

**Original Article**

## **ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN OBVIATING SUICIDE IN UNIVERSITIES IN ENUGU STATE**

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**Abstract**

This study investigated the role of guidance and counselling in obviating suicide among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State. The study was guided by three research questions. The study adopted descriptive research design. The target population for the study comprised all the 55,992 undergraduates of University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu State Universities of Science and Technology (ESUT). A sample of 560 respondents was drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling. A trial test was conducted and used for reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. Reliability indices of .60, .69 and .79 were obtained for parts 1, 2, and 3 respectively, while the overall reliability index stood at .80. This, the researcher regarded to be high enough and so went ahead to use the instrument to collect the main data for the study. The researcher administered the self-structured questionnaire to the respondents while the data generated was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Four point scale response format was used to measure the opinion of the respondents, such that after the statistical analysis, real limit of members were used to determine the decision rule. The result obtained from the analysis showed that Guidance and counselling to a great extent obviate emotional problem, suicidal thoughts and depression among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State. Based on these findings the researcher recommended among others that Guidance and counsellors should constantly admonish students against suicidal thoughts in universities in Enugu State

**Keywords:** Guidance, Counselling, Obviating, Suicide, Universities, Undergraduate

### **Introduction**

The complex nature of the present human society has resulted in a variety of challenges to human growth

development and freedom. One of the fundamental human rights, according to the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO, 2014) is the right to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2012) stated that its mission is to advocate for the protection of children's right and to meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potentials. These rights among others include the right to protect children from sexual harassment, abuse and right to life. In recent years' series of deaths have been recorded in tertiary institutions worldwide which amounted to over one million deaths due to suicide attempt. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2016), suicide is the second leading cause of death among aged 15-29 years approximately 11.4% per 100000 people, while in Nigeria is put at 9.5% per 100,000 people. For this, it has been a thing of concern to stakeholder in Nigeria system of Education to find out what could be the cause of suicide attempt.

Suicide refers to the act of intentionally causing one's own death. It was from two Latin words "sui" and "caedere" which together translate to "kill oneself". Suicide may be as a result of mental disorder, personality disorder (alcoholism). Some suicide is impulsive acts as a result of stress one undergo, for examples financial difficulties, troubles with relationships or bullying. Pereira & Cardoso (2015), reported that suicidal ideation is an important element in a process called suicidal behaviour which can later result into suicide attempt and committing suicide. National Crime Bureau (2015), reported that majority of suicide attempt in India are by those below the age of 30 years. Betterham, Calcar and Christensen (2013), stated that suicide is a thing that can be avoidable; it shows that all avoidable measures have not been yielding any progress. Statistically, 17% of students reported attempting suicide in the previous months, 14% of students

always have a plan attempting suicide in the previous months and 8% of students attempted suicide one or more times in the previous year (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Therefore, Anderson & Smith, (2015) and Schwartz, (2016) reported that suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15to-24 years olds students and the second leading cause of death among college students respectively.

In a report given by (WHO, 2016), it was estimated that 804,000 people committed suicide in the world including young people of aged 15 to 29 years, which was calculated to be 8.5% of deaths in this age group worldwide. Evidence of the growth in this population segment is concerned, considering the possibility of years to be lived, productivity and transformation in the lives of these young people who are entering the academic world and suicide is the second leading cause of death among institution students, second only to self-inflicted injuries (Taliaferro, Rienzo, Pigg, Miller & Dodd, 2019). In a study conducted by Jena and Sidhartha (2014) in Delhi, it was found that suicidal ideation rate was 21.7%, it was reported to be common among male adolescent students than female. A divergent view, Cheung and Dewa (2016) revealed that female students have suicidal ideation than their male students. Similarly, Waslick, Kandel, and Kakouros (2012) reported that adolescent female students develop suicidal ideation than male adolescent. Numerous factors were identified in the literature that causes suicidal ideation among students in higher institution of learning; this indicates that it is a multi-factorial/ multidimensional event (Pereira and Cardoso, 2015). Gvion, Horesh, Levi-Belz and Apter (2015) stated factors that trigger suicidal ideation process; these are hopelessness, impulsivity, aggression, body perception, communication difficulties and lack of social belonging. Among

other factors listed by researchers that can cause suicidal ideation were problems with the law break up with a significant other, bullying or victimization, academic crisis or school failure or forced or extended separation from friends or family (Leiberman, Poland & Cowan, 2016). Moreover, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (2012) opined that worthlessness, depression and hopelessness are common thought distortions associated with suicidal ideation. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) revealed that family conflict, abuse or trauma, substance abuse, lack of social support, and unsuccessful attempts to access mental health were factors that can cause suicide ideation. Aleke (2016), revealed that as demographic and socioeconomic variables, sexual orientation, religious practice, suicidal behaviors in the family and among friends, alcohol consumption and depression have also been shown in the literature as causes of suicidal ideation.

