



COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR CURBING TRUANCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.

BY

EGBO CHINONYE EMMANUELLA

NWANGWU IGNATIUS .O.

&

ODO JOHN .O.

ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at investigating counselling strategies for curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The research was carried out in Enugu State which has six Education zones. Five research questions and five hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled “Counselling Strategies for Curbing Truancy Questionnaire (CSCTQ)”. It was self-reporting and had two sections; A and B. Section A contained 3 items designed to elicit personal information from the respondents while section B was divided into 5 parts and contained 50 items structured to answer the research questions. The response format for the instrument was a 4-point scale of very great extent, great extent, less extent and very less extent. The instrument was validated by three research experts. The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.72 using Cronbach’s Alpha method. The five research questions were answered using the mean, standard deviation and grand mean scores while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Major findings of the study showed that male and female counsellors do adopt to a great extent orientation counselling strategy, group counselling strategy, reinforcement counselling strategy and listening strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state while at the same time do adopt to a very low extent the application of punishment counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state.

Based on the findings, the researcher, therefore, recommends among others that school counsellors should include truancy skills in their scheme of work while the government should also mount a sensitization campaign through billboard posts, print and electronic media by encouraging parents to take active participation in the education of their children and attend school Parent Teachers` Association programmes.

KEYWORDS: COUNSELLING STRATEGIES, TRUANCY, COUNSELLORS

INTRODUCTION

According to Usha (2017), education could be seen as the process of providing individuals with the means or tools of knowledge for understanding their society and its structures. This knowledge is not an end but a means to an end; that is to help them create meanings out of the environment as well as being able to influence the environment.

Every society needs to survive and so the young ones are taught the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that will enable them function effectively and thereby contribute to its survival and growth. These formal form of education take place in the school system which begins from the nursery to primary then secondary and finally, through tertiary institutions.

The researcher is focused on Secondary level of Education in Enugu State. Secondary school is the level whereby children formally receive secondary education after primary education. Adolescents are known to dominate the Secondary level of Education in Enugu State. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), Secondary school education is that level of education which children receive after primary education and before the tertiary level. At this level just like other levels, students are expected to be actively involved because teaching and guidance activities take place for appropriate skills and academic knowledge acquisition. It has been discovered that students have been hindered to these benefits as a result of continuous absence to school and class. Students in secondary schools are said to be adolescents. This is a trying period in their lives because their characters are unstable and could not be predicated.

Adolescents are individuals between childhood and adulthood. Researches have shown that adolescence stage is a period where most adolescents are unstable, angry, moody, stubborn, independent, self-conscious and inexperienced in handling emotional problems. Iwuama (2021) noted that adolescence stage is a period of Stress and Storm which encompasses tensions due to inner emotional instability and as a result of conflicting external influence. In this same vein, Jone (2019), observed that at this stage, the adolescents are known to behave in ways contrary to the norms and values of their society as they tend to rebel and display maladaptive, unacceptable or deviant behaviours that are inimical to the growth of the educational objective.

Deviant behaviours are unacceptable behaviours in every society. These behaviours violate the normative rules, understandings, expectations of social systems. Some examples of deviant behaviours in schools are; examination malpractice, truancy, bullying, lateness to school, stealing, drug abuse, cultism, sex offences and noise-making (Ibrahim, 2010).

The focus of this study is on truancy which is a major deviant behaviour displayed by some adolescents in Secondary schools in Enugu State. Truancy is an act of being absent from school without permission or proper clarification for such action or misconduct. It is a purposeful action or misconduct without adequate excuse or remorse. For example; a child who skips school for no reason is playing truancy and these truant behaviours can only be corrected with proper guidance and counselling (Hurblock 2017).

Ukaejiofor (2021) while addressing parents in a forum stated that the root causes of truancy are complex and varied and can include drug use, membership in a peer group of truants or gangs, lack of direction in education, poor academic performance, bullying in school, violence at or near school, lack of encouragement from parents as a result of too much freedom given to the students by their parents. Other causes include lack of interest in school activities, lack of attention from significant others and lack of encouragement from teachers and school heads. Truancy negatively impacts on

students in several ways. Students who are truants are more likely to fall behind academically, drop out of school, use drugs and alcohol, and be involved with the criminal justice system.

Truancy, or the habitual act of being absent from school without permission, is a major issue affecting the overall success of a school. According to Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett, and Wilson (2007), the causes for truancy can be positioned within four major categories. These categories include family factors, school factors, economic influences, and student variables. Family factors that may cause truant behavior include, but are not limited to parents' education, parental supervision, and household income. In a recent study on eighth and tenth grade student absenteeism, Henry (2007) correlates family factors with truant behavior. Henry's study illustrates that the lower the father's education, the more likely the child is to commit truancy. The chance the child would commit truancy was even higher if the mother was a high school dropout. Additionally, Henry's work proves that the longer a child is unsupervised after school, the more likely that child is to become a truant; 29.9% of truants were unsupervised for five hours or more after school whereas only 11.3% of truants were never unsupervised after school. In a recent study on truant offenders in the juvenile justice system, Zhang, et al. (2007) linked truancy to household income. They established that minors that are first referred to the juvenile justice system tend to be more financially impoverished, with a relatively higher percentage of families making less than \$15,000 per year, than their regularly attending peers. That is, students are more likely to exhibit truancy if they live in families that gross less than \$15,000 annually.

