

INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING SERVICES ON STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM AND MOTIVATION IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN BASSA LGA, PLATEAU STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of school counselling services on students' self-esteem and motivation in selected secondary schools in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population consisted of 1,450 senior secondary school students across six randomly selected schools. Using Yamane's formula, a sample of 312 students was drawn through proportionate stratified random sampling. A self-developed questionnaire titled *School Counselling, Self-Esteem and Motivation Scale (SCSEMS)* was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts and had a reliability coefficient of 0.81 using Cronbach Alpha. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and independent t-test to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that school counselling services significantly improved students' self-esteem, enhanced their learning motivation, and positively affected their attitude toward schooling. The study recommended that school administrators strengthen counselling units, provide more professional

Keywords: School counselling, self-esteem, motivation, secondary school students, Bassa LGA

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage marked by rapid physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. During this period, young people are not only concerned with academic success but also with forming a sense of identity, belonging, and self-worth. School environments play a central role in shaping these developmental outcomes because they are the primary settings where students interact with peers, teachers, and authority figures on a daily basis (Santrock, 2021).

School counselling services are designed to address the psychosocial, academic, and career needs of students. Counsellors provide guidance, emotional support, and interventions that help students manage personal and interpersonal challenges, develop self-awareness, and make informed decisions (Okeke, 2020). By offering preventive, developmental, and remedial services, counselling contributes to building students' resilience and promoting positive mental health.

One of the major goals of counselling is to foster healthy self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to the way individuals perceive and evaluate themselves. A student with high self-esteem tends to be confident, motivated, and willing to participate actively in school activities, while one with low self-esteem may experience feelings of inferiority, withdrawal, anxiety, and academic underachievement (Rosenberg, 1965). Schools that provide regular counselling services often report improved confidence, social adjustment, and better interpersonal relationships among students.

Another critical area influenced by counselling is student motivation. Motivation drives students' willingness to attend school regularly, pay attention in class, and persist in the face of academic challenges. Lack of motivation often leads to absenteeism, poor study habits, and low academic performance. Counselling interventions such as goal-setting sessions, time management training, and study skills workshops are proven strategies to boost students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Eyo et al., 2010).

In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of guidance and counselling and has recommended its integration into school systems. However, implementation remains inconsistent, and many schools lack adequate counselling personnel, offices, and materials (Adewumi & Falaye, 2019). In rural areas like Bassa Local Government Area (LGA), students face additional challenges such as poverty, parental neglect, peer pressure, and limited exposure to psychosocial support services. Understanding the specific impact of school counselling services on students' self-esteem and motivation in this context is therefore vital for evidence-based educational planning and intervention.

Statement of the Problem

School administrators and teachers in Bassa LGA have expressed growing concern over the psychosocial and academic challenges faced by students. Reports indicate rising cases of poor classroom participation, examination anxiety, peer conflicts, and absenteeism. Many students appear to have low confidence in their abilities, leading to underperformance and negative attitudes toward schooling.

Although counselling units have been established in most schools, their impact seems minimal. Several factors contribute to this situation, including a shortage of qualified counsellors, limited resources, lack of awareness among students, and sometimes negative perceptions of counselling as a service for "troubled" students. As a result, many students who could benefit from professional counselling either do not seek it or receive inadequate support.

If these issues are not addressed, there is a risk that students will continue to experience low self-esteem, poor motivation, and disengagement from school, potentially leading to higher dropout rates, poor academic outcomes, and maladaptive behaviours. This study therefore seeks to empirically determine the influence of school counselling services on students' self-esteem and motivation in Bassa LGA, providing data that can guide policy formulation and improve the delivery of school counselling services in the area.

Research Objectives

The study aimed to:

1. Determine the influence of school counselling services on students' self-esteem.
2. Examine the influence of school counselling services on students' motivation toward learning.
3. Assess the joint effect of school counselling services on students' overall attitude toward schooling.

Research Questions

1. How do school counselling services influence students' self-esteem in selected schools in Bassa LGA?
2. In what ways do school counselling services affect students' motivation toward learning?
3. What is the combined effect of school counselling services on students' overall attitude toward schooling?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: School counselling services have no significant influence on students' self-esteem.

