

Original article

Assessment of Students' Satisfaction with Counselling Services in Federal Universities in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed the level of awareness of students on counselling services that are available in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The study also assessed the level of availability of counselling services in the study area. It further determined the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in the study area. The study equally examined the influence of counselling services on students' satisfaction in the study area. This study employed descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised 193,526 students from the seven federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The sample for the study comprised 1,144 students from three selected universities in the region. The instrument for the study was tagged 'Students' Satisfaction with Counselling Services Questionnaire' (SSCSQ). Data were analysed using percentages and regression analysis. The results showed that the level of students' awareness of counselling services in the study area was low (75.9%). The results also showed that the level availability of counselling services in the study area was low (79.6%). The results further indicated that the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in the study area was low (69.4%) and that counselling services in terms of level of availability, had significant influence ($\beta=0.212$; $p<0.05$) on students' satisfaction in the study area. The study concluded that counselling services were not adequately available in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria and the low level of availability was responsible for dissatisfaction of students with counselling services. The study recommended that government should equip counselling centres with necessary facilities and materials as well as employing more counsellors in different universities with a view to providing effective counselling services.

Keywords: Counselling services, Guidance and Counselling, Students' Satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counselling for students in tertiary institutions is part of critical services that promotes and enhances students' wellbeing during their stay in the institution. Students in the university come to the institution with different needs which include academic, careers, cognitive, social, behavioural, personal and even spiritual needs. It is therefore imperative for university management to plan how these needs can be met. Among services available in the university to meet emotional and psychological needs of students is provision of counselling services. Guidance and counselling refers to service that helps students discover and develop their educational, psychological and vocational potential which will help students achieve their goals and their dreams as well as achieving maximum level of personal satisfaction and social usefulness. Counselling service is primarily concerned with helping students achieve personal self realisation and also help them to find solutions to the problem that might serve as obstacle to the realisation of their goals. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2002) states that guidance and counselling is a broad professional field that offers a variety of programmes, activities, and services aimed at helping people better understand themselves, their issues and challenges, their surroundings, and the world around them. It also aims to help people develop the necessary skills to make informed decisions throughout their lives.

The functions guidance and counselling performs in the university is also concerned with helping students to make good, realistic and informed decision, to improve their coping strategies as well as adjusting themselves to their environment. In all levels of education, counselling service include but not limited to orientation programmes for students, helping students develop coping strategies either with peer or in difficult times, helps students develop studying and effective learning strategies, coping with bullying, prepare for transition to the next stage in life and in academics and so on. According to Mutie and Ndambuki (as cited in Ngeno, 2022), counselling services in educational institutions help students develop productive study habits, choose subjects, stay motivated to learn, manage their time and stress, and take steps to improve their academic performance. Similarly, Ebizie, Enajedu and Nkechi (2016) contended that counselling services encompass post-secondary planning, utilisation of library resources, examination preparation techniques, disciplinary management, overcoming learning challenges and class counselling.

Literature Review

In order for students to benefit from learning and achieve their academic objectives, effective support through high-quality guidance and counselling services is crucial. Guidance and counselling are essential services in any educational institution since students need assistance in all areas of their lives (Njoka & Cajertane, 2014).

Counselling and guidance is a profession that offers a wide range of programmes, activities, and services to help people understand themselves, their issues, their school environment, and the world around them. It also helps people build the necessary skills to make informed decisions. Guidance and counselling, according to Bark (as cited in Dieudonne, 2022) are services provided by people who are skilled and trained to help people of any age manage their own daily activities, develop their own opinions, make their own decisions, and bear their own burdens. According to Mwanaamina (2022), there are essentially three forms of guidance and counselling services that are frequently provided to students in schools: individual, group, and peer counselling. Individual counselling is a process where a professional counsellor and a client establish an interactive connections that promotes the clients' self-awareness and gives them the ability to effectively address their specific situational problems. In a university context, providing students with effective individual counselling services will help them enhance their academic, social, and personal skills (Mwanaamina, 2022). Group counselling on the other hands may be described as a dynamic contact between people for the purpose of preventing or resolving issues or enhancing individual development through the interactions of those who come together for a purpose that is mutually agreed upon and at predetermined times. Peer counselling is the procedure in which a few model students receive counselling training so they can provide counselling services to other students, such as in their homes. Since young people trust themselves, this has been shown to have positive effects (Nyaga, 2011).