School factors that may cause truant behavior include, but are not limited to school climate, class size, attitudes, ability to meet each student's diverse needs, and the school's discipline policy regarding truancy. According to Wilkins (2008), students that attend large schools may feel isolated or alienated in their school setting, so to escape these feelings they choose not to attend. These students do not feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, secure; they are lacking a connection to a trustworthy somebody within the school. In oversized classrooms, students' diverse needs, whether they are

instructional, social, or a various other, cannot consistently be met and student-teacher relationships cannot be developed. This leads to a school climate and attitude in which each individual must fend for himself. Henry (2007) solicits that 23% of truants choose to skip school because they do not feel safe in their school environment. Moreover, if a student does not feel comfortable, secure, or safe, and logically decides to skip school because location x is safer than the school, he is punished. Tobin (2009) suggests that imposing more serious punishments has worsened truant behavior; thus proving punishment to be counterproductive in the fight against chronic absenteeism. Economic influences that may cause truant behavior include, but are not limited to living situation and student employment. Henry (2007) discerned in his study that 33.5% of high school truants did not live with their mother or father, 27.6% lived with their father only, 19.8% lived with their mother only, and 14.4% lived with both parents. Therefore, the likelihood that a student would commit truancy increases when the student lives with only one parent, and increases anywhere between 5.9% to 13.7% if the child lives with neither his mother or father. Moreover, Henry explains that students, who work more than 20 hours per week, greatly increase their chances of committing truancy. Of the truants the author examined, 23.9% worked 20 hours or more per week, whereas only 13.4% worked five or less hours per week. Student variables that may cause truant behavior include, but are not limited to physical and mental health problems, substance abuse, drug use, perception of self, and detachment from school. DeSocio, et al. (2007) identifies physical and mental health issues as contributing towards school absenteeism. They suggest that truancy coexists with student and family mental health disorders and may be an indicator for an existing or emerging mental health disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and/or substance abuse. Supporting evidence from Henry's study (2007) implicates students that use alcohol one or more times a month as 26.5% more likely to skip school than peers who do not use alcohol, and if the student drinks to a level of intoxication his likelihood of skipping school increases to 31.2%. Moreover, 33.9% of the students who have been truant smoke cigarettes and 37.2% smoke marijuana at least once a month. Of equal

importance, students that held lower perceptions about themselves were more likely to skip school than students who held higher perceptions of themselves. For example, students that answered “probably won’t” graduate from high school and “definitely won’t” attend college committed higher truant behavior at 44.5% and 30% respectively than their peers who answered “definitely will” graduate from high school and “definitely will” go to college at 15% and 12.1% respectively. Even more defining, DeSocio et al. (2007) indicate, that as many as 30% of youth who are absent on a given school day are representative of school disengagement, or detachment. According to Henry (2007), students that exhibit school disengagement, lack commitment to the school, are poor achievers, and hold low aspirations for their futures.

Henry (2007) indicates that truancy’s consequences are extensive, resulting in negative implications for multiple levels of society. In the short-term, truancy can predict maladjustment, poor academic performance, school dropout, substance abuse, delinquency, and teen-age pregnancy. In the long-term, evidence reveals truancy as a predictor of poor adult outcomes, including violence, marital instability, job instability, adult criminality, and incarceration. Moreover, truancy exerts a negative effect on community because of its correlation with delinquency, crime, and other negative adult outcomes. Student dropout from school is the most obvious result of chronic absenteeism. According to Rodriguez and Conchas (2009), truancy and dropout rates are concentrated and worsening in racially segregated central cities in primarily large high schools attended by mostly low-income youth of color. Dropout rates in these areas are at twice the national average, nearly 20%, and exceed 50-60% in some areas of the United States. In these areas, more students are dropping out than graduating. What does this say about our society? What is in store for these students? How do these individuals survive in a country where average income is directly correlated with level of education? The most logical response: an increase in crime rates and the nation’s incarcerated population. The most consistent finding regarding truancy and dropout rates is the correlation the behavior has to high rates of delinquency (Mueller and Giacomazzi, 2006). These forms of delinquency

include substance abuse, gang activity, and later involvement in adult criminal activity such as burglary, auto theft, and vandalism, thus leading to incarceration.

Egbo (2021) stated that a truant can be guided away from such misconduct through effective counselling. The author, further noted that counsellors can curb truancy in these students with effective use of counselling strategies. Curbing means to restrain or keep in check, to control or limit something that is not wanted and in this case, it is truancy.

Counselling, according to Anyamene (2017), is the process of assisting and guiding clients especially by a trained person on a professional basis to resolve personal, social or psychological problems and difficulties. Counselling as seen by Egbo and Egbo (2021) is a service designed to help troubled persons solve their problems through self-understanding in which the counsellor uses his professional knowledge and skills to assist the client to attain proper development and maturity, improve functioning and ability to cope with life problems. They noted that counselling helps individuals to understand themselves, their environment and how they react to situations. It aids individuals go from unacceptable behaviours to acceptable behaviours, hence, changing from truant to always being in school, punctual, neat, organized, attentive and enthusiastic about school and its activities.