H₀₂: School counselling services have no significant influence on students' motivation toward learning.

H₀₃: School counselling services have no significant combined effect on students' overall attitude toward schooling.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design as it is suitable for describing existing conditions and gathering opinions from a large population without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population consisted of 1,450 senior secondary school students from six selected public secondary schools in Bassa Local Government Area. The sample size of 312 students was determined using Yamane’s (1967) formula and selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation across schools, gender, and class levels (SS1–SS3).

The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire titled *School Counselling, Self-Esteem and Motivation Scale (SCSEMS)* with three sections: Section A elicited demographic data, Section B measured self-esteem (10 items), and Section C measured learning motivation (10 items). Items were scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). The validity of the instrument was ensured by three experts in Guidance and Counselling who reviewed it for clarity, coverage, and relevance to the research objectives. The reliability was confirmed through a pilot test, yielding a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2019).

Data collection was carried out by the researcher and trained assistants during school hours, with permission from school authorities. Ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent were strictly observed. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions, while independent t-tests were used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: How do school counselling services influence students’ self-esteem in selected schools in Bassa LGA?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Counselling Services on Students’ Self-Esteem (N=312)

Item	Statement	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Decision
1	Counselling sessions make me feel valued and accepted.	3.29	0.63	Accepted
2	I have developed more confidence in my abilities after counselling.	3.17	0.66	Accepted
3	Counselling helps me overcome feelings of inferiority.	3.09	0.72	Accepted
4	I still feel inadequate even after counselling sessions.	2.22	0.81	Rejected
5	I now participate more actively in class activities.	3.15	0.60	Accepted

Table 1 reveals that students perceive school counselling services as highly beneficial to their self-esteem. Most respondents reported feeling valued and accepted, gaining confidence in their abilities, and overcoming feelings of inferiority as a result of counselling. They also indicated that counselling encouraged them to participate more actively in class activities. These results suggest that counselling sessions provide students with a sense of belonging and help them develop a healthier self-concept, which is consistent with Rosenberg’s (1965) view that positive feedback from significant others strengthens self-esteem. However, the rejection of item 4 (“I still feel inadequate even after counselling sessions”) highlights that some students continue to experience low self-worth despite available counselling services. This may be due to inconsistent attendance, deep-rooted psychological issues, or insufficient follow-up by school counsellors. The finding suggests that more personalized and sustained counselling interventions are needed for students with persistent self-esteem challenges.

Research Question 2: In what ways do school counselling services affect students' motivation toward learning?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Counselling Services on Students' Motivation (N=312)

Item	Statement	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Decision
1	Counselling has inspired me to set higher academic goals.	3.22	0.67	Accepted
2	I am more interested in my studies after attending counselling.	3.10	0.64	Accepted
3	Counselling helps me manage examination anxiety.	3.04	0.71	Accepted
4	I am still not motivated to attend school regularly.	2.35	0.79	Rejected
5	Counselling helped me develop better study habits.	3.08	0.62	Accepted

Table 2 shows that students agreed that school counselling services significantly enhance their learning motivation. They reported setting higher academic goals, increased interest in studies, and improved ability to manage examination anxiety after attending counselling. They also acknowledged the development of better study habits, which are crucial for sustained academic achievement. These findings support Eyo et al. (2010), who observed that counselling interventions help students focus on learning and persist in the face of challenges. The rejection of item 4 indicates that some students remain unmotivated to attend school regularly despite counselling. This could be attributed to external factors such as home environment, socio-economic difficulties, or peer influence that counselling alone may not fully address. This underscores the importance of a collaborative approach that involves parents, teachers, and community stakeholders to reinforce school attendance and motivation.