The percentage rate of suicide attempt among adolescents worldwide is being put at 12%, in Nigeria, the Suicide Research and Preventive Initiative (SURPIN) has found that about one-fifth of suicide cases seen at its affiliated institution are those aged 13-19 years and that over 50% of the crisis calls received through its hotline are from those aged 13-29 years; 27.8% were students. In a study by the Suicide Research and Preventive Initiative (SURPIN) conducted in Lagos State University Hospital, out of 66 suicide victims cumulatively recorded in 2018, only about 37.9% committed suicide through conventional means while nearly 62.1% bit the dust by consuming poison often sniper. This prevailing condition indicates the need for guidance and counselling in the universities. Guidance and counselling are two closely interrelated concepts. According to Okita (2012), guidance refers to a broad area of all educational

activities and services aimed at assisting students understand themselves and adjust to school life. It is aimed at bringing about maximum development and self-realization of human potentials for the benefit of the individual and the society. Guidance and counselling is a confidential dialogue between a client and a counsellor which is aimed at enabling the client to cope with stress and take personal decisions including those regarding parenting care (Olayinka, 2016). According to Arowolo (2013), Guidance and counselling is also a process of helping people to discover their needs, interests and capabilities in order to formulate their own goals and make plans to realize them. Guidance and counselling plays an important role in promoting learning in school. Okeke (2013), defined counselling as a helping relationship involving the counsellor and the client, in which the counsellor uses his professional knowledge and skills to assist the client attain proper development and maturity, improved functioning and ability to cope with life's problems.

Guidance and counselling aims at establishing maximum development and self-realization of human potentials to the benefit of both society and individuals concerned. The major reason for introducing counselling is due to the apparent ignorant of many people about career prospects and personality maladjustment among students (NRN, 2014). Apart from the policy statement by the federal government on the need for guidance and counselling there are a number of other circumstances that jointly or separately call for counselling services in schools. The survival of any country depends on the ability of its citizenry to possess some measures of common understanding attitudes, belief, skills and purpose as such the provision of broad based and functional guidance and counselling play a role in inculcation of societal

values ethics and right types of value and attitudes in the students. This is necessary in order to train future citizen, teach sound values systems bordering on respect for dignity of labor freedom, evil of tribalism, dangers of dishonestly, fraud and other vices. Udoka (2016), posited that through group and individual counselling students are helped out of depressing and emotional troubles. Onah (2014), stated that the role of guidance and counselling in managing students' educational, vocational, and socio personal adjustments can never be over emphasized. However there is need for empirical evidence on the role guidance and counselling play in obviating suicide in universities in Nigeria and Enugu State in particular.

In Nigeria, guidance and counselling in schools has been well received by the government and private sectors since it is a programme that is meant to help school children to adjust meaningfully to the environment, develop the ability to set realistic goals and improve on total education programmes (Egbo, 2015). In essence, Guidance and counselling combined with education provide opportunities for students to reach their full potential in the areas of educational, vocational, social and emotional development, hence, it is imperative for schools to implement Guidance and counselling programmes (Lunenburg, 2010). Considering the importance of Guidance and counselling in schools, Nigeria has embraced the idea of providing Guidance and counselling services in universities.

Guidance and counselling services have always played a leading role in terms of child's development and improvement as well as resolution of personal and social issues. Okobiah and Okorodudu (2016), highlighted that Guidance and Counselling is encompassed by activities of relevant services and also processes of helping persons within and outside the school, to achieve their full potentialities in their

emotional, moral, social, academic and vocational developments. Esen (2019), noted that guidance and counselling is aimed primarily at assisting the receiver to discover his own hidden strengths and ultimately grow in independence and ability to take his own decisions, make choices or adjustments unaided. Thus, it is assumed that with guidance and counselling, the high rate of suicide recorded in recent times will be obviated. It is a thing of serious concern and worries that despite the rate of suicide recorded among university students recently, little or nothing has been done to obviate this abnormality. Worst still, no research study within the reach of the researcher studied the role of guidance and counselling in obviating suicide in universities in Enugu State. Therefore, it is against this background that the researcher is motivated empirically to investigate the role of guidance and counselling in obviating suicide in universities in Enugu State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The school environment should be conducive, safe and void of any phenomenon that has the potentials to truncate the teaching and learning process. The staff and students are important people in the university environment and the relationship that exists between the two entities should be wholesome in order to accomplish the set educational goal and objectives of the university education, unfortunately the reverse seem to be the case as there is an increasing report of suicide among the university undergraduates recently, yet this situation is unresearched nor reported as a result of cold reaction of government and the school authority in tackling this issue.