Counselling is a process whereby a professional counsellor helps his/her client or clients wriggle out of their problems. Therefore, every student needs counselling to regulate them, keep them in check as well as aid them overcome school challenges like examination conduct, having future plans, to be present in school always, punctuality to school, career choice, peers association, and a host of others. Therefore, the counsellors can reduce truancy in Secondary schools to the barest minimum using various counselling strategies. Consequently, counselling is informative and must be carried out by professional Counsellors with the use of any of the various counselling strategies for curbing the above deviant behaviours displayed by adolescents.

This research is focused on the counselling strategies for curbing truancy among Secondary school students.

According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2015), counselling strategies are counselling plans of actions intended to accomplish specific goals. Counsellors are therefore expected to make use of these counselling plans of actions depending on their perception of them to resolve the challenges posed by truancy among Secondary school students in Enugu State. According to Ukwueze (2020), Counselling Strategies are procedures, plans and methods undertaken by a counsellor to actualize a set goal or objectives. Counselling strategy implies a discussion of emotional, personal and career problems with a client with the general objective of decreasing such problems. In this work, the objective of counselling strategies is to help curb truancy. The rate at which students drop out of schools in Enugu state is very alarming. A walk down the streets of any major city in Enugu state will discover young boys and girls hawking when they are supposed to be in schools. While some boys indulge in menial jobs to eke a living, girls go into filling station or store attendants. These young boys and girls are school dropouts. The situation calls for adequate solution that will reduce the rate of dropouts in schools and put in place mechanisms that will keep children in schools until they complete their studies. This, therefore, explains the rationale for this study which focused on counselling strategies for curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state.

There are counselling strategies but the study is focused on five counselling strategies used in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu State. These strategies are as follows;

- Orientation Counselling Strategy
- Group Counselling Strategy
- Punition Counselling Strategy
- Reinforcement Strategy

- Listening Counselling Strategy.

Orientation counselling strategy according to Egbo (2021) is an organized action aimed at capturing student's attention as early as on resumption day, to sensitize them on issues relating to absence in school, late coming, noise making, bullying and a host of other vices. This strategy aids the students to understand where exactly they are and what is expected of them as well as penalties accompanying misconducts. According to Akinade (2017), orientation helps secondary school students understand their new environment, the dos and don'ts. Orientation counselling strategy is therefore, geared towards guiding new students appropriately and adequately towards achieving their academic aims. This is a process whereby students are shielded from derailing from what they have come to school to do. Group counselling is another strategy that has the potential of reducing truancy in secondary schools. It is a strategy that gives students the confidence that whatever problem that confronts them must have a solution.

According to Nwadinobi (2019), group counselling strategy is a counselling strategy which has been quite effective for counsellors as students have interest in attending sessions with other students, therefore reducing their fear of being a truant. This Counselling strategy is very effective as it reduces the tension and stress of students facing the problem and helps them realize that there may be solutions to whatever it is that is making them restless in the school. Apart from group counselling strategy, there is also a punishment counselling strategy. This is a strategy where mechanisms that are deterrents to misbehaviours are established.

Punishment counselling strategy is a counselling strategy effective for taming the stubborn characters. In most cases, truants who prove stubborn learn and adjust better through punishment strategy. They tend to fear being punished, hence, do well to adhere to outlined school rules (Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2012). Motivation is an important ingredient in human lives. It is a catalyst that propels one to action. In counselling, reinforcement is a sort of motivation that can enhance student's retention in schools.

Reinforcement counselling strategy is a strategy used by counsellors to motivate well performing students as well as invariably motivates the truants to do better in order to receive positive reinforcements like their classmates. Peters (2018), stated that re-enforcement is a good and rewarding strategy as it encourages student's active participation in school activities. Motivation is an important ingredient in students' retention in schools. This explains the relevance of reinforcement counselling strategy in this study. When students' problems are not given adequate attention, they feel frustrated. When this situation arises, their immediate option will be to drop out. This situation makes listening counselling strategy an important component of counselling strategy that will checkmate truancy.

Listening counselling strategy is an active act of paying attention to the verbal and non-verbal outputs of the students with no sound and actively nodding or displaying gestures to aid the students speak up further and express themselves better. This Counselling strategy gives students a feeling of being listened to and a feeling of oneness with the counsellor and has been quite effective for both counsellors and clients in solving the problems (Akinade, 2017). Listening counselling strategy confers confidence on students, demonstrates counsellor's care on them. It is an effective strategy in the sense that students feel that they have somebody who can listen to them and proffer solutions to their problems.

Statement of Problem

Students' truancy in Enugu state has assumed a worrisome dimension. It is embarrassing to see an army of children either hawking or loitering in the street in the morning when they should be in schools. This situation has become a source of concern to education stakeholders in Enugu state. They have blamed school counsellors for not doing their work properly to guide and retain these students in school. According to them, school counsellors were trained and equipped with skills with which to counsel students in a way they should understand the importance of education and pursue it with all amount of commitment and sincerity.

The stakeholders have argued that if the counsellors have done their counselling work well, the state will not have the alarming population of children seen in the streets hawking or loitering. They have argued that they have not adopted the relevant counselling strategies that will keep students in school, create enabling and friendly learning environments that will retain students in schools. According to them, these relevant counselling strategies include orientation, group counselling, punishment, reinforcement counselling and listening counselling strategies. They have argued that these counselling strategies have the potential of retaining and motivating students in pursuance of their academic desires. They lament that the non-application of these strategies in counselling students, a good number of students play truancy. This explains the teaming number of children found in streets in Enugu state loitering, roaming or hawking during school hours.

