Effectiveness of Counselllng in the adjustment of Delinquent Students in Secondarv Schools in Anambra State

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Abstract

Delinquency is one of the serious challenges that face secondary schools in Anambra State. The purpose of this study therefore was to ascertain the effectiveness of counselling in the adjustment of delinquents in secondary schools in Anambra State. It is a descriptive survey guided by one research question and the hypothesis. The population of the study comprised two hundred and fifty-one (251) counsellors in the 251 government-owned secondary schools in the State. The entire population was studied. A researcher-developed instrument duly validated by experts and whose reliability index was 0.81 was used in data collection. The researcher with the help of assistants administered the instrument. Mean scores and z-test were used in data analysis. It was among others found that counselling is effective in helping delinquent students adjust in the areas of provision of services in schools to help delinquents learn basic values for their socialization. One of the recommendations is that counselors

should make counselling effective in terms of providing information to the delinquent regarding vocational training of the delinquents to ease their adjustment in school.

Key words: Counselling, Adjustment, Delinquency

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency refers to delinquent and criminal behaviour among young people as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood in an increasingly complex and confusing world. Although the issue of juvenile delinquency is an age long problem, it seems that the juvenile delinquency of the past cannot be compared with that of the present era. The antisocial behaviours often associated with the juvenile delinquents' include vandalism, drug abuse, weapon carrying, alcohol abuse, rape, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, cultism, truancy, school drop-outs, to mention but a few (Brook, Brook, Dc Ia Rosa, Whiteman, & Montoya, 1999). Obviously, unless something is done to roll back the wave of juvenile delinquency, the prospect of a better, safer and more prosperous society emerging in Nigeria will remain elusive.

Continued efforts to decrease the number of delinquent acts have led many researchers to investigate the underlying factors that lead to juvenile delinquency. Many factors are responsible for delinquency among school children especially in Anambra State. Researches indicate that the family environment is an important variable in the development of delinquency. Researches also indicate that various exposures to violence within the family or outside the family are important sources of delinquencies. In other words, if violence encompasses all emotional environmental aspects of the juvenile's life, he is more likely to engage in delinquent activities (Hagan and Foster 2001). Family behaviours particularly parental monitoring and disciplining seem to influence association with delinquent peers throughout the juvenile period (Cashwell and Vacc 1994). In most cases, delinquents have been viewed as individuals who come from less-intact families often referred to as "broken homes". Typically, the term "broken home" has been operationally defined to mean children residing in single-parent households or any type of household other than a household in which both Nological parents are present. In contrast, an "intact family" usually refers to a nuclear family arrangement in which both biological parents reside in the household with their biological children. "Intact family arrangements" differ from other modem day family arrangements including single-parent arrangements, two-parent arrangements involving a step-parent, extended family arrangements, and the adoptive or foster family arrangement (Kierkus & Bauer 2002):

Other researchers have found that many family characteristics and family environment influence juvenile delinquency behaviour. For example, the number of people in a family, inconsistent parenting, familial problems, child neglect, and the

children's attachment to parents (Derzon and Lipsey 2000; Wasserman & Seracini 2001). In the light of the above research findings, family is very important in creating a law abiding child; whereas truancy and school drop-outs are disturbing issues confronting adolescents, parents, and teachers alike. Wright and Wright (1994) study shows that single parent families produce more delinquent children than two-parent families. In consonar'ce with this, Muehlenberg (2002) stresses, (based. on research findings), that the very absence of intact families makes gang membership more appealing. According to Wright and Wright (1994), two parent families provide increase supervision and surveillance on property while single-parenthood increases the likelihood of delinquency and victimization simply by the fact that there is one less person to supervise adolescents' behaviour.