University students as young adults are usually encumbered with so many problems ranging from relationships, financial challenges, academic challenges as well as uncertainty they might face them after graduation. These challenges in most times weigh students down and non-availability of counsellors and counselling services on these areas might affect them emotionally which in turn could have great impact on their academic performance. Owobamigbe and Ogunode (2021) and Kanus (2017) asserted that the provision of counselling services in educational institutions is essential for addressing a wide range of challenges faced by students; these include traumatic experiences, relationship issues, sexual orientation concerns, academic difficulties, career guidance, illness, and bereavement.

Studies have pointed out that guidance and counselling contribute in no small measure to the academic performance of students as well as to the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of the students. Cheruiyot and Simatwa (2016); Eremie and Jackson (2019) suggested that the expansion of counselling services within educational institutions typically results in improved academic performance among students.

Similarly, Tina and Ugochukwu (2014); Shehu et al (2021) discovered that the provision of guidance and counselling services contributes to better academic performance and fulfillment of students' needs. In researches conducted by Shehu et al (2021) and Daramola, Afolabi and Jemilehin (2024), findings indicated a favourable improvement in students' academic achievement subsequent to

their receipt of counselling support, resulting in commendable performance. Apart from benefit of guidance and counselling to students' academic success, counselling service also has tremendous benefits on students' behavioural and character formation. Counselling service officers in schools help build behaviours that are generally acceptable in the school and in the society as a whole.

Offering of counselling service in tertiary institutions therefore will help students to desist from social vices that can tarnish their image, image of their families, their institutions as well as the image of the nation. Good and responsible students that will serve as role model in all areas can be produced by an academic institutions if there is provision of reliable counselling units and services where students can pour out their minds on issues bothering them with a view to receiving professional attention and solutions. This assertion supports the opinion of Kurniawan, Supriatna and Yustiana (2021) who submitted that students who engaged in school counselling activities and programmes exhibited notably reduced defiant and unacceptable behaviour and demonstrated more favourable disposition and attitude towards school compared to those who did not partake in the programme.

Furthermore, Omizo, Hershberger and Omizo (as cited by Kanus, 2017) opined that group counselling significantly decreased students' aggressive and hostile behaviour. This is not different from the view of Arfasa (2018), who submitted that school counsellors have also been proven to be successful in lowering victimisation by supporting children who have been victimised and bullied, lowering bullying behaviours and altering the environment and structure of the school. Dieudonne (2022) asserted that the absence of guidance and counselling during adolescence has led to a rise in negative social outcomes. Low academic achievement, dropping out of school, drug misuse, criminal activity, and even inability to get employment are some of these negative social outcomes. Anastasi (as cited in Dieudonne, 2022) also stated that the goal of educational counselling and guidance is to help students adapt to their studies by enhancing their study habits and resolving issues relating to the subject matter. Without guidance and counselling services in schools, students find it difficult to adapt, which can result in poor performance, misbehaviour, and dropout rates. Odeke (as cited in Dieudonne, 2022) asserted that in the absence of effective guidance and counselling, many students lose focus and become involved in negative behaviours like drug and alcohol abuse, skipping classes, and dropping out, which ultimately leads to complete failure in life.