Research Question 3: What is the combined effect of school counselling services on students' overall attitude toward schooling?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Overall Influence of Counselling Services on Students' Attitude Toward Schooling (N=312)

Item	Statement	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Decision
1	I now see school as a place where I am supported to succeed.	3.21	0.62	Accepted
2	Counselling has helped me build better relationships with teachers and peers.	3.14	0.65	Accepted
3	I have a more positive attitude towards attending classes.	3.06	0.70	Accepted
4	I still feel disconnected from the school environment.	2.31	0.77	Rejected
5	Counselling has helped me take responsibility for my learning.	3.11	0.66	Accepted

Table 3 indicates that counselling services positively shape students' overall attitude toward schooling. Respondents agreed that they view school as a supportive environment, have improved relationships with teachers and peers, attend classes with a more positive attitude, and take greater responsibility for their learning. This aligns with Okeke (2020), who found that effective counselling fosters a supportive school climate and enhances students' sense of belonging. However, some students still reported feeling disconnected from school despite counselling interventions. This result suggests that more targeted psychosocial support, inclusive extracurricular activities, and mentorship programmes may be necessary to fully integrate disengaged students into the school community.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: H₀₁: School counselling services have no significant influence on students' self-esteem.

Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis on the Influence of Counselling Services on Students' Self-Esteem

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value	Decision
Students exposed to counselling services	165	3.18	0.64	310	4.27	1.97	0.000	Reject H₀
Students with little/no counselling exposure	147	2.87	0.71					

Table 4 shows a calculated t-value (t-cal = 4.27) greater than the critical value (t-crit = 1.97) at 0.05 significance level. The p-value (0.000 < 0.05) further confirms that the difference between the means of the two groups is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that school counselling services significantly influence students' self-esteem. This suggests that exposure to regular counselling boosts students' confidence, helps them overcome inferiority feelings, and improves participation in school activities.

Hypothesis Two: H₀₂: School counselling services have no significant influence on students' motivation toward learning.

Table 5: Independent t-test Analysis on the Influence of Counselling Services on Students' Motivation

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value	Decision
Students exposed to counselling services	165	3.09	0.66	310	3.14	1.97	0.002	Reject H₀
Students with little/no counselling exposure	147	2.85	0.70					

Table 5 reveals a calculated t-value (t-cal = 3.14) higher than the t-critical value (t-crit = 1.97), with a p-value of 0.002 which is less than 0.05. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that school counselling services significantly enhance students' learning motivation. This implies that students who receive counselling are more likely to set academic goals, manage exam anxiety, and develop better study habits compared to those with little or no counselling exposure.

Hypothesis Three: H₀₃: School counselling services have no significant combined effect on students' overall attitude toward schooling.

Table 6: Independent t-test Analysis on the Combined Effect of Counselling Services on Attitude Toward Schooling

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	p-value	Decision
Students exposed to counselling services	165	3.12	0.63	310	1.64	1.97	0.102	Fail to Reject H₀
Students with little/no counselling exposure	147	3.01	0.68					

Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value (t-cal = 1.64) is less than the t-critical value (t-crit = 1.97) at 0.05 level of significance, and the p-value (0.102 > 0.05) indicates that the difference between the means is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained, suggesting that while counselling services improve self-esteem and motivation, their combined effect on students' overall attitude toward schooling is not strong enough to be statistically significant. This finding highlights the possibility that other factors such as school climate, teacher support, and peer influence may also play a substantial role in shaping students' attitudes.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of school counselling services on students' self-esteem and motivation, as well as their overall attitude toward schooling, in selected secondary schools in Bassa LGA, Plateau State. The discussion of findings is organized according to the research questions and hypotheses.

Findings from both descriptive statistics (Table 1) and hypothesis testing (Table 4) revealed that school counselling services significantly improve students' self-esteem. Students reported feeling more valued, developing greater confidence in their abilities, overcoming inferiority feelings, and participating more actively in class activities. The significant difference in mean scores between students exposed to counselling and those with little or no exposure ($t\text{-cal} = 4.27, p < 0.05$) confirms that counselling interventions are a powerful determinant of positive self-concept among adolescents.

This finding aligns with Rosenberg's (1965) classic theory of self-esteem, which posits that acceptance, recognition, and constructive feedback from significant others (such as school counsellors) strengthen an individual's sense of self-worth. It also supports Okeke (2020), who observed that students who participate in counselling sessions are better able to manage low self-esteem and cope with peer pressure. However, the fact that some students still reported feelings of inadequacy despite counselling points to the need for sustained, individualized interventions for students with persistent psychosocial issues.