It is this argument of the stakeholders that has motivated the researcher to investigate the extent to which secondary school counsellors adopt counselling strategies to curb truancy in schools in Enugu state. The problem of this study is therefore, put in a question form "To what extent do counsellors adopt counselling strategies to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?"

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the counseling strategies that are adopted by counsellors in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. determine the extent to which counsellors adopt orientation counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu State.
2. ascertain the extent to which counsellors adopt group counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu State.
3. investigate the extent to which counsellors adopt punishment counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu State.

4. determine the extent to which counsellors adopt Reinforcement strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu State.
5. ascertain the extent to which counsellors adopt listening counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the findings of this study are anchored on the theories of behavioural counselling approach, propounded by Beck, 1960.

Practically, the findings of the study will be of significance to counsellors, students, parents, teachers, principals, the Ministry of Education and the society in general.

Through the findings of this study, counsellors handling secondary school students will be better guided as they decide on counselling strategies they will adopt for curbing truancy in their schools. The findings of this study will further be a parameter with which counsellors can assess or appraise themselves to determine their skills in curbing truancy. The counsellors will use the findings of this study to evaluate the impact of counselling strategies on curbing truancy in secondary school. The affected students are undoubtedly the most favoured when they figure out all they have missed since they disassociate themselves from school and its activities while parents also learn sense of involvement in their children's lives.

The findings of this study will form a ready-made material for workshops, conferences, and seminars which the Ministry of Education from time to time organizes for secondary school staff, counsellors and PTA in general. With the findings of this study being the subject of discussion in these workshops and conferences, school counsellors will be better equipped to counsel students on the benefits of education and good behaviour.

Students who have several issues relating to maladaptive behaviours hoping to be influenced towards behavioural change would benefit from this study as it is aimed at exposing the actual issues leading to truancy which invariably aids students adjust towards adaptive behaviours. With adequate and proper counselling emanating from the findings of this study, students will become functional and contributing members of society.

Teachers will use these findings to understand the individual differences evident in every student and do well to adjust their methods or coaching strategies in order to accommodate their students. When teachers understand the individual differences of students that they teach, it enhances learning and harmonious existence in the classroom. This understanding is only possible through counselling of students.

Parents who are willingly to assist in the nurturing and coaching of their children will benefit from this study as they also tend to understand the strategies to emulate in order to influence positive change in their children. Some of the major beneficiaries of this study are the parents. Parents look forward to having a well-educated, well behaved and active children. This is possible through proper counselling of students in schools.

A secondary school with students of great behavioural display denotes a great principal who is the leader of the school hence, the principal tends to benefit from this study as they understand the various strategies and ways to influence positive change in their students.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study will be delimited to finding out the extent to which counsellors adopt counselling strategies to curb truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state. The content scope covers the extent to which counsellors adopt orientation, group counselling, punishment, reinforcement and listening counselling strategies in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state. While the geographical scope will be Enugu state, the theoretical scope will include behavioural

counselling approach, rational emotive therapy, psychoanalytic theory and cognitive behavioural theory.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. To what extent do counsellors adopt orientation counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?
2. To what extent do counsellors adopt group counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?
3. To what extent do counsellors adopt puniton counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?
4. To what extent do counsellors adopt reinforcement counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?
5. To what extent do counsellors adopt listening counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt orientation counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt group counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

3. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt puniton counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.
4. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt reinforcement strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.
5. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt listening counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

METHOD

The researcher adopted a descriptive survey research design for this study. According to Nworgu (2015), a descriptive survey research design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data or information from every member of the population. The area of the study is Enugu State, Nigeria. Enugu State is one of the five states in South East geopolitical zone. It has six Education zones – Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor and Udi Education zones in the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. The population for the study comprises all the 113 secondary school Guidance counsellors in the 295 public secondary schools in Enugu State under the control of Post Primary School Management Board. It comprises 85 female and 28 male Guidance counsellors in Enugu Education zone. This is based on the data obtained from the Post Primary School Management Board Enugu (PPSMB, 2022). There was no sampling in this study. The researcher made use of the entire population because it is manageable. This is in line with Uzoagulu (2011) who posited that if the population for the study is in hundreds, the researcher can make use of the whole respondents in the study. Thus, data were collected from the entire population of 113 secondary school Guidance counsellors in the 295 public secondary schools in Enugu State, were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled "Counselling Strategies

for Curbing Truancy Questionnaire (CSCTQ)". It was self-reporting and had two sections; A and B. Section A contained 1 item designed to elicit personal information from the respondents. Section B was divided into 5 parts and contains 50 items structured to answer the research questions. The response format for the instrument was a 4-point scale of very great extent, great extent, less extent and very less extent. Each response option had a numerical value assigned to it as follows:

Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4 points

Great Extent (GE) = 3 points

Less Extent (LE) = 2 points

Very Less Extent (VLE) = 1 point

The respondents were requested to tick the options that best suit their opinion on each item.

To ascertain the face validity of the instrument, the researcher gave the instrument to two experts in Guidance and Counselling Department and one in Department of Mathematics and Computer Education. These experts were all from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. The researcher requested the experts to assess the items in terms of clarity, adequacy, appropriateness of language used and appropriateness of instructions to the respondents.

