

Parental Socioeconomic Status and Counselling Services among Secondary School Students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined parental socioeconomic status and counselling services among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The population comprised senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area. A sample of 200 students was selected from four public secondary schools using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using the Influence of Parents' Socioeconomic Status on Counselling Services Questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.68. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviation, to answer the research questions. The findings indicated that respondents reported the provision of various counselling services, including educational information, assistance with course selection, and guidance in making educational decisions. The findings also indicated variations in students' responses to selected indicators of family socioeconomic circumstances and counselling-service engagement. Based on the findings, the study recommends increased parental awareness of the importance of counselling services and stronger collaboration between parents and school counsellors. Schools should also strengthen counselling programmes to ensure equitable access to counselling services irrespective of students' socioeconomic background.

Keywords: Parental socioeconomic status, counselling services, secondary school students, guidance and counselling.

Introduction

Introduction Counselling is an important component of the educational system because it assists students in addressing academic, vocational, social, emotional and personal challenges.



At the secondary school level, students encounter developmental and educational challenges that may affect their adjustment, decision-making, academic progress and preparation for future careers. Counselling services are therefore expected to support students in understanding themselves, making appropriate decisions and developing skills for effective adjustment within and outside the school environment. School counselling encompasses a range of services designed to meet students' developmental and educational needs. These services may include orientation, information, appraisal, placement, referral, follow-up, consultation and research services. Through these services, professionally trained counsellors assist students in identifying their abilities, interests and limitations and in making informed decisions concerning their education, careers and personal development. Counselling therefore constitutes an important support mechanism within the school system. Akpan (2010) views counselling as an educational service that provides adolescents with opportunities for holistic development and preparation for functional living. Similarly, Egbochuku (2008) describes counselling as a process through which individuals receive assistance that enables them to understand themselves and their environment and develop behaviours for effective adjustment. Alutu (2015) also conceptualises guidance and counselling as professional assistance provided to individuals to enable them make appropriate decisions and cope effectively with life challenges. Egbule (2010) emphasises the role of counselling in helping students understand themselves and develop their potentials. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that counselling is a structured helping process directed towards students' personal, social, educational and vocational development.

The family constitutes an important environment in which children develop their attitudes, values, aspirations and patterns of behaviour. Parental socioeconomic status is commonly understood in terms of indicators such as educational attainment, occupation and economic resources. These characteristics may influence the resources available to children and the nature of support provided for their educational and developmental needs. Family factors have also been associated with children's developmental outcomes, including aspects of cognitive and creative development (Jankowska & Karwowski, 2019).

The relationship between family socioeconomic circumstances and students' educational experiences may have implications for school counselling. Families with greater educational and economic resources may be able to provide educational materials, information and other forms of support that facilitate students' educational decision-making. Conversely, students from economically disadvantaged families may experience constraints associated with limited resources, parental work demands or competing family responsibilities. Such circumstances may affect students' opportunities or willingness to seek assistance from school counsellors. However, socioeconomic status should be distinguished from parental involvement, parental support and family structure because these represent related but conceptually different constructs.

Parental occupation may also affect the amount of time available for interaction with children. Parents whose occupations involve long working hours or substantial economic demands may have fewer opportunities to participate in their children's educational activities. Similarly, parental educational attainment may influence parents' awareness of educational opportunities and their capacity to provide information and guidance. These factors may interact with the counselling needs of secondary school students.

Although counselling services are designed to be available to students irrespective of family background, students' socioeconomic circumstances may shape their experiences, needs and engagement with such services. The extent to which socioeconomic circumstances are associated with students' access to or utilisation of counselling services therefore warrants empirical investigation.