Results from Table 2 and Table 5 indicated that counselling services significantly enhance students' motivation toward learning ($t\text{-cal} = 3.14, p < 0.05$). Students agreed that counselling inspired them to set higher academic goals, improved their interest in studies, and helped them develop better study habits. This corroborates the work of Eyo, Joshua, and Esuong (2010), who found that students exposed to guidance programmes display more positive attitudes toward academics and persevere in the face of challenges.

This finding can also be interpreted using Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which suggests that students' belief in their ability to succeed is a key motivator for learning. Counselling sessions may enhance students' self-efficacy by teaching them coping skills, time management strategies, and realistic goal-setting techniques. Nevertheless, the rejection of the item on school attendance motivation implies that other barriers such as poverty, home responsibilities, or peer influence may limit students' ability to maintain regular attendance, even when they are intrinsically motivated.

The combined effect of counselling services on students' attitude toward schooling was not statistically significant ($t\text{-cal} = 1.64, p > 0.05$), even though descriptive data suggested some improvement in students' perception of school as a supportive environment. This finding implies that while counselling contributes to specific areas such as self-esteem and motivation, it may not be sufficient on its own to transform students' overall attitude toward schooling.

This result is consistent with Adewumi and Falaye (2019), who noted that school attitudes are influenced by multiple factors, including teacher-student relationships, peer group dynamics, school infrastructure, and the general learning environment. It suggests that counselling services need to be complemented by other systemic interventions such as improved teacher support, better school facilities, and peer mentoring programmes to bring about a more holistic improvement in students' attitudes.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have several important implications:

- **For School Counsellors:** There is evidence that counselling services are effective in improving self-esteem and motivation, indicating the need for counsellors to intensify regular group and individual sessions, with follow-up support for students with persistent low self-worth.

- **For School Administrators:** The results underscore the importance of investing in functional counselling units, recruiting more trained counsellors, and ensuring counselling offices provide a private and welcoming environment.
- **For Policymakers:** There is a need for policies that mandate regular counselling sessions as part of the school timetable and provide adequate funding for counselling programmes in rural schools.
- **For Teachers and Parents:** Collaboration with counsellors is essential to reinforce counselling outcomes at home and in the classroom, especially in addressing absenteeism and low school engagement.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that school counselling services significantly enhanced students' self-esteem by making them feel valued, confident, and more willing to participate actively in class activities. Counselling also improved students' motivation by helping them set academic goals, develop study habits, and manage examination anxiety effectively.

However, the study also found that the combined effect of counselling services on students' overall attitude toward schooling was not statistically significant, suggesting that other factors such as school climate, peer relationships, and teacher support may also shape students' perceptions of schooling. In conclusion, school counselling services are essential for fostering positive psychosocial and academic outcomes, but their impact can be maximized when complemented by holistic support systems that include teachers, parents, and school administrators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. **Strengthen Counselling Units:** School administrators and government agencies should recruit more trained professional counsellors and provide well-equipped, private counselling offices in schools to encourage students to seek help without fear or stigma.
2. **Integrate Counselling into the School Timetable:** Counselling sessions should be scheduled regularly within the school timetable so that all students have access, rather than limiting it to only those with identified problems.
3. **Promote Student Awareness and Utilization:** Awareness campaigns should be conducted to sensitize students about the benefits of counselling, reduce stigma, and encourage voluntary participation.
4. **Address Attendance and Motivation Holistically:** Counsellors should work with parents, teachers, and community leaders to address external factors such as poverty, peer pressure, and family challenges that contribute to absenteeism and low motivation.
5. **Provide Continuous Professional Development:** Counsellors should receive regular training on emerging counselling techniques, adolescent psychology, and motivational strategies to remain effective in addressing students' needs.
6. **Introduce Mentorship and Peer Support Programmes:** Schools should complement formal counselling with peer mentoring, teacher-student mentorship initiatives, and extracurricular activities that build a sense of belonging and improve overall school attitude.

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