

# **GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: THE CASE STUDY OF PRACTICUM STUDENTS, UNIVERSITY OF UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE**

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## **Abstract**

*The essence of Guidance and Counselling in the Nigerian educational system and the larger society cannot be over emphasized. The study investigated guidance and counselling challenges in Nigeria: the case study of practicum students, university of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A total population and sample size of 156 was used for the study. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique in selecting the three programmes; regular, part time and sandwich students for the study. The reliability of 0.75 was obtained using cronach alpha reliability technique. Data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation in answering research questions. The results of the findings showed that year of study, age, sex and type of programme in the University of Uyo do not have any differences among practicum students which by implication means that students irrespective of their year of study, age, gender and programme type experience challenges. It was recommended amongst others that student counsellors should be exposed to a of simulating exercises during practicum theory before they go for practicum practical.*

Guidance and counselling today is in the lips of all people all over the world due to the importance attached to it as a result of its role in human development. In Nigeria for instance the development of formal guidance and counselling started in the late 1950s in the school system with the help of some Reverend sisters who were teachers at St. Theresa's College, Oke-Ado in Ibadan who invited some people to come and talk with their girls that were about to leave school that year. From then to date, what started like an in house thing has spread all over the country that presently it is not only for the schools but any where man can be found.

It is on this note that guidance and counselling takes a centre stage in the educational development of Nigeria, based on this, it is one of the Educational services. Educational services according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) facilitate the implementation of educational policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion

of effectiveness of educational system. In fact the initial idea that federal government had in mind has been over taken because it was to care for the need of primary and post primary institutions but it is now very necessary in all higher institutions for effective management of the education sector. It is on this note that one of the things National University Commission (NUC) when on institutional accreditation looks out for is a functional guidance and counselling unit. This is in line with Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:41) policy statement which states that "...in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors shall be appointed..."

Again, the Nigerian nation is in dire need of counsellors because of the economic and political states of the country where a lot of families are destabilized and disorganized due to happenings within the nation such as kidnapping, assassination, recession, boko haram activities and so many suicide cases. In the North East a lot of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps and with the returning of some Chibok girls, Government is highly interested in employing the services of professional counsellors to help them recoup emotionally, psychologically, socially and educationally. To this end, it becomes very necessary that counsellors' training especially the practical aspect of their training should be looked into, as lack of proper training will ruin the profession. It is to this note that the researcher is interested in carrying out this research to discover the challenges encountered by these counsellors in training while on their practicum.

### **Issues in Literature**

Guidance and counselling is a professional field designed to help individuals of all ages and of all works of life. It is not limited to the school system. It is also needed outside schools such as the Hospitals, Workplaces, Prisons, Faith based Organizations, Rehabilitation centres, Families, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps and all places where living beings are found. To Olorungbemi (2013) Guidance and Counselling is specialized field of training designed to help people to be properly aware of themselves and be fulfilled in life. This definition makes it clear that in Guidance and Counselling the clients, who visit the counselor go with the mind of being helped to resolve their personal problems which could be educational, vocational and personal social. On this note, Nwachuku (2009:12) explained Guidance and Counselling as

a formal and systematic process of organized services offered in the school system to help an individual know and develop his potentials to the fullest, thereby consciously acquiring proper self-knowledge, understanding of self and situation and skills for appraisal of self in situational relation, for appropriate decision and action in education, the world of work and the society.

This definition indeed has given all that we need to understand about the usefulness of Guidance and Counselling in the present day Nigeria where people need to take responsibility for every action taken as a result of decision made.

In Guidance and Counselling there are several services rendered. The services according to these authors, Alutu (2007), Egbule (2009), Adamu and Mora (2010), Ekpo (2011) and Awoyemi (2013) are; information service, appraisal service, placement service, orientation service, counselling service, referral service, follow up service, educational service, vocational service, personal social service and community service. These services are rendered by professional counsellors in any environment they found themselves and are for the benefits of recipients and the general public.

To effectively carryout these services the counsellor must employ some skills. These skills are as stated by Akinade (2002) , Cormier and Hackney (2005), Modo and Inaja (2010) empathy, listening, rapport building, restatement, confidentiality, establishment of counselling club, and homework. As the counsellor puts all these skills to practice as he handles the clients presented problems, he would have professionally and successfully rendered the needed help to the clients.

