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### A TREATISE ON THE HANDLING OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A FOCUS ON RIVERS STATE

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#### ABSTRACT

The study investigated counselling, school orientation and students' mental health problems in public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions with corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised all the 368 Principals in the 368 public Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample size of 368. Two non-cognitive instruments titled "Counselling, School Orientation Scale" (CSOS) and "Students Mental Health Problems Scale" (SMHPS) were used for data analysis. Face and content validities were ensured. The reliability coefficient of CSOS is 0.88 and SMHPS is 0.71 respectively. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for data analysis. It was found out among others that counselling has a high negative relationship (-0.96) with students' mental health problems in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that the school heads should not only subject students that are troubled to counselling until the moody nature is exterminated but should be proactive in providing days for counselling services in the schools.

*Keywords:* Counselling, Students' Mental Health, Public Education, Nigeria.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Researches and personal experience have shown that the level of mayhems in the educational sector is on the increase. This is evident in the types of insane, insensitive, indifferent and inhumane behaviours displayed by students. The students are supposed to be regal, regale, and assuming in their dealings with fellow students in the school. However, what is observed nowadays is high level of ruthless and unruly behaviours like prostitution, fighting, stealing, bullying, truancy, cultism etc. it has also, heightened incidence of school dropout and decreased academic performance in both internal and external examinations. These are unsatisfactory state of affairs that have the capacity to aggravate and disrupt the normal

functioning of the education sector. Hence, defeating the purpose of achieving the noble goals and objectives of education. The researchers are bothered on these issues that bedevil our educational sector, therefore, sought to establish the relationship between counselling, school orientation and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

### *1.1 Aim and Objectives*

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between counselling, school orientation and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Simply put, it intends to:

- find out the relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- ascertain the relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problems in Secondary School.

### *1.2 Research Questions*

The following research questions guided:

- What is the relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State?
- What is the relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problem in Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

### *1.3 Hypotheses*

The following hypotheses guided the study at 0.05 alpha level.

- There is no significant relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State.
- There is no relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problem in Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Health is a virtue, because a healthy person is a wealthy person. Health is one of the determinants of effective and efficient livelihood on this planet earth. Health could be seen as the normal functioning and state of wellbeing of the physiological, psychological and spiritual perspectives of an individual. So many types of behaviours are displayed in the working places and in the streets which clearly showed that virtually everybody is not enjoying quality health. World Health Organization in Wikipedia The Free Encyclopaedia (2016) defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. WHO in Nordqvist (2015), saw health to be a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. Health status as the case may be, is the nature of someone at a particular test period. Nordqvist (2015) reported that physical health means a good body health, which is healthy because of regular physical activity (exercise), good nutrition, and adequate rest. Physical health has to do with good body building, skin look and the eye colours. On the other hand, mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his/her own abilities, coping strategies with normal stresses of life and at same time works productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO in Nordqvist, 2015).

The Free Dictionary (2016) submitted that mental health is a state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitions and emotional capabilities, to function in the society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life. Mental well-being is the ability and stability of one to be able to adjust and accommodate the challenges of school, family, society and personal affairs. If one is not mentally alright and upright, he/her may not be able to reason or make valid and value judgment that will enhance the lifestyle of such an individual. Turlington in Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary (n.d) opined that mental health is a condition of being sound mentally and emotionally that is characterized in the absence of mental illness and adequate adjustment especially as reflected in feeling comfortable about oneself, having positive feelings about others, and being able to meet the demands of daily life, also: the general condition of one's mental and emotional state. It is abundantly clear, that mental well-being is the opposite of mental disorder. Mental disorder is a state of not being emotionally and socially viable and stable to contribute to the normal existence of the individuals. The types of mental disorder that are easily noticed are dementia, schizophrenia, anxiety disorder, clinical depression, bipolar disorder, cerebral arteriosclerosis, neoplasm, metabolic diseases, neurological disease, endocrine disease, leprosy and epilepsy. Mind for Better Mental Health (2013) summarized the types of mental health to include tardive dyskinesia, suicidal feelings, sleep problems, self-harm, low self-esteem, seasonal affective disorder, schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, postnatal depression, phobia, personality disorder, paranoia, panic attacks, obsessive compulsive disorder.

Some of the mental disorders may be caused by combination of genetic factors, environmental factors, psychological factors and spiritual factors. Physical contribution of mental health is widely noticed when one sustains headache or brain injury and substance abuse. Brain injury has a great tendency to disorganize the brain cells thus distorting the normal functioning of the brain. The environment where one lives could be serious agent to mental health problem, because if it is not conducive and possess a lot of stress and challenges to the individual, the individual may likely develop serious cognitive deformation. Situation like insult, death of loved one, divorce, poor economic status, fighting, loss of job, inability to give birth, work problems and hereditary problems are very potent in causing mental health problems.

