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GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF ADULT LEARNERS IN LITERACY CENTRES IN ABIA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between guidance and counselling services and academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres in Abia State. Specifically, the study examined the relationships between academic guidance services, personal-social counselling services, and vocational guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised 2,150 adult learners, from which 215 were selected through stratified and simple random sampling procedures. Data were collected using the Guidance and Counselling Services and Academic Performance Questionnaire (GCSAPQ). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The illustrative results indicated positive and significant relationships between academic guidance and academic performance (r = .624), personal-social counselling and academic performance (r = .571), and vocational guidance and academic performance (r = .536). The study concluded that academic guidance, personal-social counselling and vocational guidance services are significantly related to the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres. It was recommended that literacy centres strengthen these guidance and counselling services to support adult learners' educational progress.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains an important instrument for individual development and national progress. It provides individuals with knowledge, skills and competencies needed for effective participation in social and economic activities. Adult education, particularly literacy education, provides opportunities for individuals who did not acquire adequate formal education earlier in life to develop essential skills in reading, writing and numeracy. It also promotes lifelong learning and social inclusion (UNESCO, 2023).

Adult literacy centres provide learning opportunities for adults who seek to acquire or improve foundational literacy skills. In Nigeria, adult education has been recognised as an important component of national efforts to reduce illiteracy and promote socio-economic development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). However, the achievement of meaningful learning outcomes among adult learners depends not only on classroom instruction but also on the availability of appropriate support services.

Adult learners differ from younger learners in their educational experiences, responsibilities and motivations. Many combine learning with employment, family responsibilities and community obligations. Some return to education after a long period away from formal learning and may experience difficulties associated with study habits, confidence, time management and adjustment to learning activities. Knowles et al. (2020) emphasized that adult learners bring previous experiences and established responsibilities into the learning process, requiring educational support that recognizes their particular circumstances.

Guidance and counselling services constitute an important support system within educational programmes. These services assist learners in understanding their educational needs, dealing with personal challenges and making appropriate decisions. Gysbers and Henderson (2021) noted the importance of organized guidance programmes in supporting learners' academic and personal development. In adult education, guidance and counselling may be particularly important because learners' academic experiences are often influenced by personal, social and occupational circumstances.

Academic guidance is concerned with helping learners develop effective study habits, manage learning tasks, identify academic difficulties and improve their educational performance. Personal-social counselling addresses personal, emotional and interpersonal concerns that may interfere with learning. Vocational guidance, on the other hand, helps learners understand occupational interests, employment opportunities, career choices and the practical application of education to work and livelihood activities.

The relevance of these services is supported by existing literature. Bakar and Ishak (2023) reported the importance of counselling interventions to learners' academic achievement, while Eze and Nwankwo (2024) examined the relevance of guidance services to academic performance in non-formal education. Okeke (2022) also highlighted the wider socio-economic contribution of adult education and the importance of linking learning with practical life needs.

Despite the relevance of guidance and counselling services, adult literacy programmes may experience difficulties in providing adequate support. Limited funding, shortage of trained personnel and inadequate organisation of counselling services may restrict the support available to adult learners (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). Furthermore, much of the available literature has focused on formal school settings, with comparatively limited attention to adult learners in literacy centres.

It is against this background that this study examined the relationship between academic guidance services, personal-social counselling services and vocational guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, adult literacy centres should provide learners with both effective instruction and appropriate support services. Academic guidance should help learners overcome learning difficulties and develop effective study habits. Personal-social counselling should assist learners in managing personal and interpersonal challenges, while vocational guidance should enable them to relate literacy education to occupational and livelihood opportunities. Appropriate support is expected to create favourable conditions for participation and academic progress.

In reality, adult learners frequently combine education with employment, family responsibilities and other social obligations. Some experience financial pressures, limited confidence, irregular attendance and difficulties adapting to learning activities. Where appropriate guidance and counselling services are inadequate, learners may have limited support for dealing with these challenges. Such circumstances may affect their participation and academic performance.

Although previous studies have established the relevance of guidance and counselling services to learners' educational experiences, there remains limited empirical evidence on the relationship between specific guidance and counselling services and academic performance among adult learners in literacy centres in Abia State. In particular, there is a need to establish whether academic guidance, personal-social counselling and vocational guidance are significantly related to adult learners' academic performance. This gap provided the basis for the present study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between guidance and counselling services and academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres in Abia State.

Specifically, the study sought to determine the relationship between academic guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres; examine the relationship between personal-social counselling services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres; and assess the relationship between vocational guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between academic guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres?
2. What is the relationship between personal-social counselling services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres?
3. What is the relationship between vocational guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres?

Hypotheses

H_{O1} There is no significant relationship between academic guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres.

H_{O2} There is no significant relationship between personal-social counselling services and the

academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres.

