



ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN IMPROVING TIME MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GWAGWALADA LOCAL GOVERNMENT, FCT, ABUJA.

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Abstract

This study examined the role of guidance and counselling in improving time management practices and academic performance among secondary school students in Gwagwalada Local Government, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The study was motivated by concerns over poor time management among students, which often results in ineffective study habits, procrastination, and declining academic performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of secondary school students in public schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, from which a sample of 381 students was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' time management practices, exposure to guidance and counselling services, and academic performance indicators. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviation. The findings revealed that guidance and counselling services play a significant role in helping students develop effective time management skills such as prioritizing academic tasks, creating study schedules, avoiding procrastination, and balancing academic and social activities. The study also found that students who had access to functional guidance and counselling services demonstrated better academic performance compared to those with limited or no access. Furthermore, guidance and counselling contributed to improved self-discipline, goal setting, and academic motivation among students. The study concludes that effective guidance and counselling services are essential in promoting positive time management behaviours and enhancing academic performance among secondary school students. It recommends that school authorities strengthen guidance and counselling units, employ qualified counsellors, and organize regular counselling programmes to support students' academic development and overall success.

Keywords: Peer pressure, Time management, Academic performance, Guidance and counselling, Secondary school students.

Introduction

Educational institutions are established with the primary aim of ensuring that students achieve mastery of instructional objectives and develop the intellectual, moral, and social capacities required for meaningful participation in society. Academic performance therefore remains a central indicator of educational effectiveness. However, students' academic success does not depend solely on intellectual ability. It is also influenced by behavioural, environmental, and psychosocial variables such as peer relationships, motivation, discipline, and time management practices (Ryan, 2000; Uche, 2010). Academic performance reflects not only cognitive competence but also students' level of commitment, organization, and engagement with learning



tasks (Pandney, 2008; Steinberger, 2005). In recent years, concerns have emerged regarding the declining academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria, including those in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and curriculum experts have attributed this trend to several behavioural factors, particularly negative peer influence and poor time management. Adolescence, which is characterized by rapid emotional, social, and cognitive changes, is a developmental period during which individuals increasingly shift their orientation from parental authority to peer acceptance (Obidoa & Ifelunni, 2010). According to Erik Erikson, adolescence represents the stage of identity versus role confusion, where individuals strive to establish a clear sense of self while seeking social belonging. This developmental struggle often heightens adolescents' susceptibility to peer pressure (Berk, 2004; Wall, Power & Arbona, 1993). Peer groups serve as powerful agents of socialization, establishing norms and expectations that members tend to adopt (Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Tarrant, 2002). While peer influence can be constructive, encouraging academic excellence and positive behaviour (Landau, 2002; Lingren, 1995), it can also be detrimental. Students may be lured into maladaptive behaviours such as truancy, substance abuse, excessive socialization, and other distractions that interfere with effective time utilization (Oni, 2006; Nwankwo, 2007). When adolescents devote excessive time to peer-related activities at the expense of academic responsibilities, their time management practices and academic outcomes are negatively affected.

Within the school system, guidance and counselling services play a crucial role in addressing these behavioural and psychosocial challenges. Guidance and counselling refer to professional services provided to assist students in understanding themselves, solving personal-social and academic problems, and making informed decisions. School counsellors perform preventive and developmental functions aimed at fostering discipline, self-awareness, and responsible behaviour. Through structured interventions such as individual counselling, group sessions, career talks, and study skills workshops, counsellors help students cultivate effective time management skills and resist negative peer influence.

Time management is the ability to plan, organize, and allocate time effectively to accomplish tasks within stipulated deadlines. For secondary school students, time management involves developing study schedules, completing assignments promptly, balancing academic and extracurricular activities, and minimizing distractions. Effective time management enhances productivity, reduces academic stress, and promotes better academic outcomes. Conversely, poor time management often manifests in truancy and absenteeism, incomplete assignments, last-minute examination preparation, overdependence on peers for academic tasks, and reduced classroom engagement. These behaviours significantly undermine academic performance and long-term educational attainment (Henry, 2007; Seeley, 2008).

Academic performance refers to the measurable learning outcomes achieved by students in school subjects and is commonly assessed through tests, assignments, continuous assessments, and external examinations. It is influenced not only by intellectual capacity but also by motivation, discipline, environmental conditions, and peer associations. Research indicates that students who associate with peers who value academic achievement are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement and performance (Ryan, 2000). On the other hand, association with peers who devalue academic commitment often correlates with lower achievement levels and poor study habits.

The theoretical underpinning of this study is grounded in psychosocial and peer influence perspectives. Psychosocial Development Theory, as proposed by Erik Erikson, explains that



adolescents are particularly vulnerable to external influences because of their search for identity and social acceptance. During this stage, without adequate guidance and counselling support, students may adopt behaviours that undermine their academic focus, including ineffective time allocation and susceptibility to peer pressure. The inability to resolve the identity crisis positively may result in confusion, poor self-regulation, and weakened academic commitment.