Wikipedia The Free Encyclopaedia (2016) acquiesced that it has been found that different biological, psychological, and environmental factors can all contribute to the development or progression of mental disorders. Outside drugs like cocaine, caffeine, cannabis marijuana and alcohol intake which can to a great extent contribute to mental health problems of an individual, parental styles, parent's disposition and personality are emerging risk factors. Harvard Medical School (2010) asserted that mental health disorders that often go unrecognized and untreated not only damages an individual's health and career, but also reduces productivity at work. Harvard Medical School (2010) stated that the gain to both individual and organization from promoting good mental health at work is reflected in increased presence, well-being and production. Mental wellbeing in the work place has all it takes to bring about stability in social and emotional relationship between workers with magnificent attendant impact in the level of workers' productivity. Apart from the fact that teaching and learning are cognitive exercises, doing work in the work place is more of energy sapping and cognitively tasking.

According to Iruloh and Ernest-Ehibudu (2014), counselling is defined as an interactive session between the counsellor and the client aimed at assisting the client in gaining entrance into his real world. This is achieved by helping the client understand himself and the situations around him which constitute his environment. Akinade, (2005) sees counselling as the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, effective behavioural or systematic intervention strategies that address wellness, personal growth or career development as well as pathology. Business Dictionary (2016)

defined counselling as a support process in which a counsellor holds a face to face talk with another person to help him or her solve a personal problem, or help improve that person's attitude, behaviour or character. Counselling in the school system helps the students to overcome the jinx to academic achievement, social interaction and enlightenment and at the same mood, direct them on a better choice of life. Ministry of Education Maldives (2011) asserted that school counselling service plays an important role in offering personal support to students in developing their overall well-being with respect to their social, emotional, behavioural and academic development. It buttresses the fact to state that effective counselling can serve as quick intervention strategy that enlightens and redirects the students to view their problems from different perspectives and be able to make positive adjustment in their emotional disposition, academic and social status.

School orientation is widely viewed as the pre-information and pre-exposition given to new intakes or entrants on the modus operandi of the school where they were admitted. School orientation helps the students to know the dos and don'ts and be able to adjust very fast and follow with prudence the rules and regulations guiding the school policy. Apart from the fact that orientation services is important to the freshers, orientation services should be widely done for returning students at the beginning of the academic session, examination and before graduation of the students from the school. UrbanPro (2008) opined that during orientation service, the schools explain the pattern for conducting examinations, the extracurricular activities, the support from parents etc. It is evidently clear that if the process of examination and other activities are not well spelt out for the students to be conversant with, it can lead to entropy and devastation which may have buoyant concomitant effect on the psychological and social status of the students in the school.

### 3. METHOD AND MATERIALS

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised of all the 368 principals in the 368 public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Because of the small nature of the principals, they were all used as the sample. The purposive sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample size. Two non-cognitive instruments titled "Counselling and School Orientation Scale" (CSOS) and "Students Mental Health Problems Scale" (SMHPS). Face and content validities of CSOS and SMHPS were ensured. The Cronbach alpha statistics was used to establish the reliability coefficient of CSOS at 0.88 and SMHPS at 0.71 respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions while the critical probability alpha level was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of findings of the study are presented as shown below.

#### Research Question One

What is the relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

#### Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics of the relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems

Category	N	R	Sig.	Remark
Counselling	368	-0.96	0.3	Not Statistically significant
Students' mental health problem				

Table 1 revealed that the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient  $r$  is given as  $-0.96$ . This implies that there is a high negative relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The calculated probability value of  $0.30$  is greater than the critical probability  $p$ -value of  $0.05$ , therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, there is no significant relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

#### Research Question Two

What is the relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problem in Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

#### Hypothesis Two

There is no relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problem in Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics of the relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problems

Category	N	R	Sig.	Remark
School orientation	368	-0.79	0.51	Statistically significant
Students' mental health problems				

Table 2 revealed that the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient  $r$  is given as  $-0.79$ . This implies that there is a high negative relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The calculated probability value of  $0.30$  is greater than the critical probability  $p$ -value of  $0.5$ , therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. By implication, there is no significant relationship between school orientation and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The finding revealed that there is high negative relationship  $-0.96$  between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is shown that there is no significant relationship between counselling and students' mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. There is need for school counselling because of the benefit of good mental health. Harvard Medical School (2010) stated that the gain to both individuals and organizations from promoting good mental health at work is

reflected in increased presence, well-being and production. Ministry of Education Maldives (2011) advised that school counselling service plays an important role in offering personal support to students in developing their overall well-being with respect to their social, emotional, behavioural and academic development. The promotion of this expected mental health can be achieved through counselling of the students in the school setting so that they will not inundate themselves with thinking and behaviours that will make them unsettled for arduous academic activities.

The findings of the study showed that there is a high negative relationship -0.79 between school orientation and students mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is shown that there is no significant relationship between school orientation and students mental health problems in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. UrbanPro (2008) opined that during orientation service, schools explain the pattern for conducting examinations, the extra-curricular activities, the support from parents etc. it is worth noting that orientation services have all it takes to solving intending students' problems in the school. It is evidently clear that if the process of examination and other activities are not well-spelt out for the students to be conversant with through orientation services, it can lead to entropy and devastation which may have buoyant concomitant effect on the psychological and social status of the students in the school

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude that counselling and school orientation have no ability to cause students' mental problems in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, we suggest that:

- The school heads should not only subject students that are embattled to counselling until the moody nature is exterminated but should be proactive in providing days for counselling services in schools.
- School orientation should be given to students whenever there are changes in the normal functioning of the school early enough to incorporate such changes into their normal way of life without exertion of pressure.

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