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SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PREFERENCES BY GENDER FOR COUNSELING IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on senior secondary school students' choices for counseling in Delta State, Nigeria, broken down by gender. To direct the investigation, one null hypothesis was developed and three research questions were posed. The study used a descriptive survey research approach. Every senior secondary school student made up the study's population. Simple random sampling methods were used to choose 200 respondents. The questionnaire served as the data gathering tool. According to the study's findings, many students favor female counselors over male ones. Based on these findings, the study came to the conclusion that students prefer female counselors to male counselors. However, it is important to emphasize that this preference is limited to a few areas and cannot be used to excuse a counselor from doing their duties in the educational system. It was suggested, among other things, that school administrators should provide enough female counselors and make them available for counseling sessions in order to be able to lead, direct, and help the students in obtaining their best life objectives.

KEY WORDS

Gender, Counselling, Secondary School, Students.



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Introduction

The purpose of education is to help people realize their potentials as fully as possible. As a result, education develops a person's entire personality. Nigeria's federal, state, and municipal governments oversee education policy. Igbokwe (2015) asserted that education is a tactical tool for social and economic change in the general and global environment. The Federal Ministry of Education is primarily concerned with tertiary education but is also in charge of general policy formation and quality supervision. Governments at the state and municipal levels are primarily in charge of secondary and elementary education, respectively (Craddock, 2017).

Counseling is one of several programs like this, which focuses on enhancing or reestablishing clients' own levels of self-awareness, decision-making abilities, risk-taking, and personal development (Kamunyu, Ndungo, and Wango, 2019). The school counselor has a crucial role to play in assisting the children in making the best judgments and choices possible. Be it decisions about your education, career, relationships, personal or social life, etc. Along with instruction, guidance and counseling are considered as the third force in education. They are viewed as a crucial component of the educational system because, according to Egbule (2020), they have the power to improve students' performance when employed correctly. Eyo, Joshua and Esuong (2010) asserted that guidance programs for secondary school students are created to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational, and academic difficulties of adolescent students in an effort to demonstrate the relevance of guidance and counseling in secondary schools in Nigeria. These are intended to supplement classroom instruction and improve pupils' academic performance and achievements.

The growth in primary and secondary school enrollment following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country's increasing need for youth, ongoing changes to the educational system, conflict in tertiary institutions, and changes in home and family life are just a few of the factors that led to the development of guidance and counseling in Nigeria (FRN, 2013). Counseling is a service provided to people who are experiencing problems and require expert assistance to deal with them (Omoniyi, 2016). These issues, difficulties, and obstacles have the potential to impede the growth of such a person by keeping him troubled, easily agitated, and under strain. Counseling is a highly specialized service that calls for education in personality development and working with extraordinary teams of people. Counseling is intended to address and resolve issues, assist with decision-making, help a person cope with crisis, work through emotions, and resolve internal conflicts in order to improve relationships with others and oneself (Kanga, 2017).

The socially created roles, behaviors, activities, and characteristics that a particular culture deems proper for men and women are referred to as gender. To put it another way, "masculine" and "feminine" are gender categories, whereas "male" and "female" are sex categories (Gender, Women & Health 2017). In most civilizations, there are two genders and a gender binary. Gender binary, as stated by Hyde, Bigler, and Joel Tate Van Anders (2019), is the idea that there are only two types of people in the world: women and men.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of gender in counseling settings. According to William, Bethany, and McManus (2020), gender can have an impact on a person's willingness to share intimate relationship details with counselors. According to Glasheen, Shochet, and Campbell (2016), research findings show that boys typically seek assistance less frequently than girls since the former do not perceive assistance as readily as the latter. Does this indicate that students' desire in obtaining therapy is influenced by their gender? Such a question and others will guide this study's direction.