Counselling service also addresses mental and psychological status of the students in the tertiary institutions. Students' mental and psychological condition are usually being influenced by many factors among which are financial problems, chronic diseases, social relationship, stress, life events, past experiences, sexual assault, family history of depression, drug or alcohol use. It is also note worthy that mental or psychological illnesses can lead to suicide, apathy, poor interpersonal relationship as well as poor academic performance. Shabeena, Muhammad and Muhammad (2023) asserted that counselling services have a positive impact on mental health and can mitigate psychological disturbances. Guidance

and counselling services are also crucial in addressing a range of issues affecting students, including social, mental, emotional and educational challenges. Furthermore, addressing these issues can lead to improved well-being and academic success and even enabling students to reach their full potential. This can only be achieved through professionals who are trained to understand students' problems and can proffer enduring or sustainable solutions.

In order to help students solve various mental and psychological problems therefore, university must provide counselling service for all students. Adequate and well trained counsellors as well as other psychological therapists must also be available and accessible to students at any time. Sensitisation on the importance of counselling must be organised for students in order to know the benefits of counselling. In order for students to gain confidence of school counsellors, the counsellors must guarantee the confidentiality of all information or secrets given to them by the students.

In Nigeria's educational system, guidance and counselling services have existed since the late 1960s. According to Cheruiyot and Simatwa (2016), it is widely acknowledged that some Reverend Sisters began providing formal guidance at St. Theresa's College, Oke-Ado in Ibadan, in 1959, out of concern for the graduates of the school. Since then, efforts have been made to establish counselling unit in different schools with a view to providing professional counselling services as well as meeting the academic, physiological, emotional and spiritual needs of young adults who are the bulk of students in various schools. However, studies have shown that counselling services in Nigeria's educational institutions is at its lowest ebbs due to mirage of challenges. Some of the identified challenges militating against the effectiveness counselling services in Nigeria include lack of conducive counselling office, poor funding of counselling units, lack of counselling materials and diagnostic tools, recruitment of unqualified counsellors among others (Owobamigbe & Ogunode, 2021).

The aforementioned challenges might be biting harder on public universities because of the population of students particularly federal universities in Nigeria. These challenges might be affecting the quality of counselling services with its attendant consequences on students' utilisation of counselling services as well as on students' satisfaction with counselling services in federal universities in Nigeria.

In a bid to enhancing effectiveness of counselling services in various levels of education across the world, numerous researches have been conducted regarding counselling and guidance. Udeshini (2023) studied the perception of students on guidance and counselling provided in Sri Lankan School System. The study showed that greater percentage of the students had low level of awareness of counselling services and students rarely patronised counselling units in the various educational institutions. Owobamigbe & Ogunode (2021) under took a review of challenges and solutions to the problems of counselling services in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The review indicated that inadequate trained counsellors, inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate of counselling materials and equipment were among the challenges confronting counselling services in higher

educational institutions in Nigeria. The review added that allocation of adequate fund to counselling centres, guidance and counselling services being an integral part of educational programme in various institution, employment of qualified professionals as well as the provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, materials and modern counselling equipments were part of the steps to increase the efficiency of counselling services at higher educational institutions in Nigeria.

