**Short communication**

**IMPERATIVES OF INFORMATION GUIDANCE SERVICES AND COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECURITY AND SAFETY WELL-BEING OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH WEST NIGERIA**

**Abstract**

This paper examines and recognizes the imperatives of the provision and importance of guidance and counselling services to secondary school students has long been recognized by educational policies of the federal government of Nigeria. The National policy of Education and the National Counselling Policy both stressed the need for all the stakeholders to ensure that, students’ needs are adequately cared for, at all levels of education in Nigeria. The security challenges that bedeviled the North West region and has since becomes serious threats to safety school environment which has implications not only to the teaching and learning processes in schools within the region, but has also call for more concerted efforts and collaboration among stakeholders. Suggestions include; a robust approach to security challenges which can be facilitated through counselling services. ***Keywords****; Counselling , information services, safety, security.*

Introduction

In North West Nigeria, many secondary school students face an unprecedented challenge which boarder on safety and security and safety. Recent years have witnessed an alarming surge in incidents threatening the well-being and educational pursuit of these young individuals. Within this context, the imperative for robust information guidance services and the nuanced role of counselling stand as pivotal pillars in safeguarding the future of these students.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the North West region of Nigeria has experienced a disturbing increase in school-related violence and abductions, disrupting the fundamental right to education for thousands of students (UNESCO, 2021). Amidst this turmoil, Oyebade and Adebule (2020) highlight that effective information guidance services play a pivotal role in not only providing critical safety information but also nurturing a sense of resilience and preparedness among students, empowering them to navigate these precarious environments.

This paper examined the imperative nature of information guidance services tailored for the unique challenges faced by secondary school students in North West Nigeria. Furthermore, it unravels the intricate web of counselling implications within this framework, underscoring its profound impact on the security, safety, and educational trajectory of these young individuals.

The North West region of Nigeria stands at a critical crossroads, grappling with multifaceted challenges that have cast a shadow over the safety and security of secondary school students. Within this region, the prevalence of insecurity has surged, disrupting the educational landscape and posing substantial risks to the well-being of young learners.

Recent reports by Amnesty International (2022) highlight the escalating insecurity plaguing North West Nigeria, marked by an upsurge in kidnappings, attacks on schools, and a general atmosphere of fear, directly impacting access to education for countless students. These incidents not only disrupt the academic continuum but also inflict psychological trauma and hinder the educational pursuits of these young minds.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA, 2021) underscores the staggering impact of insecurity on education in the region, with over 1,000 schools shut down due to safety concerns, affecting nearly 1.3 million children. Such a disruption not only deprives students of their right to education but also exposes them to heightened risks, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and radicalization.

According to Kingsley, Ebele and Chidi. (2023) the complex socio-political landscape north west zone further exacerbates these challenges, necessitating tailored interventions that address the region's unique security dynamics. The confluence of factors such as poverty, ethnic tensions, and the proliferation of armed groups underscores the urgency for comprehensive strategies that safeguard the security and safety of secondary school students in North West Nigeria.

In this volatile context, the significance of information guidance services and counseling interventions becomes increasingly pronounced, serving as indispensable tools to mitigate risks, empower students, and restore a sense of normalcy to their educational journey.

**Imperatives of Information Guidance Services**

The turbulent landscape of North West Nigeria necessitates a strategic approach to fortify the security and safety of secondary school students. Within this milieu, the deployment of information guidance services emerges as a critical imperative, serving as a proactive measure to mitigate risks and equip students with the necessary tools to navigate these precarious environments.

According to a study by John Sedofia (2014). information guidance services should encompass multifaceted strategies, including the dissemination of safety protocols, emergency preparedness training, and the establishment of reliable communication channels. These services not only foster awareness but also instill a sense of empowerment among students, enabling them to respond effectively to potential security threats.

Syamsu (2023) underscore the significance of community involvement in information guidance initiatives, highlighting the need for collaboration between schools, local authorities, and community leaders. This collaborative approach not only enhances the reach of these services but also fosters a sense of collective responsibility towards safeguarding the educational spaces of these students.

Moreover, Eze et al. (2020) advocate for the integration of technology in information guidance services, leveraging digital platforms for real-time information dissemination and establishing alert systems to swiftly address security concerns. The utilization of technology ensures a rapid response mechanism, crucial in ensuring the safety of students in dynamic and volatile situations.

Additionally, UNICEF (2021) emphasizes the role of psychosocial support within information guidance services, stressing the importance of addressing the emotional and mental well-being of students affected by insecurity. Counseling interventions embedded within these services offer a holistic approach, nurturing resilience and providing avenues for emotional healing amidst adversity.