The practicum students are counsellors in training at the university level of education and are exposed to these services and skills as part of their professional training. So as they embark on field experience they are expected to show forth their level of understanding by employing these skills into their day to day performance of their duties to the clients and establishments within and outside the school. To this end practicum is seen by Alutu(2007) as a type of internship specifically designed for practical demonstration of the counselling theories and skills acquired by the prospective counsellors during the academic training period. Practicum is a field work carried out by student counsellors under the supervision of the counsellor educators or practicing counsellors

To Nwachuku (2009), practicum is described as a period of closely supervised field work experience in Guidance and Counselling work, a period of internship. Again Okobiah (2006) states that practicum is a field experience by counsellors in training. Also, Akinade (2002) sees practicum as a mandatory course that would be counsellors undergo so as to acquire theory and practice in real life techniques and skills needed to become an effective counsellor during their training under close supervision of qualified counsellors.

Akinade (2002) went further to say that there are two types of practicum namely; micro practicum and macro practicum. In Micro practicum it is carried out in counselling laboratory or classroom as the case maybe among class-mates before the trainees go out for real life experience. In the other hand macro practicum is the real life experience of practical work student counsellors undergo in their place of posting outside the university lecture halls.

### **Expectations of Practicum Students**

In Guidance and Counselling practicum students are expected to perform and put into practice all they have learnt in classroom situation to actual real experience such as counselling, orientation, placement and information respectively. Even with all

these they are expected to do other activities and also needed to come back from site with some documents put into the practicum kit for the supervisors. Nwachuku (2009) in her work listed the following as activities and items to come back with by the students. They include; getting a site, rapport building at the site, the standard portfolio, needs assessment and setting analysis, the checklist, identification of felt need, the work plan, guidance time schedule, allocation of office space, cassette recorder, cassette and batteries. Also needed is letter of discharge from the place of service. Again most often within the weeks of practicum the student are expected to shuttle from the practicum site to the school to attend lectures thereby over working the students and do add to their inadequacy. Based on these, this research is out to discover what challenges practicum students from the university of Uyo encounter and how best to resolve such problems in subsequent practicum exercise by the students of this school.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges encountered by practicum student of the university of Uyo and provide possible remedies to identified problem in order to produce more productive counselors for counselling effectiveness.

### **Research Questions**

The follow research questions were raised and answered in the study.

1. Does year of study contribute to the challenges encountered by practicum students?
2. How does programme type influence practicum students challenges?
3. Does age of students influence practicum challenges?
4. How does sex influence practicum students challenges?
5. what are the major challenges experienced by practicum students?

### **Methodology**

The research design adopted for the study is the descriptive survey. The design was appropriate because it enabled the investigator to obtain information from the direct source of practicum students. The study sample size was 156 undergraduate students of Guidance and Counselling of different programmes: - the regular, part time and sandwich students in the department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling University of Uyo, Uyo. The study adopted purposive sampling technique since the study was aimed at studying those that have participated in practicum exercise once or twice. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire constructed by the researcher named practicum challenges in guidance and counselling questionnaire (PCGCQ). The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.76. A descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used in answering research questions.

## **Results**

This section presents the result of the findings obtained from the field

### **Research Question 1**

Does year of study contribute to the challenges encountered by practicum students?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Challenges Encountered by Practicum Students Based on Year of Study**

Year of Studies	N	Mean	SD
Year three	64	12.30	3.47
Year four	56	10.40	2.41
Year five	23	6.30	0.34

As shown on the table1, a total mean value of 12.30 was obtained for the challenges encountered by practicum students in year three, a total mean value of 10.40 and the standard deviation of 2.41 were obtained for the year challenges encountered by year four students whereas the year five students encountered challenges based on the mean value of 6.30 and the standard deviation of 0.34 comparing this values, it could be concluded that year of study contributes slightly to the problem encountered by practicum students. Therefore, practicum problems encountered by the students may depend on their year of study.

### **Research Question 2**

How does programme type influence practicum students challenges?

**Table2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Influence of Programme Type on Practicum Students Challenges**

Programme Type	N	Mean	SD
Regular	84	30.00	8.40
Part time	29	19.40	3.40
Sandwich	36	21.20	4.10

As shown on table 2, the mean and standard deviation of 30.00 and 8.40 were obtained for students in regular programmes, 19.49 and 3.40 were obtained for students in part-time programme, while the mean of 21.20 and 4.10 were obtained for students practicum challenges in sandwich programme. Therefore the data obtained show that programme types influence practicum students' challenges.

### **Research Question 3**

Is there any difference in the challenges encountered by the student during practicum programme based on age?

