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**GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES AND SUICIDAL TENDENCIES
AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS, IN UYO LOCAL EDUCATION
COMMITTEE**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined guidance and counseling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local education committee. The survey research design was adopted for the study on a population of 12,227 students in public secondary schools in the Uyo local educational committee. A sample size of 250 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire titled "Guidance and Counselling Services and Suicidal Tendencies Questionnaire" (GCSSTQ) was used as an instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to a face validation and a reliability test. A reliability coefficient index of 0.88 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha statistics. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the .05 level of significance. The results revealed there is a significant relationship between educational counselling service, vocational counselling service, and social counselling service and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. It was recommended, among others, that regular counseling sessions should be held for students with a high tendency for depression and anxiety.

KEYWORDS: Guidance and Counselling, Educational Counselling Service, Vocational Counselling Service, Social Counselling Service and Suicidal Tendencies

INTRODUCTION

The rising tendency for suicidal behavior among young secondary school students has become a thing of concern for parents, teachers, and counselors. Suicidal behavior is any deliberate action with potentially life-threatening consequences, such as taking a drug overdose or deliberately crashing a car. Suicidal behaviors often occur in response to a situation that the person views as overwhelming. Social isolation, death of a loved one, emotional trauma, serious physical illness, aging, unemployment, financial problems, guilt feelings, or dependence on alcohol or other drugs/substances account for some suicidal tendencies issues in social psychology.

Suicide is a global challenge and a large concern for public health across the world. Ghambari et al. (2016) report that suicide is the tenth leading cause of death and the third leading cause of death among individuals from 15 to 34 years of age. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), around 800 000 to 1 000 000 people (one every 40

seconds) die by suicide each year. It estimates that about 1.53 million people will die by suicide in 2020. Some 73 percent of suicides in the world occur in developing countries (WHO, 2014). According to Ghambari et al. (2016), a history of suicidal behavior is a risk factor for suicide reattempts. Around 40 percent of people who died by suicide have at least one previous attempt (Cavanagh, Carson, Sharpe, and Lawrie, 2003). There is strong evidence that suicide is preventable (Ono, 2006). Preventing suicide is one of the central parts of the WHO's operational program aimed to decrease the suicide rate in countries by 10 percent in 2020 (WHO, 2014).

Suicide has been shown to impact every age. Thus, Montague, Cassidy, and Liles (2016) argue that suicide is the second leading cause of death among children ages 10-14 years (Center for Diseases Control and Prevention, CDCP, 2015). According to Granello and Granello, cited in Ekanem (2019), every year approximately 12,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 years are admitted to a psychiatric hospital for suicidal behavior. This implies that in one study, 33 percent of children between the ages of 6-12 years had contemplated, attempted, or threatened suicide. Adolescents are ranked as having the highest suicide rates between the ages of 15-19 years, estimating 11 teens per day. Furthermore, an estimated 60 percent of high school students reported experiencing suicidal ideations, and 9 percent attempted.

This suicidal trend among secondary school students has called for effective guidance and counseling services in our educational system. Guidance and counselling, according to Modo, Sanni, Uwah, and Mogbo (2013), is one of the educational services. Guidance and counseling are encompassed by activities of relevant services and also processes of helping persons within and outside the school to achieve their full potential in their emotional, moral, social, academic, and vocational developments.

According to Modo et al. (2013) in the guidance and counselling profession, there are many services that the professional counsellor renders to the school and the host community. These include educational, vocational, and personal social services. The educational service in guidance and counseling is a service that takes care of all issues associated with education as they relate to the physical environment of the school, the structural makeup of the school, activities within the school, student intake, student progress, and adaptability within the school. Thus, Egbule, Modo, et al. (2013) argue that educational guidance is given to students to assist them in functioning well in the school. It assists them in understanding themselves and how their potentials could be developed. With these definitions, educational guidance and counseling for the adolescents are sine qua non if they must achieve maximally (Egbule, 2006). Effective provision of educational guidance would assist students to function well in the school as well as to understand how to overcome academic-related issues that could trigger suicidal tendencies (Modo et al., 2013).

Vocational service in guidance and counseling, according to Egbule (2006:82), is the process of assisting the individuals to choose an occupation, prepare to enter into it, and make progress. Egbule (2006:84) goes further to list the following as the reasons for vocational guidance and counseling in the school system. They are:

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

Following the elaborate explanation of vocational guidance and counseling by Egbule (2006), vocational guidance and counseling, therefore, is the service provided by the counselor to assist students in starting early enough to plan for a proper vocation in terms of their interest, abilities, aptitude, duration of training, sponsors, family, and societal needs.

