

21

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Contents

Community Counselling: Pathway to Self-Reconstruction and Social Re-orientation Osiki Jonathan O.	1 – 12
Amos' Anti-Corruption cum Human Security Evangelistic Counselling Message: Implications for Nigerian Christian Community Oluwawunsi, O. Adekola Titus Justine Midala, Olayiwola, Gafari Ishola	13 – 26
Parental Factor, Classroom Environment and Self-Efficacy as Correlates of Adolescents' Creative Behaviour In Ijebu-Ode Metropolis of Ogun State, Nigeria Dele Olanisimi	27– 42
Counselling for Reconstruction and Social Orientation In The Church Community Stephen Oluwafunmilayo Ogundipe	43 – 57
Differential Influence of Religion, School Type and Gender on Academic Achievement among Selected Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria Omolara Olawumi, Kehinde	59 – 70
Education, Prevention of Recidivism and Social Integration of Offenders in Nigerian Prisons: Implication for Counselling Ojo, Funmilayo Yemi	71 – 87
Entrepreneurship Education as Panacea for Youth Unemployment: Implication of Vocational Counselling for Sustainable National Development Abosede M. Ewumi, Anthony O. Oyenuga & Jimoh W. Owoyele	89 – 99

Measured Effect of Self-Efficacy on Job-Seeking Behaviour of Unemployed Youths in Ibadan, Nigeria Ajufu, B.I.	101 – 114
Moral Issues Inherent in Prison Counselling Service in Nigeria Joseph Olufemi Asha	115 – 122
Students' Poor Perceptions about School: Challenge to School Counsellors Ogundokun Moses Oluwafemi & Alamu Leah Oyeyemi	123 – 136
Psychosocial Factors as Correlates of Counselling Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Counsellors in Ekiti State Nigeria Olayemi Mary Onikepe & Falaye Ajibola.....	137 – 158
Youth's Career and Vocational Counselling: A Tool for Realizing Vision 20:2020 in Nigeria Ukoha Callista, Sheu Adaramaja Lukman & Duru Ngozi	159 – 170
Counselling against Corrupt Practices in Christian Community: Pathway to Self Reconstruction and Social Re-Orientations of Christians in Nigeria Oluwawunsi, O. Adekola, Bongotons, I. Oliver & Ajiboye, Samuel Kolawole.....	171 – 192
Predictive Influence of Family Background, Peer and Neighbourhood on Academic Achievement among Selected Secondary School Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria Omolara Olawumi Kehinde	193 – 202
Effects of ICT Knowledge and Parenting Styles on Academic Achievement of Junior Secondary School Students in Ibadan North, Oyo State Tlatu Ibrahim Umaru & Akinyemi Atinuke Olusola.....	203 – 211

Counselling: A Tentade for Societal Re-Orientation Towards Thespecial Needs Adesina, O. J. & Adeduntan-Danesi, Falilat.....	213 – 223
Counselling For Reconstruction and Social Re-Orientation in the Religious Community Adediran Ibraheem Adedayo	225 – 236
HIV/Aids-Risk Behaviour among Adolescents In Ogun State, Nigeria Kate U. Azekhueme	237 – 254
Social Support and Leadership Styles As Predictors Of Psychological Wellbeing among Secondary School Teachers in Oyo State, Nigeria Muraina Kamilu Olanrewaju & Oyadeyi Joseph	255 – 273
Education Stakeholders' Perception on the Persistence Use of Corporal Punishment in Selected Primary Schools in Lagelu Local Government, Ibadan: Implication for Counselling. Ogunlade, Oludele Olagoke, Olugbode, Mujidat Lola & Adekola Olubunmi Eunice	275 – 286
The Family Structure, Parenting Styles, Birth Order and Gender as Predictors of Learning Outcomes among The Senior Secondary School Students in Ibadan, Nigeria Oluwole David Adebayo, Afolabi-Ige Temidayo Eniitan Oyebiyi Dele Augustine	287 – 299
Reorientation of The Attitudes of Health Workers in Promoting Health Practices In The Community: Counselling Implication Oyesikun, A. N. & Ayorinde, S.O.....	301– 308