This study was inspired by the gender issues that exist in our society and the necessity to take into account female gender education due to cultural considerations. Additionally, there are cultural constraints that may limit the mobility of women and girls, which might result in under-utilization of services if they are located outside of the nearby neighborhood (Egbule, 2013). At the communal level, it can be necessary to create distinct organizations for men and women for cultural and religious reasons. Female extension agents and community workers may be necessary, as well as distinct training and consultation sessions for men and women. The current study offers the chance to look into the possibility that these limitations also apply to counseling services provided by senior secondary schools in Delta State.

There can never be enough emphasis placed on the value of providing advice and counseling to secondary school pupils. To keep up with the fast rising complexities in our society, political, social, industrial, economic, and technical growth, effective guiding and counseling services are required. For the majority of adolescents, the secondary years are a time of academic, social, psychological, emotional, and intellectual growth (Alemu, 2015).

According to Olusakin (2017), a counselor in Nigeria can be either a man or a woman; what matters is that he or she be efficient. He or she should have these fundamental qualities of a counselor. The article went on to state that when one thinks about what a counselor does and the nature of the counseling relationship as one in which one person (the counselor) goes to great lengths to assist another (the client) in bettering himself and growing through this self-understanding.

Given that most female secondary school students appear to perform better than male students in particular abilities, there has been a great deal of attention in the field of how gender disparities affect the counseling process in both developed and developing countries (Akpotor & Egbule, 2020). Male counselors questioned female clients more frequently than male clients about their familial relationships, according to Buczek's (2011) research. According to Faldstein (2015), both male and female clients regularly gave male counselors higher ratings than female counselors in terms of expertise (expertness), dependability, and attractiveness. Therefore, the study examined senior secondary school students' preferences by gender for counseling in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the investigation:

- i. When choosing to get counseling at senior secondary schools in Delta State, what gender of counselor do male students prefer?
- ii. When choosing to get counseling at senior secondary schools in Delta State, whose gender of counselor does the female student population prefer?
- iii. How frequently do students attend counseling sessions at particular secondary schools in Delta State?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated at 0.05 level of significance

- i. The preference of men and women for the gender of the counselor on socio-personal concerns is not significantly different.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was the one used in this study. All of Delta State's senior secondary public schools made up the population. 200 pupils from all throughout the State

were included in the study's sample using a multi-stage sampling technique. There are 3 senatorial districts in Delta State. By using simple random selection, one mixed school was chosen from each senatorial district. A total of five (5) schools were chosen, including two single schools (a boys' and girls' school) using purposive random sampling methods. Using basic random picking, 40 students were chosen, bringing the total number of research participants to 200. A structured questionnaire with the name Gender Preference Counseling Questionnaire (GPCQ) served as the data gathering tool. Sections A and B of the questionnaire will be included. The respondents' biographical information is covered in Section A, whereas the senior secondary students' gender preferences for receiving counseling are covered in Section B. To guarantee the consistency of the instrument, test-retest reliability and validity were performed. The study issues were addressed using frequency counts, mean scores, and standard deviation, and the hypothesis was analyzed using a t-test at a significance level of 0.05. 2.50 will be utilized as the criteria mean for making decisions. Any response with a mean score of 2.50 or above was accepted; anything with a mean score of 2.50 or lower was discarded.

Research Questions

Result is presented in table 1 below

Table 1: Percentage Status of students' visitation for counseling

s/n	Statement	Level of Agreement							
		often	100 %	Some times	100 %	regularly	100 %	Not much	100 %
1.	I enjoy going to a counselor's office.	5	2.5	23	11.3	64	32.0	108	54.0
2.	When I am puzzled and in need of knowledge, I prefer to seek a counselor's assistance.	94	47.0	16	8.0	76	38.0	14	7.0
3.	I like discussing my difficulties with the counselor.	21	10.5	79	39.5	8	4.0	92	46.0
4.	I attend to therapy because the school requires it	93	46.5	24	12.0	66	33.0	17	8.5
5.	I don't think I need to see a counselor.	10	5.0	73	36.5	20	10.0	97	48.5