In the Nigerian secondary school context, there is a need for empirical evidence concerning factors that may affect students' engagement with guidance and counselling services. Understanding the possible role of parental socioeconomic circumstances may assist counsellors, parents, school administrators and policymakers in developing more inclusive counselling programmes. Previous studies in Nigerian have shown that school counselling services especially those focused on academic and career guidance positively influence students' achievement motivation and school adjustment (Musa & Ibrahim, 2022), empirical evidence on the impact of these services in Edo State secondary schools remains limited and fragmented. Existing reports indicate that, while counselling programmes are formally available in many schools, they are often poorly implemented and inadequately funded (Adebayo & Oyedele, 2021). It is against this background that the present study examined parental socioeconomic status and counselling services among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary school students experience a variety of academic, vocational, social, emotional and personal challenges that require appropriate guidance and counselling services. School counsellors are expected to provide services that assist students in understanding themselves, making educational and vocational decisions, managing personal difficulties and adjusting effectively to the school environment. However, the availability and utilisation of counselling services may be affected by factors within and outside the school environment.

One factor that may be relevant is the socioeconomic circumstances of students' families. Parental educational attainment, occupation and economic resources may influence the extent of educational support and information available to students. Students from families with adequate economic and educational resources may have greater opportunities to obtain educational information and parental support, whereas students from economically disadvantaged families



may encounter constraints associated with limited resources, parental work demands and competing responsibilities.

The concern is not necessarily that students from particular socioeconomic backgrounds are incapable of benefiting from counselling services, but that differences in family circumstances may affect their opportunities, perceived need for, or engagement with such services. For example, students whose parents have limited educational backgrounds may have fewer opportunities to obtain educational guidance at home, while students from families facing substantial economic demands may have competing responsibilities that limit their interaction with school counsellors.

Although guidance and counselling services are intended to be accessible to all students, there is insufficient local evidence regarding the extent to which parental socioeconomic circumstances are associated with students' counselling experiences in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The absence of such evidence may make it difficult for counsellors and school administrators to design targeted strategies for ensuring equitable access to counselling services.

It is therefore necessary to investigate parental socioeconomic status and counselling services among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area. The findings may provide useful information for counsellors, parents, school administrators and policymakers in strengthening counselling provision and promoting equitable access to counselling services.

Purpose of the Study

Purpose of the Study The purpose of this study was to examine parental socioeconomic status and counselling services among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the counselling services available to secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State; and
2. examine the extent to which parental socioeconomic circumstances are associated with students' engagement with counselling services in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What counselling services are available to secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State?
2. What is the relationship between parental socioeconomic status and students' engagement with counselling services in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State?

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design because the study sought to determine the relationship between socioeconomic status and students' engagement with counselling services without manipulating the variables. The population of the study comprised 4,098 SS I and SS II students enrolled in public secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

A sample of 200 students was selected from four public secondary schools using a multistage sampling procedure. At the first stage, all the schools were categorised according to their kind. At the second stage the schools were selected based on sex; two mixed schools, one all boys school, and one all girls school. At the final stage, fifty (50) students were chosen at random from each school that had previously been picked using basic random sampling.

The instrument comprised of two sessions, section A elicit information on the demographic status of the respondents and section B comprised of 6 items on counselling services and 6 items on socioeconomic status making total of 12 items, A four-point Likert scale, with SA = Strongly Agree (4), A = Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), and SD = Strongly Disagree (1), was used to develop the questionnaire. The criterion mean is: $(4 + 3 + 2 + 1) \div 4 = 2.50$. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in educational evaluation and counselling psychology. The experts examined the items for clarity, relevance, appropriateness and adequacy in relation to the constructs being measured, and their observations were used to revise the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire was administered to 20 secondary school students who were not included in the main study, and the responses were analysed to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.68 was obtained.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Counselling Services in Egor Local Government Area

