

ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES FACING SCHOOL COUNSELLORS OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

This study assessed the personal and administrative challenges faced by Secondary School Counsellors of Adamawa state of Nigeria in their delivery of guidance and counselling services in order to understand the struggles. Using the descriptive research design, a total of one hundred fifty (150) senior secondary school counsellors were randomly selected in the five educational zones of Adamawa State in Nigeria and took part as participants of the study. The primary data-gathering tool utilized in the study involved a self-developed questionnaire which was validated by experts, pilot-tested and with an ascertained reliability coefficient of 0.786. The results revealed that among the personal challenges of school counsellors when delivering guidance and counselling services include computer illiteracy, inability to render home-based counselling, poor counsellor integrity, and stress. The administrative challenges besetting the counsellors on the other hand include the administrators' perception of counsellors, non-counselling tasks, limited funds, poor formal structure, poor support for training, engagement of teachers as counsellors, poor incentives, insufficient clarity, lack of cooperation and poor monitoring. Moreover, t-test and ANOVA analysis revealed that there are significant differences in the mean response scores of respondent-counsellors along personal challenges ($t = -3.23$; $p = 0.00$) and administrative challenges respectively, with $F(2, 150) = 53.04$; $p = 0.00$). These findings are imperative in policy decisions, professional development initiatives and targeted interventions that would redound to the improvement of counsellors' effectiveness and enhancement of the quality of guidance and counselling services.

Keywords: Counsellors; personal; administrative challenges; guidance Counselling services; secondary schools; Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a critical component of societal development, and the effective delivery of guidance and counselling services plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic and personal development of students. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2014) stated that education is a tool of social change and economic development. This is because it plays a prominent role in educating and training of future leaders as well as a tool of developing high-level technical capacities that underpin economic sustenance and development. In Nigeria, particularly in the Education Zones of Adamawa State, the senior secondary school phase is a crucial period where students make academic and life choices that significantly impact their future. Guidance and counselling services are designed to assist students in navigating the complexities of academic, career, and personal development. These services extend not only to students but also involve collaboration with parents who are integral to the support system. However, the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools faces assessment challenges, and

there are notable issues that school counsellors encounter in rendering these services. Chief among these challenges is students' attitudinal and parental challenges.

Students' attitude towards guidance and counselling in schools simply refers to their willingness to seek counselling. The attitudes of senior secondary school students in all the Education Zones of Adamawa State towards guidance and counselling services can determine whether they seek help or utilize the available resources. Positive attitudes, such as recognizing the benefits of counselling and being open to seeking support, can lead to higher service utilization rates in the school. Conversely, negative attitudes, such as perceiving counselling as unnecessary or stigmatizing, can result in underutilization of services. Additionally, students' attitudes towards counselling can influence their receptiveness to guidance aimed at academic and personal growth (Sedofia, Antwi-Danso & Nyarko-Sampson, 2018). In addition, senior secondary school students often face various emotional challenges in almost all the Education Zones, such as stress, anxiety, or low self-esteem. Thus, these students' attitudes towards counselling can impact their willingness to seek emotional support and coping strategies. Positive attitudes can lead to early intervention, effective emotional regulation, and improved mental health outcomes. Negative attitudes, however, could contribute to the reluctance to seek help, exacerbating emotional difficulties and impeding overall well-being. Also, some students are often not willing to disclose their problems to the counsellors because they do not trust them. This obviously can affect school guidance and counselling services in the Education Zones.

On parental support, as a probable challenge to effective guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools. Nyaga (2016) stated that the support of parents and society at large is crucial for the success of guidance and counselling services in schools. This is because it is only through their participation, that most of the psycho-social problems of their children can be understood and with solutions provided. When parents actively support and encourage their children to utilize guidance and counselling services in the Education Zones, students are more likely to seek help and engage with the available resources. Parental endorsement can significantly reduce the stigma associated with counselling and create a positive perception of these services among students. However, Usman (2018) stated that lack of parental support is a major problem to guidance and counselling services in secondary schools. This may be because when parents are not engaged in the counselling process, important information and feedback may not be effectively communicated. This lack of communication could hinder the collaborative efforts necessary for addressing students' needs comprehensively through guidance and counselling services in the education zones.

