

COUNSELING SERVICES FOR DRUG ADDICTED ADOLESCENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: THE POTENCY AND STRENGTHENING MECHANISMS

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examined counseling services for drug-addicted adolescents in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, focusing on their potency and strengthening mechanisms. Drug addiction among adolescents has become a major concern in Nigerian higher institutions due to its negative effects on academic achievement, emotional stability, mental health, and social adjustment. The study explored the concept of counseling services and drug-addicted adolescents, highlighting the important roles counseling services play in prevention, rehabilitation, emotional support, behavioral modification, and academic adjustment. The study further examined the effectiveness of counseling services in helping adolescents overcome substance dependence through therapeutic approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy, group counseling, motivational interviewing, and awareness programs. The study also identified major challenges affecting effective counseling services in Nigerian tertiary institutions, including inadequate funding, shortage of trained counselors, poor counseling facilities, stigma and discrimination, peer pressure, lack of awareness, weak institutional policies, and insufficient parental involvement. These challenges reduce students' willingness to seek help and weaken rehabilitation efforts. In addressing these problems, the study proposed several strengthening mechanisms such as increased funding, recruitment and training of qualified counselors, awareness and sensitization programs, peer support groups, stronger institutional policies, parental collaboration, and technology-based counseling platforms. The study concluded that effective counseling services are essential for reducing drug addiction among adolescents and promoting healthier academic and social environments in Nigerian tertiary institutions. One of the recommendations made was that government and school authorities should provide adequate funding for counseling centers, rehabilitation facilities, and drug abuse prevention programs in tertiary institutions.

KEYWORDS: Counseling Services, Drug Addicted Adolescents, Tertiary Institutions, Strengthening Mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has become a growing social, educational, and public health concern. The increasing rate of substance use among students has negatively affected academic performance, emotional stability, interpersonal relationships, and moral behavior within institutions of higher learning. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by curiosity, experimentation, peer influence, and emotional instability, making young people highly vulnerable to drug abuse and addiction. Commonly abused substances among students include alcohol, cannabis, tramadol, codeine, cocaine, and other psychoactive drugs. According to the World Health Organization (2023), substance abuse among adolescents contributes significantly to mental health disorders, risky behaviors, school dropout, and poor social adjustment.

The potency of counseling services in managing drug addiction among adolescents lies in their ability to provide early identification, rehabilitation, emotional healing, and relapse

prevention. Through approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy, group counseling, peer support, and motivational interviewing, counselors help addicted students regain self-control and reintegrate into academic and social life. Counseling service plays a crucial role in preventing, managing, and rehabilitating drug-addicted adolescents. Counseling provides psychological support, behavior modification strategies, and emotional guidance that help students overcome dependence on drugs. According to Onijigin and Sanni (2020), However, despite their effectiveness, counseling services in many Nigerian tertiary institutions are hindered by inadequate funding, shortage of qualified counselors, social stigma, poor awareness, weak institutional policies, and negative peer influence. Therefore, strengthening counseling mechanisms through improved funding, awareness campaigns, professional training, parental involvement, peer mentoring, and technology-based counseling services is necessary to ensure effective management of drug addiction among adolescents in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

CONCEPT OF COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling services provide confidential, non-judgmental "talk therapy" where trained professionals help individuals, couples, or families navigate personal, emotional, and psychological challenges. The goal is to empower clients, develop coping strategies, and improve overall mental health and well-being. Gladding (2021) explained that counseling services are professional helping services designed to assist individuals in understanding themselves, solving personal and social problems, and making meaningful life decisions. In counseling services, a client and a qualified counselor have a private connection in which coping mechanisms, emotional support, and direction are given. Because they assist people in achieving emotional stability, personal development, and better mental health, counseling services are crucial in schools, hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, and workplaces.

Owobamigbe and Ogunode (2021) explained that counseling services play a major role in educational institutions by helping students adjust socially, emotionally, and academically. Counseling services help students with academic planning, career selection, dispute resolution, and psychological adjustment. Good counseling services support students' academic performance, self-discipline, and general well-being in higher education as well as in society at large.

CONCEPT OF DRUG ADDICTED ADOLESCENTS

Drug addiction (substance use disorder) in adolescents is a chronic, relapsing brain disease characterized by the compulsive use of substances despite harmful consequences. It disrupts normal adolescent brain development, affecting decision-making, impulse control, and emotional regulation, making young people highly vulnerable to long-term physical, academic, and psychological impairments. Steinberg (2021) explained that drug-addicted adolescents are young individuals who develop physical or psychological dependence on harmful substances such as alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and other illicit drugs during the stage of adolescence. Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage marked by experimentation, curiosity, peer pressure, and emotional instability, all of which raise the possibility of substance abuse. Adolescent drug addiction frequently has an impact on social interactions, scholastic achievement, emotional stability, and physical health.

Adeyemi and Odukoya (2022) explained that drug-addicted adolescents require emotional, medical, psychological, and counseling support to overcome addiction and reintegrate successfully into society. Through awareness campaigns, counseling services,

rehabilitation, and parental advice, schools, families, counselors, and community organizations play crucial roles in preventing and managing teenage drug addiction.