Furthermore, factors that contribute to suicide among undergraduates include; life transition that is very upsetting or disappointing, loss of an important relationship or the death of a loved one, depression, anxiety or other serious emotional troubles, feelings

of hopelessness or despair, low self-esteem and shame, failure to live up to one's own or others' expectations, extreme loneliness, news of a major medical illness, severe physical or emotional pain, alcohol or drug abuse among others. Guidance and counselling in the university is assumed effective in ameliorated these factors. However it is unfortunate to observe that emphasis are not laid on guidance and counselling in obviating, and to the best knowledge of the researcher, no study have been carried out on the role guidance and counselling in obviating suicide in the Universities in Enugu State. These prevailing condition motivated the researcher to carry out this study, thus, the problem of this study put in a question form, therefore is, what is the role of guidance and counselling in suicide prevention in universities in Enugu State?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the role of guidance and counselling in obviating suicide in universities in Enugu State. Specifically, the study aim to;

1. identify the role of guidance and counselling in obviating emotional troubles among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.
2. investigate the role of guidance and counselling in obviating depression among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.
3. ascertain the role of guidance and counselling in obviating suicidal thoughts among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

1. To what extent does guidance and counseling serve in obviating emotional troubles among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State?

2. To what extent does guidance and counselling in obviating depression among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State?

3. To what extent does guidance and counselling in obviating suicidal thoughts among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State?

### **Research Method**

Descriptive survey research design was utilized for this study. Descriptive survey research design according to Nworgu (2015), is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The descriptive survey research design is considered suitable since the study solicited information from the respondents directly and afford all the respondents equal chance of being chosen for the study. The population for the study comprised all the 55992 undergraduates of University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Enugu. The figure above is made up of 28151 male and 27841 female population of undergraduates from both UNN and ESUT. The sample size for this study will be 560 undergraduate students of University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and Enugu University of Science and Technology (ESUT). The sample will be made up of 282 male and 278 female undergraduates from UNN and ESUT respectively. The researcher will use Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique to draw 1% of male and female students from each of the 17 and 11 Faculties in UNN and ESUT respectively. This is in line with Uzoagulu (2012) which states that when the respondents' population are in the hundreds of thousands 1% of the entire population can serve as the sample. The researchers developed a self-structured instrument named; Role of Guidance and Counselling in obviating suicide in Universities (RGCOSU). The instrument has two



sections, A and B. Section A contains the respondents bio-data with two items. While section B is divided into three parts with 24 items structured to assist the researcher in providing clues to the research questions that guided the study. Part 1 is on emotional problems with 8 items, part 2 is on depression with 7 items. Part 3 is on suicidal thought with 9 items. The response format for the instrument is a 4 point scale of Very great extent, great extent, little extent, very little extent.

The respondents used the response options to rate the extent to which guidance and counselling services is needed among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State. An introductory letter stating the rationale for the study was attached to the instrument for the respondents. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from Guidance and Counselling Department and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation Option, Mathematics and Computer, Department, all from the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology. To this end, the researcher attached the purpose of the study, the research questions and hypotheses that were raised and formulated to guide the study. They used them to assess the instrument in terms of clarity relevance and suitability of the items raised within the instrument. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher conducted a trial test using 20 undergraduates from two government owned Universities within Anambra State. This served as a similar population for the study. The respondents were assured of complete confidentiality of all information they supplied. They were allowed to complete the instrument at their own convenience. The responses to the various items of the questionnaire were used in computing its reliability coefficient using Cronbach