Furthermore, the Education Zones of Adamawa State, Nigeria, encompasses a diverse range of communities with unique socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Understanding the local context is essential for tailoring guidance and counselling services to meet the specific needs of students and their families. In light of these considerations, a comprehensive study was necessary to assess the current state of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools within Adamawa State. Thus, this study sought to establish through empirical research students' attitudinal and parental challenges facing guidance and counselling programme in senior secondary schools in the Education Zones of the State.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The delivery of effective guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools is paramount for the holistic development of students. However, within the context of education zones in Adamawa State, Nigeria, there exist significant challenges related to students' attitudes towards these services and obstacles faced by parents in actively engaging with the counselling process. These issues contribute to an environment where the full potential of guidance and counselling services may not be realized. One of the central issues is the prevailing attitude of students towards guidance and counselling services. There is therefore a need to investigate the factors influencing students' perceptions of the importance of counselling in their academic and personal growth. This includes exploring whether there are misconceptions, stigma, or a lack of awareness that may hinder students from seeking and benefiting from counselling services. Understanding the roots of negative attitudes is crucial for designing interventions that foster a positive and receptive environment for guidance and counselling.

Another critical facet of the problem is the array of challenges faced by parents in actively participating in their children's counselling process. This encompasses issues such as limited awareness of the services offered, cultural barriers, and inadequate communication channels between schools and parents. Economic constraints and competing priorities may also pose obstacles to parental involvement. Investigating these challenges is essential for developing strategies that enhance parental engagement and support in the guidance and counselling journey of their children. The combined effect of students' negative attitudes and parental challenges has broader implications for the holistic development of students in senior secondary schools. When students do not fully embrace counselling services and parents face barriers in participating, there is a risk of unaddressed academic, socio-emotional, and career-related concerns. This, in turn, may hinder students from realizing their full potential and making informed decisions about their future.

Despite all these problems, there is no factual data to support the aforementioned guidance and counselling challenges in senior secondary schools in the Education Zones of Adamawa state.

Hence, an investigation was required to identify the root causes of students' negative attitudes and parental challenges in engaging with guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools in the education zones. Addressing these issues would not only enhance the utilization of counselling services but also contribute to the overall well-being and success of students within the educational system of Adamawa State, Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess students and parental challenges facing guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools across the education zones of Adamawa state, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were to:

- i. assess students' attitudinal challenges facing guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools in Adamawa State;
- ii. examine the personal challenges faced by school counsellors in delivery of guidance counselling services in senior secondary schools in education zones of Adamawa State, and;
- iii. determine the administrative challenges faced by counsellors in the delivery of guidance counselling services in senior secondary school students in Adamawa State;
- iv. determine gender-based attitudinal challenges facing guidance and counselling services in senior secondary school students in the education zones of Adamawa State;

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the personal challenges faced by school counsellors when delivering guidance counselling services?
2. Is there a significant difference on the mean scores of the counsellors along administrative challenges?
3. Is there any significant on the personal challenges of secondary school counsellors when grouped based on gender?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the respondents along administrative challenges they face in delivering guidance counselling services.

Ho2: There is no significant difference on the personal challenges of secondary school counsellors when grouped based on gender.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study, some related literatures were reviewed regarding guidance and counselling services and the impeding challenges caused by school counsellors and administrators in Nigerian Secondary Schools. The reviews were as follows:

2.1 Concept of Guidance and Counselling

The words, guidance and counselling have been used either individually or synonymously by various authors and as a result, many researchers interchangeably use the term guidance for counselling and vice versa. The general consensus among specialists is that guidance is a family name for all the helping services within the general educational and community systems. Guidance, on one hand is the provision of services geared towards assisting students/ individuals to acquire their full potentials in preparation for adulthood and the future in general (ASCA, 2012). On the other hand, counselling is a professional helping relationship between a counsellor and a counsee. It is “the heart” or “core” of the whole structure called *guidance* (Odebode, 2020). The objective of counselling includes helping the client to understand him/herself better, which enables him/her to make a wise and realistic decision. Counselling also, is a subset of the general term called guidance (Nweze & Okolie, 2014). Counselling therefore, could be educational, vocational, persona-social, marital, etc. (Chepkemei, 2014; Odebode & Adegboyega, 2016; Oluremi, 2019).