Peer Influence Theory further emphasizes that peer groups significantly shape adolescents' behaviours, attitudes, and academic motivation. Students often conform to peer norms to gain acceptance and avoid rejection. When peer groups encourage academic diligence, structured study schedules, and disciplined behaviour, members are more likely to develop positive time management practices. Conversely, when peers promote indiscipline and disregard for academic tasks, students may neglect study routines and prioritize social engagements over learning activities. Guidance and counselling services therefore serve as critical mechanisms through which students can critically evaluate peer influence, develop independent decision-making skills, and build resilience against negative social pressures. Counsellors assist students in goal setting, prioritization, and self-regulation, thereby enhancing effective time utilization and academic performance. In the context of increasing academic challenges and peer-related distractions among secondary school students in FCT, Abuja, there is a compelling need to examine how guidance and counselling can improve time management practices and ultimately enhance academic achievement. This study is therefore designed to explore these relationships and provide empirical evidence to inform educational policy and practice.

The literature on students' academic performance emphasizes that achievement is shaped by cognitive, behavioural, and psychosocial factors. While intellectual ability is important, researchers increasingly highlight peer influence, time management, and guidance and counselling as key determinants of academic outcomes. In the Nigerian secondary school context, concerns about declining academic performance have prompted investigations into how social and developmental factors influence students' engagement and productivity. Academic performance refers to measurable learning outcomes assessed through tests, assignments, and examinations. Steinberger (2005) describes academic achievement as an indicator of mastery of curriculum objectives, while Pandney (2008) argues that it reflects not only cognitive competence but also motivation, discipline, and effective learning strategies. Students with organized study habits and consistent attendance tend to perform better, whereas absenteeism and disengagement are associated with poor performance and dropout (Henry, 2007; Seeley, 2008).

Time management is widely recognized as a critical determinant of academic success. It involves planning and allocating time effectively to complete academic tasks. Secondary school students must balance study schedules, assignments, and extracurricular activities. Effective time management enhances productivity, reduces anxiety, and improves retention, while poor time management leads to incomplete assignments, last-minute preparation, and reduced participation, which negatively affect academic outcomes (Henry, 2007; Ryan, 2000).

Peer relationships also significantly influence adolescents' academic behaviour. During adolescence, peer groups become central to identity and social validation. Adolescents often conform to peer norms to gain acceptance (Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Tarrant, 2002). Ryan (2000) found that association with academically motivated peers improves engagement and performance, while Landau (2002) noted that positive peer networks reinforce constructive study habits. Conversely, negative peer influence contributes to truancy, indiscipline, and reduced academic focus (Oni, 2006; Nwankwo, 2007).



Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory explains adolescents' susceptibility to peer influence, particularly during the identity versus role confusion stage. At this stage, adolescents seek acceptance and may conform to peer expectations even when they conflict with academic goals (Berk, 2004; Wall, Power, & Arbona, 1993). Without proper support, this may result in poor academic decisions and ineffective time use.

Guidance and counselling play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. Counselling services help students develop self-awareness, problem-solving skills, and resistance to negative peer influence (Zhang, 2007). Through study skills training and academic planning, counsellors promote discipline and effective time management. Collaboration among counsellors, teachers, and parents further strengthens students' academic behaviour (Alderman, 2000). In Nigeria, Obidoa and Ifelunni (2010) note that increased peer interaction has reduced parental monitoring, highlighting the need for structured counselling programmes. Overall, positive peer influence, effective time management, and counselling support contribute significantly to improved academic performance.

Objectives of the study

1. Examine the role of guidance and counselling in improving students' time management practices in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja.
2. Determine the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja.
3. Research Questions
4. Examine the role of guidance and counselling in improving students' time management practices in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja.
5. Determine the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey design involves collecting data from a group of people without manipulating any variables. It is appropriate for describing existing conditions and examining relationships among variables as they naturally occur. According to Nworgu (2016), descriptive survey research involves studying a representative sample of a population in order to describe characteristics, opinions, or relationships among variables. Similarly, Kerlinger (2000) explained that survey research studies both large and small populations by selecting and analysing samples drawn from the population to discover the distribution and interrelationship of variables. This design is suitable for the study because it enables the researcher to examine the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' time management practices and academic performance without altering the school environment.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all Senior Secondary School (SS I–SS III) students in public secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. According to records obtained from the Education Resource Centre (ERC), the total population of senior secondary school students in public schools in Gwagwalada Area Council is approximately 13,213 students (ERC, 2018/2019 statistics).

Method of Data Analysis



The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, were used to answer the research questions. A mean score of 2.50 was used as the benchmark for decision-making, where items with a mean of 2.50 and above were considered “Agree,” while items below 2.50 were considered “Disagree.” For inferential analysis, the independent samples t-test was employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. This test was appropriate because it determines whether there is a significant difference between the means of two groups, such as students exposed to guidance and counselling services and those who were not.

