

## Psychological Test Usage among Secondary School Counsellors in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *In Nigeria, despite the inclusion of guidance and counselling in secondary schools, the behaviour problems among the youths were on the increase. This problem was traceable to ineffectiveness of diagnosis technique which resulted to ineffectiveness of counselling process. The study examined the prevalence of psychological tests usage among counsellors in Nigerian secondary schools in diagnosing students' behaviour problem. This study adopted a survey research design. Three hundred and sixty-eight professional counsellors who were members of Counselling Association of Nigeria participated in the study. These participants were made up of 128 or 35% males and 240 or 65% females. Their ages range from 24-59 years with the mean of 38.4 years. Psychological Test Usage Scale (PTUS) was developed to measure counsellors' psychological test usage in diagnosing clients' unobservable psychological problems. Three hypotheses were tested and the findings revealed a significant difference between counsellors who use psychological tests and those who do not. Psychological tests usage was found to be significantly different based on educational level and years of experience of counsellors. The findings were discussed and recommendations were made among others that counsellors should be posted to secondary schools based their experiential and clinical experience.*

**Keywords:** Counsellors, psychological test, behaviour problem

### Introduction

Students are priceless assets and most essential elements in education. It is absolutely necessary to direct students to exhibit acceptable attitude and behaviour within and outside the school. Do Nigerian Secondary students exhibit acceptable attitude and behaviour within and outside the school? There appears to be a consensus among Nigerian researchers and observers that many traditional values are changing rapidly and for the worse (Naswen, 2001; Ezeh, 2001; Arumala, 2005 and Eruesegbefe, 2005). The Nigerian society today

has to grapple with many behavioural problems of its youth. Such problems include truancy, disobedience, drug offences, assault, insult, stealing, violent demonstrations, vandalism, examination malpractices, robbery, and secret cult activities (Nnachi, 2003).

Apart from these widely publicized behavioural problems, heterosexual activities are also listed among types of behavioural problems prevalent in Nigerian secondary schools. These are variously named in the literature as sex abuse, sex offences, sexual misconduct, sexual immorality, sexual

promiscuity, and sexual maladjustment (Odoemelam, 1996; Adedipe, 2000; Ndu, 2000, Nnachi, 2003). Many students come to school having developed problem behaviour because their parents allow their children to get what they want when they exhibit problem behaviour such as temper outburst (Amahala, 1979: 232).

In summary, the rate at which student exhibit classroom behaviour problems is on the increase. This negates the purpose of guidance and counselling inclusion in educational system. Classroom behaviour problems are a major source of stress and burnout for both new and experienced teachers (Blankenship, 1988; Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999; Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999; Ministry of Education, 1989; Parkay, Greenwood, Olejnik, & Proller, 1988).

Teachers believe they spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with behaviour problems compared with time spent on instruction and academic activities (Cains & Brown, 1996). Failure to address mis-behaviour compromises the learning environment whereby academic activities are interrupted, curriculum content is not covered, teacher authority is undermined, and most importantly, there are decreased opportunities to learn (Blankenship, 1988; Cains & Brown, 1996; Cartledge & Johnson, 1996; Fields, 1999; Little & Hudson, 1998; Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999).

In solving the behaviour problems in Nigerian secondary schools, Nigerian Government introduced Guidance and Counselling to her education system through inclusion of Guidance in the policy document of the National Policy on Education (1981). Paragraph 83 (II) of the policy document contains the following few lines written about Guidance and Counselling:

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in Post-Primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category are scarce, Government will continue to make provisions for the training of interested teachers in guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling will also feature in teacher education programmes (: 43).

Counseling in secondary school and else where is the skilled and principled use of relationships that develop self-knowledge, emotional acceptance and growth. Counseling seeks to address and resolve problems, help one in decision making while also assisting one to cope with crises. Counseling is also concerned with helping individuals to work through feelings and inner conflicts *so* as to improve relationships with others (Ndichu, 2005). However, as Osokoya (1987) and Egbochuku (1999) put it, Guidance and Counselling is more than what could be given during the teaching - learning experiences alone. This is because guidance is broad in scope. It consists of educational, vocational and personal-social in scope. It is the all-round development of the school child or of an individual.

Despite the introduction of guidance and counselling in Nigerian secondary schools there is evidence that the behaviour problems are still rampant. The Nigerian society today still contends with many behavioural problems of its youth (Nnachi, 2003). In a school setting today, there are many difficulties which students express through any of the following ways: withdrawal, unhappiness, annoyance, anger, and inability to meet needs, lack of knowledge, partial or total

failure, inability to turn aspirations into fruition, anxiety, and hyperactivity.

This development signifies ineffective of guidance and counselling in Nigerian secondary schools. What can be the reasons for poor counselling outcomes in Nigerian secondary schools? Abdullahi (2009) and Nnachi (2003)) identified non-use and inappropriate use of psychological tests in secondary schools as one of the reasons why counselling may have a negative outcome. Counsellors use tests generally for assessment, placement, and guidance, as well as to assist clients to increase their self-knowledge, practice decision making, and acquire new behaviours. They may be used in a variety of therapies--e.g., individual, group, and family--and for either informational or non-informational purposes (Goldman, 1971). If counsellors for any reason do not use psychological tests in secondary schools to identify behaviour problems then all efforts to help the students may not be fruitful. The thrust of this study however, is to determine the prevalence of psychological tests usage among counsellors in Nigerian secondary schools.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to determine the prevalence of psychological tests usage among counsellors in Nigerian secondary schools. Other specific objectives include;

1. To determine if there is a significant difference between counsellors who use psychological tests and those who do not
2. To investigate if there is a significant difference in the usage of psychological tests between graduate and non-graduate counsellors
3. To investigate if there is a significant difference in the usage of psychological tests

between counsellors with high working experience and those with low working experience

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant difference between counsellors who use psychological tests and those who do not.
2. There is no significant difference in the usage of psychological tests between graduate and non-graduate counsellors.
3. There is no significant difference in the usage of psychological tests between counsellors with high working experience and those with low working experience.