However, guidance and counselling is a meaningful nomenclature for a double edged functional academic and professional discipline (Nweze & Okolie, 2014). Guidance and counselling aim at establishing maximum development and self-realization of human potential for the benefit both society and the individual.

2.2 Students' Attitude towards Guidance and Counselling in Secondary Schools

The function of education is to provide opportunities for students to reach their full potentials in the areas of educational, vocational, social, and emotional development (Lunenburg, 2010). According to Stephenson (2013), for students achieve these, the nations must ensure that guidance and counselling services become integral part of education. Guidance and counselling, is a professional field in education that has a broad range of activities and services aimed at assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment and their world (Asamari & Namale, 2018). Students need effective professional help on appropriate study habits and techniques to perform optimally in national examinations (Kiptala & Kipruto, 2021). Also, guidance and counselling services assist students to understand their basic physiological needs accept others and develop positive associations with peers. Effective school guidance and counselling services are based on the students' needs which are established through guidance needs assessment, and counsellors can only help students when they know the guidance needs of the students.

Over the years, students' perception of school counselling and their attitudes to its programmes has increasingly generated a great deal of concern among school counsellors in many parts of the world (Agi, 2014). The term attitude has different meanings. Attitude represents an evaluative integration of cognitions and affects experienced in relation to an object. Attitudes are evaluative judgments that integrate and summarize these cognitive/affective reactions. These evaluative abstractions vary in strength, which in turn have implications for persistence resistance and attitude behaviour disposition. The primary mission of a school's guidance and counselling programme is to provide a broad spectrum of personnel services to the students. However, the effectiveness of any guidance programme is contingent, in part, on knowing the guidance needs of those for whom the programme is designed and tailoring guidance services to meeting those needs (Sedofia, Antwi-Danso & Nyarko-Sampson, 2018; ASCA, 2012).

In actual sense, students need counselling to know how they should deal with or tackle the problems they face in their daily life situations. School counselling helps remove barriers to academic achievement, support social-emotional development, and guide college and career readiness (Karunanayake, Chandrapala & Vimukthi, 2020). The effectiveness of any counselling service has been attributed largely to the prevailing climate of opinion towards such a service. Counselees attitudes which reflect this opinion are indices of their willingness or otherwise to accept, patronise or utilise counselling services. Evidence from related literature reveals two basic attitudinal response patterns, those students whose attitudes are positive and those whose attitudes are negative. Although attitudes generally have cognitive, affective and behavioural characteristics, in this paper, it has been found convenient to conceptualize counselees' attitudes as a function of individual perception. Students' attitudes to counselling relate to a range of factors, chief among them being individual perception. It is an undeniable fact that the success of guidance and counselling services in school system largely depends on students' perception (Asamari & Namale, 2018).

2.3 Parental Factors and Guidance and Counselling in Schools

Parental factor is one of the personnel factors affecting guidance and counselling services in secondary schools and this is because parental support as a factor can affect effective guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools. As Nyaga (2016) stated, the support of parents and society at large are crucial for the success of guidance and counselling services in schools because it is only through their participation that most of the psycho-social problems of their children can be understood and solutions provided. Usman (2018) stated that lack of parental support is a major problem to guidance and counselling services in secondary schools. Similarly, Low (2019) opined that uncooperative parents are an obstacle to the provision of guidance and

counselling services in secondary schools at any level. In line with his, Oye (2018)'s study revealed that most parents usually tend to avoid forums where their children privately discuss domestic issues with outsiders (including teacher counsellors) due to cultural reasons. The parents according to Kuluba (2017) have not done a good job in offering the services because they are limited by the traditional thinking that it is embarrassing and unbecoming for a parent to discuss certain issues with her/his children. Also, most parents today are engaged in various activities to such an extent that they have not had an impact in the development of their children. Kinyua (2018) stated that in the absence of sufficient care, such students can grow up to be hostile to the community that has ignored them.

