary school education cannot be over-emphasized, Shertzer& Stone, in Nwoye (2009) Outlined the following as the importance of counselling strategies to students: to assist all students in making appropriate and satisfying personal, social, educational and vocational choices, work and learning in view to help the students to help themselves. Counselling strategy is a dynamic skill, problem focused and effective approach, a high level plan of action intended to accomplish a specific goal. Counselling strategy facilitate the development of counselling skills that can be used to encourage and assist clients develop the concepts and processes required for achieving counselling objectives. There are various counselling strategies a counsellor can apply as cited by Okere (2015), behavioural counselling strategies as follows; modeling, systematic-desensitization, feedback, paradoxical intention, punishment, proximity control, time-out, cognitive restructuring, assertive training, shaping, and ignoring strategy. Onah (2002) noted that changes in an individual's environment can bring about changes in the individual's behavior and an individual can solve most of his problems if he is taught the procedures therein. In this study, the counselling strategies used includes; individual counselling strategy, group counselling strategy, cognitive restructuringstrategy.

Individual counselling is a personal opportunity to receive support and experience growth during challenging times in life. Individual counselling can help one deal with many personal topics in life such as anger, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, marriage and relationship challenges, parenting problems, school difficulties, career changes.(Foluke, 2011). Individual counselling is a joint, intimate and confidential relationship between the individual and the counsellor which should give the counselee the opportunity, freedom to express and explore himself and the issues confronting him, (Onah, 2002). To achieve deeper understanding of self and his problems and choose a path towards the resolution of his problems. Ojo (2009), ascribed it as mainly to bring about change in the client either by altering the maladaptive behavior as well learning the decision making process. In the context of this study, Individual counseling is defined as a one to one, face to face relationship marked by intimacy, warmth and rapport between the counsellor and counselee, seeks to assist the counselee in assuming the responsibilities for his or her problem and its solution.

However, group counselling strategy can also be used by counsellors to control antisocial behavior. Onah, (2002) posited that in professional counselling circles, group counselling refer to a situation where one counsellor renders counselling services to a group or number of clients with a similar case at a time. In group counselling the number ranges from four to twelve (4 - 12). Onah went further to state that the main tenet of group counselling is stamping out of bad habits, influencing attitudes, and treating other personal problem of the member. The goals of group counselling are to facilitate the development of mature tendencies and as well to attain an awareness of self so that the students can be responsible for themselves (Byrne, 2011).

In addition, cognitive restructuring is also a counselling strategy the counsellor uses, the counsellor use this approach to assist students to have a new way of perceiving events. (Okere 2015). Altering the irrational taught of the students based on the high level of unemployment rate facing our country, the counsellor assures and enable them to understand the fact that there is still need for education by every individual in the country. (Oyinloye, 2015). Operationally cognitive is a counselling strategy use by the counsellor to restructure client irrational thinking to rational thinking. Researchers across the world have carried out findings on the above counselling strategies and have found to be effective in reducing maladaptive behavior among secondary school students. In the context of this study, counselling strategies are activities performed during counselling relationships to achieve the methods of counselling applied in pursuance of set counselling goals. Therefore, this study sees the effectiveness of counselling strategies as a remedy to secondary school dropout

Statement of the Problem

Despite the strategic position and role of secondary education in the educational system and the educational career of a child, its acquisition is being hindered in Nigeria. School dropout issue is a major social and economic problem that poses complex subject for policy makers, educators, parents, counsellors, students and others. Female students who leave school without completion are at a disadvantage on the labour market in today's knowledge-based society. Secondary education is not only an acceptable qualification for good jobs but also serves as a milestone or a gateway to sound higher education. Secondary school dropout is increasing immensely in Nsukka; this has caused the communities lack of productive workers and as well higher costs associated with health care and other social services.

The effect of dropout is very rapid in the rural areas where the female students prefer sales girls work and early marriage to schooling. Majority of the female students involve themselves in prostitution as a means of getting money for their up keep and some of this female students indulge in cyber-crime including bet Naija to the pitfall of their academic endeavors.

If the school dropout continues to increase on the high rate and remained unchecked, it will lead to Nsukka communities to be overcrowded with youth who will become miscreant, vagabond and social deviant to the community and to the society at large. It is on this backdrop that the researchers focused to investigate various counselling strategies that will help as an antidote to ameliorate female student dropout in Nsukka Local Government Area.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the counselling strategies for controlling female student dropout from secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. To find out the extent individual counselling strategy can control female student prone to dropout in secondary school.
2. Find out the extent group counselling strategy can control female student prone to dropout in secondary school.
3. Determine the extent cognitive restructuring strategy can control female student prone to dropout in secondary school.

