

PRINCIPALS' COUNSELLING STRATEGIES FOR CONTROLLING INDISCIPLINE AMONG STUDENTS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to determine the counselling strategies utilized by principals in controlling indiscipline among students in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. This study was conducted in secondary schools in Anambra State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. All the 555 secondary schools both public and private in all the 6 education zones were studied. The sample for the study comprised 166 principals made up of 77 principals and 89 principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State respectively. The sample consisted 30% of the entire population. The instrument for data collection was researcher-developed questionnaire whose validity and reliability were duly determined. The researcher together with research assistants collected the data from the respondents. Mean ratings and standard deviations were used to answer the research question while the t- test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at.05 level of significance.

Keywords: Counselling Strategies; Principals; Controlling Indiscipline; Students; Public and Private Schools.

INTRODUCTION

In secondary schools, principals represent the government whose policies they implement. Expectedly, the government guarantees the safety of the principals and their jobs as long as they act within the limits of constitutional powers. Sadly however, occasions have arisen where officials of the government education authorities have taken side with influential parents and penalize school administrators for disciplinary measures taken against students in their schools. Such penalties have often come in form of denial and delayed promotions, punitive transfers, queries, surcharge, demotions or even suspension from service. Such wrong application of instruments of government according to Olu-Ajayi (2016) has seriously eroded the powers of the principals to the extent that they find it difficult converting students' reluctance to conformity. These explain the reason for the rampant cases of disciplinary problems among secondary school students today.

In some secondary schools, disobedient students pride themselves with how much problems they have given to the authorities (Robert, 2017). They sometimes organize themselves to beat up the school heads. According to Rouse (2016), they even break into the principals' offices and school treasuries, and in some cases, burn down the whole of the school administrative blocks. However, Fields and Boesser (2010) concluded that though solving school violence and discipline problems is not easy, it can be done. Ultimately, they recommended that solving the problem requires a real effort by district officials (that is, staff of the relevant government

agency or ministry) to stand behind school employees with the support they need as well as a commitment by school administrators to forge a cooperative effort with other school employees aimed at educating students, parents and members of the community about the need for tough but fair discipline policies. As noted by Rubin (2015), one way to solving the problem is through counselling.

According to Nwankwo (2014), counselling is an interactive learning process between the counsellor and the student, whether individual or group, which approaches in a holistic way the personal/social, educational and vocational issues. Nwankwo further maintained that competitiveness, bullying, social exclusion, family crisis, scholastic under-achievement, abuse, homophobia, peer pressure, substance abuse and ethnicism are some of the problems which can be solved with the support of counselling. In the school setting, counselling provides students an opportunity to explore difficulties and empowers them to make informed decisions (Dollarhide & Saginak 2008).

The guidance counsellor is pivotal in establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive school culture that recognizes and celebrates diversity. The counsellor does not discipline and punish students as this could compromise the counselling relationship. According to Dollarhide and Saginak (2008), the principals ensure that counsellor plays these roles in the school:

- i. Providing a professional and confidential counseling service for all students.
- ii. Providing guidance service, programmes and activities
- iii. Promoting healthy communication between families, peers and staff.
- iv. Student advocacy.
- v. Identifying students at risk and providing appropriate support

Counselling helps the students by increasing their self-awareness, emotional growth and maturity. Counselling also empowers them to articulate their issues, as there is more understanding of their problems. The students are empowered as they explore alternative solutions to their problems. They learn the need to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the choices which they make (Karanja & Bowen, 2012). The students consequently learn to be more accountable for their actions.

Counselling seems to be a preferred option in solving the problem in discipline, and to this end, its use needs to be encouraged in schools. The problem here is that in most schools, some students are not safe to meet with the school counsellors as most of them have compromised their calling. According to Ali, Dada, Isiaka, & Salmon (2014), cases abound where some school counsellors abused students that came to see them sexually. As a result, some students no longer feel safe to consult the school counsellors. The fact that many students are not free to consult their school counsellors needs to be looked into critically. Again, counsellors and students should have a close relationship that will ensure that students are free to consult counsellors and that counsellors have enough time to attend to students. One of the solutions to the problem of indiscipline and unrests in public and private secondary schools is to strengthen counselling services because they can help to increase students' self-awareness and foster emotional growth and maturity (Karanja & Bowen, 2012). As part of their callings, principals can provide, enhance and encourage counselling activities in their schools to complement the work of the professional counsellors (Fields & Fields 2016). This is the main thrust of this study as it aimed at determining the counselling strategies utilized by principals in controlling indiscipline among students.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the counselling strategies utilized by principals in controlling indiscipline among students. Specifically, the study determined counselling strategies utilized by principals in controlling indiscipline among students in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question: What are the counselling strategies utilized by principals in controlling indiscipline among students in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary schools principals on the utilization of counselling as a strategy for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State.