THE ROLES OF COUNSELING SERVICES FOR DRUG ADDICTED ADOLESCENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

In Nigerian tertiary institutions, counseling services are crucial for treating drug addiction in teenagers. The rising prevalence of substance addiction among college and university students has emerged as a significant public health and educational issue. Students who receive counseling services are better able to overcome addiction, do better academically, and lead healthier lives.

➤ Early identification and assessment of drug abuse problems

Early detection and evaluation of drug addiction issues is one of the main functions of counseling services. Through behavioral observations, psychological evaluations, and interviews, professional counselors assist in identifying students who are at risk. Early identification enables prompt intervention before addiction worsens. According to Adekeye (2021), early counseling interventions significantly reduce the progression of substance abuse among Nigerian undergraduates.

➤ Rehabilitation and behavioral modification

Behavioral modification and rehabilitation have a significant influence as well. Counselors assist addicted teenagers in altering harmful behaviors and creating constructive coping mechanisms by using therapeutic techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), group counseling, and motivational interviewing. Regular counseling sessions help students develop the self-control, emotional regulation, and decision-making abilities needed for healing.

➤ Psychological and emotional support

Additionally, counseling programs offer emotional and psychological help. Many teenagers consume drugs as a result of stress, peer pressure, anxiety, sadness, or family issues. Counselors provide a secure setting where kids can communicate their emotions without worrying about being judged. Students who receive emotional support are able to regain their self-assurance and mental stability. Research by Olatunji and Adebayo (2022) found that counseling support improves self-esteem and emotional adjustment among substance-dependent students.

➤ Drug abuse awareness and preventive education

Counseling services also encourage preventive education and drug abuse awareness in higher education. Counselors educate students about the risks of substance misuse and the advantages of leading a healthy lifestyle through lectures, workshops, orientation programs, and campaigns. Adolescents who receive preventive education are less curious and misinformed about drugs.

➤ Family and peer involvement in recovery processes

Finally, counseling services encourage family and peer involvement in recovery processes. Counselors collaborate with parents, guardians, lecturers, and peer groups to provide continuous support for addicted adolescents. Strong social support systems increase the chances of long-term recovery and relapse prevention.

THE POTENCY OF COUNSELING SERVICES FOR DRUG ADDICTED ADOLESCENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

Drug abuse among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has become a serious public health concern, affecting academic performance, mental stability, and social development. Substance use among students is influenced by peer pressure, curiosity, stress, and poor family support systems. As noted by Adejoh et al. (2020), adolescents involved in substance abuse often experience negative psychological outcomes such as addiction, impaired judgment, and increased vulnerability to mental health disorders, which can disrupt their academic and social functioning. This situation highlights the urgent need for effective counseling services within tertiary institutions to address drug-related challenges among students.

Counseling services play a crucial role in preventing, managing, and rehabilitating drug-addicted adolescents. Counseling provides psychological support, behavior modification strategies, and emotional guidance that help students overcome dependence on drugs. According to Onijigin and Sanni (2020), counseling psychologists and school-based interventions are essential in producing positive behavioral changes among students who engage in drug abuse, especially through sensitization programs and rehabilitation support systems. These interventions help students develop self-awareness, improve decision-making skills, and resist peer influence that often leads to substance abuse.

In addition, counseling contributes to rehabilitation and reintegration of affected students into academic life. Through therapies such as cognitive-behavioral counseling, group therapy, and motivational interviewing, students are guided toward recovery and positive lifestyle changes. These counseling approaches also help reduce relapse rates by strengthening coping mechanisms and emotional resilience. As highlighted by Adejoh et al. (2020), peer and family influences are major determinants of substance abuse; therefore, counseling that involves family engagement improves recovery outcomes significantly.

However, despite the effectiveness of counseling services, many Nigerian tertiary institutions still face challenges such as inadequate counseling centers, shortage of trained counselors, stigma, and lack of awareness among students. These limitations reduce the effectiveness of intervention programs and allow drug abuse to persist among adolescents. Strengthening counseling services through government support, institutional policies, and awareness campaigns is therefore essential.

THE CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE COUNSELING SERVICES FOR DRUG ADDICTED ADOLESCENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

➤ **Inadequate funding and poor counseling facilities**

Despite the rising occurrence of substance misuse among students, counseling services for drug-addicted teenagers at Nigerian higher education institutions encounter several obstacles that limit their efficacy. Poor counseling facilities and insufficient financing are two significant obstacles. Many Nigerian universities and colleges lack state-of-the-art counseling facilities, cutting-edge rehabilitation programs, and qualified staff to address complicated addiction problems. Limited financial support from school authorities often results in insufficient awareness campaigns, lack of confidential therapy spaces, and inadequate treatment resources (Odejide & Morakinyo, 2021)

➤ **Social stigma and discrimination**

Social stigma and discrimination related to drug addiction present another difficulty. Many students steer clear of counseling services because of concern that peers, instructors, and even family members will label them as drug users, careless, or morally deficient. This stigma discourages adolescents from seeking professional help early, thereby worsening addiction problems and psychological distress (Adebisi, 2022).