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Influence of Age of the Students on Practicum Challenges**

Age of the Students	N	Mean	SD
18 – 22	49	17.12	4.30
23 – 27	60	17.33	5.12
28 – 32	30	19.43	1.30
33 and above	19	16.99	0.30

The result on table 3 indicates the mean and standard deviation of 17.12 and 4.30 for students found within the ages of 18 – 22 years, for students within the ages of 23 – 27, the mean value of 17.33 and the standard deviation of 5.12 were obtained for their challenges whereas, the mean and standard deviation of 19.43 and 1.30 were obtained for students whose ages were within 28 – 32 years of age whereas for students within 33 and above years of age were 16.99 and 0.30.

**Research Question 4**

Is there any difference in the challenges encountered by the student during practicum program based on sex?

**Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Influence of Sex on Practicum Students Challenges**

Sex	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Male students	64	20.40	5.70	ND
Female students	79	20.12	5.20	

As shown on the table 4, the mean and standard deviation of 20.40 and 5.70 were obtained for male students whereas 20.12 and 5.20 were obtained for female students' practicum challenges. From the findings, the data indicate that male and female students do not differ in the challenges encountered during practicum in school. Therefore there is no difference in the challenges encountered by the students during practicum programme based on sex

**Research Question 5**

What are the major challenges experienced by practicum students?

**Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the Major Challenges Experienced by Practicum Students**

S/N	ITEMS	Rank	Mean	SD
1	Lack of acceptance at the placement site.	10 <sup>th</sup>	4.65	1.18

2	Inability to prepare the needs assessment	4 <sup>th</sup>	5.10	1.32
3	Difficulty in analyzing the needs assessment checklist	5 <sup>th</sup>	4.93	1.30
4	Absence of office space at the practicum site	11 <sup>th</sup>	4.54	1.14
5	Lack of specific time for counselling	12 <sup>th</sup>	4.44	1.10
6	Lack of clients to work with	7 <sup>th</sup>	4.92	1.22
7	Lack of cooperation from teachers	18 <sup>th</sup>	4.09	0.77
8	Lack of cooperation from school heads	16 <sup>th</sup>	4.19	0.85
9	Forced to teach subjects outside counselling	1 <sup>st</sup>	5.67	1.60
10	Inability to make appropriate referrals	20 <sup>th</sup>	3.98	0.69
11	Inability to organized group counselling	13 <sup>th</sup>	4.32	1.09
12	Insufficient knowledge of completing a log book	14 <sup>th</sup>	4.28	1.06
13	Lack of confidence in handling clients problems as presented	8 <sup>th</sup>	4.90	1.19
14	Fear of supervision at site	21 <sup>th</sup>	3.93	0.65
15	Fear of supervisors	25 <sup>th</sup>	1.45	0.24
16	Inability to produce a work plan	15 <sup>th</sup>	4.22	0.95
17	Difficulty in starting a counselling interview with the client for the first time	16 <sup>th</sup>	4.86	1.27
18	Problem of combining lectures with practicum exercise	2 <sup>nd</sup>	5.43	1.50
19	Inability to maintain confidentiality of clients' information	19 <sup>th</sup>	4.00	0.73
20	Lack of application of social media in dealing with clients.	22 <sup>th</sup>	3.86	0.59
21	Lack of resident counselor	3 <sup>th</sup>	5.24	1.44
22	Working with the opposite sex	17 <sup>th</sup>	4.13	0.80
23	Client refusal to work with suggestions of the counsellors	10 <sup>th</sup>	4.65	1.39
24	Lack of funds to invite resource persons during group counselling	23 <sup>th</sup>	3.79	0.53
25	Inability to relate theory with practice	9 <sup>th</sup>	4.77	1.22
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>4.24</b>	<b>0.99</b>

The result on table 5 indicates that item 9 was ranked first, item 18 ranked second, item 21 ranked third, item 2 ranked fourth, item 3 is ranked fifth, item 17 is ranked sixth, item 6 ranked seventh, item 13 was ranked eighth. Item 28 was ranked ninth, items 1 and 23 were ranked tenth, item 4 was ranked 11, item 5 was ranked twelve, item 11 had a rank of thirteen, item 12 was ranked fourteen, item 16 was ranked fifteen, item 8 was ranked sixteen, item 22 was ranked seventeen, item 7 was ranked eighteen, item 19 was ranked nineteen, item 10 was ranked twenty, item 14 twenty-one, item 20 had 22<sup>nd</sup> rank, the 24 item had 23<sup>rd</sup> rank among the practicum challenges faced by the students.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result of the findings in table 1 showed that year of study does not influence the problems encountered by practicum students. This result implies that no