2.4 Administrative and Societal Attitudes Towards Counselling Programme

While some significant others seek for information to be divulged others see the counselling relationship as an invasion of the privacy of the individual. Some parents who are in support of this view attempt to frustrate rather than support the guidance programme (Omoniyi, 2016). They sometimes accuse counsellors of instigating their children against them and intruding into their family life. These negative attitudes lead to an unsuccessful implementation of the counselling activities since these attitudes are sometimes passed on to the students (Adubale, 2018). These negative attitudes may be traced back to the age long tendency of man resisting to change. Counsellors are to individually support students, forming an inter-personal relationship. They should assist the students to prevent and resolve their educational problems in schools. For example, students are often faced with the problem of making suitable educational choices. Some of these concerns result from parental pressures and rigidity. Some parents make educational plans for their children, despite the lack of knowledge of the current educational world. It is the role of the counsellors to assist students to make proper decisions especially in their choice of school subjects, having considered their abilities and interest (Adubale, 2018). This would no doubt help prevent frustration, maladjustment and any possible dropout while in school. Parents are unable to fully discharge their functions to their children and consequently, children come to school unprepared to learn. Since students' problems are not addressed at home, they bring them to the school. The counsellor is supposed to intervene, stabilizing the child by providing counselling services (Ojeme, 2019). Regrettably, these professionals are not fully in a position to carry out this function not because of unpreparedness but because of environmental challenges within the school.

Furthermore, the success of guidance and counselling services in any school setting dependsto great extent on students' readiness or willingness for counselling and as well administrative support (Anho, 2018). There are some schools that does not have trained guidance counsellors for their students. Also, in some cases, some school authorities/administrators do not give the desired

support to counsellors for guidance counselling services such that even counselling offices for counsellors are hardly or not provided completely in spite of its importance.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Research design was used for this study was a survey type. Survey is a design for gathering data on a specific variable at a specific point in time with the hope of describing the nature of the existing conditions or identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships between the variable(s) of focus (Kojigili, 2023).

The **area of the study** is Adamawa State of Nigeria which is one of the six states of Northeast geopolitical zone. Northeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria occupies slightly less than one-third of Nigeria's total area and has at 2011 a projected population of 3,558,674 or 13.5% of the country's population; while as at 2015, it has an estimated population of 4,294,218 (Cityfacts, 2011-2024). Also, the region shares international borders with three countries which are the Republic of Cameroon to the East, the Republic of Chad to the North East, and Niger Republic to the North. It has a total number of 21 local government areas with five education zones.

3.1 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all the public senior secondary school counsellors in the five Education zones of Adamawa state, Nigeria from which three Education zones were sampled using simple random sampling technique. Also, from all the 261 senior secondary schools in the three sampled Education zones of the state, 150 schools were randomly sampled which comprised 50 senior secondary schools from each of the zones. However, bearing in mind that not all the public senior secondary schools in the Education zones have trained counsellors, all those serving as counsellors in each of the senior secondary were automatically obtained through census sampling techniques which is a technique that allows the use of all the elements of a population of interest. Thus, by this technique, a total of 150 counsellors were used as the sample (participants) for the study.

3.2 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection for the study was a self-structured questionnaire titled: "Assessment of Guidance and Counselling Challenges Questionnaire (AGCCQ)". The AGCCQ was used for collecting data from school counsellors in the sampled schools. The instrument was made up of 20 items based on a modified 4-point Likert's rating scale of Strongly to Strongly Disagree (SD) and rated 1 to 4 respectively.

3.3 Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, it was subjected to five experts' judgement and scrutiny from the Faculty of Education, Adamawa State University, Mubi, Nigeria. This was done to ensure that the instrument actually measured what it purports to measure. For the reliability of the instrument, it was trial tested by administering it on 30 senior secondary school counsellors that were not part of the targeted population and from different education zones. The data collected were analysed using Cronbach Alpha method (Kojigili, 2018) which yielded a reliability co-efficient of 0.78 and by that the instrument was found reliable enough for the data collection.