Data Presentation and Analysis of Results

Research Question One

Examine the role of guidance and counselling in improving students’ time management practices in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja.

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on the Role of Guidance and Counselling in Improving Time Management Practices (N = 381)

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Guidance and counselling help students develop effective study schedules.	160	125	65	31	3.09	0.84	Agreed
2	Counsellors teach students how to prioritize academic tasks properly.	155	130	60	36	3.06	0.87	Agreed
3	Guidance and counselling help students reduce time wastage.	148	140	55	38	3.05	0.88	Agreed
4	Counselling services help students balance academic and social activities.	152	128	65	36	3.04	0.86	Agreed
5	Students who attend counselling sessions manage their time more effectively.	165	120	60	36	3.10	0.85	Agreed
Cluster Mean							3.07	Agreed

Table 1 shows that all items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The cluster mean of **3.07** indicates that guidance and counselling play a significant role in improving students’ time management practices.

The findings reveal that guidance and counselling services help students develop structured study schedules, prioritize academic tasks, minimize time wastage, and balance academic and social activities. Furthermore, students who attend counselling sessions demonstrate better time management skills. This implies that guidance and counselling contribute positively to enhancing students’ ability to effectively manage their academic time.

Research Question Two

Determine the influence of guidance and counselling services on students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja.

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Guidance and Counselling on Academic Performance (N = 381)

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
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1	Guidance and counselling help improve students' academic performance.	162	128	60	31	3.11	0.83	Agreed
2	Counselling services help students develop better study habits.	158	132	55	36	3.08	0.86	Agreed
3	Students who receive counselling perform better in examinations.	150	135	60	36	3.05	0.87	Agreed
4	Counsellors motivate students to improve their academic performance.	165	120	65	31	3.10	0.84	Agreed
5	Guidance and counselling helps students overcome academic challenges.	160	125	60	36	3.08	0.85	Agreed
Cluster Mean							3.08	Agreed

Table 2 indicates that all items have mean scores above the benchmark mean of 2.50. The cluster mean of **3.08** shows that guidance and counselling services have a significant positive influence on students' academic performance.

The findings suggest that guidance and counselling help students develop effective study habits, improve examination performance, overcome academic difficulties, and increase academic motivation. Counsellors provide essential support that enhances students' academic focus and commitment. This demonstrates that guidance and counselling is an important factor in improving students' academic success in secondary schools.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings from Research Question One revealed that guidance and counselling play a significant role in improving students' time management practices in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja. This is evident from the cluster mean score of 3.07, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Specifically, the respondents agreed that guidance and counselling help students develop effective study schedules, prioritize academic tasks, reduce time wastage, balance academic and social activities, and improve overall time management effectiveness. These findings suggest that counsellors equip students with essential organizational and planning skills that enable them to use their time more productively. Time management is a critical factor in academic success, and the presence of counselling services helps students adopt structured approaches to their studies. This implies that counselling interventions contribute significantly to improving students' discipline, focus, and academic responsibility.

The findings from Research Question Two also showed that guidance and counselling services have a positive influence on students' academic performance, as indicated by the cluster mean score of 3.08, which is above the benchmark mean of 2.50. The respondents agreed that counselling services help improve academic performance, develop better study habits, enhance examination performance, motivate students academically, and help them overcome academic challenges. These findings indicate that counsellors play an important role in supporting students academically by helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop effective learning strategies, and maintain academic motivation. Counselling services also provide emotional and psychological support, which helps students overcome anxiety, lack of confidence, and other barriers to academic success. This demonstrates that guidance and counselling contribute not only to students' academic organization but also to their academic achievement and overall educational development.



Overall, the findings from both research questions confirm that guidance and counselling services are essential in improving students' time management practices and academic performance. Students who benefit from counselling services are more likely to develop positive academic behaviours, manage their time effectively, and achieve better academic outcomes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that guidance and counselling plays a vital role in improving students' time management practices and academic performance in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Local Government, FCT, Abuja. The study established that counselling services help students develop effective study schedules, prioritize academic tasks, reduce time wastage, and balance academic and social activities. Furthermore, guidance and counselling enhance students' academic performance by improving their study habits, increasing motivation, helping them overcome academic challenges, and improving examination performance. Therefore, guidance and counselling services are an essential component of the secondary school system and contribute significantly to students' academic success and personal development.

Recommendations

1. Schools should strengthen guidance and counselling units by employing qualified and trained professional counsellors who can provide regular and effective counselling services to students.
2. School administrators should create structured counselling programmes and ensure that counselling sessions are integrated into the school timetable to enable students' benefit fully from guidance services.
3. Government and educational authorities should provide adequate resources, facilities, and support for guidance and counselling services in secondary schools to enhance their effectiveness in improving students' time management and academic performance.

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