Table 1 above, item 1 showed that 2.5% of the respondents enjoy visiting a counselor's office frequently, 11.5% enjoy doing so sometimes, 32.0% enjoy doing so regularly, and 54.0% do not enjoy visiting a counselor's office very much. According to Item 2, 47.0% of respondents frequently prefer to seek the assistance of a counselor when they are confused and in need of information, 38.0% of respondents routinely prefer to seek the assistance of a counselor when they are confused and in need of information, and 7.9% of respondents do not particularly prefer to do so. In response to question 3, it was discovered that 10.5% of respondents frequently enjoy discussing their problems with counselors, 39.0% occasionally enjoy doing so, 4.0% frequently enjoy doing so, and 46.0% do not enjoy discussing their problems with counselors very much. In response to question 4, 46.0% of respondents indicated they frequently seek counseling because their schools require it, 12.0% indicated they occasionally do so, 33.0% indicated they regularly do so, and 8.5% indicated they do so infrequently. 5.0% of the responders to item 5 admitted that they frequently do not feel the need to seek counseling. 10.0% of them don't feel the need to seek therapy on a regular basis, while 48.5% of

them don't feel the need to seek counseling very often. Of these, 36.5% feel the need to do so sometimes.

Research Question Two

Results is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Male Students Preference of Counselor

S/N	Statement	Level of Agreement				\bar{x}	SD	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	I seek guidance from a male counselor to improve my reading abilities.	15	21	76	88	1.80	0.87	Disagree
2.	I believe a male counselor will be more able to assist me sort out my issues with subject pairings.	91	77	18	13	3.26	0.85	Agree
3.	I seek advice from a male counselor when I need help picking a job	97	74	21	10	3.28	0.85	Agree
4.	I find it discouraging to have to talk about my sexual desires with a man counselor.	15	19	71	95	1.70	0.84	Disagree
5.	In order to better comprehend how my body is changing, I prefer to consult a male counselor.	11	14	72	103	1.68	0.85	Disagree
6.	When I am stressed, I look forward to talking with a male counselor.	10	23	74	89	1.77	0.84	Disagree
7.	I can better understand my mood fluctuations with the aid of a male counselor	10	34	74	82	1.87	0.88	Disagree
8.	When my family is pressuring me, I decide to see a male counselor.	108	64	17	13	3.34	0.86	Agree
9.	When I have trouble turning in an assignment, I prefer a male counselor.	92	67	23	19	3.16	0.98	Agree
10.	A male counselor will be better able to explain to me how to handle pressure in the classroom.	92	68	27	12	3.21	0.90	Agree
Grand Mean						2.51	0.87	

According to Table 2 above, the means scores for items 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10 were 3.26, 3.28, 3.34, 3.16, and 3.21, respectively, whereas the means scores for items 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 were 1.80, 1.70, 1.68, 1.77, and 1.87. The grand mean of 2.51 showed that some respondents agreed that they think a male counselor will help them sort out problems of subject combinations better; go to a male counselor when they need advice about choosing a career; and choose to go to a male counselor when they are feeling pressure from my family. While the remaining respondents disagreed that they go to a male counselor for guidance on their reading skills; felt discouraged having to discuss their sexual urges with a male counselor; preferred to go to a male counselor whenever they are subject to peer pressure; and felt that a male counselor is in a better position to help them understand how to handle classroom pressure.

Research Question Three

Result is presented in table 3

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of female students' Preference of counselor

S/N	Statement	Level of Agreement				\bar{X}	SD	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	I need clarity from a female counselor on my comprehension abilities.	108	62	25	5	3.38	0.78	Agree
2.	I believe a female counselor will be more able to assist me sort out my issues with subject pairings.	91	80	16	14	3.25	0.88	Agree
3.	I consult a female counselor when I need advice on picking a profession.	93	79	20	8	3.28	0.81	Agree
4.	I find it discouraging to have to talk about my sexual inclinations with a female counselor.	15	26	66	93	1.83	0.95	Disagree
5.	To comprehend my bodily changes, I prefer to consult a female counselor.	95	75	18	12	3.29	0.84	Agree
6.	When I am under peer pressure, I look forward to talking with a male counselor.	93	73	29	5	3.24	0.84	Agree
7.	I can better understand my mood swings if I work with a female counselor.	78	78	33	11	3.13	0.88	Agree
8.	In situations where I am under pressure from my family, I opt to see a female counselor.	95	70	24	11	3.21	0.87	Agree
9.	When I experience problems with assignment submission, I prefer a female counselor.	90	78	19	13	3.26	0.89	Agree
10	I can better grasp how to handle classroom pressure from a female counselor.	90	68	24	19	3.16	0.98	Agree
Grand Mean						3.10	0.87	