Similarly, Tita-Nghamun (2016) reviewed the trends and difficulties in Cameroon State Universities' guidance and counselling services. According to the review, the main barriers to the institutions' ability to effectively provide counselling services were lack of qualified counsellors, skepticism about the effectiveness of guidance and counselling, lack of dedication on the part of government officials, insufficient funding, and lack of confidentiality. The review recommended better funding of educational institutions to improve effectiveness of the provision of counselling services. Ghebrehwet, Florence, and Okubatsion (2019) investigated how students in Keren Subzone Secondary Schools in the Anseba Region of Eritrea used counselling services. The survey discovered insufficient counselling resources and a lack of knowledge about counselling services. Additionally, the majority of the study's participants did not visit the institutions' counselling centres. Mwanaamina (2022) conducted a study on the evaluation of the quality of counselling services in Zanzibar: a case study of Zanzibar University and Abdulrahman Al-sumait University, Tanzania. According to the report, the institutions' counselling services were insufficient. Fasoni (2023) investigated how well-informed Osun State College of Education, Ilesa (now University of Ilesa) personnel and students were about the availability and accessibility of counselling services. The study discovered that students' awareness of the availability and accessibility of counselling service was low, although staff members' awareness was high, and that counselling resources were not sufficiently available. Abolanle, Olanrewaju, and Modester (2017) conducted a study on the need, awareness, perception, and utilisation of guidance and counselling services by students at the Federal University of Agriculture in Abeokuta, Nigeria. According to the study, regular sensitisation led to high counselling service patronage, which in turn raised students' awareness of counselling services. Sadara, Tanui and Kara (2022) examined how well students perceived the welfare services provided by Kenyan educational institutions. The study revealed that students had positive perception of counselling services in the institutions. Dieudonne (2022) investigated the evaluation of service provision in guidance and counselling departments on a few Rwandan Polytechnic schools. The study indicated that students' rated counselling high in availability and they were also contented with the quality of counselling services in the institutions. Okunaiya and Omovre (2021) studied counselling and mental health condition of students at Obafemi Awolowo University. The study showed that students were aware of counselling services and mental health issues but has low level of counselling patronage. Yagana, Bulama and Domiya (2020) investigated the availability of counselling services at higher educational institutions in Borno State in northern part of Nigeria. The study revealed that counselling services were sufficient in some institutions while they

were not adequately available in some institutions. Kilili (2018) conducted a research at the counselling centre of United States International University. The study indicated that students were highly satisfied with counselling services. The study also indicated that modern counselling technical gadgets as well as qualified personnel were deployed at the counselling centres. Adebowale (2011) found that counselling services were not adequately available in higher educational institutions in Southwestern Nigeria. Akopi and Ofole (2013) found that students were dissatisfied with counselling support services for students in National Open Open University Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The study:

1. assessed the level of awareness of students on counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria
2. assessed the level of adequacy of counselling services in the study area.
3. determined the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in the study area.
4. examined the influence of counselling services on students' satisfaction in the study area.

Research Questions

Three research questions were generated from the objectives of the study:

1. What is the level of students' awareness of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria?
2. What is the level of availability of counselling services in the study area?
3. What is the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in the study area?

Hypothesis

An hypothesis was also formulated to guide the study:

- There is no significant influence of counselling services on students' satisfaction in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria.

MATERIALS and METHODS

The research design for this study was descriptive survey research design. The study population comprised 193,526 students of the seven federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The study sample comprised 1,144 students. The selection of the sample was done through Multistage sampling procedure. At the first stage, Obafemi Awolowo University(OAU) Ile Ife, Osun State, University of Ibadan (UI), Ibadan, Oyo State, University of Lagos (UNILAG), Akoka, Lagos State were purposively selected. The justification for the selection of the three universities was that they may require more counselling

services because of the students' population in the institutions. In addition, 381, 381 and 382 students were proportionately selected from OAU, UI and UNILAG respectively through the use of Research Advisors (2006) at 0.05 significant level. The students were eventually selected using accidental sampling technique. The instrument for the study were tagged 'Counselling Services Questionnaire for Students (CSQS)'. Out of the 1,144 questionnaires that were distributed to the students, 1,108 copies were returned. All the copies of questionnaire returned were useful for analysis. Data were analysed using percentages, weighted averages and regression analysis.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the level of students' awareness of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria?

To answer research question one, items were elicited on the level of students' awareness of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The interpretation was based on percentage scores and decision was based on averages mean scores. The acronyms on the Table were interpreted as follow: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree and Strongly Disagree (SD). To ascertain the level of students' awareness of counselling services, Strongly Agree (SA) was regarded as "high" (70%-100%), Agree was regarded as "moderate" (50%-69%), while Disagree and Strongly Disagree were collapse as "low" (1%-49%).

