

# Necessity And Framework For Evaluation Of A Formal Guidance And Counselling Programme In Taraba State University Jalingo. Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study investigated the necessity and framework for evaluation of a formal Guidance and Counselling programme in Taraba State University (TSU), Jalingo, to improve students' academic achievement, mental health, and readiness for the workforce. Using a descriptive survey design, the study took inspiration from a population of 542 people, including undergraduate students, academic personnel, and non-academic staff with a sample of 230 respondents selected via Yamane's (1967) formula and stratified random sampling. Information was gathered using the Guidance and Counselling Programme Assessment Questionnaire (GCPAQ) and analysed through mean scores, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. Results revealed prevalent student challenges, including academic adjustment issues, examination anxiety, financial stress, and career indecision, with a grand mean of 3.32 signalling strong consensus on the need for professional counselling. Respondents endorsed a centrally managed centre under the Student Affairs Division ( $\bar{x} = 3.33$ ), delivering comprehensive services encompassing academic, personal, social, and career counselling ( $\bar{x} = 3.38$ ). A phased, time-bound implementation plan with diversified funding ( $\bar{x} = 3.20$ ) and robust monitoring mechanisms ( $\bar{x} = 3.33$ ) was advocated. The study concludes that a dedicated Guidance and Counselling Centre is vital for advancing both overall student development and institutional excellence at TSU, recommending the hiring of competent counselors, ongoing funding, administrative support, and ongoing assessment for long-term effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** Guidance and Counselling, Framework, Evaluation, Students, Academic Performance, TSU.

## 1. Introduction

Some experts in educational research measurement and evaluation have noted that Taraba State University, Jalingo, is among the fastest-growing universities in the northeastern region of Nigeria. This is similar to other Nigerian tertiary institutions that host a diverse student population navigating a crucial transition into adulthood. Additionally, students may encounter several obstacles that impact both their academic performance and personal development.

Nevertheless, some of these difficulties include poor study habits, exam anxiety, difficulty adjusting to university-level learning, and perplexity about course choices. Stress, depression, anxiety, homesickness, low self-esteem, and drug misuse. Peer pressure, dating problems, roommate disputes, and cultural adaptations. Insufficient job ready abilities, a lack of vocational advice, and uncertainty regarding future career possibilities. Currently, support for these issues may be the overall purpose of this study is to design a framework for the evaluation of an effective and comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Programme at Taraba State University (TSU), Jalingo.

## 2. The Evolving Needs of University Students

Research shows that psychological anguish is becoming more common among college students worldwide. A crucial time marked by intense academic pressure, financial strain, identity exploration, and social adaptations is the transition to university life. (Kadison&DiGeronimo, 2004). These difficulties are made worse in Nigeria by elements including cultural pressures, poor infrastructure, economic instability, and cultism. (Okocha&Alika, 2019).

Studies specific to Nigerian universities highlight common student concerns:

- i. Academic Stress: Oluwatoyin (2018) discovered that the main causes of stress, which result in subpar academic performance and, in extreme situations, dropout, are exam anxiety, poor time management, and new teaching techniques. .
- ii. Mental Health Issues: Awoyinfa (2020) noted substance misuse, depression, and anxiety as rising issues that are frequently underreported because of stigma and a lack of knowledge about available resources. .

- iii. Career Indecision: Alutu and Aluede (2017) highlight the fact that many Nigerian students select their courses based more on JAMB scores or parental influence than on their own potential, which results in a lack of motivation and job disorientation after graduation. .
- iv. Socio-economic Pressments: Financial difficulties are a primary stressor, forcing students to balance part-time work with studies and leading to feelings of inadequacy and social exclusion (Egbochuku, 2019).

### 3. Theoretical Frameworks

Counseling programs that work are based on well-established psychological theories. In a university context, three fundamental frameworks are especially pertinent. :

- i. **Developmental Theory:** Pioneered by theorists like Erikson and Super, According to this method, counseling is a proactive procedure that helps kids move through predicted stages of growth (e.g., identity vs. role confusion, career exploration). Instead of only reactive, one-on-one therapy, a developmental approach promotes preventive, outreach-oriented programs like workshops and seminars. (Ipaye, 2018). This is ideal for TSU since it seeks to assist all students, not just those who are experiencing difficulties. .
- ii. **Person-Centred Therapy (Carl Rogers):**A secure and nonjudgmental counseling setting is built on this humanistic approach, which is founded on congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. It gives pupils the freedom to solve problems on their own, which is essential for developing self-reliance and self-efficacy. (Corey, 2017).
- iii. **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** CBT is a useful, evidence-based strategy that works well for treating some problems like depression, anxiety, and bad study habits. It is very useful to academic stress and exam anxiety since it assists students in recognizing and altering maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors. (Okocha&Alike, 2019). Because it enables counselors to customize their techniques to each student's requirements, an integrative approach that draws from these and other theories is regarded as best practice.

### 4. Documented Impact of Counselling Services

The benefits of university counseling centers are consistently shown by empirical research. :

**Academic Improvement:** Turner and Quinn's (2019) study revealed a favorable relationship between better GPA and the use of counseling (GPA). When compared to a control group, students who received counseling, especially for academic concerns, shown a notable improvement in their grades. .

**Retention and Persistence:** Strong student support services, including as counseling, are crucial for raising student retention rates, according to a meta-analysis by Wilson (2018). Counseling lowers dropout rates by assisting students in overcoming academic and personal obstacles.

**Mental Health and Welfare:** Research has demonstrated that university students' symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression can be effectively reduced with brief counseling. (Bewick, Koutsopoulou, & Barkham, 2010). This makes the campus environment healthier. .