➤ **Shortage of qualified counselors and mental health professionals**

Effective service delivery is also impacted by a lack of licensed counselors and mental health specialists. Compared to the enormous number of students, the majority of Nigerian educational institutions have relatively few professional counselors. In some schools, counselors are not adequately trained in addiction therapy, adolescent psychology, or behavioral intervention techniques required for substance abuse management (Eze & Ifelunni, 2020). This shortage reduces personalized attention and follow-up care for addicted students.

➤ **Peer pressure and campus drug culture**

Peer pressure and the drug culture on campus are major issues as well. Students are exposed to peer groups that promote substance addiction, including the use of alcohol, codeine, cannabis, and tramadol, in many postsecondary institutions. Even after counseling, recovering adolescents may relapse because of continued exposure to drug-using friends and unfavorable social environments (Nwosu, 2021).

➤ **Lack of parental involvement and weak institutional policies**

Inadequate institutional policies and insufficient parental involvement contribute to ineffective counseling outcomes. Some parents, due to denial, embarrassment, or poor communication with school officials, fail to support rehabilitation initiatives. Additionally, inconsistent school policies regarding drug abuse prevention and student discipline undermine the effectiveness of counseling interventions (Adeyemi & Omoegun, 2024).

MITIGATING STRATEGIES TO THE CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE COUNSELING SERVICES FOR DRUG ADDICTED ADOLESCENTS IN TERTIARY IN NIGERIA

➤ **Increased funding and provision of adequate counseling facilities**

To increase the efficacy of counseling services for drug-addicted teenagers at Nigerian tertiary institutions, a number of tactics might be used. Increasing financing and providing sufficient counseling facilities is one key tactic. Counseling clinics, rehabilitation programs, and awareness campaigns should receive adequate funding from government agencies, school administrators, and non-governmental organizations. Modern counseling offices equipped with confidential therapy rooms, educational materials, and rehabilitation resources can encourage students to seek professional help (Afolayan & Adebayo, 2021).

➤ **Recruitment and training of qualified counselors and mental health professionals.**

Hiring and educating licensed counselors and mental health specialists is another successful tactic. More professional counselors with expertise in behavioral management, adolescent psychology, and addiction therapy should be employed by postsecondary institutions.

Continuous professional development through workshops, seminars, and certification programs can improve counselors' competence in handling drug addiction cases among adolescents (Ede, 2022).

➤ **Awareness and sensitization programs**

To reduce the stigma and misunderstandings surrounding counseling and drug addiction, awareness and sensitization campaigns are crucial. Universities and colleges should hold regular lectures, anti-drug campaigns, orientation programs, and peer education activities to inform students about the risks of substance abuse and the importance of seeking counseling support. Public enlightenment initiatives can foster a supportive and non-judgmental environment for students in recovery (Odukoya, 2020).

➤ **Integration of peer support groups and mentorship programs**

The implementation of mentorship programs and peer support groups on college campuses is an effective strategy. Students recovering from addiction often respond positively to support from peers who understand their challenges. Creating peer counseling clubs, support groups, and mentorship initiatives can empower adolescents to resist peer pressure and sustain their recovery following counseling sessions (Okeke&Eze, 2023).

➤ **Strengthening institutional policies and collaboration with parents**

"Collaborating with parents and strengthening institutional policies can improve the effectiveness of counseling. Postsecondary institutions should develop clear anti-drug policies that prioritize prevention, rehabilitation, and student welfare rather than focusing solely on punishment. Additionally, parents should be actively engaged through regular communication with counselors and school administrators to support students in rehabilitation (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2024)."

➤ **Technology-based counseling services**

Access to counseling services can be improved through technology-based options, including private helplines, mental health apps, and online counseling platforms. Many adolescents may find it easier to address sensitive issues through these digital channels, which could result in increased participation and earlier intervention (Akanbi, 2021).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, counseling services remain one of the most effective approaches for addressing drug addiction among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Drug abuse among students has continued to threaten academic excellence, emotional well-being, mental health, and social development within higher institutions. Counseling services provide professional guidance, emotional support, behavioral modification, rehabilitation, and preventive education that help addicted adolescents recover and reintegrate successfully into society. Despite the potency of counseling services, several challenges continue to limit their effectiveness in Nigerian tertiary institutions. These include inadequate funding, shortage of qualified counselors, social stigma, poor counseling facilities, weak institutional policies, and the influence of peer pressure and campus drug culture. Therefore, strengthening counseling services through improved government support, professional training, awareness creation, parental involvement, peer mentoring, and digital counseling initiatives is necessary for effective drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation among adolescents in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government and school authorities should provide adequate funding for counseling centers, rehabilitation facilities, and drug abuse prevention programs in tertiary institutions.
- Tertiary institutions should employ more qualified counselors and mental health professionals who specialize in adolescent psychology and addiction management.
- Regular awareness campaigns, seminars, and workshops should be organized to educate students on the dangers of drug abuse and the importance of counseling services.
- Schools should establish peer counseling groups and mentorship programs to encourage recovering students and reduce the influence of negative peer pressure.
- Parents and guardians should collaborate closely with school counselors to monitor

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