Pre-Marital Counselling and Emotional Intelligence as Determinants of Marital Adjustment Among Married Civil Servants in Oyo State Salako Adebayo A. & Feyisetan C.T.	309 – 319
Literary Creation as a Tool in the Teaching of Values Clarification from Early Childhood to Adulthood in School Setting: An Approach to Community Counselling Omotayo F. Siwoku-Awi	321 – 336
Emotional Intelligence as Panacea for Socio-Political Challenges Adeyemi, A.O.	337 – 353
Counselling as a Tool for Conflict Management in Workplace Community Adebayo M. A. & Lamidi S. O.	355– 367
Ensuring School Connectedness: Implication For Counselling Olaitan, Adebisi Victory.....	369 – 375
Modifying Street Begging Behaviour through The Application of Counselling and Orientation Techniques on the Physically Challenged Persons in Sokoto State. Bashiru Muhammad Liman & Nasiru Muhammad Sani.....	377 – 389
An Assessment of Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Public Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools within Lagelu Local Government Lasisi, A. K. & Rev. Fr. Domingo, M. O.	391 – 402

- Multicultural Counselling: Enhancing Unity among
Divers Ethnic Groups. Case Study of Federal
College of Education (Special) Oyo.
Olaajo, Olubanke Adeleye.....403 – 414
- Counselling Intervention: A Panacea for Ameliorating
the Effects of Learning Disabilities among Secondary
School Students in Ibadan
Lazarus U. Kelechi & Adekanmi T. Esther415 –427

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STUDENTS' POOR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL: CHALLENGE TO SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine secondary school students' perception and the challenges it poses to guidance counsellors in the school community. The participants for the study comprised 205 secondary school students in Ido Local Government Area, Oyo State. Descriptive survey research design was employed. A simple random technique was employed in selecting 205 participants across the Local Government Area and four instruments were used to collect data. Their age ranged between 11 years 17 years with the mean age of 10.4 years and the standard deviation 4.68. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The results showed that social support was the most potent factors contributing to students' perception about school. Parents, teachers, guidance counsellors as well as government should cooperate in changing students' perception about school so as to have a fulfilling stay in school.

Key words: Students' Perceptions, Secondary School Students, Interest, Attitudes, Social Support, School Counsellors

Introduction

Education is the greatest force that can be used to bring about change. It is also the greatest investment that a nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources. It was in realization of this that a National Policy on Education was formulated for the country. The policy seeks the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; the training of the mind in understanding of the world

around; and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (FRN, 2004). To achieve this National objective, school is the centre of learning where the behaviours of the students (future leaders) are modified and channel to prepare them for better future.

In readiness for school students come to school with ready mind to learn and acquire knowledge without minding the prize that may cause them in the cause of learning. In their bid to acquired knowledge, the way individual student perceive education which is the greatest force that bring about change to individuals and quick development to nation is largely determine by the level of their commitment to learning. Meece, Anderman, and Anderman, (2006) opined that adolescents perceive, interpret and respond differently to various aspects of the school environment. This may be as a result of meaning, value and importance attached to schooling which may be indirectly link to their interest as well as their attitudes to learning.

Secondary education is a stage between primary education and the tertiary education. The aims of secondary education within Nigeria's overall national objectives are preparation of students for useful living within the society and for higher education. For secondary school students to be well equipped for their tertiary education as well as their future their perception about schooling is determine by a lot of variables such as interest, attitude, and social support this is so because interest is seen as the fundamental principles to success in life and attitude determines success (Oxford Dictionary, 8th edition) however, the social support which youths derives from a number of sources such as family, peers, and teachers is associated with beneficial outcomes (Malecki & Demaray, 2003).

Review of Related Literature

Interests are considered to be the most important motivational factors in learning and development as asserted by Stefan and Ciomos (2010). This is so because interest is the fundamental principles to success in life and individual who is involving in schooling task must be motivated to learn. The motivation can be in form of serene learning environment, adequate learning materials, adequate human resources (teaching staff) and good rapport between students and the school management.

This will foster effective teaching and learning between the learners and teaching personnel if the motivating factors are in place, there would not be mismatch between students and their interest to schooling as this in turn will affect their academic performance positively. Roeser (2000) asserts that if there is a mismatch between individual needs and their learning environments this may lead students to feel incompetent, devalue school, and develop emotional or behavioral problems. This in turn will have effects in the students' interest about school as well as subjects taking in the school.