Alphareliability estimate. Reliability indices of .60, .69 and .79 were obtained for parts 1, 2, and 3 respectively, while the overall reliability index stood at .80, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable and suitable for the study. The researcher administered the instrument directly to the 560 respondents using two briefed research assistants. The research assistants were briefed by the researcher on the conduct of the exercise in a one-day consultative meeting, during which they were acquainted with the purpose of the study and how the questionnaire should be administered and collected. Appointments were booked with the respondents for collection at later dates for those who were not able to fill their own copies of the instrument because of the nature of their job. The researcher and the assistants were able to retrieve 520 copies of the distributed questionnaire instruments while 40 copies were not retrieved, signifying 92.86% return rate

The statistical tools for data analyses for the study will be mean, standard deviation and t-test statistic. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions that guided the study. On the decision rule real limits of numbers was applied, therefore the upper and lower limits of the mean are as follows; Mean score from 3.50 – 4.09 = Very Great Extent (VGE); Mean score from 2.50 – 3.49 = Great Extent (GE); Mean score from 1.50 – 2.49 = Little Extent (LE); Mean score from 0.00 – 1.49 = Very Little Extent (VLE)

## **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does guidance and counselling serve in obviating emotional troubles among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State?

**Table 1: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation of the Respondents on the Extent to which guidance and counselling obviate emotional troubles among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State**  
N=520

S/N	Extent to which guidance and counselling obviate emotional troubles among undergraduates include;	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC
1.	provide undergraduates with individual counseling on emotional control	149	140	145	86	2.68	1.06	GE
2.	improve undergraduates study skills	165	175	176	4	2.96	0.83	GE
3.	equippe students with various reading strategies	135	160	145	80	2.67	1.02	GE
4.	engage undergraduates group counseling on emotional control	129	146	147	78	2.59	1.06	GE
5.	organize periodic educative conference for undergraduates	149	164	159	48	2.80	0.96	GE
6.	give educative advice to undergraduates	153	148	124	95	2.69	1.08	GE
7.	create rapport with undergraduates	128	133	143	116	2.52	1.09	GE
8	dissemination of educational information to undergraduates	115	144	133	128	2.47	1.09	LE
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>						<b>2.67</b>	<b>1.02</b>	GE

From Table 1 above, the results of data analysis for research question 1 indicated that items (1,2,3,4,6,7,) had mean responses that were higher than the cut-off point as indicated in the real limit of number. The standard deviation for the items raised is small indicating that the respondents' responses to the items raised are homogenous and closely clustered around the Mean. The value of the grand mean was also high 2.67. Going by the decision rule for

interpreting the respondents' mean score, the answer to research question 1, is that guidance and counselling to a great extent serve in obviating emotional troubles among undergraduates in Universities in Enugu State.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does guidance and counselling obviate depression among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State?

**Table 2: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation on the Extent to which guidance and counselling obviate depression among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.**  
N=520

S/N	Extent to which guidance and counselling obviate depression among undergraduates include;	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC
9.	assist undergraduates in solving their emotional problems	187	196	134	3	3.09	0.80	GE

10.	encourage healthy interpersonal relationship among undergraduates	203	229	48	40	3.14	0.88	GE
11.	help undergraduates who have inefficient social skills to develop them	144	164	118	94	2.69	1.06	GE
12.	help undergraduates to develop positive self-image	170	169	174	7	2.97	0.85	GE
13.	help undergraduates to develop the skills of decision making	130	138	138	114	2.55	1.09	GE
14.	help undergraduates change their maladaptive behaviours	165	174	180	1	2.97	0.82	GE
15.	help undergraduates to develop positive image of others	130	134	148	108	2.55	1.08	GE
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>						<b>2.85</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>GE</b>

Table 2 above presents the results of data analyses for research question 2. Items (9-15) had mean responses that were higher than the cut-off point as indicated in the real limit of number. The standard deviation for the items raised is small indicating that the respondents' responses for the items raised are homogenous and closely clustered around the Mean. The grand mean (2.85) was also high. Going by the decision rule for interpreting the respondents mean score, the answer to research question 2, is that

guidance and counselling to a great extent serve in obviating depression among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does guidance and counselling obviate suicidal thoughts among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State?