Table 1. Students' Responses on their Level of Awareness of Counselling Services

	Counselling Service	SA F (%)	A F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)	Decision
1	I am aware of the location of counselling unit in my university	194 (17.5)	111 (10)	471 (42.5)	332 (30)	Low
2	I can recognise my school counsellors if I see them any where	55 (5.0)	86 (7.8)	377 (34)	590 (53.2)	Low
3	I am aware that counselling unit in my school offers academic counselling	166 (15)	170 (15.3)	277 (25)	495 (44.7)	Low
4	I am aware that my school offers emotional and psychological counselling for all students	208 (18.8)	133 (12)	443 (40)	324 (29.2)	Low
5	I am aware of the procedures for accessing counselling services in my school	133 (12)	89 (8)	499 (45.1)	387 (34.9)	Low
6	I am aware of referral process for receiving counselling services in my school	73 (6.6)	165 (14.9)	388 (35)	482 (43.5)	Low
7	I am aware that my school offers career counselling	109 (9.8)	164 (14.8)	171 (15.4)	664 (60)	Low
	Weighted Average	12.1	12	33.9	42	Low

Source: Authors' field work, 2025

Table 1 depicts the level of students' awareness of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. According to the Table, students demonstrated low level of awareness of

counselling services in the study area. It was shown that majority of the students were not aware of the location of counselling unit in their institutions. Not only that, students could not recognise their school counsellors when they see them on or outside the campus. Similarly, students were not aware that academic, career, psychological, emotional and spiritual counselling services are available to them. Furthermore, students lack awareness of the procedures for accessing counselling services as well as counselling referral procedures in the institutions. This lack of students' awareness of counselling services could have been as a result of the level of availability of the services and this could have resulted in low patronage of counselling services by the students in the study area.

Research Question 2: What is the level of availability of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria?

To answer research question two, items were elicited on the level of availability of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The interpretation was based on percentage scores and decision was based on averages mean scores. The acronyms on the Table were interpreted as follow: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree and Strongly Disagree (SD). To ascertain the level availability of counselling services in the study area, Strongly Agree (SA) was regarded as "high" (70%-100%), Agree was regarded as "moderate" (50%-69%), while Disagree and Strongly Disagree were collapse as "low" (1%-49%).

Table 2. Students' Response on the Level of Availability of Counselling Services in Federal Universities in Southwestern Nigeria

	Counselling Service	SA F (%)	A F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)	Decision
1	There are adequate counselling centres for all students in my university	50 (4.5)	202 (18.2)	199 (18.1)	657 (59.2)	Low
2	The number of counsellors in my university are adequate	101 (9.1)	140 (12.7)	276 (24.9)	591 (53.3)	Low
3	Counsellors in my school display high level of professionalism and confidentiality when dealing with students	70 (6.3)	120 (10.8)	116 (10.5)	802 (72.4)	Low
4	There is regular academic and emotional counselling for all students	99 (8.9)	100 (9.1)	69 (6.2)	840 (75.8)	Low
5	Procedures for accessing counselling service in my university are simple	110 (9.9)	89 (8)	184 (16.6)	725 (65.5)	Low
6	The management of my school cares about students' mental health	73 (6.6)	165 (14.9)	621 (56.1)	248 (22.4)	Low
7	Counselling centres in my institution are furnished with necessary materials and equipment for effective counselling services	101 (9.1)	140 (12.7)	276 (24.9)	591 (53.3)	Low
8	There are regular individual, peer and group counselling services in my institution	50 (4.5)	202 (18.2)	199 (18.1)	657 (59.2)	Low
9	Academic staff and non - academic staff in my department encourage students to visit counselling centre when the need arises	60 (5.4)	120 (10.8)	126 (11.4)	802 (72.4)	Low
10	There are regular career counselling and referrals for students at all levels in my university	98 (8.8)	175 (15.8)	94 (8.5)	741 (66.9)	Low
	Weighted Average	7.3	13.1	19.5	60.1	1.5