3.4 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

A researcher was assigned to each of the three sampled education zones for the administration and collection of the instrument from the respondents within the specified period of time. When the data were collected, they were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, mean and inferential statistics to answer research questions while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used for testing the null hypotheses. A decision rule was used for the research questions. Thus, a mean of 2.50 was the cut-off point for means of research questions which implies that any mean above or equal to 2.50 were considered accepted to indicate that the level of agreement of the respondents is high and any mean point less than 2.50 was considered a rejected opinion of the respondents. For the null hypotheses, if the calculated value (p) is greater than the level of significance (0.05), then we accept the null hypothesis. Otherwise, it is not accepted.

4. RESULTS

The results of the findings of the study are presented in the Tables as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the personal challenges faced by school counsellors when delivering guidance counselling services?

Table 1 shows the opinions of the respondents to research question 1. From the Table, it shows that most of the respondents disagreed to item 1, which means that counsellors keep proper record of students in the study area. Item 2 was also disagreed to by the respondents, which means school counsellors used personality traits to help guide students' career choice. Item 3 was also disagreed to by most of the respondents, which implies that counsellors have ability to personally identify students with challenges in secondary schools. Item 4 was however agreed to by most of the respondents, which showed that most school counsellors are not computer literate in the study area. Item 5 was also agreed to by most of the respondents, which revealed that school counsellors in the study area do not render counselling services beyond the school walls. Item 6 was disagreed to by most of the respondents, which revealed that school counsellors in the study area have compassion towards their counselee.

In addition, the respondents also agreed to item 7 which means that poor integrity of most school counsellors as a factor that draws students and teachers away from guidance and counselling services; while the respondents disagreed that they don't spare time outside work to visit their students to check on their progress after counselling in item 8. In item 9, most of the respondents strongly agreed that stress from counselling affects their relationship with their family members. Also, in item 10, the most of the respondents disagreed that they often demonstrate flexibility in their intervention strategies in secondary schools in the study area. Overall, and with a grand mean of 2.43 and standard deviation of 1.22, the table further reveals that computer illiteracy, home based counselling, poor integrity and stress are some of the personal challenges of school counsellors in providing guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in the Education Zones of Adamawa State.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference on the mean scores of the respondents along administrative challenges?

Table 2 reveals the responses of the respondents to research question 2. It also reveals that the respondents agreed to all the items stated.

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the respondents along administrative challenges they face in delivering guidance counselling services.

Table 3 shows the result of ANOVA analysis of the response scores of senior secondary school counsellors on the administrative challenges they face when delivering guidance counselling services in Adamawa State of Nigeria. The F-value of 52.018 for the group is significant, when comparison is done between the p-value and alpha. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the mean response scores among senior secondary school counsellors on the administrative challenges facing guidance and counselling services in the Education Zones of Adamawa State, with $F(2, 150) = 52.018, p = 0.00$.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Responses of the Counsellors on Personal Challenges faced by school Counsellors in the delivery of Guidance Counselling Services in Adamawa State

S/No.	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	As a school counsellor, I do not often keep proper record of students.	150	2.01	1.28	Disagree
2.	I am not adequately prepared to help students discover occupations that suit their abilities through personality traits.	150	1.68	1.26	Disagree
3.	Counsellors' inability to personally identify students with challenges in school.	150	2.41	1.47	Disagree

4.	I am not able to use a computer system in rendering my service.	150	2.91	1.23	Agree
5.	At most times, I do not render counselling services beyond the school walls.	150	2.85	1.05	Agree
6.	I often appear to lack compassion towards my counselee.	150	1.89	1.27	Disagree
7.	I consider poor integrity of most school counsellors as a factor that draws students and teachers away from guidance and counselling services.	150	3.26	0.91	Agree
8.	I often don't spare time outside work to visit my students to check on their progress after counselling	150	2.27	1.20	Disagree
9.	Stress from counselling affects my relationship with my family members.	150	2.85	0.88	Agree
10.	I don't often demonstrate flexibility in my intervention strategies	150	2.33	1.44	Disagree
Grand Mean			2.43	1.22	Disagree