Many familiaf variables have further been studied in- an attempt to better understand the etiology of delinquency. Heather and Farrington (2001), report that adolescents without parental supervision during and after school hours are more likely to engage in delinquent acts. Featherstone, Cundick and Jensen (1993), claim that youths from intact or two parent families are less likely to report school problem than are children from single-parent families. A large number of studies emphasize differential treatment of siblings by parents in function of their birth order (Barker & Buehler, 1996; Crowley, 1998). Drawing on diverse methodological approaches (parent or child self-report questionnaires, observation, experimentation) this literature argues that parental investment in offspring is unequal. Thus, parents attribute more importance to their first child, which concretely results in larger amount of time and better quality of care given to the firstborns (1-larada, 1995).

Compared with later-horns, firstborns are more exposed to adult models and to adult expectations and pressure (Ilofiman & Johnson, 1998). The requirements imposed by parents are generally firmer for firsthorns (Crowley, 1998). Similarly, it would appear that the feeling of being controlled by parents (Schaller, 1972), as well as identification with them, is higher among firstborns. l7urther, as has been suggested by Crowley, (1998) that the older child is frequently playing the role of parent surrogate to the younger ones, a situation that may strengthen one's inclination to internalize parental norms,

Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Ashli, and David (2001: 13) state that the increase in "diverse student problems and the current economic situation have made the need for effective counselling services even more critical than in the past". GormanSmith and Tolan, (1998) add that students experience immense psychological pressures in today's world. Madhuku (2005:1) concurs with Gorman-Smith et al. (1999) and Gorman-Smith and 'l'olan, (1998) when she states that there are a number of socioeconomic and psychological problems which disturb the learning process of students. In other words, the growing number of social, economic and 4 family problems has resulted in an

increased need for School Guidance and Counselling services, hereafter referred to as SGC services. For example, Geismar, Williams, and Vazonji (1999) call for SOC services to be restructured so that they become responsive to the existing social, economic and political realities within today's complex and diverse society.

Clark and Shields (1997), in their study found a correlation between familial communication and juvenile delinquency asserting that the level of communication within the family among its members may significantly contribute to delinquency. Cashwell and Vacc (1996) investigated the role of family cohesion and round that a cohesive family environment reduces the chances of delinqent behavi urs.

Further researches have produced the following manifestations 0r juvenile delinquencies in secondary schools in Nigeria. These include: cruelh, bullying, fighting, vandalism, roughness during games, use of foul language, stealing, lying, cheating, examination malpractice, gambling, truancy, drug abuse, noise-making, disobedience, stubborimess, apathy, untidiness, failure to wear correct school uniform, reading of pornographic materials, sexual immorality, mob action, loitering, and carrying of weapon. Bringing into perspective the preponderance of juvenile delinquency, Edelman (1995) discovers that about 1,234 youths run away from home and 2,255 teenagers drop-out of school each day. Every five minutes, a juvenile is arrested for some kind of violent crime, and every two hours a child is harmed with a weapon.

Without doubt, the problem of juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Anambra State is a grave one. Going by statistical data available on the frequency, intensity and diversity of juvenile delinquency in the State, it appears that, in the 5 war against juvenile delinquency, the adult society is steadily losing ground on every front. This further raises questions as to the effectiveness of counselling in the adjustment of delinquents in the State.

Gorman-Smith, Tolan, and Henry (1999) define counselling as advice and help that is given to someone experiencing problems. Gcismar, Williams, and Vazonji (1999) state that counselling is largely concerned with normal individuals in a bid to increase such individuals' self-awareness, helping improve problem-solving skills, educating the individual and supporting that individual. Counselling is thus normally seen as a one to one relationship between a counsellor and a client whereby the counsellor attempts to help the specific individual make personally relevant decisions that he or she can live with. Counselling may involve groups. In this study, counselling means helping students to help themselves. In this regard, school counsellors assist students to understand themselves and their opportunities, to make appropriate adjustments and decisions in the light of this insight, to accept personal responsibility for their choices and to follow courses of action iii harmony with their choices.

Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Ashli, and David (2001) define effectiveness as working well and producing the intended results while Gorman-Smith and Tolan, (1998) define it as producing a decisive or desired effect. The two definitions above focus on yielding desired results. In this study, the focus was on the extent to which counselling is effective in the adjustment of delinquent students in Ananthra State. The effectiveness of counselling, according to Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Ashli, and David (2001), could be affected by gender. They noted that females are better counsellors than males. This observation is strengthened by••Madhuku (2005) who found that, mothers, by the nature of their endowments are good counsellors. This probably could be the reason for the greater number of female counsellors in Nigerian schools than males.

Research Question

One research question guided the study:

How effective is counselling in the adjustment of delinquent studeits in Anambra

State?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was tested at p<O.O5 level of significance:

Hoi: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female counsellors on the effectiveness of counselling in the adjustment of delinquent students in Anambra State

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised two hundred and fifty-one (251) counsellors in the 251 government-owned secondary schools in the State. The whole population was studied. Thus, there was no need for sampling since the population size is not large enough to warmnt sampling. A 24- items self structured questionnaire titled "Effectiveness of Counselling in Delinquent Adjustment Questionnaire (ECDAQ) was used to collect data. The questionnaire was divided into sections. Section "A" sought information on biodata while section 'B' consisted twenty-four (24) items on counselling for delinquent adjustment. A four point model scale of: Very Effective (VE =4) Effective (E=3); Slightly Effective (SE2); and Ineffective (JE=l) was employed 7 for the instrument. The instrument was validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling Department from Nnamdi Azik Iwo University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to estimate the reliabilit5' of the instrument by administering copies to 30 counsellors from Delta State of Nigeria. After analyzing the responses, a co-efficient of 'r'-0.78 was obtained and considered adequate for the study. Instrument was administered to the respondents through the

help of research assistants out of the 251 copies distributed, 249 representing 99.64% were retrieved and used for the study.

Simple descriptive statistics that involved mean ratings were used in aialyzing the data for the research questions. The items were assigned the following points: Very Effective (VE) 4.00 — 5.00; Effective (E): 3.00 — 3.99; Slightly Effective (SE): 2.00-2.99 and Ineffective (IE): 1.00-1.99. In answering.Ihe research question, 3.50 and above were regarded as effective while mean scores less than 3.50 were regarded as ineffective. The hypothesis was tested with z-test at p<O.O5 level of significance.

Results and Findings

Research Question: How effective is counselling in the adjustment of delinquent students in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Counsellors on Effectiveness of Counselling on Adjustment of Delinquent Students

S/n	What is the effectiveness of counselling in the following area	Mean X	Dec.
1.	Provision of services in schools to help delinquents learn basic values for their socialization	4.50	VE
2.	Promotion of services to assist delinquent students to adjust in schools and develop their personality	4.00	VE
3.	Developing the talents and mental abilities of delinquent students in order to make them responsible members of their families and society.	3.67	E
4.	Promotiorr and development of social values to assist delinquent students to adjust well in their families and schools.	3.78	E
5.	Undertaking activities that foster delinquents sense of identity with and of belonging to the school and the community.	3.59	R
6.	Encourage delinquents to undertake reformative activities that foster their sense of identity with the school and their families through counselling services.	3.65	E
7.	Provision of services that can encourage delinquents to understand and respect diverse views and opinion of their peers	4.76	VE

8.	Provision of information regarding vocational training of the delinquents to ease their adjustment in school.	1.32	IE
9.	Provision of positive emotional support to of positive emotional support to delinquents measures in schools, particularly corporal punishment to ease the adjustment of the delinquents and the avoidance of psychological maltreatment	3.32	E
10.	Encourage avoidance of harsh disciplinary measure in schools, particularly corporal punishment to ease the adjustment of the delinquents.	4.30	VE
11.	Counselling delinquents against cruelty in school	2.65	SE
12.	Conuselling delinquents against bullying in school	4.00	VE
13.	Improving study habits of delinquents by providing services that can encourage students to be more dedicated to their studies	1.39	IE
14.	Helping delinquents through counselling assistance to efficiently use their time instead of engaging in anti-social activities	3.67	E
15.	Ensuring improved classroom behaviour of the delinquents through counselling assistance	2.18	SE
16.	Helping delinquents develop positive attitude toward their peers and the school.	2.20	SE
17.	Reduce delinquents student's anxiety through counseling services.	2.32	SE
18.	Enhancing tolerance among delinquents and other students in the class	4.00	VE
19.	Helping delinquents though counsellingservices to develop positive self image	1.33	IE
20.	Providing delinquents with knowledge of various careers which can ease their adjustment in school	2.10	SE
21.	Helping delinquents through counselling services of adopt democratic process in their endeavours instead of domineering	4.50	VE
22.	Provision of services to encourage delinquents to understand themselves in order to adjust properly in school	4.00	VE