In order to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher used the Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering 30 copies of the questionnaire to a sample of 12 male and 18 female Guidance counsellors from public secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The choice of Ebonyi state is predicated on the fact that the state has identical educational system with the area of the study.

About 113 questionnaire were administered directly to the respondents and 92 retrieved by the researcher using three (3) research assistants. The research assistants were briefed on how to administer the questionnaire in a one-day interactive session. The researcher acquainted them with the purpose of the study and how to exhibit good human relationship during the data collection stage.

The five research questions were answered using mean, standard deviation and grand mean scores while t-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In answering the research questions in this study, mean scores that fall below 2.50 were taken as "low extent" and any mean score above or equal to 2.50 was taken as "great extent". The benchmark of 2.50 was gotten by

summing up the weighted options (4+3+2+1=10) and dividing it by total number of response options (4) as follows; $10/4=2.50$. The use of standard deviation enabled the researcher to examine the level of dispersion of the respondents' opinions from the mean. In testing the null hypotheses, if t-calculated is equal to or greater than t-critical at 0.05 level of significance and the given degree of freedom, the null hypothesis is significant, but if otherwise, it is not significant.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent do counsellors adopt orientation counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviations of respondents on the extent to which orientation counselling strategy curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

S/n	Counsellors adopt the following Orientation Counselling Strategies to curb students' truancy:	Male Counsellors N = 23			Female Counsellors N = 69			Overall		
		\bar{X}	SD	Dec	\bar{X}	SD	Dec	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
1	taking students round the school to acquaint them with different locations.	3.17	0.58	GE	2.84	0.76	GE	2.91	0.73	GE
2	informing students on dos and don'ts on resumption.	2.87	0.76	GE	2.77	0.86	GE	2.79	0.84	GE
3	informing them of the dangers of cultism.	3.09	0.85	GE	2.81	0.74	GE	2.87	0.77	GE
4	introducing prefects and their functions on school resumption.	3.17	0.65	GE	3.27	0.63	GE	3.25	0.64	GE
5	introducing teachers, disciplinary committees and their functions to students on arrival.	3.00	0.60	GE	2.87	0.84	GE	2.90	0.79	GE
6	informing students of the aims of schooling and benefits of education.	3.30	0.82	GE	3.23	0.92	GE	3.25	0.89	GE
7	giving them tips on learning habits.	3.09	1.12	GE	3.70	0.67	GE	3.56	0.83	GE
8	encouraging students to feel free with their teachers.	3.22	0.85	GE	3.42	0.93	GE	3.37	0.91	GE
9	informing students of the dangers of involving themselves in deviant behaviours.	3.26	1.14	GE	3.35	0.92	GE	3.33	0.97	GE
10	counselling them on security measures.	1.65	0.65	LE	1.63	0.62	LE	1.64	0.63	LE
	Grand mean	2.98	0.20	GE	2.99	0.11	GE	2.99	0.11	GE

Key: GE (Great Extent), LE (Low Extent), SD (Standard Deviation)

Data presented on Table 1 above show the mean ratings and standard deviations of male and female counsellors with regards to the extent to which they adopt orientation counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state. While the male counsellors' mean

ranged from 1.65 to 3.30 with a grand mean of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.20, that of female counsellors ranged from 1.63 to 3.42 with a grand mean of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 0.11. On the other hand, the overall mean ranged from 1.64 to 3.56 with a grand mean of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 0.11. In exception of item 10 which has mean below 2.50 benchmark across board, all other items have a mean above the benchmark of 2.50. The closeness of the standard deviations shows that there is unanimity among the responses of the respondents. All these indicate that most items in this cluster are attributes of orientation counselling strategy. Finally, the overall grand mean of 2.99, implies that counsellors adopted to a great extent the application of orientation counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state.

Research Question 2: To what extent do counsellors adopt group counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviations of respondents on the extent to which group counselling strategy curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

S/n	Counsellors adopt the following Group Counselling Strategies to curb students' truancy:	Male Counsellors N = 23			Female Counsellors N = 69			Overall		
		\bar{X}	SD	Dec	\bar{X}	SD	Dec	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
11	teaching students to study in groups.	3.29	0.42	LE	3.48	0.62	LE	3.42	0.59	LE
12	counselling students in groups.	3.16	0.42	LE	3.52	0.66	LE	3.45	0.62	LE
13	encouraging students to build good attitude in groups.	3.65	0.57	GE	3.30	0.82	GE	3.38	0.78	GE
14	encouraging social learning.	3.48	0.95	GE	3.66	0.62	GE	3.62	0.70	GE
15	counselling students with similar deviant behaviours.	1.30	0.56	LE	1.89	0.85	LE	1.75	0.83	LE
16	encouraging good peer influence.	4.00	0.00	GE	3.57	0.69	GE	3.67	0.63	GE
17	applauding cliques of good behaviour.	3.74	0.69	GE	3.53	0.75	GE	3.58	0.74	GE
18	explaining the demerits of disobedience to truants in a group.	3.39	0.89	GE	3.49	0.80	GE	3.47	0.82	GE
19	giving students group assignments.	3.39	0.89	GE	3.67	0.67	GE	3.61	0.73	GE
20	recognizing adjusted students among truants in a group.	3.48	0.79	GE	3.85	0.36	GE	3.76	0.51	GE
Grand means		2.89	0.29	GE	3.00	0.14	GE	2.97	0.10	GE

Key: GE (Great Extent), LE (Low Extent), SD (Standard Deviation)

Data presented on Table 2 above show the mean ratings and standard deviations of male and female counsellors with regards to the extent to which they adopt group counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state. While male counsellors recorded a grand mean of 2.89, female counsellors scored a grand mean of 3.00 slightly higher than that of their male counterparts. Item 15 in cluster 2 has a mean below the benchmark, while the rest items recorded mean above benchmark of 2.50 and overall standard deviation of 0.10. However, it is a clear indication that 99 percent of items in this cluster are attributes of group counselling strategy. Finally, with the grand mean of 2.97, it is an implication that counsellors do adopt to a great extent the application of group counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state.