According to Table 3 above, the mean scores for items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10 were 3.38, 3.25, 3.28, 3.29, 3.24, 3.13, 3.21, 3.26, and 3.16, respectively, whereas item 4 had a mean score of 1.83. The grand mean of 3.10 showed that some respondents agreed they go to a female counselor for clarification on their reading skills, because they believe a female counselor will help them sort out problems of subject combinations better, because they need information about choosing a career, or because they prefer a female counselor to help them understand their physical changes. Additionally, they anticipate talking with a male counselor whenever they are under pressure; a female counselor can assist them in understanding my mood swings; they choose to see a female counselor when they are under pressure from my family; they prefer a female counselor when they have problems with the submission of assignments; and a female counselor is in a better position to assist them in understanding how to handle classroom pressure, while the remaining respondents disagreed that feel discouraging.

Hypothesis Testing

The research hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. The preference of men and women for the gender of the counselor on socio-personal concerns is not significantly different.

Table 4: t-test analysis showing preference between men and women for gender of counselor's on socio- personal issues

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	Sig	Decision
Male	200	82.86	6.67	198	0.163	1.65	0.87	Accepted
Female	200	82.60	7.51					

In Table 4, the t-test study of the preference of male and female counselors on socio-personal concerns was displayed. Given 398 degrees of freedom and a 0.05 level of significance, the t-cal value of 0.163 is determined to be smaller than the t-tab value of 1.6549. The null hypothesis is maintained since the t-cal value is not significant because it is smaller than the t-tab value. It suggested that counselor preferences for men and women were significantly different. The key area of distinction is the threshold of socio-personal problems. When it comes to social difficulties, many students favor female counselors over male counselors. The average score for male students was 82.86, compared to 82.60 for female students. The preference of male students is greater than that of female students. According to the implication, male students likewise favor female counselors over male counselors. This showed that a lot of pupils like female counselors over male ones.

Discussion

According to this survey, respondents wait until they are confused and in need of advice before seeking counseling. The results broadly concurred with Glasheen, Shochet, and Campbell (2016), who came to the conclusion that while many secondary school students struggle with relationships, academic demands, and mental health issues (Egbule, 2020), many do not seek professional help when faced with such issues.

According to the survey, respondents favor female counselors over male counselors. In support of this, Eyo, Joshua, and Esuong's (2010) asserted that female students are more likely than their male counterparts to benefit from school guidance and counseling services. It is consistent once again with Olusakin (2017), who examined the impacts of counselor gender. Buczek (2011), on the other hand, disagrees with the results because he believes that male counselors are better since they frequently inquire about families. The findings showed that attitudes about getting help are highly influenced by both gender and sex role orientation. As a result, the study found that many students favor women.

Conclusion

The study examines senior secondary school students' gender-specific counseling preferences in Delta State, Nigeria, with a focus on how male and female students interact with school counselors. In light of this, the study came to the conclusion that students prefer female counselors to male counselors. However, it is important to highlight that this preference is limited to a few areas and cannot be used to excuse a counselor from doing their duties in the educational system.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made in light of the findings:

- i. Schools should have enough female counselors and make them available for counseling sessions so that they can help kids reach their highest aspirations in life.
- ii. Male or female school counselors must provide students a serious orientation to the necessity to seek advice and counseling services for their educational, professional, social/personal, or perhaps all three of these areas.

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