S/N	Statements	N	Mean	Standard. Deviation.	Decision
1	School counsellor provide me with good information that help me to overcome my challenges	200	3.30	.764	Agree
2	School counsellor provide me with educational information that enable me to attain good result	200	3.27	.720	Agree
3	Counsellor in my school assist me in choosing my course of study	200	2.83	.946	Agree
4	School counsellor provide me with information that help me to choose the university I will attend	200	2.62	1.01	Agree
5	I give information to my counsellor to enable him/her guide me in decision making	200	3.10	.798	Agree
6	I do not provide good information to my school counsellor because I do not need the counselling	200	2.44	1.02	Agree

Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed that school counsellors provide information that helps them overcome their challenges ($M = 3.30$), provide educational information that enables them to attain good results ($M = 3.27$), assist them in choosing courses of study ($M = 2.83$), provide information that helps them choose a university ($M = 2.62$), and receive information from students to guide them in decision-making ($M = 3.10$). However, the respondents disagreed with the statement that they do not provide information to their school counsellor because they do not need counselling ($M = 2.44$).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Socioeconomic status in Egor Local Government

S/N	Statements	N	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Decision
7	The interest to participant in school counselling is subject to my family wealth	200	2.47	1.06	Disagree
8	My family is able to provide all that I need and so, I do not need the services of a counsellor	200	2.73	.994	Agree
9	I desire counselling services because my family is not able to meet my needs	200	2.39	1.06	Disagree
10	I am interested in counselling services regardless of my socioeconomic status	200	2.66	.998	Agree
11	Since my family is highly educated, I do not need counselling services	200	2.47	1.08	Disagree
12	I do not have time to visit a counsellor because I engage in menial jobs	200	2.56	1.04	Agree

Table 2 shows mixed responses regarding the relationship between socioeconomic status circumstances and students' engagement with counselling services. Respondents disagreed that their interest in school counselling was determined by family wealth ($M = 2.47$), that they desired counselling services because their families were unable to meet their needs ($M = 2.39$), and that having a highly educated family meant that they did not need counselling services ($M = 2.47$). However, respondents agreed that their families were able to provide their needs and that they therefore did not need counselling services ($M = 2.73$), that they remained interested in counselling services regardless of socioeconomic status ($M = 2.66$), and that they did not have sufficient time to visit a counsellor because they engaged in menial jobs ($M = 2.56$).

Conclusion

The study examined parental socioeconomic circumstances and counselling services among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. The findings indicate that students reported receiving various counselling services, including educational information, assistance with course selection and guidance in educational decision-making. The responses concerning family socioeconomic circumstances and counselling engagement were mixed. While some respondents indicated that adequate family provision reduced their perceived need for counselling, others expressed interest in counselling irrespective of their family background. Some respondents also reported that involvement in menial work limited the time available for visiting school counsellors. These findings suggest that family socioeconomic circumstances may be relevant to students' experiences and engagement with counselling services. However, because the study relied on descriptive statistics, the findings do not establish a statistically significant relationship or causal influence between parental socioeconomic status and counselling services. Counselling programmes should therefore be strengthened to ensure that students can access appropriate support irrespective of their family socioeconomic background.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. School administrators should strengthen guidance and counselling programmes to ensure that counselling services are accessible to all students irrespective of their socioeconomic background.
2. School counsellors should adopt proactive outreach strategies by identifying students who may experience family-related, economic or educational challenges and providing appropriate counselling support.
3. Parents should be sensitised to the importance of counselling services and encouraged to collaborate with school counsellors in addressing their children's academic, vocational, social and personal needs.

4. Schools should provide flexible counselling arrangements for students whose family or economic responsibilities may limit the time available for visiting counsellors.
5. Counsellors should provide equitable educational and career information to students, particularly those who may have limited access to such information within their families.
6. Relevant education authorities should provide adequate resources for school counselling programmes, including qualified counsellors, suitable counselling spaces and materials necessary for effective service delivery.
7. Future researchers should conduct studies using appropriate inferential designs and validated measures of parental socioeconomic status to establish more clearly whether and how socioeconomic circumstances are associated with students' utilisation of counselling services.

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