

**COUNSELLOR'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN THE
PROMOTION OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.**

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between counsellors' involvement in decision making process and the health of school climates of public secondary school in Enugu state. The correlational research design was adopted in the study. The sample size consisted of 69 counsellors, for all the (194) schools selected. Semi-structured questionnaires and interview guide were designed and administered to the targeted population. To ascertain the reliability of the research instruments, the Cronbach Alpha test was used on a coefficient value of 0.7. Also, the ANOVA statistics was computed to predict the overall effect of counsellors participation in decision making process on school climate in public secondary schools in Enugu state. The findings indicate among others that counsellors involvement in decision making process has a very significant and positive relationship with the school climate in Enugu state. On the basis of the findings made, recommendations suggest that ministry of education should include counsellors as one of the education stakeholders that should participate in curriculum development of secondary school students in Enugu state among others.

Keywords: Counsellors, participation, decision making, school climate, secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

Counsellors play key roles as educational stakeholders. Counsellors' primary objective is to ensure academic development, career growth in personal social development which will enable students to lead productive rewarding lives as adults in a global society. Counsellors as educational provide additional and useful information for the school to assist with student achievement and to enhance a sense of community pride and commitment which may boost the overall success of the school. Chigbu, Ngwaka&Onu in Grace, Benedicta, Chima, Chigbu&Uzoekwe (2022) describe a counsellor as professional trained person who uses his/her skills and strategies to help students in their working environment to resolve and ameliorate their problems in all spheres of life.

According to Okoiye and Anusiem (2017), counsellors are professionals that are exposed to various training which help in the reformation and adjustment of student's life style. Chigbu, Oguzie& Obi (2020) emphasize that counsellors through counselling process engage students in an effective interaction that will lead to finding a solution to problems as well as making a decision for better and more stable future. Thus, the place of counsellors in school setting may make their existence in decision making process of the school inevitable and vulnerable.

Decision making is the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering information and assessing alternative resolutions

(https://www.umassd.edu/fycm/decision-making/process/#:~:text=decision%20making%20is%20the%20process,relevant%20information%20and%20defining%20alternatives.)).

Decision making process can help to make a deliberate and thoughtful resolution among possible alternative. Decision making process for the promotion of a healthy school climate is very important at its boost and influence positively the overall standard of student performances and achievement. Therefore, counsellors' participation in school decision making process is very important because the information they gather from student will enhance the knowledge base of the decision making process. The knowledge and information gathered from students will form a basis which the decision making will be subjected to. This decision making in a public school may come in form of academic formation (time table and curriculum), moral upbringing (discipline), peer group influences and teachers' student's relationship.

Ismail (2018) point out that school counsellors develop the ability of coordinating with the school environment in making decisions as it concerns learning objectives, devices and situations. Therefore, counsellors' involvement in the decision making process of the school becomes paramount because they know the strength and weaknesses of the students.

To Chigbu, Obi, Uzoekwe & Grace (2021) counsellors should be involved in the decision making process of the school as it concerns curriculum development because their involvement will help the curriculum to be consistent with student's needs as discerned

through the guidance process. Hence, through counselling process, guidance and counsellors detect the strength and weaknesses of students and match it with the potential success of the future lives.

Chigbu, et al, (2021) conceive that counsellors should be unavoidable involve in response to the reason for the climate change in the school system as it concerns the psychological wellbeing. Thus, when counsellors are responsible for the above explanation it means they may also contribute to decision making process of the school for the promotion of healthy school environment .Sindabi (1992) postulate that young people in secondary school undergo emotional development, manifesting characteristics of being erratic, irritable, unpredictable, ambivalent, critical and rebellious as a result of climate crisis. In the contest of this study, school climate is the general condition of school environment which elicit negative outcomes like complex abnormalities and psychosocial problems and positive outcome like sound mental health and good academic achievement. Chigbu et al, (2021) assert that student that elicit negative outcome of harsh climate usually experience erratic psychological and psychosocial changes resulting to unpredictable mood swings and social development. Unhealthy school climate necessitates the rationale for counselling participation in decision making of the school because the toxicity of the environment can lead to disposition of maladaptive behaviour as a result of psychosocial need problems (Weinten, 2017). UNESCO, (2006) states that a hallmark of students behaviour modification rests on the guidance and counselling services. Brigman and Campel (2007) put guidance and counselling services as the leading school agency that develop, strengthens and maintain fundamental principles adjustment among school students. In Japan, the goal of school guidance counselling is to help every student develop abilities of self-understanding, decision making, life planning studies on the modification behaviour among students (Loesher, 2007). With the above assertions, it simply means that counsellors may be part of decision makers of public secondary school in Enugu State.