**Counseling Implications**

In the wake of pervasive insecurity, the role of counseling emerges as a pivotal component in addressing the multifaceted needs of secondary school students in North West Nigeria. Counseling interventions, as highlighted by Yuan, Azlina, Taufiqnur and Rao (2023) The extend beyond mere psychological support, encompassing a spectrum of implications crucial for the well-being and resilience of these young individuals amidst adversity.

Jirkor, Chuchee and Johnafrica. underscore the significance of trauma-informed counseling approaches tailored for students affected by insecurity. These approaches not only acknowledge the psychological impact of traumatic events but also provide a framework for counselors to address and mitigate the associated distress, fostering a conducive environment for emotional healing.

Furthermore, John Sedofia (2014). advocate for culturally sensitive counseling practices that acknowledge the unique sociocultural contexts prevalent in North West Nigeria. Aligning counseling strategies with cultural norms and beliefs not only enhances the effectiveness of interventions but also fosters trust and rapport between counselors and students, thereby augmenting the impact of these sessions.

[Pawanjeet Kaur](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pawanjeet-Kaur-2?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIn19).( 2024. emphasizes the role of preventive counseling measures, promoting resilience and coping mechanisms among students. Proactive interventions, including stress management workshops and emotional regulation techniques, equip students with the tools to navigate the challenges posed by insecurity, thereby fortifying their psychological well-being.

Moreover, UNESCO (2020) stresses the need for a comprehensive framework integrating counseling within the educational curriculum. By embedding counseling modules within the academic sphere, students gain continual access to support mechanisms, fostering a resilient mindset and promoting emotional well-being as an integral facet of their educational journey.

**Implementation and Challenges**

Implementing comprehensive information guidance services and counseling interventions in North West Nigeria poses both opportunities and challenges in ensuring the security and safety of secondary school students.

Punam and Danveer (2023) Advocate for a collaborative approach involving government agencies, educational institutions, NGOs, and community stakeholders in implementing information guidance services. However, logistical hurdles such as limited resources, infrastructure deficits, and bureaucratic complexities often hinder the seamless execution of these services, creating challenges in their effective implementation.

Moreover, Afolayan et al. (2019) highlight the geographic disparities prevalent in the region, underscoring the challenge of reaching remote and conflict-affected areas with these crucial services. Inaccessible terrains and security concerns impede the equitable distribution of information guidance and counseling support to all students, leaving certain populations at a disadvantage.

In addition, ELEKE, Ebimie Melbourne (2023) emphasize the shortage of qualified counseling professionals as a significant impediment. The scarcity of trained counselors capable of addressing the psychological needs of students affected by insecurity poses a substantial challenge in providing adequate support within schools.

Furthermore, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021) identifies the ever-evolving nature of security threats as a challenge. The dynamic landscape of insecurity requires continuous adaptation and innovation in information guidance services and counseling strategies to effectively address emerging risks, demanding agility and flexibility in interventions.

Despite these challenges, Save the Children (2022) highlights successful pilot programs that have demonstrated the efficacy of community-based approaches in overcoming implementation hurdles. Engaging local community leaders and leveraging indigenous knowledge systems have shown promise in circumventing logistical challenges and enhancing the reach and impact of these services.

**Conclusion**

In the midst of uncertainty and adversity, the imperative of safeguarding the security and safety of secondary school students in North West Nigeria emerges as a collective responsibility—one that necessitates cohesive and innovative strategies. The confluence of information guidance services and counseling interventions stands as a beacon of hope in navigating these turbulent waters.

As underscored throughout this exploration, the implementation of information guidance services tailored to the unique challenges of the region lays the groundwork for proactive measures. From disseminating safety protocols to leveraging technology and fostering community collaboration, these services serve as guardians, equipping students with the tools to navigate the complex landscape of insecurity.

Simultaneously, the profound impact of counseling interventions resonates in nurturing resilience, healing psychological wounds, and fostering an environment conducive to learning amidst adversity. By acknowledging the cultural nuances and embedding trauma-informed approaches, counselors become agents of empowerment, offering a safe harbor for emotional well-being.

Yet, amid the successes lie challenges—logistical barriers, resource constraints, and the dynamic nature of security threats. However, these hurdles serve not as deterrents but as catalysts for innovation and collaboration. Pilot programs and community engagement initiatives showcase the potential for overcoming these challenges, offering pathways towards inclusive and effective implementations.

In closing, the journey towards securing the well-being of these young minds in North West Nigeria is a testament to collective dedication and resilience. It beckons for sustained commitment, continual adaptation, and unwavering advocacy. As educators, policymakers, counselors, and communities unite in this noble endeavor, the promise of a safer, nurturing, and empowered educational landscape for secondary school students shines brightly on the horizon.

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