Research Question 3: To what extent do counsellors adopt puniton counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviations of respondents on the extent to which puniton counselling strategy curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

S/n	Counsellors adopt the following Puniton Counselling Strategies to curb students' truancy:	Male Counsellors N = 23			Female Counsellors N = 69			Overall		
		\bar{X}	SD	Dec	\bar{x}	SD	Dec	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
21	kneeling truants down;	1.35	0.57	LE	1.32	0.69	LE	1.32	0.66	LE
22	expelling truants from school.	1.39	0.78	LE	1.34	0.70	LE	1.35	0.71	LE
23	flogging truants.	1.52	0.85	LE	1.33	0.75	LE	1.37	0.77	LE
24	making them cut grass and pick papers littering the school compound.	1.35	0.78	LE	1.67	0.59	LE	1.60	0.65	LE
25	Giving them extra assignments.	3.61	0.58	GE	3.41	0.61	GE	3.45	0.61	GE
26	Detaining them after school dismissal.	1.30	0.47	LE	1.23	0.42	LE	1.25	0.43	LE
27	making them face disciplinary committees.	3.74	0.62	GE	3.70	0.61	GE	3.71	0.61	GE
28	Isolating truants.	1.52	0.67	LE	1.70	0.67	LE	1.66	0.67	LE
29	publicly calling out truants at assembly to punish them.	1.65	0.98	LE	1.30	0.46	LE	1.38	0.63	LE
30	asking their classmates to boo them.	1.04	0.21	LE	1.10	0.30	LE	1.09	0.29	LE
Grand means		1.85	0.22	LE	1.81	0.14	LE	1.82	0.14	LE

Key: GE (Great Extent), LE (Low Extent), SD (Standard Deviation)

Data presented on Table 3 above show the mean ratings and standard deviations of male and female counsellors with regards to the extent to which they adopt puniton counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state. While male counsellors recorded a grand

mean of 1.85, female counsellors had a grand means of 1.81. Items 25 and 27 in cluster 3 recorded means below the benchmark, while the rest items recorded mean above benchmark of 2.50 and overall standard deviation of 0.14. However, again, it clearly indicates that 98 percent of items in this cluster are not attributes of acceptable punishment counselling strategy. Finally, with an overall grand mean of 1.82, it is an implication that counsellors adopted to a low extent the application of punishment counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state.

Research Question 4: To what extent do counsellors adopt reinforcement counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?

Table 4: Mean scores and standard deviations of respondents on the extent to which reinforcement counselling strategy curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

S/n	Counsellors adopt the following Counselling Strategies to curb students' truancy:	Male Counsellors N = 23			Female Counsellors N = 69			Overall		
		\bar{x}	SD	Dec	\bar{x}	SD	Dec	\bar{X}	SD	Dec
31	applauding truants who do well in class	1.70	0.63		2.37	0.64		2.22	0.70	LE
32	gifting truants who dish sound ideas.	3.00	0.52		3.15	0.70		3.12	0.66	GE
33	praising and patting them whenever they are in school.	3.52	0.59		3.29	0.70		3.34	0.68	GE
34	urging parents of truants to applaud their children at home when they study.	3.43	0.51		3.51	0.64		3.49	0.61	GE
35	making complimentary remarks about them when they behave well.	3.48	0.79		3.34	0.64		3.37	0.67	GE
36	assigning responsibilities to them, like; Class prefects.	3.00	1.04		3.51	0.73		3.39	0.83	GE
37	appreciating and admiring their school dress and looks.	3.43	0.79		3.51	0.68		3.49	0.70	GE
38	standing ovation for them whenever they answer questions correctly in class.	2.91	0.67		2.80	0.59		2.82	0.60	GE
39	talking to them whenever they are in school.	3.57	0.51		3.46	0.69		3.48	0.66	GE
40	sending messages to their parents through them.	3.48	0.51		3.46	0.62		3.46	0.59	GE
Grand means		3.15	0.17		3.24	0.05		3.22	0.07	GE

Key: GE (Great Extent), LE (Low Extent), SD (Standard Deviation)

Data presented in Table 4 above show the mean ratings and standard deviations of male and female counsellors with regards to the extent to which reinforcement counselling strategy curb truancy among secondary school students. While the male counsellors recorded a grand mean of 3.15, female counsellors scored a grand mean of 3.24. Other items except serial number 31 in this cluster have means above the benchmark of 2.50 as a clear indication that they are all attributes of reinforcement counselling strategy. The overall grand mean of 3.22 was recorded, and this presents a statistical evidence that counsellors do adopt to a great extent reinforcement counselling strategy in curbing truancy.