The concept of attitude includes ways of feeling, thinking and behaving and maintaining an expression of one's identity within the environment. Research has shown that individual attitudes to things around him have a lot of effects on him which may be positive or negative this is because attitude determines the altitude. Adesoji, (2008); Cokadar and Kulce, (2008), identified some of the factors that relate to the students' attitude towards school subjects, gender, age, education level (elementary school), type of school (government or private school), the students' school results and their classmates' influence, self-image, social self-perception, their family's socio-economic status (parents' education, jobs and monthly income), teaching methods, the parents' attitude towards sciences, the students' cognitive style, their interest in a certain type of career, social view. The attitudes of students based on some of these factors go a long way on how much they value schooling and goals they set for themselves while in school this is because general attitude to school is related to academic performance. A child that is interested in school we have a goal set for himself and will channel his affection and attitude to schooling entirely and such a child will be doing well in school but of a contrary is a child who do not have interest in school activities may not have positive attitude to school no matter how conducive and active oriented the learning environment may be. The outcome of this will be lower academic performance if not total failure.

In connection to social support, Dimpy and Megha (2013) described social support as assistance or comfort provide to other people in order to help them cope with a variety of challenges (problems). Turner, (1999) observed that support comes from different quarters such interpersonal relationships, family members, neighbours, support groups, religious groups and friends. Cohen and Wills (1985)

also opined that mutual sharing of personal, social, or moral ideas by peers supports the individual and his/her social development which sources positively affect the individual's adaptation in a positive way regardless of the level of stress in the adolescent's life. Contemporary research indicates that an individual's life satisfaction levels are positively affected by an increased social support system (e.g. Duru, 2007). In sum, from the literature, social support was viewed as care, value and guidance provided from family, peer and community members, it also include the physical and emotional comfort given to individuals by their family, friends, and other significant persons in their lives (e.g. Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983; Israel & Schurman 1990; Dollete, Steese, Phillips, & Matthews, 2006; Dimpy et al. 2013). It was also correlated with many positive indices of physical and mental health, such as wound healing (Sarason et al. 1983), happiness (Matheny, Curlette, Aysan, Herrington, Gfroerer, & Thompson, 2002), higher life satisfaction (Dimpy et al. 2013) and optimism (DeVries, Craft, Glasper, Neigh, & Alexander, 2007). It also relate positively to students' satisfaction with their schooling experience (DeSantis, Huebner, Suldo, & Volois, 2006). The justification for this is that a satisfied learner will be interested in learning and have positive attitude to learning and schooling as well.

Teachers are important figures in the life of students. Gichuru (2008) argues that the teacher is the single most important individual in the educational life of each student and the teacher-student relationship should be characterized with warmth, acceptance, and friendliness. The teachers being important figure in the life of student should make themselves accessible for assistance and understanding so as to make learning experiences effective for the learners. Contemporary research within educational system shown that teacher is a dynamic source of encouragement, inspiration, and motivating factor for student academic achievements as these will influence student towards high achievement leading to students' self realization (e.g GOK, 2004).

Guidance and counselling services is a supplement that strengthens student academic performance by making learners realize their strengths and weaknesses and necessary coping abilities so as to have true self understanding and minimize frustrations that they may experience in balancing their goals with the school expectations. Since

personal development is the major aim of guidance which can only fostered through a personal interest shown in each student, then guidance and counselling supplement teachers' efforts in assisting students with academic problems. The school counselors' role in advocating for every child's academic, career, college readiness, and personal/social success in every elementary, middle, and high school is a critical support that every child needs for their success.

With series of lectures and exposure to literature it was discovered that the variables of the study had been used on different occasions, for example students perception of university education was research by various researchers (e.g. Alexitch & Stewart, 2001; Hongjiang, 2011); also attitude had been used in different dimensions such as students attitudes towards skill for sustainable development (Rachel, Elizabeth & Jamie, 2011) attitude to school subjects (science) (e.g. Adesoji, 2008; Cokadar & Kulce, 2008, Stefan & Ciomos, 2010); interest in science (e.g. Stefan & Ciomos, 2010); interest in schooling (among fresh students in secondary school) (Adeyemo, 2005; Olatoye & Oguntola, 2008); social supports on life satisfaction (DeSantis *et al* 2006, Duru, 2007; Dimpy *et al.* 2013) social support and self-esteem (Lipschitz-Elhawi, & Ltzhaky, 2005; Teoh, & Nur, 2010; Cai-Lian, Teck-Heang, Wai-Mun and Wei-Li, 2011). There are also factors residents in learners that can affect their perception about schooling, factors such as level of intelligence, parental socio-economic status.