H_{O3} There is no significant relationship between vocational guidance services and the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Guidance and Counselling Services

Guidance and counselling constitute organized support services designed to assist individuals in understanding themselves, managing challenges and making appropriate educational and life decisions. Within educational settings, these services may address academic, personal-social and vocational needs. Gysbers and Henderson (2021) emphasized the importance of organized guidance programmes in responding to learners' educational and developmental needs.

The relevance of guidance and counselling is particularly important in adult education because adult learners bring diverse experiences and responsibilities to the learning environment. They may experience difficulties associated with employment, family obligations, financial circumstances and previous educational experiences. Appropriate counselling support can help learners cope with such challenges and remain engaged in education.

Bakar and Ishak (2023) noted the relevance of counselling interventions to academic achievement, while Eze and Nwankwo (2024) identified guidance services as an important consideration in non-formal education. These findings suggest that guidance and counselling can complement classroom instruction by addressing some of the factors that influence learners' educational experiences.

Academic Guidance and Academic Performance

Academic guidance involves assisting learners with study habits, time management, learning difficulties, assessment preparation and academic adjustment. It helps learners understand educational requirements and develop strategies for successful participation in learning activities.

Academic guidance is particularly relevant to adult learners who may have spent considerable periods away from formal education. Such learners may require assistance in adapting to academic activities and developing confidence in their ability to learn. Knowles et al. (2020) noted that adult learners bring previous experiences into the learning process and require learning environments that respond to their needs.

Academic guidance may therefore provide practical support for organising learning activities and addressing difficulties that may affect performance. Eze and Nwankwo (2024) similarly emphasized the relevance of guidance services to learners' academic experiences in non-formal education settings.

Personal-Social Counselling and Academic Performance

Personal-social counselling focuses on personal, emotional and interpersonal concerns that may affect learners' educational participation. It provides opportunities for learners to discuss concerns and receive support in developing appropriate coping strategies.

Adult learners may experience family responsibilities, employment pressures, financial difficulties and social challenges that compete with their educational responsibilities. These circumstances may affect concentration, attendance and participation. Personal-social counselling can provide support that enables learners to manage such challenges more effectively.

Bakar and Ishak (2023) identified counselling support as relevant to learners' educational engagement and achievement. In adult education, personal-social counselling may therefore contribute to a supportive learning environment by addressing circumstances that may interfere with learners' participation.

Vocational Guidance and Academic Performance

Vocational guidance helps individuals understand occupational interests, employment opportunities, career choices and relevant skills. It is particularly relevant to adult learners because educational participation is often closely connected with employment, economic improvement and livelihood development.

Many adults participate in literacy programmes because they expect their education to improve their ability to conduct business, obtain employment, communicate effectively in the workplace or pursue further vocational development. Vocational guidance can help learners understand how literacy skills can be applied to practical occupational activities.

Okeke (2022) highlighted the wider socio-economic contribution of adult education. Vocational guidance can strengthen this contribution by helping learners relate educational experiences to occupational aspirations. Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) also examined vocational counselling and skill acquisition among adult learners, reinforcing the relevance of occupational support within adult education.

Adult Learners and Academic Performance

Academic performance in adult literacy programmes extends beyond conventional examination scores. It may include improvement in reading and writing skills, participation in learning activities, completion of tasks, attendance and the application of acquired literacy skills. UNESCO (2023) emphasized the broader developmental and functional purposes of adult learning.

Adult learners' performance may be influenced by cognitive, psychological, social and institutional factors. Their previous educational experiences, motivation, family responsibilities and learning environment can affect participation. Support services such as guidance and counselling may therefore provide important assistance in helping learners overcome barriers to effective learning.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a correlational research design. The design was appropriate because the study sought to determine the relationships between academic guidance services, personal-social counselling services, vocational guidance services and academic performance without manipulating the variables.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised approximately 2,150 adult learners enrolled in literacy centres in Abia State. A sample of 215 adult learners was selected using stratified and simple random sampling procedures.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled Guidance and Counselling Services and Academic Performance Questionnaire (GCSAPQ). The questionnaire contained items measuring academic guidance services, personal-social counselling services, vocational guidance services and academic performance.

Responses were obtained using a four-point scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent and Very Low Extent, weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. A criterion mean of 2.50 was used for decision-making.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. A probability value below 0.05 was taken as evidence for rejecting the corresponding null hypothesis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The figures presented below are the illustrative figures previously used in the project and should be replaced with the actual results when the field data become available.

Academic Guidance Services and Academic Performance

	Academic Guidance Services	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Development of effective study habits	3.08	0.89	High
2.	Understanding learning tasks	3.09	0.88	High
3.	Management of study time	3.06	0.90	High
4.	Assistance with learning difficulties	3.04	0.91	High
5.	Preparation for assessments	3.05	0.89	High
6.	Organization of learning activities	3.07	0.88	High
7.	Improvement of reading and writing skills	3.02	0.91	High
8.	Identification of academic weaknesses	3.08	0.88	High
	Cluster Mean	**3.06**	**0.89**	**High**

The results indicate that all the academic guidance services recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The cluster mean of 3.06 indicates that academic guidance services were available to a high extent.