Research Question 5: To what extent do counsellors adopt listening counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state?

Table 5: Mean scores and standard deviations of respondents on the extent to which listening counselling strategy curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

S/n	Counsellors adopt the following Listening Counselling Strategies to curb students' truancy:	Male Counsellors N = 23			Female Counsellors N = 79			Overall		
		X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec	X	SD	Dec
41	giving them adequate attention	3.39	0.50	GE	3.28	0.66	GE	3.30	0.63	GE
42	paying attention to the needs of truants.	3.39	0.50	GE	3.41	0.76	GE	3.40	0.71	GE
43	nodding when they are talking.	3.70	0.47	GE	3.61	0.56	GE	3.63	0.54	GE
44	one-on-one encounter with truants.	3.57	0.79	GE	3.28	0.64	GE	3.34	0.68	GE
45	giving truants opportunity to express themselves.	3.48	0.51	GE	3.30	0.63	GE	3.34	0.61	GE
46	being patient with truants when they are talking.	3.70	0.70	GE	3.75	0.52	GE	3.74	0.56	GE
47	creating rapport with truants.	3.57	0.59	GE	3.53	0.64	GE	3.54	0.62	GE
48	having empathic understanding of truants.	3.74	0.45	GE	3.44	0.75	GE	3.51	0.70	GE
49	smiling when they are talking.	3.57	0.79	GE	3.63	0.64	GE	3.62	0.68	GE
50	helping them out with words to express themselves.	3.52	0.79	GE	3.52	0.78	GE	3.52	0.78	GE
Grand means		3.55	0.14	GE	3.47	0.08	GE	3.49	0.07	GE

Key: GE (Great Extent), LE (Low Extent), SD (Standard Deviation)

Data presented in Table 5 above show the mean ratings and standard deviations of male and female counsellors with regards to the extent to which listening strategy curbs truancy among secondary school students. While the male counsellors recorded a grand mean of 3.52, female counsellors scored a grand mean of 3.52 as well. All items in the cluster 5 above have a mean above the benchmark of 2.50 as a clear indication that they are all attributes of listening strategy as perceived by respondents. The overall grand mean of 3.52 was recorded, and by implication indicates a statistical evidence that counsellors perceived to great extent that listening strategy curb truancy.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt orientation counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Table 6: t-test of the difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which orientation counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t(cal)	t. value (0.05)	Decision
Male	23	2.98	0.20	100	0.72	1.96	Ho ₁ not rejected
Female	69	2.99	0.11				

From Table 6 above, it can be observed that the t-calculated of 0.72 is less than the critical value of the t-test which is 1.96 at 100 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This reveals that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent they adopt orientation counselling strategy can curb truancy among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt group counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Table 7: t-test of the difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which group counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t(cal)	t. value	Decision
						(0.05)	
Male	23	2.89	0.29	100	0.99	1.96	Ho ₂ not rejected
Female	69	3.00	0.14				

From Table 7 above, it can be observed that the t-calculated of 0.99 is less than the critical value of the t-test which is 1.96 at 100 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This reveals that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which group counselling strategy is adopted to curb truancy among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt puniton counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Table 8: t-test of the difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which puniton counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t(cal)	t. value	Decision
						(0.05)	
Male	23	1.85	0.22	100	1.98	1.96	Ho ₃ rejected
Female	69	1.81	0.14				

From Table 8 above, it can be observed that the t-calculated of 1.98 is greater than the critical value of the t-test which is 1.96 at 100 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Alternatively, there is significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and

female counsellors on the extent to which punishment counselling strategy was adopted to curb truancy among secondary school students.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt reinforcement strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Table 9: t-test of the difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which reinforcement strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t(cal)	t. value (0.05)	Decision
Male	23	3.15	0.17	100	1.03	1.96	Ho ₄ not rejected
Female	69	3.24	0.05				

From Table 9 above, it can be observed that the t-calculated of 1.03 is less than the critical value of the t-test which is 1.96 at 100 of degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected, therefore, is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt reinforcement strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which they adopt listening counselling strategy in curbing truancy in secondary schools in Enugu state.

Table 10: t-test of the difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which listening counselling strategy in curbing truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state

	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t(cal)	t. value (0.05)	Decision
Male	23	2.98	0.81	100	0.71	1.96	Ho ₅ not rejected
Female	69	2.70	0.64				

From Table 10 above, it can be observed that t-calculated of 0.71 is less than the critical value of the t-test which is 1.96 at 100 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

This reveals that there is no significant difference between the mean rating scores of male and female counsellors on the extent to which adoption of listening counselling strategy was used to curb truancy among secondary school students.

Summary of the Findings

Extent to which counsellors adopt orientation counselling strategy to curb truancy

Findings on the extent to which counsellors adopt orientation counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state indicated that counsellors adopt orientation counselling strategy to a great extent. It was revealed that counsellors also practice more of orientation strategies in the areas of taking students round the school to acquaint them with different locations, informing students on dos and don'ts on resumption, informing them of the dangers of cultism, introducing teachers, disciplinary committees and their functions to students on arrival, and informing students of the aims of schooling and benefits of education amongst others.

Extent to which counsellors adopt group counselling strategy to curb truancy

This study examined the extent to which counsellors adopt group counselling strategy to curb truancy. The mean and standard deviation revealed that group counselling is adopted by counselor to a great extent.