Research Questions

The following research questions posed will guide the study.

1. To what extent does individual counselling strategy control female student proneness to dropout in secondary school?
2. To what extent does group counselling strategy control female student proneness to dropout in secondary school?
3. To what extent does cognitive restructuring strategy control female student proneness to dropout in secondary school?

Sampling Technique

The population of the study comprised of 6,295 SS1 –SS3 students from public secondary school in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu state. A sample of (120) students of public secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area who were identified as those prone to leave school was used for the study. Using purposive sampling, 10 secondary school was drawn out of 31 secondary schools in Nsukka Local government area. Using proportionate random sampling, 12

female students were drawn from each of the 10 secondary schools in the study area, making a total of 120 female students.

Instrument for data collection

The instruments for data collection were Students Proneness to Leave School Questionnaire (SPLSQ) and Counselling Strategies Questionnaire (CSQ) which were validated by three experts. The SPLSQ has 10 items that depicts that a student has the tendency to leave schooling and the CSQ has 23 items with three clusters measuring individual counseling, group counseling and cognitive counseling respectively. The aim of the SPLSQ was only to identify those female students that are prone to dropout of school and use them for the study. The instruments were subjected to pilot study at Igbo-Eze south local government area of Enugu state and the reliability coefficient was calculated using cronbach's alpha and was found to be 0.87, and 0.93, 0.98, 0.99 respectively for SPLSQ and CSQ. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions with four point scales of very high extent (VHE) 3.50-4.00, high extent (HE) 2.50-3.49, low extent (LE) 1.50-2.49, very low extent (VLE) 0.50-1.49. Thus any mean that is below 2.50 will be considered negative.

Results

Research Question 1: To what Extent does individual counselling strategy can control female student proneness to dropout from secondary school

Table 1: mean and standard deviation analysis on individual counselling strategy for controlling female student proneness to dropout from secondary school.

S/N	Item Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
1.	Individual counselling helps female students to realize their goals and how to progress towards its achievement.	120	3.37	0.73	Accepted
2.	Individual counselling helps to boost female students confidence about their ability.	120	3.18	0.65	Accepted
3.	Individual counselling helps female student to change self defeating habits.	120	3.13	0.66	Accepted
4.	Individual counselling helps to improve female students interpersonal skills.	120	3.07	0.84	Accepted
5.	Female students are likely to have a better understanding of one's self and emotion during one on one counselling.	120	3.04	0.78	Accepted
6.	Female students are more likely to open up to counsellors on their academic learning difficulties during one on one counselling.	120	2.92	0.82	Accepted
7.	Female students do understand the exact challenges they faced in school when they engage in individual counselling with a counsellor	120	3.01	0.89	Accepted
8.	One on one counselling promotes decision making skills in female students	120	3.07	0.75	Accepted
Grand mean		120	3.10	0.77	Accepted

The analysis of data in table 1 shows the mean responses on the extent individual counselling strategy can be use to ameliorate female student dropout from secondary school. The grand mean of 3.10 shows the various counselling strategies counsellors can deploy to control school dropout. Results shows that items 1-8 have mean score which were above 2.50 criterion of acceptance. And the above result indicate that individual counselling strategy is an effective strategy that can be use by counsellors and other significant orders to control female student dropout from secondary school in Nsukka local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Question 2: To what Extent does group counselling strategy can control female student proneness to dropout from secondary school

Table 2: mean and standard deviation analysis on group counselling strategy for controlling female students proneness to dropout from secondary school.

S/N	Item Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
9.	Counsellors can easily address issues in the group that meet the needs of the female students.	120	2.98	0.77	Accepted
10.	Group counselling brings female students out of their isolated world through group interaction.	120	2.77	0.72	Accepted
11.	Group counselling can be used by the counsellor to promote the importance of counselling among female students.	120	3.49	0.72	Accepted
12.	Group counselling enables female students to discover that their fellow students have a similar problem and needs.	120	3.48	0.62	Accepted
13.	Group counselling protects female students from the stigma of being labeled as people with abnormal behavior.	120	3.33	0.54	Accepted
14.	Group counselling serves as a means of influencing female student attitudes and also to stamp out bad habits.	120	3.05	0.72	Accepted
15.	A female student involved in group counselling develops effective study skills and ability to cope with family issues.	120	3.14	0.76	Accepted
Grand Mean		120	3.18	0.69	Accepted

The analysis of data in table 2 shows the mean responses on the extent group counselling strategy can be use to ameliorate female student dropout from secondary school. The grand mean of 3.18 shows the various counselling strategies counsellors can deploy to control school dropout. Results shows that items 9-15 have mean score which were above 2.50 criterion of acceptance. And the above result indicate that group counselling strategy is an effective strategy that can be use by counsellors and other significant orders to control female student dropout from secondary school in Nsukka local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Question 3: Extent cognitive restructuring strategy can control female student proneness to dropout from secondary school

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation analysis on group counselling strategy for controlling female student proneness to dropout from secondary school.