23.	Establishment a secure physiological school environment to aid well adjustment of the delinquents	3.50	V
24.	Improvement of students' engagements in order to ease the adjustment of the delinquents.	2.30	SE
	Average mean	**3.27**	**E**

In table 1, only items 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10,12,14,18,21 and 23 scored 3.00 or above indicating that they effective in the adjustment of delinquents. The remaining 10 items scored below 2.00; hence, the respondents agree that those strategies are ineffective in the adjustment of delinquents.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female counsellors on the effectiveness of counselling in the adjustment of delinquent students in Anambra State

Table 2: z test of Male and Female Counsellors on Effectiveness of Counselling on Adjustment of Delinquent Students in Secondary Schools in Ananibra State

Counselor	No	X	z.cal	z-crit	p>0.05
Males	21	3.27			
Females	230	3.59	0.29	1.69	Not significant

The z- calculated value exceeded the table value. The decision is to accept the null hypothesis. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female counsellors on the effectiveness of counselling in the adjustment of delinquent students in Anambra State

Discussion of Findings

This work investigated effectiveness of counselling in the adjustment of delinquent students in Anaiiibra State. ilic study found that counselling is effective in helping delinquent students adjust in the areas of provision of services in schools to help delinquents learn basic values for their socialization and promotion of services to assist delinquent students to adjust in schools and develop their personality. The findings are in agreement with Amato and Sobolewki (2001) who found that counselling is effective in helping delinquents turn a new leave. It was also found that counselling is effective in developing the talents and mental abilities of delinquent

students in order to make them responsible members of their families and society and promotion and development of social values to assist delinquent students to adjust well in thcir flirnilies and schools. The above findings are in agreement with Demuth and Brown (2004) who also found that effective counselling is capable of making delinquents responsible children in their families and society. Other findings of the study indicate that counselling ease adjustment of delinquents by mounting activities that foster delinquents' sense of identity with and of belonging to the school and the community and encourage delinquents to undertake reformative activities that foster their sense of identity with the school and their families through counsclling services and as well provide services that can encourage delinquents to undurstand and respect diverse views and opinions of their peers.

Furthermore, the study found that counselling provide positive emotional support to delinquents and the avoidance of psychological maltreatment and also encourage the avoidance of harsh disciplinary measures in schools, particularly corporal punishment to ease the adjustment of the delinquents. The above findings are usefhl in the adjustment of delinquents. The analysis of the null hypothesis revealed that male and female counsellors do not differ in their mean ratings on the effectiveness of counselling in the adjustment of delinquent students in Anambra State

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was found counselling is effective in the adjustment of delinquenis except in the areas of providing information to the delinquent regarding vocational training of the dclinquents to ease their adjustment in school; improving study habits of delinquents by providing services that ëan encourage students to be more dedicated to their studies and helping delinquents through counselling services to develop positive self image. The above forgotten areas are central in the adjustment of delinquent students.

Recommendations

In the strength of the findings, discussions of the findings and the conciusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should make counselling effective in terms of providing information to the delinquent regarding vocational training of the delinquents to ease their adjustment in school.

2. Efforts should be made by counsellors to improve study habits of delinquents by providing services that can encourage delinquents and other students in the school to be more dedicated to their studies.

3. Counselors posted to secondary schools should help delinquents through providing counselling services to develop positive self image of the delinquents.

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