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Responses on the Administrative Challenges facing Guidance and Counselling Services in Senior Secondary Schools

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	As a counsellor, I am often regarded as unimportant by the school heads.	150	2.78	0.91	Agree
2.	My school administrator often allots non-counselling schedules that deny me of adequate time for implementing counselling programmes.	150	3.05	0.89	Agree
3.	There are virtually no funds for running guidance and counselling services in my school.	150	3.01	0.73	Agree
4.	There is no proper formal structure for conducting guidance and counselling services in my school.	150	2.71	0.81	Agree
5.	My school management do not always support counsellors to attend training programmes.	150	2.52	0.60	Agree
6.	The engagement of teachers as counsellors in the school by administrators affect counselling services in my school.	150	2.73	0.74	Agree
7.	Lack of incentives by school administrators for guidance counsellors affect my morale as a counsellor.	150	2.64	0.66	Agree
8.	Insufficient clarity on the functions performed by the school counsellor affects counselling	150	2.72	0.58	Agree

	services in my school.				
9.	There is no much cooperation among various levels of authority in the school, which poses issues for the counsellor.	150	3.61	0.57	Agree
10.	My school administrator does not provide counselling monitoring, which discourages student participation.	150	2.97	0.75	Agree
Grand Mean			2.87	0.72	Agree

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Secondary School Counsellors' Responses on the Administrative Challenges faced in Guidance Counselling Services delivery

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.933	2	6.937	52.018	.000
Within Groups	22.501	148	.134		
Total	36.434	150			

**Significant (p<0.05)

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis based on Gender of Respondent on Counsellors' Personal Challenges on facing Guidance and Counselling Services in Senior Secondary Schools of Adamawa State

Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	sig. (2-tailed)	t	Remark
Male	57	2.26	0.45	148	0.002	-3.127	significant
Female	93	2.61	0.82				

Significant (p < 0.05)

Ho 2: There is no significant gender difference in the mean response scores among senior secondary school counsellors on counsellors' personal challenges facing guidance and counselling services in Adamawa State.

Table 4 shows the result of t-test analysis of hypothesis 2 which reveals that there is a significant gender difference in the mean response scores among senior secondary school counsellors on the counsellors' personal challenges facing guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools of Adamawa State. This is because the probability value (p-value) is less than the alpha level (p < 0.05).

5. DISCUSSION

The finding of research question one in Table 1 reveals that personal challenges of school counsellors in providing guidance and counselling services in secondary schools of Adamawa State, Nigeria include computer illiteracy, home based counselling, poor integrity and stress. This finding is in agreement with the studies of Mushaandja, Haihambo, Vergnani and Elzan (2013); Oguzie (2014); Subhasish (2018); and Gachenia and Mwenje (2021) that found that school counsellors encountered personal challenges in the course of their counselling duties. The identification of personal challenges faced by school counsellors in delivering effective guidance and counselling services in secondary schools of Adamawa State, sheds light on the complexities inherent in the role of these professionals. The implication of this finding is that addressing these personal challenges of counsellors requires a combination of targeted interventions, training, and support mechanisms as these challenges not only impact the counsellors themselves but also have potential consequences for the quality and impact of the support they provide to students. By addressing these personal challenges, the school counselling profession in the Education Zones can work toward providing more effective and comprehensive guidance and counselling services to secondary school students.

The finding of research question two in Table 2 reveals that administrative challenges to guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in the Education Zones of Adamawa State include the administrators' perception of counsellors, non-counselling tasks, limited funds, poor formal structure, poor support for training, engagement of teachers, poor incentives, insufficient clarity, lack of cooperation and poor monitoring. This finding is in agreement with the studies of Low (2019) and Ojeme (2019) that found that school counsellors encountered administrative challenges in the course of their counselling duties. Additionally, if schools do not provide adequate support for counsellor training, the quality of counselling services can suffer. Also, if incentives for counsellors are lacking, it may affect their motivation and dedication to providing high-quality counselling services; while without proper monitoring mechanisms in place, it becomes challenging to assess the impact of counselling interventions and make necessary improvements. These challenges not only affect the quality of support provided to students but also impact the overall functioning of the school counselling system.