**Career Readiness:** Aptitude assessment and internship coordination are examples of programs that have been shown to improve students' employability skills and self-efficacy in choosing career options (Okocha, 2017).

### 5. Challenges and Best Practices in the Nigerian Context

Along with recommended best practices, the literature also highlights difficulties unique to developing counseling programs in Nigerian universities:

- **Problem: Low Utilization and Stigma:** Many students believe that getting counseling is a sign of weakness or insanity (Egbochuku, 2019).
- **Best Practice:** Using familiar language (such as "Student Success Centre"), including counseling into orientation programs, and launching aggressive awareness efforts can all assist normalize help-seeking behavior.
- **Problem: Insufficient Staffing and funding:** numerous counseling services at universities are understaffed and devoid of essential resources. (Okocha&Alike, 2019).

- Best Practice: As suggested for TSU, a gradual implementation strategy is advised. It can also be advantageous to look for alternative funding through grants and collaborations with outside groups (such as NGOs or health authorities).
- Problem: Absence of a Holistic Model: Some Nigerian centers that are currently in operation prioritize academic counseling above professional and personal counseling. Best Practice: For optimum impact, a complete model that takes into account the "whole student"—academic, personal, social, and professional development—is essential (Ipaye, 2018).
- Challenge: Cultural Sensitivity: Counselling approaches must be adapted to the local cultural context of Taraba State, respecting diverse ethnic and religious values.
- Best Practice: Recruiting counsellors with an understanding of the local context and providing ongoing cultural competence training is essential.

The literature overwhelmingly supports the critical role of guidance and counselling.

## 6. Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The study's population consists of all 542 enrolled undergraduate students in Taraba State University's Faculty of Education during the 2024–2025 academic year, as well as a few chosen academic and non-academic staff members. Since a structured questionnaire was the main tool used to gather data, 230 participants were chosen for the study's sample size in order to account for a 10% non-response rate utilizing Taro Yamane sampling techniques. To guarantee that every subgroup is represented, the stratified random selection procedure with proportionate allocation was also employed. The Guidance and Counseling Program Assessment Questionnaire was the main structured questionnaire used to gather data (GCPAQ). The collected data were examined using Descriptive Statistics and Inferential.

## 7. Discussion of Major Findings:

### Academic Guidance and Adjustment

The data shows that there is a significant degree of agreement that academic guidance services are generally seen favorably (overall mean = 3.41; SD = 0.67). The statement on receiving useful advice on time management and study strategies had the highest mean (3.74), indicating the effectiveness of academic support. Students also agreed that counseling services help manage academic stress and exam anxiety (Mean = 3.48). On the other hand, a modest mean (3.07) for assisting new students in acclimating to the university indicates that orientation and transition assistance should be improved.

### Vocational/Career Guidance

Students' perceptions of career and vocational assistance were generally favorable, with an overall mean of 3.23 and SD = 0.75. The highest-rated item (Mean = 3.56) shows that counseling services effectively help students determine their skills, interests, and career strengths. Similarly, assistance in selecting a post-graduation career was rated well (Mean = 3.33). However, the availability of professional information (Mean = 2.93) and career seminars (Mean = 3.11) was considered moderate, indicating a need for more outreach, awareness, and frequency of such events. .

### Personal and Social Guidance

Strong student satisfaction with social and personal counseling services was demonstrated by this area, which had the highest total mean (3.46) with SD = 0.66. Students highly agreed that services raise awareness of behavioral and mental health concerns (Mean = 3.59) and that counselors are friendly and private (Mean = 3.70). These results demonstrate the unit's beneficial contribution to students' psychological health. Relationship skills development, on the other hand, was rated somewhat lower (Mean = 3.26), indicating a need for more organized interpersonal development initiatives. .

### Program Effectiveness and Perception

With an overall mean of 3.37 and SD = 0.69, students generally thought the G/C program was beneficial. Respondents concurred that counselors are honest and competent professionals (Mean = 3.56) and that they would suggest the services to others (Mean = 3.48). Although the program is trusted, its visibility and delivery should be improved to increase overall impact, as indicated by the comparatively lower overall satisfaction score (Mean = 3.07). .

## 8. Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate the importance of Taraba State University, Jalingo's Guidance and Counseling (G/C) department in helping students in their academic, professional, social, and personal lives. Strong engagement from those most directly involved in teaching and learning was shown by the demographic data, which showed a preponderance of academic personnel and higher female participation.

Students' opinions of the G/C services were largely favorable across all parts, as evidenced by mean ratings above 3.0 in each subject. Although orientation help for new students may be improved, academic coaching received positive comments, particularly in areas pertaining to study skills and stress management. Although vocational and career counseling was thought to be beneficial in determining individual talents and future paths, more frequent career seminars and updated.

## 9. Recommendations

The following suggestions are put up to improve the efficacy of Taraba State University, Jalingo's Guidance and Counseling (G/C) program in light of the study's findings: Develop structured programs specifically aimed at helping new students adjust to university life, including workshops on academic expectations, campus resources, and social integration.

- i. Make career workshops, CV writing sessions, interview preparation, and entrepreneurship initiatives more frequent and visible.
- ii. To support mental health initiatives, expand programs that foster behavioral awareness, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills.
- iii. Make sure students are aware of the counseling services and activities that are available by using a variety of communication channels, including as emails, social media, posters, and student forums.
- iv. To keep counselors up to date and implement best practices in academic, career, and personal counseling, schedule frequent training sessions.

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