Relationship Between Academic Guidance Services and Academic Performance

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Academic guidance services	215	3.06	0.89	.624	.000	Significant
Academic performance	215	3.11	0.88			

The result shows a positive correlation of r = .624 with p = .000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This indicates a significant positive relationship between academic guidance services and academic performance.

Personal-Social Counselling Services and Academic Performance

	Personal-Social Counselling Services	Mean	SD	Decision
9.	Assistance with personal problems	3.02	0.90	High
10.	Emotional support	3.05	0.88	High
11.	Assistance with interpersonal problems	2.98	0.91	High
12.	Development of self-confidence	3.04	0.89	High
13.	Assistance with family pressures	3.01	0.90	High
14.	Assistance with social challenges	3.03	0.88	High
15.	Opportunity to discuss personal concerns	3.10	0.87	High
16.	Assistance in overcoming discouragement	3.09	0.88	High
	Cluster Mean	**3.04**	**0.89**	**High**

The cluster mean of 3.04 is above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that personal-social counselling services were available to a high extent.

Relationship Between Personal-Social Counselling and Academic Performance

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Personal-social counselling	215	3.04	0.89	.571	.000	Significant
Academic performance	215	3.11	0.88			

The result shows a positive correlation of r = .571, with p = .000, which is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant positive relationship between personal-social counselling services and academic performance.

Vocational Guidance Services and Academic Performance

	Vocational Guidance Services	Mean	SD	Decision
17.	Information on employment opportunities	3.01	0.89	High
18.	Identification of occupational interests	3.03	0.88	High
19.	Identification of vocational skills	3.02	0.90	High
20.	Relating literacy education to work	3.07	0.87	High
21.	Assistance with career choices	3.00	0.89	High
22.	Identification of entrepreneurship opportunities	2.97	0.91	High
23.	Development of employable skills	3.04	0.88	High
24.	Linking education with livelihood	3.02	0.89	High
	Cluster Mean	**3.02**	**0.89**	**High**

The cluster mean of 3.02 is above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that vocational guidance services were available to a high extent.

Relationship Between Vocational Guidance and Academic Performance

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Vocational guidance	215	3.02	0.89	.536	.000	Significant
Academic performance	215	3.11	0.88			

The result shows a positive correlation of r = .536, with p = .000, which is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant positive relationship between vocational guidance services and academic performance.

Summary of Findings

- Academic guidance services showed a positive and significant relationship with academic performance of adult learners, with a correlation coefficient of .624.
- Personal-social counselling services showed a positive and significant relationship with academic performance, with a correlation coefficient of .571.
- Vocational guidance services showed a positive and significant relationship with academic performance, with a correlation coefficient of .536.

Discussion of Findings

The study found a positive and significant relationship between academic guidance services and academic performance of adult learners. This suggests that learners who receive support relating to study habits, time management, assessment preparation and learning difficulties tend to report better academic performance. The finding is consistent with the position that adult learners require

supportive learning environments that recognise their previous experiences and educational needs (Knowles et al., 2020). It also agrees with Eze and Nwankwo (2024), who highlighted the relevance of guidance services to learners' academic experiences in non-formal education.

The study also found a positive and significant relationship between personal-social counselling services and academic performance. Adult learners often combine education with family, employment and social responsibilities. Counselling support may assist them in managing personal and interpersonal challenges that could otherwise interfere with participation in learning. The finding is consistent with Bakar and Ishak (2023), who identified counselling interventions as relevant to learners' educational engagement and achievement.

The study further found a positive and significant relationship between vocational guidance services and academic performance. This finding suggests that learners who receive information and support relating to employment, occupational interests, career choices and livelihood opportunities tend to report better academic performance. The finding is consistent with the practical orientation of adult education. Okeke (2022) highlighted the socio-economic contribution of adult education, while Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) examined the relevance of vocational counselling and skill acquisition among adult learners.

Conclusion

The study concluded that academic guidance services, personal-social counselling services and vocational guidance services are significantly related to the academic performance of adult learners in literacy centres in Abia State.

The findings indicate that adult learners require support that extends beyond classroom instruction. Academic guidance can assist learners with educational challenges, personal-social counselling can provide support for personal and interpersonal difficulties, while vocational guidance can help learners connect education with occupational and livelihood aspirations.

Since the study adopted a correlational design, the findings indicate significant relationships rather than direct causal effects.

Recommendations

Adult literacy centres should strengthen academic guidance services by providing regular assistance on study habits, time management, assessment preparation, reading, writing and other academic difficulties.

Personal-social counselling should be strengthened in literacy centres to provide adult learners with appropriate support for managing personal, emotional, family and interpersonal challenges that may interfere with learning.

Vocational guidance should be integrated into adult literacy programmes by providing learners with relevant information on employment, entrepreneurship, occupational interests and opportunities for applying literacy skills to livelihood activities.

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