matter the students' year of study they all encounter challenges during practicum exercise. The result of the findings in table 2 revealed that there is no influence of programme type on challenges encountered by practicum students in University of Uyo. This implies that problems encountered by the students during practicum do not depend significantly in the type of programme of the students. This implies that students do not face counselling challenges based on their programme type. From the findings of the study, it was submitted that many practicum challenges encountered by the students do not depend solely on programme type. For instance the students on practicum can also experience the same type of problems or challenges faced by a regular student. Students who passed through part time programme or sandwich students will still experience the same type of problems encountered by the regular students. Therefore from the result, the study revealed that counselling challenges do not differ, based on students programme type.

The result of the findings on table 3 revealed that there is no difference in the challenges experienced by practicum students based on their age. This means that no matter the age of the students, practicum problems will still be encountered. Many students during practicum encounter diverse problems which may not be as a result of their age. For instance a student who is very tender at age will experience the same challenge as an adult if they do the same practicum together.

The result of the findings in table 4 shows that sex of the students does not differ based on the challenges encountered during practicum among students in university of Uyo. This implies that the male and female students do not differ in the problems encountered during practicum. Hence, both male and female encounter the same challenges.

These findings of the present study which show that irrespective of sex, all students encounter the same challenges during practicum. Hence, the challenges experienced by students during counselling are not sensitive to male and female. For instance, both male and female do experience lack of acceptance at the placement site because in most cases when schools are overloaded with responsibility and they have sufficient hands to handle the problems they may not see the need to accept practicum students for counselling programmes in the school. Both male and female students who lack knowledge on how to prepare need assessment will always have difficulties in analyzing the need assessment check list in during practicum programmes in schools.

As shown on table 5, the result of the finding revealed that that item 9 was ranked first, item 18 was ranked second, item 21 was ranked third, item 2 was ranked fourth, item 3 was ranked fifth, item 17 was ranked sixth, item 6 was ranked seventh, item 13 is ranked eighth. Item 25 was ranked ninth, item 1 and 23 was are ranked tenth, item 4 was ranked 11, item 5 was ranked twelve , item 11 had a rank of thirteen, item 12 was ranked fourteen, item 16 was ranked fifteen, item 8 was ranked sixteen, item 22 was ranked seventeen, item 7 was ranked eighteen, item 19 was ranked nineteen, item 10 was ranked twenty, item 14 was ranked twenty-one, item 20 had rank of 22<sup>nd</sup>, the 24

item had a rank of 23<sup>rd</sup> a rank of among the particular challenges faced by the students. As observed from the findings all Practicum students experience the challenged of being forced to teach subject outside counselling. This implies that students of counselling are usually forced by proprietors and school heads to teach subjects such as mathematics, physics, biology, Christian religious knowledge and English language to mention a few during practicum. Also another major challenge faced by counselling students is the problem of combining lectures with practicum exercise. This means that, practicum students experience a situation whereby they have to attend lectures in University because lectures go on within and outside the department during the six weeks they are supposed to be on practicum in any environment. Most of these students encounter these challenges as a result of trying to meet up their lectures and practicum centres. It is also speculated from the study that lack of resident counsellors was one of the observable challenges faced by practicum students. Most of these students face this as a problem because they see no one to mentor them on what is expected of them. It is expected that resident counsellors are to monitor the activities of practicum students and play on site supervisory role to the students. When these are lacking the students encounter a lot of problems. These three problems were regarded in the study as the most pressing need for the practicum students.

### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were made based on the results of the findings of the study. It was concluded that University of Uyo practicum students encounter some challenges during practicum exercise which extends from being forced to teach subjects outside counselling, combining lectures with practicum exercise, no resident counsellors to act as site supervisors and so many other challenges. The study went on to conclude that these challenges faced by these practicum students were not based on year of study, programme type, age, and sex. These results are an eye opener that Guidance and Counselling challenges encountered by practicum students cut across all the categories of students in the University of Uyo.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made.

1. Student counsellors should be exposed to a lot of simulating exercises during practicum theory before they go for practicum practical.
2. The department should try to see how they can either remove lectures during practicum or meet the time table planners to schedule lectures for them in the evenings to reduce the burden on students.
3. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) at National and state levels should make necessary arrangement with federal and state ministries of education to

stop forcing counselors whether students or permanent staff to teach other subjects outside counselling to enable counsellors to be efficient in their counselling duties.

4. Government should employ counsellors and post them to schools and non schools settings for them to serve as resident counsellors.

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