The decision making process may involve the identification of the decision to make, gathering of relevant information through a process of self-assessment (through internal or external), identifying the numerous alternatives, weighing the evidence in a priority order based on the school value system, make the right choice after evaluation, take positive and appropriate action base on the alternative selected and finally reviewing the decision taking and the consequences embedded on it (<https://www.umassd.edu/fycm/decision-making/process/#:~:text=decision%20making%20is%20the%20process,relevant%20information%20and%20defining%20alternatives>).

The above decision making process is the basic procedure for ensuring and prioritizing good decision among alternatives. However, for decision making process in public secondary school to be efficient and effective, the school staff and educational stakeholders should be fullyinvolved to provide healthy school climate. However, the researchers are worried to the deteriorating effect of our school environment, hence unhealthy school climate perhaps because the decision making bodies are not fully involved or that the

school administrative body are nonchalant in the affairs of the school, taking their personal matters paramount in place of their primary assignment. There could be also problem of qualified teachers for guidance and counselling services in Enugu State, there is also inadequate provision of counselling tools, equipment's functional facilities and materials for counselling in secondary schools, inadequate finance for guidance and counselling problem, inadequate time allocated to counsellors for counselling services and shortage of guidance counsellors. Though in spite of continuous decline in government funding of guidance and counselling services, efforts are being made by counsellors to guide and counsel students, parents also support the school through PTA and provision of students needs yet public school have continued to register poor school attendances, poor performance and unhealthy school climate every year. Therefore, if counsellors despite all odds play fundamental roles in guiding both students and staff, how would negative vices and influences encounter on daily basis amidst counselling practices promote healthy school environment? Thus, the researchers are set to evaluate the relationship between counsellor's involvement in decision making process and the health of school climate of public secondary schools in Enugu State.

AIM

This study sought to evaluate the relationship between counsellors' involvement in decision making process and the health of school climates of public secondary school in Enugu state.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between counsellor's involvement in decision making process and the health of public secondary schools in Enugu state.

Ho: There is a significant relationship between counsellors' involvement in decision making process and the health of the climate of public Secondary School in Enugu state.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was correlational design. Correlational design according to Nworgu (2006) seeks to establish the extent of the relationship between two or more variables and also determine the direction and magnitude of such relationship. Nworgu further states that the design also permits the selection of sample from the population and using the information generated to make references or generalizations to their entire population provided in the study.

Enugu State is made up of six education zones (Obollorafor, Udi, Agbani, Nsukka, Enugu and Awgu). Through simple random sampling, three education zones were selected, namely Nsukka, Enugu and Awgu with 194 public schools located in the three education zones. The population for the study consisted of all 69 school counsellors currently serving in the 194 public schools in Nsukka, Enugu and Awgu Education Zones. The population was small and manageable so no sampling was done. Semi structured questionnaires and interview guide developed by the researchers and administered to the targeted population

the instrument was named Secondary School Counsellor's decision making process questionnaire (SSCDMPD). Data was collected from primary source directly from counsellors through the help of two research assistance. The quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed. To ascertain the reliability of the research instruments, the Cronbach Alpha test was used on a coefficient value of 0.7Furthermore; the ANOVA statistics was computed to predict the overall effect of counsellor's participation in decision making process on school climate in public secondary school in Enugu state.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 showing counsellors' opinion on their involvement in decision making process in secondary schools

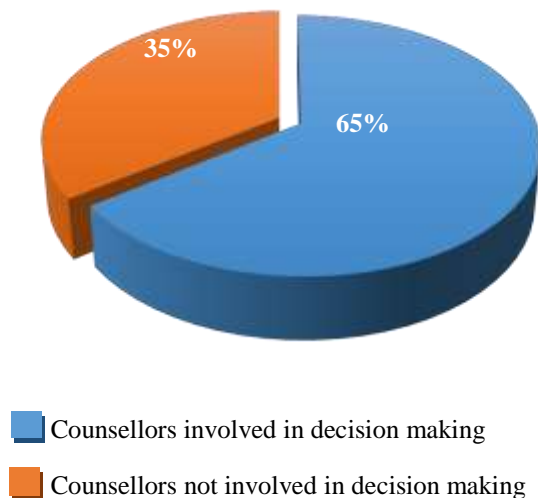
Items	Strongly Agree (SA)	Stretched		Strongly Disagree	Collapsed	
		Agree (A)	Disagree (D)		SA/A	D/SD
Counsellors are fully in PTA meetings where most of the matters concerning students are discussed.	50 (80%)	10 (10%)	5 (5.2%)	4 (4.8%)	60 (90%)	9 (10%)
Counsellors participate in curriculum development of public secondary schools.	9 (6%)	10 (9%)	30 (55%)	20 (30%)	19 (15%)	50 (85%)
Counsellors participate in social activities of students as it concerns excursions, intercourse sports, debates and school orientation.	50 (80%)	19 (20%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	69 (100%)	0 (0.0%)