Based on the evidences available, there is no gainsaying that students' interest in schooling, their attitudes towards school as well as social support receiving from important figures in their lives significantly influences their perceptions' about schooling which should be a concern to guidance counsellors. This study therefore, set to examine the relationship, joint and relative contributions of interest in schooling, attitudes to schooling, and social support to the perception of secondary school students about schooling.

Research Questions

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the following hypotheses were raised and answered in the study:

- (i) Is there any significant relationship among the independent variables (interest in schooling, attitudes to schooling, and social support) to students' perception of schooling?

- (ii) What is the joint contribution of each of the independent variables (interest in schooling, attitudes to schooling, and social support) to the prediction of students' perception of schooling?
- (iii) What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to the prediction of students' perception of schooling?

Methodology

The study used descriptive research design to investigate the perception of secondary school students to schooling.

The target population for the study was all Secondary school students in Ido Local Government Area, Oyo State. A simple random technique was employed in selecting 205 students from four secondary schools randomly selected from the list of over 20 secondary schools in Ido Local Government. The researcher ensured that 50 secondary school students were considered from each school. Their age range between 13 and 17 years with mean of 10.4 years and the standard deviation of 4.68.

Demographic information was collected from participants regarding their age, gender, school type and religion. The participants completed the four questionnaires: Students' Perception of School Cohesion (SPSC) by Andrew, Amy, Guillermo, Marcela and Michael (2009); Attitudes Towards School Scale (ATSS) by Anderson (1999), Students Interest in Schooling Scale (SISS) by (Mitchell, 1993), modified by Umomyan (1999) and Social Support Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet *et al.*, 1988).

SPSC (Andrew, 2009) was used to measure supportive school relationships, student-school connectedness, and student-teacher connectedness in the school environment. For the "Supportive School Relationships" subscale, the coefficient alpha were .71 and .74, respectively. For the "Student-School Connectedness" subscale, the Spearman-Brown correlation and coefficient alpha were .75 and .72, respectively. Lastly, for the "Student-Teacher Connectedness" subscale, the coefficient alpha was .72, which is equivalent to the Guttman-Flanagan split half. For the full scale, Spearman- Brown correlation and coefficient alpha were .87 and .84, respectively. These values indicate

good internal consistency. The scale has 10 items constructed on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Typical examples of the items are: "I feel close to people at school", "I feel a part of this school".

ATSS (Anderson, 1999) was used to measure attitudes that an individual has towards his/her school environment, including teachers, homework, grades, and learning. The scale has 15 items constructed on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1= Totally Disagree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral, 4= Totally Agree, 5= Agree the response on Neutral was removed by the researcher to avoid cover up by the students. Typical examples of the items are: "I feel positive when I am at school", "it is easy to learn in my school". The reliability co-efficient alpha for the scale was .80 with internal consistency of .89.

SISS (Mitchell, 1993) was used to measure students' interest in schooling. This scale comprises of 15 items measuring interest in schooling on a four point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Students' personal interest, situational interest meaningfulness of Schooling, Involvement in school work, home work, and assignment among others are measured by the items. The scale was modified by Umomyan (1998) to suit the Nigerian environment. The instrument has a Cronbach alpha value of 0.79 and split half reliability index is 0.93. Typical examples of the items are: "I am general attentive in school", "School life is exciting to me".

MSPSS (Zimet, Dahlem, & Farley, 1988) is a 12-item instrument designed to measure perceived social support from three sources (subscales): family, friends, and a significant other. The scale has 12 items with response format ranging from Very strongly disagree (1) to Very strongly agree (7). Typical examples of the items are: "There is a special person who is around when I am in need", "There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows". The score of MSPSS is the total of the individual item scores divided by the number of items. Higher scores reflect higher perceived social support. The reliability co-efficient alpha for the scale was .65 with internal consistency of .78.

Procedure

All the participants for the study were administered the four instruments namely: Students' Perception of School Cohesion, Attitudes towards School Scale, Interest in Schooling Scale and Social Support Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in their respective schools by the researcher. The researcher with the cooperation of the school counsellors and teachers participated in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires from the respondents.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis.