Research Method

This study was conducted in secondary schools in Anambra State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. All the secondary schools both public and private in all the 6 education zones in the state which include Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha were studied. There are 257 public secondary schools and 298 private secondary schools in the 6 education zones. The population of the study consists of 555 principals in the six education zones. The sample for the study comprised 166 principals made up of 77 principals and 89 principals in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State respectively. The sample consisted 30% of the entire population. The instrument for data collection was researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Principals' Counselling Questionnaire" (PCQ). It is a 4-point scale type, structured thus: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4points; Agree (A) = 3points; Disagree (D) = 2points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1point. The face validity of the instrument was established by three experts: two in guidance and counselling and one in measurement and evaluation; all in the Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha method and a correlation co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained for the instrument. The researcher together with 5 research assistants collected the data from the respondents. Mean ratings and standard deviations were used to answer the research question while the t- test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Results

Research Question: What are the counselling strategies utilized by principals in controlling indiscipline among students in public and private secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores of Principals' Utilization of Counselling Strategies in Controlling Indiscipline among Students in Public and Private Secondary Schools

S/N	ITEMS	Public principals			Private Principals		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school	2.62	1.11	Agree	2.54	1.11	Agree
2	Ensuring that students have individual or group counselling session with the counsellor every term for proper guidance	2.60	1.10	Agree	2.57	1.10	Agree
3	Holding meeting with the parents and counsellor concerning students' behaviour	2.36	1.07	Disagree	2.34	1.06	Disagree
4	Supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help unruly students	2.64	1.09	Agree	2.51	1.06	Agree
5	Collaborating with the counsellor to refer an unruly student to a professional psychologist	2.28	1.01	Disagree	2.11	1.06	Disagree
6	Working with the counsellor to guide staff on proper ways to handle students with unruly behaviours	2.45	1.03	Disagree	2.31	1.08	Disagree
7	Creating ample time to discuss with students who have unruly behaviour	2.36	1.10	Disagree	2.42	1.08	Disagree
8	Confronting the problems of unruly students with the counsellor for solutions	2.33	1.14	Disagree	2.59	0.99	Agree

The result presented on table 1 showed that public secondary school principals mean scores for items 1, 2, and 4 are above the cut off mean of 2.50 their utilization of counselling strategies for the items. This implies that the counselling strategies utilized by public secondary school principals in controlling indiscipline among secondary school students in Anambra State included: ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counselling session with the counsellor every term for proper guidance and supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help unruly students. However, principals in public secondary schools recorded mean scores below 2.50 for items 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 indicating disagreement with the items as their counselling strategies utilized, in controlling indiscipline. This shows that principals in public secondary schools disagreed that their counseling strategies in controlling indiscipline among students included; holding meeting with the parents and counsellor concerning students' behaviour, collaborating with the counselor to refer an unruly student to a professional psychologist, working with the counsellor to guide staff on proper ways to handle students with unruly behaviours, creating ample time to discuss with students who have

unruly behaviours and confronting the problems of unruly students with the counsellor for solutions.

On the other hand, mean scores of private secondary school principals for items 1, 2, 4 and 8 are above the cut off mean of 2.50 their utilization of counselling strategy for the items. This implies that the counselling strategies utilized by private secondary school principals in controlling indiscipline among students included: ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counseling session with the counsellor every term for proper guidance, supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help an unruly students and confronting the problems of unruly students with the counsellor for solutions. However, principals in private secondary schools recorded mean scores below 2.50 for items 3, 5, 6 and 7 indicating with the items as their counselling strategies utilized, in controlling indiscipline. This shows that principals in private secondary schools disagreed that their counselling strategy in controlling indiscipline among students included; holding meeting with the parents and counsellor concerning students' behaviour, collaborating with the counselor to refer an unruly student to a professional psychologist, working with the counsellor to guide staff on proper ways to handle students with unruly behaviours and creating ample time to discuss with students who have unruly behaviours. The standard deviation scores which range 0.99-1.14 for public and private secondary school principals indicate closer disparity and this means that there is no much variation between their responses.

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of public and private secondary schools principals on the utilization of counselling as a strategy for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State.

Table 2: t-test of No Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Public and Private Secondary School Principals on the Utilization of Counselling as a Strategy for Controlling Indiscipline among Students in Anambra State

S/ N	ITEMS	Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-cery	∞	Remk s
1	Ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school	Public Private	2823 13	2.62 2.54	1.02 1.11	0.85	1.96	0.0 5	Not sig
2	Ensuring that students have individual or group counseling session with the counsellor every term for proper guidance	Public Private	282 313	2.60 2.58	1.10 1.10	0.20	1.96	0.0 5	Not sig
3	Holding meeting with the parents and counsellor concerning students' behaviour	Public Private	282 313	2.36 2.34	1.07 1.06	0.26	1.96	0.0 5	Not sig
4	Supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help an unruly students	Public Private	282 313	2.64 2.51	1.09 1.07	1.52	1.96	0.0 5	Not sig
5	Collaborating with the counselor to refer an unruly student to a professional psychologist	Public Private	282 313	2.28 2.11	1.01 1.06	1.98	1.96	0.0 5	Sig