Source: Authors' field work, 2025

Table 2 depicts the level of availability of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. According to the Table, 23.7% agreed that there were adequate counselling centres for all students in their university, while 76.3% disagreed, 21.8% agreed that the number of counsellors in their university were adequate, while 78.1 disagreed, 17.1% agreed that counsellors in their university displayed high level of professionalism and confidentiality when dealing with students, while 82.9% disagreed. Similarly, 18% agreed that there was regular academic and emotional counselling for all students, while 82% disagreed, 17.9% agreed that the procedures for accessing counselling service in their university were simple, while 82.1% disagreed. Also, 21.5% agreed that the management of their institution cared about students' mental health, while 78.5% disagreed. Furthermore, 21.8% agreed that counselling centres in their institutions are furnished with necessary materials and equipment for effective counselling services, while 78.2% disagreed. In the same vein, 22.7% agreed that there were regular individual, peer and group counselling services in their institutions, while 77.3% disagreed. 16.2% of the students agreed that academic staff and non - academic staff in

their departments usually encourage them to visit counselling centre when the need arises while 83.8% disagreed and 24.6% agreed that there were regular career counselling and referrals for students at all levels in their university, while 75.4% disagreed. The weighted average of (1.5) also buttressed the results.

Research Question 3: What is the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria?

To answer research question three, items were elicited on the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The interpretation was based on percentage scores and decision was based on averages mean scores. The acronyms on the Table were interpreted as follow: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree, Strongly Disagree (SD). To ascertain the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services, Strongly Agree (SA) was regarded as "high" (70%-100%), Agree was regarded as "moderate" (50%-69%), while Disagree and Strongly Disagree were collapse as "low" (1%-49%).

Table 3. Students' Response on their Level of Satisfaction with Counselling Services in Federal Universities in Southwestern Nigeria

	Counselling Service	SA F (%)	A F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)	WA
1	I am satisfied with the adequacy of counselling centres in my university	80 (7.2)	350 (31.6)	160 (14.4)	518 (46.8)	Low
2	I am satisfied with the number of counsellors in my university	101 (9.1)	140 (12.7)	310 (28)	557 (50.2)	Low
3	I am satisfied with the level of professionalism and confidentiality with which students are treated by my school counsellors	50 (4.5)	140 (12.6)	168 (15.2)	750 (67.7)	Low
4	I am satisfied with academic, career, psychological and emotional counselling services available to students in my university	150 (13.5)	189 (17.1)	210 (19)	559 (50.4)	Low
5	I am satisfied with the procedures for accessing counselling service in my university	150 (13.5)	189 (17.1)	268 (24.2)	501 (45.2)	Low
6	I am satisfied with the attitude of teaching staff, non-teaching staff and the management on mental health of the students.	123 (11.1)	197 (17.8)	531 (47.9)	257 (23.2)	Low
7	I am satisfied with the general condition of my university counselling centre as well as available counselling materials and equipment at the centre.	129 (11.6)	197 (17.8)	351 (31.7)	431 (38.9)	Low
	Weighted Average	10.1	20.5	25.8	43.6	1.5

Source: Authors' field work, 2025

Table 3 depicts the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria. The result indicated that students' satisfaction with adequacy of counselling services, number of school counsellors, counselling materials, equipment and technological gadgets was

low. It was also shown that students were dissatisfied with the treatment received from school counsellors, referral process, academic, non- academic and management's attitude towards students' mental health and academic, career, emotional and psychological counselling services offered.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of counselling services on students' satisfaction in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 4. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.922 ^a	0.86	0.76	12.09268

The R-squared value (R^2) is 0.860, which means that approximately 86% of the variation in students' satisfaction can be explained by the predictor variable counselling services in the model.

Table 5. Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	30051.09	7	4293.013	29.357	.000 ^b
1	Residual	146817.909	1004	146.233		
	Total	176868.999	1011			

The ANOVA Table shows that the regression model is statistically significant. The F-statistic of 29.357 with a p-value of .000 suggests that the predictor variable has a significant effect on students' satisfaction.

Table 6. The Results of Regression Analysis: Model Summary

Model	Variable	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.894	3.095		15.054	0.000
	Counselling Services	0.004	0.362	0.212	5.16	0.000

Constant (Intercept): The constant term is 20.894. This represents the predicted students' satisfaction when the predictor variable set to zero. However, since it is unlikely that the predictor variable can be zero in this context; this value might not have a practical interpretation.

