

COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS FOR THE SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EKITI STATE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find the counselling interventions for the Special Needs Students in some Secondary Schools in Ekiti State. Three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated for the study. A self constructed instrument is titled “Counselling Interventions for the Special Needs Students” was used for the study. A sample of fifty two respondents was selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that there is no significant difference in terms of class and age but there is difference on the basis of gender on counselling interventions for the special needs students in Ekiti State. Recommendations were made to government, corporate bodies, teachers, counsellors, parents and individual which would enable them develop in order to achieve a high level of self sufficiency and not to be at the mercy of inadequate support services.

Keywords: Counselling Interventions, Special needs students

Introduction

Education for special needs children has not been given a pride of place in Ekiti State in particular and Nigeria in general. Ekiti State, which prides itself as the fountain of knowledge, given its high literacy rate, has a population of about 2.4 million (2006 Census in Ekiti State Government, 2001). Out of the 167 public and 114 private secondary schools in the state, only 3 are for the blind, deaf and dumb, mentally and physically challenged children (Ekiti State Government, 2011). Aside these, there are only 6 nomadic primary schools for the children of the nomadic cattle rearers. Many

of the special needs children are therefore not adequately given equal educational opportunity as espoused by the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) which stipulates that all Nigerian children of school age should have equal opportunity and access to education. If education is an instrument of peer excellence for effective national development as being decided by the FGN (2004), it is desirable therefore, that all, irrespective of disabilities, impairment or life style should be provided with equal educational opportunities. This is supported by many international statements, conventions and instruments, for example, the Salamanca Statement and Frame Work for Action (1994) and UN Convention on the Right of Person with Disabilities Article 24 (2006).

Special needs children are the children who for whatever reasons, are failing or unable to benefit from regular school (UNESCO Report, 1994 in Fuandai, 2010) and are provided with special education. Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) defined special education as the education of children and adults who have learning difficulty because of their different sorts of handicaps, blindness, deafness, mental retardation, social maladjustment, physical disability, health problems or accident in later life. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) categorised them into three main groups as follows;

1. The Disabled: This includes people with impairments (physical, sensory), and because of this impairment/disability, cannot cope with regular school/class organisation and methods without formal special educational training. People in this category include visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically and health impaired, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed and all who have one form of handicap or the other.
2. The Disadvantaged: This includes the children of nomadic pastorals, migrant fisher folks, migrants farmers, hunters and so on, who due to their lifestyle and means of livelihood, are unable to have access to the conventional educational provision and therefore require special education to cater for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances.
3. The Gifted and Talented: These are people (children and adults) who have/ process very high intelligent quotients and are naturally endowed with special traits and therefore find themselves insufficiently challenged by the regular school programme.

Given their special needs and the global acceptance of the need to educate all, special education is provided to give equal educational opportunities to enable the special needs children contribute their own quota to the development of the nation. However, this group of people are characterised with inadequate support services that will make them utilise their potentials to become effective and responsible citizens in the society. Given their multifaceted challenges, most of them are still left to compete

with other students in the regular school system where there are not enough qualified teachers and materials to attend to their needs. To compound their problems, many of them are not identified early enough for the needed intervention or assistance.

This paper hopes therefore to examine the role of counselling interventions for making life more meaningful for special needs students especially the disabled and disadvantaged in some secondary schools in Ekiti State. This is based on the belief that counselling, if provided early enough for this group of students, would assist them gain more insight into their own personality, thereby appreciating their strengths and weaknesses for effective direction and living in the society.

Statement of the Problem

The special needs students, especially the disabled, seem to be denied access to tools and assistance that will make them to become more effective and self-sufficient. They experience challenges and barriers with parents, who sometimes neglect them while some seem to have little passion on the female at the expense of their male counterparts. Also, their supposed teachers who ought to empathise with them and fellow students who should show love and acceptance are also making life difficult for them. Meanwhile, at early stage, some were taken care of but were later left to fend for themselves not minding the consequences. Governmental interventions seem not adequate enough for this group of students. The larger society also seems to be indifferent by molesting in some cases and ignoring them to their fate. To further compound their problems, many of them have the habit of thinking of disability as total, believing that people who are disabled are disabled in all areas. They fail to recognise the abilities in them or see their ability and achievement as extraordinary.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the counselling interventions for the special need students on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the counselling interventions for the special needs students on the basis of class.
3. There is no significant difference in the counselling interventions for the special need students on the basis of age

Methodology

A descriptive research of survey design was adopted for this study.