### **Methods**

#### **Design**

This study adopted a survey research design. Three hundred and sixty-eight professional counsellors who were members of Counselling Association of Nigeria were randomly selected and agreed to participate in the study. These participants were made up of 128 or 35% males and 240 or 65% females. Their ages range from 24-59years with the mean of 38.4years. Only 196 or 53% were first degree holders and 172 of them had less than first degree.

#### **Instrument**

A survey instrument Psychological Test Usage Scale (PTUS) was developed to measure counsellors' psychological test usage in diagnose clients unobservable psychological problems. The instrument was highly reliable with test-retest reliability result after three weeks of 0.76 and Cronbach alpha of 0.62. The face and construct validity of the instrument were ensured through

judgment of professional counsellors and other related experts.

### Analysis and Results

There is no significant difference between counsellors who use psychological tests and those who do not.

Table 1 Summary of Chi-Square

Variations	Responses				df	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig
	Yes		No				
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected			
Do you use psychological tests to diagnose	62	184	306	184	1	161.78*	0.00

\*significant

Table 1 revealed a significant difference between counsellors who use psychological tests and those who do not at  $X^2$ -observed=161.78, degree of freedom=1 and <0.05 significant level. This implies that there is a significant difference between counsellors who use psychological tests and those who do not. The table equally revealed that those who do not use psychological tests are more than those who employ the use of psychological tests in diagnosis. However, this shows that the difference found in the use of psychological test among counsellors was not due to sampling error.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the usage of psychological tests between graduate and non-graduate counsellors.

Table 2 Summary of Chi-Square

Variations	Responses				df	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig
	Yes		No				
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected			
Counsellors who are graduates	58	33.02	138	162.98	1	48.615*	0.00
Counsellors who are non-graduates	4	28.98	168	143.02			
Total	62	62	306	306			

\*significant

Table 2 revealed a significant difference in the use of psychological tests between graduate and non-graduate counsellors at  $X^2=48.615$ , degree of freedom= 1 and  $<0.05$  significant level. This implies that counsellors who are graduates adopted the use of psychological tests more than non-graduates.

### Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in the usage of psychological tests between counsellors with high working experience and those with low working experience.

**Table 3 Chi-Square Summary**

Variations	Responses				df	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig
	Yes		No				
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected			
Counsellors with High Working Experience	44	17.18	58	84.82	1	69.616*	0.00
Counsellors with Low Working Experience	18	44.82	248	221.18			
Total	62	62.00	306	306			

\*significant

Table 3 revealed a significant difference in the use of psychological tests between counsellors who had spent above 5years on the job and those who had spent less than 5years at  $X^2=69.616$ , degree of freedom= 1 and  $<0.05$  significant level. This implies that counsellors who had spent above 5years on the job employed psychological tests more than those who had spent less than 5years

### Discussion and Conclusions

Psychological testing can be an invaluable tool for counsellors when working with students who demonstrate medical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, motivational, or behavioural difficulties in the classroom setting. Psychological tests offer insight about the optimal way to work with these students. Professional school counsellors serve a vital role in maximising student success (Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2007; Stone & Dahir, 2006). Through leadership, advocacy and collaboration, professional school counsellors promote equity and

access to rigorous educational experiences for all students. They support a safe learning environment and work to safeguard the human rights of all members of the school community (Sandhu, 2000), and address the needs of all students. The findings of this present study revealed that most counsellors were not adopting the use of psychological tests especially those who were non-graduates and those who had spent less than five years on the job. This shocking revelation called for total overhauling of counselling practice in secondary schools in Nigeria. With current socio-technological changes

and educational demands, counseling is becoming a major area of concern for in-school youths. The large number of students in schools, limited number of trained teacher counsellors, heavy work load, socio-economic and technological changes all put pressure on the teachers, students, parents and society. No wonder, there is frequent demand for counseling to help address some of these problems. It is glaring from the findings of this study that the level of education should be a major factor in posting counsellors to secondary schools, if the goal of reducing behaviour problems among the youths is to be achieved. Counsellors in secondary schools should be adequately trained and clinical experience should be a major consideration.

### Recommendations

A school counselling programme should ensure that counsellors spend most of their time in direct service to and contact with students. Therefore, school counsellors' duties should be focused on the overall delivery of the total programme through guidance curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services. If counselling is to be effective diagnosing behaviour problems in students should be done scientifically to avoid subjective results. Psychological testing offers unbiased data on performance, learning, and behaviour skills demonstrated by students. That is why trained/professional counsellors should handle them. The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study;

1. The counselling professional bodies in Nigeria should ensure that counsellors in schools should be competent. A competent test user will use tests appropriately, professionally, and in an ethical manner, paying due regard to the needs and rights of those involved in the testing process, the reasons for testing, and the broader context in which the testing takes place.
2. These professional bodies should ensure that counsellors are properly educated. Knowledge, understanding and skill underpin all the test user competencies should be well spelt out. These include;
  - i. knowledge of basic psychometric principles and procedures, and the technical requirements of tests (e.g., reliability, validity, standardisation);
  - ii. knowledge of tests and measurement sufficient to enable the proper understanding of test results;
  - iii. knowledge and understanding of relevant theories and models of ability, of personality or other psychological constructs, or of psychopathology, as necessary to properly inform the choice of tests and the interpretation of test results; and
  - iv. Knowledge of the tests and the test suppliers relevant to one's area of practice.

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