Counselling Services: The coefficient is 0.004 with a p-value of .000. A one-unit increase in counselling services is associated with an increase of 0.004 units in students' satisfaction. The Beta value (0.212) indicates a positive influence. The regression analysis shows that there existed significant influence of counselling services on students' satisfaction, hence, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The results of data analysis on the level of students' awareness of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria revealed that students had low level of awareness of counselling services in their institutions. It was shown that majority of the students were not aware of the location of counselling units in their institutions. It was also shown that students could not recognise their school counsellors when they see them on or outside the campus. Similarly, students were not aware that academic, career, psychological, emotional and spiritual counselling services were available to them. Furthermore, students lack awareness of the procedures for accessing counselling services as well as counselling referral procedures in the institutions. This was in tandem with Fasoni (2023) who found that students' awareness level on availability and accessibility of counselling resources was low in Osun State College of Education, Ilesa. Similarly, Ghebrehwet, Florence & Okubatsion (2019) found that students lack awareness of counselling services in educational institutions in Anseba Region, Eritrea. This was not different from Udeshini (2023) who found that majority of the students in Sri Lankan School System had low level of awareness of counselling services. This however negated the findings of Okunaiya and Omovre (2021) who reported that students of Obafemi Awolowo University had high level of awareness of counselling services and mental health issues. Similarly, Abolanle, *et al* (2017) found that students had high level of awareness of counselling services as a result of regular sensitisation in Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

The results of data analysis on the level of availability of counselling services revealed that the level of availability of counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria was low. It was shown that counselling services were inadequate and career, academic, emotional and psychological counselling were rarely organised for students. Similarly, there was inadequate trained counsellors while the available counsellors do not treat students with respect and professionally. It was also shown that academic, non- academic and school management did not care about the mental health of students manifesting in lack or inadequate referral of students to counselling centres. Furthermore, counselling centres were not furnished with necessary counselling materials, facilities and modern technological gadgets for effective counselling services. This was in line with Owobamigbe & Ogunode (2021) who pointed out that inadequate trained counsellors, inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate counselling materials and equipment were among the major challenges confronting counselling services in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Adebowale (2011) found that counselling services

were not adequately available in tertiary institutions in South West universities in Nigeria. Yagana, *et al* (2020) submitted that counselling services were available in some higher educational institutions in Borno State, Nigeria while they were not adequate in some of the institutions.

The results of data analysis on the level of students' satisfaction with counselling services in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria revealed that students' level of satisfaction with counselling services was generally low. The result indicated that students' satisfaction with adequacy of counselling services, number of school counsellors, counselling materials, equipment and technological gadgets was low. It was also shown that students were dissatisfied with the treatment received from school counsellors, referral process, academic, non- academic and management's attitude towards students' mental health and academic, career, emotional and psychological counselling services offered. This was in tandem with Akopi and Ofole (2013) who found that students were dissatisfied with learners' support services (counselling services) in National Open Open University Nigeria.

The result of data analysis on the influence of counselling services on students' satisfaction in federal universities in Southwestern Nigeria indicated that counselling services had significant influence on students' satisfaction. This was in line with Daramola, Afolabi and Jemilehin (2024) who found that counselling services had significant influence on students' academic performance and satisfaction. Shabeena, Muhammad & Muhammad (2023) submitted that counselling services had significant influence on students' academic, moral, and social development. Kurniawan, Supriatna & Yustiana (2021) found that guidance and counselling services had positive effects on students' satisfaction.

Additional Declaration

Author Contributions

In this study, the contribution of the authors was equal; both authors contributed equally to the development of the research idea, data analysis, writing and proofreading stages.

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No artificial intelligence support was received in any part of this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this study.

Ethics Approval

In all processes of this study, the principles of Pen Academic Publishing Research Ethics Policy were followed.

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