Extent to which counsellors adopt puniton counselling strategy to curb truancy

Findings on the extent to which counsellors adopt puniton counselling strategy to curb truancy among secondary school students in Enugu state indicated that counselors adopt puniton counselling strategy to a low extent. It was revealed that counsellors practice of puniton strategies is low in the areas of kneeling truants down, expelling truants from school, flogging truants, making them cut grass and pick papers amongst other punitive measures.

Extent to which counsellors adopt reinforcement strategy to curb truancy

The finding of this study with regards to reinforcement counselling strategy and the extent to which counsellors adopt it revealed that counsellors to a great extent adopt attributes of reinforcement counselling strategy as one of counselling tools to curb truancy and other deviant behaviours.

Extent to which counsellors adopt listening counselling strategy to curb truancy

The finding of this study with regards to listening counselling strategy and the extent to which male and female counsellors` response to this strategy revealed that counsellors to a great extent adopt attributes of listening counselling strategy as one of counselling tools to curb truancy and other deviant behaviours.

Recommendations

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

1. School counsellors and education administrators can utilize programmes about regular school attendance by organising symposia, seminars and workshops for secondary school students for them to acquire personal, interpersonal, communication, problem-solving and thought processes skills. This will develop the students` social, mental, psychological and emotional well-being to enable them practice regular school attendance behaviour.
2. Counsellors should include truancy skills in their scheme of work. Each term should focus on a particular skill while teaching the students.
3. The government (federal, state and LGAs) should also mount a sensitization campaign through billboard posts, print and electronic media by encouraging parents to take active participation in the education of their children and attend school Parent Teachers` Association programmes.
4. School counsellors should intensify their efforts in the use counselling strategies to ameliorate school disruptive behaviour and truancy among students.

5. With regard to guidance counselling specifically, the involvement of key stakeholders such as school management, teaching and support staff, students and parents in the delivery of a whole school guidance programme and a yearly guidance plan is recommended.

REFERENCES

Anyamene, A. N. & Nwokolo, C N. (2017). *Introduction to mental health In J. Anyanwu and Ofodile (Eds) Marriage Family: issues, problems and counselling strategies*, Kevin – Godson Global ventures, Nsukka.

DeSocio, J., VanCura, M., & Nelson, L. (2007, April). Engaging Truant Adolescents: Results From a Multifaceted Intervention Pilot. *ProQuest Education Journals*, 51, 3-11

Egbo C. E. (2021). *Introductory exposure to guidance and counselling*. Agada Prints.

Egbo, A. C. & Egbo, C. E. (2021). *Bare bones of guidance and counselling*. Agada Prints.

Federal Republic of Nigeria, (FRN, 2013). *National policy on education*. Lagos: NERDC.

Henry, K. L. (2007, January). Who's skipping school: Characteristics of truants in 8th and 10th grade. *The Journal of School Health*, 77, 29-35.

Hurblock, E. (2007). *Adolescent development*, New York: Mc Graw Hill Book Company inc.

Iwuama, B. C. (2021). *Foundations of guidance and counselling*. Joe Mankpa's Publishers. ISBN: 978-2057-06-1.

Jone. M. M. (2019). *General issues in behaviours*, Ekiti: Kayode press

Mueller, D., & Giacomazzi, A. (2006). Dealing with chronic absenteeism and its related consequences: the process of and short-term effects of a diversionary juvenile court intervention. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 11(2), 199-219.

Nwadinobi, V. N. (2019). Assessment of counselling strategies used for remedying deviant behaviours among students in Anambra state. *Journal of Association for promoting counselling psychology in Nigeria*. (1) 84-89. <https://www.researchgate.net>.

Nworgu, B. G. (2015). *Education research, basic issues and methodology*. Owerri: Wisdom Publishers.

Okobia, O. C. & Okorodudu, R. I. (2012) *Guidance and counselling. Benin: Ethiope Publishing Co-operation*.

Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB), (2015). *Educational services department, Guidance and Counselling Unit*.

Rodriguez, L.F., & Conchas, G.Q. (2009). *Preventing truancy and dropout among urban middle school youth: understanding community-based action from the student's perspective*. *Education and Urban Society*, 41(2), 216-247.

Tobin, L. (2009, November 3). Education: don't just walk away: truancy rates are up and policies don't seem to be working. a new study suggests a change of track. *The Guardian*, 3.

Ukwueze, F. B. (2020). *The real essence of counselling*. Jos: Johnsons Entreprises.

UNESCO (2015) *Counselling regional training seminar on Guidance and Counselling: Zambia* February 2014.

Ukaejiofo, G. G. (2021). *Essentials of educational studies and counselling*. Ibadan: Man and Man Publishers.

Usha, S. N. (2017). Education for social transformation: A collective step forward. *Journal of Family Welfare*. 1(50) 35-42.

Uzoagulu, A. E. (2011). Practical guide to writing research projects reports in tertiary institutions. Enugu: Cheston Ltd.

Wilkins, J. (2008, March). School Characteristics That Influence Student Attendance: Experiences of Students in a School Avoidance Program. *The High School Journal*, 91, 12-24.

Zhang, D., Katsiyannis, A., & Barrett, D., Wilson, V. (2007, August). *Truancy Offenders in the Juvenile Justice System*. Remedial and Special Education, 28, 244-256.