In personal social guidance and counseling, Egbule (2006:85) observes that it is a service that helps the students to take care of personal-social problems relating to personality maladjustments. The following are the objectives of personal-social guidance and counseling services:

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

Theoretical Framework

The integrated motivational-volitional model of suicidal behavior was propounded by O'Connor (2011) as a theoretical model to explain the factors that account for suicidal ideation. According to the theory, suicidal behavior results from a complex interplay of motivational and volitional phase factors. Factors within the motivational phase of the model explain how suicidal thoughts emerge in some people but not in others. Factors within the motivational phase include defeat, entrapment, and (lack of) social support. Volitional phase factors, on the other hand, are those factors that govern the transition from suicidal thinking (ideation/intent) to suicidal behavior; they include exposure to suicide, fearlessness about death, and impulsivity (O'Connor, 2011).

According to O'Connor (2011), an individual's intention is one of the major predictors of suicidal tendencies. Accordingly, intention is determined by feelings of entrapment, where suicidal behavior is seen as the salient solution to life circumstances. These feelings of being trapped are triggered by defeat/humiliation appraisals, which are often associated with chronic or acute stressors. O'Connor (2011) further notes that the transitions from the defeat/humiliation stage to entrapment, from entrapment to suicidal ideation/intent, and from

ideation/intent to suicidal behavior are determined by stage-specific moderators (i.e., factors that facilitate/obstruct movement between stages). In addition, background factors (e.g., deprivation and vulnerabilities) and life events (e.g., relationship crisis), which comprised the pre-motivational phase (i.e., before the commencement of ideation formation), provide the broader bio-social context for suicide.

The integrated motivational-volitional model of suicidal behavior is relevant to this study, as it accentuates the centrality of guidance and counseling services in discouraging suicidal thoughts and ideation arising from feelings of defeat, academic vulnerabilities, and lack of social support.

Review of empirical studies revealed that Gallo (2014) conducted a study on professional issues in school counseling and suicide prevention in schools in Iowa. The study was conducted using a survey research design on a population of 5719 high school students, and a sample size of 500 students was drawn for the study. A self-assessment questionnaire on suicidal attempts was used as an instrument of data collection. Descriptive statistics were adopted in analyzing the data, and the results revealed that counseling services allow students to learn how to cope with situations and equip them with problem-solving skills to address high-risk behaviors, which may help improve students' self-efficacy and reduce their vulnerability to suicidal thoughts. This study is related to the present study because it examined the critical issues in preventing suicidal ideation in students through counseling.

Similarly, Iyoha, Ulo, and Okocha (2020) investigated the counselling strategies for suicide prevention among undergraduate students in Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study employed a descriptive survey research design with a sample size of 300 undergraduate students in 5 selected public universities in Southeast Nigeria. An independent t-test statistic was used in testing the null hypotheses at a .05 level of significance. The results showed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of school counselors (SC) and mental health professionals (MHP) as regards the factors that contribute to suicidal behavior among undergraduate students in Nigeria. The study recommended that the counselors working in the university settings should educate adolescents as well as stakeholders responsible for the care of the adolescents about suicide in the hope of prevention. They should also make available support systems such as counseling services and peer support groups to act as valuable resources for adolescents who do not have adaptive coping skills to deal with suicidal behavior.

From the above literature reviewed, studies (Reynolds and Mazza, 2000; Gallo, 2014; Iyoha et al., 2020) on guidance and counseling services and suicidal behavior have not been carried out using the same variables and methodology. This has created a gap in existing literature; thus, it becomes necessary to investigate guidance and counseling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo Local Education Committee of Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of problem

School guidance and counseling are primarily aimed at assisting the student to discover his own hidden strengths and ultimately grow in independence and ability to make his own decisions, choices, or adjustments unaided. Thus, effective implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools is expected to help students with behavioral problems to adjust and choose a good path of living. However, the recent increase in cases of suicide attempts by young people, especially secondary school students, has raised concern and queries as to the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in schools. It has been observed that lack of support for school counselors has resulted in the ineffectiveness of guidance and counseling programs in school, thereby leading to an inability to identify students' needs for love, affection, and guidance. This situation has resulted in the proliferation of suicidal tendencies.

It has been observed also that suicide as a significant issue impacts individuals across age, race, ethnicity, and gender. Thus, it has resulted in the termination of the potential of individual aspirations. Judging from the aforementioned problems, it was necessary to examine the relationship between guidance and counseling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between guidance and counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents, in Uyo local education committee. In specific terms, it sought to:

- i) determine the relationship between educational counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents, in Uyo local education committee.
- ii) assess the relationship between vocational counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents, in Uyo local education committee.
- iii) find out the relationship between counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents, in Uyo local education committee.