Result

The results, based on the research questions are presented below.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix of the Predictor Variables (Interest in Schooling, Attitude to School, and Social Support) and the criterion (dependent variable, Perception about School) (N = 205).

	Perception	Interest	Attitude	Social Support
Perception	1.000			
Interest	.391**	1.000		
Attitude	.294**	.391**	1.000	
Social Support	.353**	.078	.043	1.000
Mean	28.3000	40.1600	34.7100	61.9600
Standard Deviation	5.9570	7.8810	4.9700	15.9570

The result from the table above shows that there was significant relationship among Interest in schooling ($r=.391$; $p<0.05$), Attitude to school ($r=.294$; $p<0.05$), Social support ($r=.353$; $p<0.05$) on Students' perception about school among secondary school adolescents respectively.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Result of Independent Variables on Perception about School

Multiple R	=0 .367				
Multiple R ²	=0 .135				
Adjusted R ²	=0 .113				
Std. Error of the Estimation	=5.417				
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE					
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	531.246	3	177.082	6.936	.001
Residual	3403.346	116	29.339		
Total	3934.592	119			

The table above shows that the joint effect of independent variables (interest in schooling, attitudes to schooling, and social support) on students' perception of schooling among secondary school adolescent was significant. The table also shows a coefficient of $F=6.036$, multiple regressions (R) of 0.367 which is strong and adjusted R^2 of 0.113 which accounted for about 11.3% of the variation in Students' perception about school was accounted for by the independent variables when taken together.

This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Table 3: Multiple Regression showing Relative Contribution of each of the Independent Variables to the prediction of Perception about school among secondary school adolescents.

Model	Un-standardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	11.154	4.689		2.379	.019
Interest	0.40	.082	.044	.486	.628
Attitude	.243	.120	.187	2.025	.045
Social Support	.117	0.38	.271	3.085	.003

Taking the perception about school as endogenous variable, interest in schooling, attitude to school and social support as exogenous variables (Table 3): Social support alone turned out to be the strongest predictor of students' perception about school ($\beta = .271$, $t = 3.085$, $P < .05$). It was followed by attitude to school ($\beta = .187$, $t = 2.025$, $P < .05$), and interest in schooling ($\beta = .044$, $t = .486$, $P < .05$).

Discussion

The results show that social support was the most potent contributors to the students' perception about school. This was in agreement with the works of previous researchers (e.g. Duru, 2007; Dimpy et al, 2013). The explanation for this may not be far fetch students are exposed to a lot of activities when left alone particularly in this era of social networking where they have access to different sites on the internet, the educative sites and destructive sites such as suicide site, phonograph site and they are not blind to government activities in various states across the country. medias are not left from this particularly when presenting a nonentity as an hero. These and others can invariably determine students' perception about school.

Attitude was also correlated significantly to the students' perception about school. This is in line with Adesoji, 2008; Cokadar et al, 2008. The justification for this is that an individual place value on what is important and relevant to them which they also hold with high esteem.

However, it was discovered that interest in schooling was the least contributor to students' perception about school and it is significant. This agrees with Adeyemo, 2005. Generally, restricting someone in a place for a certain periods even with needed materials at ones disposal the enjoyment can only be for short time as soon as is longer than necessary, the interest therein will be faded away. The same thing applicable to schooling as well.

Implication of the Findings

Social support was found to be the most potent contributor to students, perception about school. Among whom are parents, guidance counsellor, teachers, friends, religious bodies, social groups, government and immediate environment. It then follows that parents should wake up to their responsibilities in seeing to the education of

their children by giving maximum attention and support to their wards education. It is also their duty to know significant people whom their children interact with (e.g. friends). They should not just fold their arms and watch their wards going astray in the name of civilization, train up your child and he will give you rest. The policy makers should employ more qualified teachers of various subjects, provide suitable learning environment to students in the public schools.

Students should also make use of the little resources in their disposal to make something good out of their lives. They should always remember that they are the architect of their lives. Based on the evidences it is therefore recommended that school guidance counsellors should be vast in knowledge, organizing time to time talks, seminars for the learners as well as their parents particularly during Parents' Teachers Association to enhance the perception of students' to schooling.

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