Counsellors communicate teachers on issues concerning their individual students for easy guidance and counselling services.	10 (15%)	9 (10%)	40 (70%)	10 (15%)	19 (25%)	50 (85.5%)
Solving administrative problems with counsellors improves the school climate of the school.	50 (80%)	10 (20%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	69 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
Government contributes to poor guidance and counselling services in the school as they play nonchalant attitude in funding guidance and counselling services.	40 (60%)	20 (30%)	5 (5%)	4 (5%)	60 (90%)	9 (10%)
Counsellors are consulted before making decisions that affect the welfare of student in the school.	10 (10%)	10 (10%)	40 (70%)	9 (10%)	20 (20%)	49 (80%)
Allocating enough time for guidance and counselling services promotes healthy school climate.	40 (60%)	10 (15%)	10 (15%)	9 (10%)	50 (75%)	19 (20%)
Counsellors are involved in organizing school programmes	299 (45.0%)	127 (20.0%)	135 (25%)	60 (10%)	426 (65.0%)	195 (35.0%)

Based on the counsellor opinion on their involvement in decision making process, 95.5% (60) of them agreed that Counsellors are fully involved in PTA meetings where most of the matters concerning students are discussed. Also 15% (19) of counsellors accepted that counsellors participate in curriculum development of public secondary schools. In contrast, 100%(69) of counsellors agreed that counsellors participate in social activities of students as it concerns excursions, intercourse sports, debates and school orientation. Furthermore, (25%) 19 of counsellors agreed that Counsellors communicate with teachers on issues concerning their individual students for easy guidance and counselling services. 100%

(69) of counsellors equally indicate that solving administrative problems with counsellors improves the school climate of the school. Also, (90%) 60 of counsellors agreed that government contributes to poor guidance and counselling services in the school as they play nonchalant attitude in funding guidance and counselling services. The finding also showed 20% (20) of counsellors are consulted before making decisions that affect the welfare of student in the school. 90% (60) of the counsellors also agreed that allocating enough time for guidance and counselling services promotes healthy school climate. Finally, 75% (50) indicate that counsellors are involved in organizing school programmes. In overall, the findings showed that 65.0% of the counsellors agreed that counsellors are involved in decision making of the school while 35.0% of them disagreed.

Figure 1 showing counsellors opinion on their involvement in decision making process



As indicated on the figure above, majority of counsellors 65.0% indicate that counsellors are involve in decision making of the school while 35.0% of them state that counsellors are not involve.

HYPOTHESIS TEST

Table 2 showing hypothesis test on the effect of counsellors' involvement in decision making process on school climate

Test	Statistics	Counsellor's involvement In decision making Process	Healthy school Climate	Explanatory power of the effect in terms of %
Spearman's rho	R-value	1	.258	87.1%
	P-Value	.	.000	
	N	69	69	

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). $P < 0.001$ far < 0.05

Statistically, the findings showed counsellors involvement in decision making processes has a very significant and positive effect on school climate ($P < 0.001$, far < 0.05 , $R = 0.58$) and, this effect is also supported with a high explanatory power of 87.1%. The positive sign of the correlation value implies that the school administration is more likely to experience a healthy school climate when they adequately involved counsellors in decision making processes. Therefore, the hypothesis that states that parents' involvement in decision making process has a significant effect on health of the climate of secondary school in Enugu state was accepted.

The above findings are supported by Aluede and Adubale (2020) who assert that counsellors play major role in educational and career planning dimension of secondary school students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study provides an overview of the relationship between counsellors' involvement in participatory decision making and secondary school climate in public secondary school in Enugu state. Findings indicate that there is positive relationship between the counsellors' involvement in decision making and secondary school climate. The findings showed there is a significant positive relationship between counsellors involvement in participatory decision making and secondary school climate in public secondary schools in Enugu state ($R = 0.250^{**}$, $P < 0.001$, far < 0.05). This positive sign of the relationship implies that counsellors' involvement in the participatory decision making will lead to healthy school climate and this is supported by a high explanatory power of 87.1%. In addition other factors can also contribute to healthy school climate which include government participation to the school curriculum, improvement in the teaching method, improvement

in school value system through moral teaching and counselling, building teachers personality through teacher forum and seminar, curriculum and teaching infrastructural development and extension of counselling services to homes. These factors mentioned above can form basis for further studies. Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made:

- The ministry of education should include counsellors as one of the education stakeholders that should participate in curriculum development of secondary school students in Enugu state.
- School administration, teachers and counsellors should be collectively involve in decision making of the public secondary schools, thereby enhancing and creating a healthy environment both for learning and moral decadence.

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