The population of this study comprises of the all the special need students in all the secondary schools in Ekiti State. A sample of 52 respondents was selected through purposive sampling technique. The instrument used was a self constructed questionnaire titled “Counselling

Interventions for the Special Need Students” (CISNS). The instrument was given to experts in the field of psychology and, guidance and counselling to ensure face and content validity. The reliability was established using split half method and the reliability co-efficient of 0.54 was obtained. The data were analysed using inferential statistics. Hypotheses 1 and 3 were tested using t-test and hypothesis 2 was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the counselling intervention for the special needs students on the basis of gender.

Table 1: Student t-test showing the Counselling Interventions for the Special Need Students on the basis of gender.

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	Df	t-cal	t- tab
Male	22	12.590	1.61	47	3.00	2.00
Female	27	14.148	2.03			
Total	49					

P<0.05

The result in table 1 shows that, there is a significant difference in the counselling interventions on the basis of gender. That is t-cal (3.00) is greater than t-tab (2.00). The null hypothesis was not accepted. This implies that there are differences in the awareness of male and female on the counselling intervention for the special need students.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the counselling intervention for the special need students on the basis of class.

Table 2: ANOVA Showing the Counselling Interventions for Special Need Students on the Basis of Class.

Sources of Variation	SS	Df	Ms	F-cal	F- tab
Between Groups	2.657	2	1.33	2.89	3.18
Within Groups	22.323	49	0.46		
Total	24.98	51			

P>0.05

The result in table 2 indicates that there is no significant difference in the counselling interventions for the special need students on class level. The table shows that the F-cal (2.89) is less than F-tab (3.18) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no difference based on class.

HO₃: There is no significant difference in the counselling interventions for the special need students on the basis of age.

Table 3: Student t- test Showing the Counselling Interventions for the Special Need Students on the Basis of Age

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t cal	t tab
14- 19yrs	36	13.27	1.835	46	0.82	2.00
20- 25yrs	12	13.25	2.277			
Total	48					

P>0.05

Table 4 revealed that t cal (0.82) is less than t tab (2.00) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that all students of different ages were aware of the counselling interventions for the disadvantaged groups.

Discussion

The study investigated the counselling interventions for the special need students in some secondary schools in Ekiti State. The study shows the respondents awareness to the counselling interventions for the special need students. The findings revealed that there is a significant difference in the counselling interventions for this group of students on the basis of gender that is, there are differences in the awareness of male and female on the counselling intervention programmes in secondary schools in Ekiti State. This agrees with Bonnie & Beth (2005) who explained that this group of students as a result of the particular pattern of resources denied them and the barriers they face, needed. Counselling interventions in line with their different gender to help them achieve high level of personal self- sufficiency. Also, Ajobiewe (2007) suggested that certain services and interventions should be in schools to enhance a positive attitude towards the disabled.

The findings also indicate that there is no significant difference in the counselling interventions for the special needs based on class level. This corroborates the view of Akinpelu (1998) who stressed that the usefulness of a counsellor is judged when he/she is able to meet the needs of the disadvantaged students not minding their classes as they come for counselling.

The finding showed that there is no significant difference in the counselling interventions for the special need students on the basis of age, showing that all students with different ages are aware of the counselling interventions. The finding agrees with Wrightson (2007) in regards to hearing aids as a means of assistance that, the sense of hearing is an incredibly important component of the way we experience life. He further explained that when there is loss of this sense, the negative effect can be profound. However, by understanding hearing aid technology by everyone regardless of age, it becomes possible to effectively partake in full life experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The progress of special need individuals should be considered and appraised so as to employ remedial measures that could assist in making realise and appreciate their strengths and weaknesses to make them more effective and efficient in the society.

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1 Government and corporate bodies should provide necessary equipment and materials to help the special need students in ordinary groups in the classroom situation.
- 2 Teachers also should empathize with and be available to train them in the use of the materials provided.
- 3 Counsellors, societies and parents should be alert to their needs and help them to play their roles in the society.
- 4 These special need students should not look down on themselves, but rather explore their environment and potentials, and make effective use of the available opportunities.
- 5 Care given to the female special needs students should be given to their male counterpart.

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