The finding of hypothesis 1 in Table 3 reveals that there is a significant difference in the mean response scores among senior secondary school counsellors on the counsellors' personal challenges facing guidance and counselling services in the Education Zones of Adamawa State, with $t = -3.13$, when $p = 0.00$. This finding highlights the varying personal experiences and perceptions of counsellors when it comes to the obstacles they encounter in their professional roles. The statistically significant t -value of -3.13 and the associated p -value of 0.00 indicate that the observed difference in mean response scores is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Wafula and Bota (2017)'s finding that gender has significant

influence on counsellors' attitudes towards GAC programmes. The finding of this current study therefore indicates that counsellors differ in how they perceive and prioritize the personal challenges they face while providing guidance and counselling services within the same educational zone. The significant difference in mean response scores underscores that personal challenges are highly subjective and can differ significantly among counsellors.

The finding of hypothesis 2 in Table 4 reveals that there is a significant gender difference in the mean response scores among senior secondary school counsellors on the administrative challenges facing guidance and counselling services in the education zones of Adamawa State, with $F(2, 150) = 52.018, p = 0.00$. This finding highlights the diverse perceptions and experiences of counsellors when it comes to the administrative hurdles they encounter in their professional roles. The statistically significant F-ratio of 52.018 and the associated p-value of 0.00 indicate that the observed difference in mean response scores is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Mushaandja, Haihambo, Vergnani and Elzan (2013) and Ojeme (2019)'s studies that revealed that there was significant difference in the ways school counsellors perceived support received from administrators in their schools. The findings of this study therefore suggest that counsellors have different views on the administrative challenges they face. The differences in the administrative challenges perceived by counsellors could be linked to variations in the specific schools they work in. For instance, a counsellor in a big urban school in a Local Government Area (LGA) say Mubi may face different administrative challenges as compared to a counsellor in a small rural school in Gombi LGA. Such challenges might range from paperwork and documentation to communication issues or bureaucratic bottlenecks. Also, factors such as workloads, administrative support, and familiarity with processes can influence how the school counsellors' administrative challenges are perceived in the Education Zones.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that counsellors' personal challenges and administrative challenges both affect the provision of guidance and counselling services in senior secondary schools within the Education Zones of Adamawa State. The exploration of counsellors' perspectives on their personal challenges and administrative challenges has revealed a comprehensive picture of the barriers that hinder the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in the study area, although differences exist among the various schools as revealed by the respondents. Thus, the recognition of counsellors' personnel challenges such as burnout, workload, and professional development gaps highlights the need for schools and educational authorities to prioritize the well-being and professional growth of counsellors. Addressing these challenges can contribute to counsellors' capacity to provide high-quality support to students.

In addition, the identification of administrative challenges, including bureaucratic obstacles and resource constraints, calls for improvements in administrative processes and resource allocation. By streamlining administrative tasks and ensuring adequate resources, schools can enable counsellors to focus more on their core counselling roles. Thirdly, the acknowledgment of students' attitudinal challenges points to the importance of fostering positive attitudes towards counselling services. By addressing misconceptions, promoting awareness, and enhancing engagement strategies, schools can create a more receptive environment for students to benefit from counselling support. Collectively, these findings underscore the complex interplay of counsellor personal and administrative factors that influence the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools within the education zones. By addressing these challenges holistically and implementing targeted interventions, schools can create an environment that empowers counsellors to provide impactful and comprehensive support to students, fostering their holistic development and academic success.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Adamawa state government parastatals should establish a multidisciplinary team within schools, comprising counsellors, teachers, administrators, parents, and students, to collectively tackle the main challenges and enhance counselling services.
2. The State Schools Management Board should provide regular opportunities for professional development or training for school counsellors in order to address skill gaps, and enhance counsellors' efficiencies and prevent burnout.
3. SchoolsManagement should also streamline administrative processes and reduce bureaucratic hurdles that divert counsellors' focus from their primary responsibilities in senior secondary schools.
4. School administrators and counsellors should also engage local organizations, institutions and individuals especially alumni to provide additional resources, mentorship opportunities, and support for students' well-being.

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The Authors hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.