6	Working with the counselor to guide staff on proper ways to handle students with unruly behaviours	Public	282	2.45	1.03	1.59	1.96	0.0	5	Not sig
		Private	313	2.31	1.08					
7	Creating ample time to discuss with students who have unruly behaviour	Public	282	2.36	1.10	-0.71	1.96	0.0	5	Not sig
		Private	313	2.42	1.08					
8	Confronting the problems of unruly students with the counselor for solutions	Public	282	2.33	1.14	-293	1.96	0.0	5	Sig
		Private	313	2.59	0.99					

Result of data analysis presented on Table2, revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of public and private secondary school principals for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 as their counselling strategies for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State. This implies that public and private secondary school principals do not differ significantly in utilization of following as their counselling strategies for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State; ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counseling session with the counselor every term for proper guidance, holding meeting with the parents and counselor concerning students' behaviour, supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help an unruly students, working with the counselor to guide staff on proper ways to handle students with unruly behaviours and creating ample time to discuss with students who have unruly behaviours.

On the other hand, there is significant difference in the mean scores of public and private secondary school principals for items 5 and 7 as their counselling strategies utilized for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State. This implies that public and private Secondary school principals differ significantly in the utilization of the following as their counselling strategies for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State; collaborating with the counsellor to refer an unruly student to a professional psychologist and confronting the problems of unruly students with the counsellor for solutions.

Findings of the Study

The counselling strategies utilized by public secondary school principals in controlling indiscipline among students included: ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counselling session with the counsellor every term for proper guidance and supporting counsellor's recommendations the change that will help unruly students, while the counselling strategies utilized by private secondary school principals in controlling indiscipline among students included: ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counselling session with the counsellor every term for proper guidance, supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help unruly students and confronting the problems of unruly students with the counsellor for solutions.

Discussion of Findings

It was found out that counselling strategies utilized by public secondary school principals in controlling indiscipline among students included: ensuring the new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counseling session with counselor every term for proper guidance and supporting counsellor's commendations for change that will help an unruly students, while the conselling strategies

utilized by private secondary school principals in controlling indiscipline among students included: ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counseling session with the counsellor every term for proper guidance, supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help unruly students and confronting the problems of unruly students with the counsellor for solutions. This supported the findings of Onyang et al (2016) which revealed that alternative corrective measure like guidance and counselling was led by principals in public and private secondary schools for managing students' behavioural problems. The similarity in the findings could be as a result of the fact that principals in Kenya where Onyango et al. study was conducted have quite knowledge and skills in counselling strategies. This is because since the abolition of corporal punishment in Kenya, principals have been using counselling to manage students' indiscipline. This is in disagreement with the finding of Karanjal and Bowen (2012) which revealed that schools that have involved in unrest do not have counsellors. The disagreement in the findings could be as a result that the two studies were conducted in different geographical location and principals have insufficient knowledge and skills in utilizing selling strategies.

It was also found out that the public and private secondary schools do not differ significantly in the utilization of following as their counselling strategies for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State; ensuring that new students are properly given orientation on the right way to behave in school, ensuring that students have individual or group counselling session with the counselor every term for proper guidance, holding meeting with parents and counselor concerning students' behaviour, supporting counsellor's recommendations for change that will help unruly students, working with the counsellor to guide staff on proper ways to handle students with unruly behaviours creating ample time to discuss with students who have unruly behaviours. This is line with the findings of Onyango et al (2016) which reported that there is no significance difference in the mean ratings of principals, teachers, guidance and counsellors and vice principals on the extent they utilize counselling strategies for controlling indiscipline in secondary schools in Kenya. The similarities in the two findings could be as a result of the fact that both studies were on the management of indiscipline in secondary schools and the fact that the principals have adequate knowledge of counselling. This shows that public and private secondary school principals make use of the guidance and counsellor to discipline students. The result of this study further revealed that public and private secondary school principals differ significantly in the utilization of lowing as their counselling strategies for controlling indiscipline among students in Anambra State; collaborating with the counselor to refer an unruly student to a professional psychologist and confronting the problems of unruly students with counselor for solutions. This is supported by the findings of Osakwe (2013) who reported that there was a significant relationship between public and private principals' management techniques. The two studies were conducted in Nigeria and this may account for the similarity in findings.

CONCLUSION

Counselling is an innovative strategy for handling disciplinary problems in schools. Principals in public and private secondary schools differ significantly in their utilization of counselling as a strategy for handling indiscipline in secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of this study, the following recommendation are made:

1. Government should sponsor principals to workshops, seminars and conferences to enable them update their knowledge and skills. This is especially in the area of counselling strategies for handling disciplinary problems among their students.
2. The Ministry of Education should give support to school principals especially those in public schools as to provide adequate counselling services to their students.
3. Principals in public and private secondary schools should understand that the process managing students' acts of indiscipline in schools starts with the identification of the type of student enrolled in schools.

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