**Table 3: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation of the Respondents on the Extent to which guidance and counselling obviate suicidal thoughts among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.**

**N=520**

S/N	Extent to which guidance and counselling obviate suicidal thoughts among undergraduates include;	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	SD	DEC
9.	create awareness of what suicide is	148	144	125	103	2.65	1.09	GE
10.	administer psychological tests regularly to identify students problem	209	218	52	41	3.14	0.89	GE
11.	assist students in choosing their career	211	249	29	31	3.23	0.80	GE
12.	help to shape students emotional thoughts	232	255	31	2	3.38	0.62	GE
13.	provide seminars against suicide	236	248	34	2	3.38	0.63	GE
14.	engage students in discussions that reveal their	154	169	98	99	2.73	1.08	GE



	thoughts							
15.	invite resource persons to deliver talk to the students	140	150	112	118	2.60	1.11	GE
16.	help undergraduates exploit career possibilities	151	174	104	91	2.74	1.06	GE
17.	provide undergraduates with career sponsorship information	202	235	68	15	3.20	0.77	GE
<b>GRAND MEAN</b>						<b>3.00</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>GE</b>

The results of data analysis in Table 3 indicated that all the items had high mean responses. The standard deviation for the items raised were small indicating that the respondents' responses for the items raised are homogenous and closely clustered around the Mean. The grand mean (3.00) was also high. Going by the decision rule for interpreting the respondents mean score, the answer to research question 3, is that guidance and counselling to a great extent obviate suicidal thoughts among undergraduates in Universities in Enugu State.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The first research question attempted to elicit the perception of the respondents on the extent to which guidance and counselling obviate emotional troubles among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State. Out of the eight items articulated to answer the research question posed, only one item got a mean point that indicated little extent. This shows that guidance and counselling serve to a great extent in obviating emotional troubles among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State. this finding agrees with Okoroafor (2017) which opined that guidance and counselling in university play its role which is not only directed towards the inadequate, the maladjusted and the potential drop-outs but towards those who find themselves in need of some kind of help, to tide them over to a difficult time in their lives that may lead to suicide. On the contrary Ugwu (2017) argued that the increase in students'

involvement in suicide indicates that guidance and counselling in the universities are not efficient in handling students' problems. Onah (2013) noted that a comprehensively planned and effectively carried out guidance and counselling services removes some of the barrier to academic progress on students and ameliorates the effects of handicapping conditions.

The second research question revealed that to a great extent guidance and counselling obviate depression among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State. This finding is in line with Udoka (2016), which posited that through group and individual counselling students are helped out of depressing and emotional troubles. The finding also agrees with Uche (2017), who noted that personal-social service helps an individual to accommodate his or her problems. Guidance and counseling service is geared towards sound self-understanding and understanding of other.

The result in table three revealed that guidance and counselling to a great extent obviate suicidal thoughts among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State. This finding is in consonance with Aleke (2016) which asserted that guidance and counselling helps to shape the taught and reasoning of students. The finding also agrees with Okoroafor (2017), which opined that guidance and counselling in university play its role which is not only directed towards the inadequate, the maladjusted and the potential drop-outs but towards those who find

themselves in need of some kind of help, to tide them over to a difficult time in their lives that may lead to suicide.

### **Conclusion**

From the discussion of the findings, it was concluded that Guidance and counselling to a great extent obviate emotional troubles, suicidal thoughts, and depression among undergraduates in Universities in Enugu State. Thus, there is a great need for provision of guidance and counseling services among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.

### **Educational Implication of the Findings**

The findings in this study hold tremendous implication for the Nigerian educational system and the advancement of guidance and counselling services among undergraduates in Universities in Enugu State. The university stage is a delicate stage since it has to do with adolescents who are in constantly faced with different academic and behavioural challenges which call for adequate counselling services and control. If these counselling services are not provided for them, there shall be multiplicity of problems in their day-to-day life as they progress, thus the need for enhancement of the services of guidance and counselling in the universities therefore the finding of the study will draw the attention of the government on the need to improve funding and monitoring of the school counselling activities in universities in Enugu State.

The university authority and other members of staff needs to synergize with the school counselor so as achieve the desired counselling goals. Counselling in the school system cannot work without the cooperation of other significant members in the school, thus the school counselor cannot perform adequately in his duties without the assistance and team work of the staff members with the school counselor.

Undergraduates are constantly involved in one form of mal-adjustment or the other probably because of the challenges faced by school counselling services such as poor monitoring of school counselling activities and in adequate counselling facilities. These needs are supposed to be addressed and met-with for improved guidance and counselling services among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings

1. Guidance and counselling in Universities should be focused in obviating emotional troubles and depression among undergraduates in Enugu State.
2. Guidance and counsellors should constantly admonish students against suicidal thoughts in universities in Enugu State.
3. Students undergoing depression should carefully handled and attended to by the university Guidance counsellor
4. There should be adequate funding of the school counselling services and provision of equipment need for effective counselling among undergraduates in universities in Enugu State.

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