Research Questions

Three research questions were raised and answered to guide this study

- i) To what extent does educational counselling service relate with suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local education committee?
- ii) To what extent does vocational counselling service related with suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local education committee?
- iii) To what extent does counselling relate with suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local education committee?

Research Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance, to guide the study.

- H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between educational counselling service and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local education committee.
- H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between vocational counselling service and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local education committee.

H₀₃ There is no significant relationship between counselling service and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local educational committee.

Methods

A survey research design was adopted for the study. The design was considered appropriate to investigate “guidance and counseling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. A survey research design is one in which the entire population or a representative sample is studied by collecting and analyzing data from or using a questionnaire (Udoh and Joseph, 2005). This design was considered suitable to this study because it allowed data to be generated through a questionnaire and responses analyzed as they appeared.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all students in public secondary schools in the Uyo local educational committee. According to the State Secondary Education Board website, there are 12,227 registered secondary school students in the local educational committee during the 2020/2021 academic session (<https://www.sseb.ak.ng>, 2021).

Sample and Sampling Technique

Since the population of the study was a large one, it was impossible to examine the entire population. Therefore, a simple random sampling technique was adopted to select cases for the study. The simple random sampling technique allowed for the study of large population through representative sample, which permit generalization to be made. The sample for this study was 250 students selected from six schools in the area. Five (10) schools were randomly selected out of the 15 schools and in each of these school, 25 students were randomly selected to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Guidance and Counselling Services and Suicidal Tendencies Questionnaire” (GCSSTQ); this was used to collect data for the study, and it consisted of 15 items. The items were framed in line with the research questions and research hypotheses formulated. The instrument has sections A and B. Section A was the biodata of respondents, and section B contained items on guidance and counseling services and suicidal tendencies. The respondents were required to tick the correct options on the boxes provided for their responses. The response patterns were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), which carried 4, 3, 2, and 1 points, respectively. See appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

Data generated in the study were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at .05 level of significance. The decision is to accept the null hypothesis if the calculated r value is less than the table or critical value at 0.5 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between educational counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescent in Uyo local educational committee.

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Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Educational Counselling Services and Suicidal Tendencies among Secondary School Adolescents

Variables	n	r	p-value	Decision
Educational Counselling Services				
Suicidal Tendencies among Secondary School	250	.698	.009	Reject H ₀

Significant at .05 Alpha level

The analysis in table 1 shows that the p-value of .009 is significant at .05 level of significance hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between educational counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescent in Uyo local educational committee

Hypotheses Two

There is no significant relationship between vocational counselling service and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local education committee.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Vocational Counselling Services and Suicidal Tendencies among Secondary School Adolescents

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Vocational Counselling Services				
Suicidal Tendencies among Secondary School	250	.681	.012	Reject H ₀

Significant at .05 Alpha level

The analysis in table 2 shows that the p-value of .012 is significant at .05 level of significance hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between vocational counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local educational committee

Hypotheses Three

There is no significant relationship between social counselling service and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local education committee.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Social Counselling Services and Suicidal Tendencies among Secondary School Adolescents

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Social Counselling Services				
Suicidal Tendencies among Secondary School	250	.683	.008	Reject H ₀

Significant at .05 Alpha level

The analysis in table 3 shows that the p-value of .008 is significant at .05 level of significance hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant

relationship between social counselling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in Uyo local educational committee

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between educational counseling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. This finding implies that effective educational counseling services are capable of ameliorating suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. This finding is in agreement with Modo et al. (2013), whose findings revealed that effective provision of educational guidance would assist students to function well in the school as well as to understand how to overcome academic-related issues that could trigger suicidal tendencies.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between vocational counseling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. This finding aligns with Gallo (2014), who found that vocational counseling services allow students to learn how to cope with situations and equip them with problem-solving skills to address high-risk behaviors, which may help improve students' self-efficacy and reduce their vulnerability to suicidal thoughts.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between social counseling services and suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. This finding implies that social counseling service is a powerful mechanism towards addressing suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents. This finding is supported by Iyoha, Ulo, and Okocha (2020), whose findings revealed that social counseling services are significantly related to the reduction of suicidal behavior among secondary school students.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that effective educational counseling services are capable of ameliorating suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. It was also concluded that vocational and social counseling services have a significant relationship with suicidal tendencies among secondary school adolescents in the Uyo local educational committee. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

- i) Qualified counselors should be employed in public secondary schools in the Uyo local educational committee.
- ii) Regular counseling sessions should be held for students with a high tendency for depression and anxiety.

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