S/N	Item Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD	REMARK
16	Cognitive restructuring can be used to expand female students discovering abilities.	120	3.27	0.67	Accepted
17.	Cognitive restructuring has an enduring effect on female students by improving their current state of mind.	120	3.10	0.83	Accepted
18.	Cognitive restructuring helps female students to understand their current ways of thinking and behaving.	120	3.16	0.74	Accepted
19.	Cognitive restructuring is used to dispute the irrational thought among female students.	120	2.86	0.81	Accepted
20.	Cognitive restructuring used by the counsellor helps female students to gather evidence against the use of safety behaviour.	120	3.61	0.60	Accepted
21.	Cognitive restructuring are used by counsellors to expand female students efforts beyond the confines of the counselling.	120	3.53	0.72	Accepted
22.	Cognitive restructuring can be used by counsellors to understand female students mental distress and change their irrational thought system to rational.	120	3.35	0.66	Accepted
23	Cognitive restructuring can used to equipped female students with the tools to change their maladaptive behaviour pattern.	120	3.41	0.61	Accepted
Grand Mean		120	3.29	0.71	Accepted

The analysis of data in table 3 shows the mean responses on the extent cognitive restructuring strategy can be use to ameliorate female student dropout from secondary school. The grand mean of 3.29 shows the various counselling strategies counsellors can deploy to control school dropout. Results shows that items 16-23 have mean score which were above 2.50 criterion of acceptance. And the above result indicate that cognitive restructuring strategy is also effective strategy that can be use by

counsellors and other significant orders to control female student dropout from secondary school in Nsukka local Government Area of Enugu State.

Discussion

The findings of this study proved that individual counselling was effective in handling female student dropout as evident in table 1. Oyinloye (2015) observed that individual counselling reduces the number of dropout in our schools as it gives them the opportunity to talk one on one with counsellors. This implies that individual counselling strategy would be unquantifiable measure for reducing the spate of school dropout.

Table 2 showed that the effectiveness of group counselling strategy as a means that bring female students out of their isolated world and help each member of the group know and understand their selves, to develop self-acceptance and feelings of personal worth and also develop effective study skills and ability to cope with family issues. This is in agreement with Kayler and Sherman (2009) recommended that a small group counselling intervention strengthened studying behaviors as measured by pretest posttest design.

The study also revealed that cognitive restructuring is a therapeutic strategy which refutes irrational ideas and replaces them with rational ones among female students. This finding is in agreement with previous finding of Ukwueze (2010), who concedes that cognitive restructuring is a useful strategy for understanding people's unhappy feelings and moods, bad moods are unpleasant and can be replaced with positive frame of mind.

Conclusion

The research emanated from the need to seek solution to the existing dropout rate among secondary school female student. To this effect, the study ascertained the counselling strategies for controlling female student proneness to dropout from secondary schools in Nsukka local government area, and the findings revealed that individual counselling and group counselling strategies were effective in handling female student dropout. The study also revealed that cognitive restructuring is a therapeutic strategy which refutes irrational ideas and replaces them with rational ideas. However based on the findings, the study concludes that female student dropout poses a serious challenge on educational delivery in secondary school, that the effect of female student dropout from secondary schools has caused the communities to lack productive workers and as well as higher cost associated with health care and other social services. The findings also concluded that strategies identified on the study are some of the ways for ensuring the reduction of female student dropout from secondary school in Nsukka local government area.

Recommendation

1. School counsellors are charged to identify potential dropouts, and work closely with female students using individual counselling strategy to help female students stay in school or find alternative means of completing their education.
2. Counsellors should organize workshops and teachings for female students on the effect of school dropout using group counselling strategy.
3. Cognitive restructuring is another effective strategy that should be used by counsellors to change the irrational thought of female students that is prone to drop out to rational thought.
4. Implementation of service learning opportunities is another strategy to reduce the dropout rate among female students. Service learning is a teaching and learning method connecting meaningful community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth, and civic responsibility (National Dropout Prevention Center (2011)).
5. School counsellors can collaborate with communities in order to best serve female students. Hobbs and Collison (2015) suggested counsellors must be open to the contributions of those who work outside the school.

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