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EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA (PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS)

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ABSTRACT

Education is an instrument for national transformation, security, and development. It is a social responsibility of any government and the birthright of every citizen as a member of any country. Therefore any nation that toys with the education of her student indirectly invites disaster to her national development goals, transformation, positive changes, and innovation. At the forefront of this burning issue is the harsh reality of the transferred behaviours from school to society hence this study sought to investigate educational support services and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Four research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The study was conducted in Enugu Education Zone using a descriptive survey research design with a sample of 240 students selected using a purposive random sampling method from a population of 12,848 students. The researcher structured questionnaire face validated by three experts from the field of Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation respectively from Enugu State University of Science and Technology was used to elicit the desired response. The reliability coefficient was 0.73 determined using the test re-test coefficient. Method of data analysis were descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation used to answer research questions while a t-test was used to analyze the hypotheses. The result among others revealed that support services, as well as personnel in public secondary schools, are almost non-existing while available ones are not in the best condition. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government should make education its major priority by ensuring that necessary facilities and support services are adequately provided in public secondary schools for the effectiveness of the system.

KEYWORDS

Education, support services, academic performance, secondary school students, psychology.



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Introduction

Education is a lifelong process which aims at imparting skill needed to live a purposeful life. It is also a process by which a sound mind in a sound body is developed hence important indices for measuring a country's social, economic, political and technological development. Therefore one of the goals of education is for every student to stand out both in school and outside the school environment hence a student's academic performance is dependent on both mental and physical capabilities of the student. This is because the development of any nation is dependent on its educational system thus education has been and still is the weapon through which the world have combated underdevelopment, transmit knowledge, life-long skills as well as positive attitude which spurs meaningful contribution to the development of self and society (Idehen, 2021). Moreover educational system is one institution that the society looks up to in order to alleviate all its problems ranging from educational, social, financial, moral and mental. Thus teaching and learning process is likened to the refinery which produces product the society needs in order to become truly transformed. Therefore deficiency in educational system has resultant negative effect in the overall life of the society ranging from poor academic performance, increase in school drop-out and other social vices. This is partly because teaching and learning are done in isolation without educational support.

Educational support services are those relevant activities that teachers, students and other members of school community utilize in order to enhance effectiveness in the teaching and learning process as well as community services in the school. According to Ogundele & Oshopene (2014), educational support services is an integral and essential part of educational administration hence they are services provided in the school for learners which aid interpersonal harmony, conducive teaching-learning environment and personal institutional esteem within and outside the institution. Therefore their availability and utilization enhances effective goal achievement of the system. Furthermore, educational support services are services provided by schools in order to facilitate the implementation of educational policies, attain educational goals and promote effectiveness of the educational system (FME, 2014). They are also services that promote teachers' effectiveness in the discharge of professional duties as well as improvement of students learning. Okon & Okpa (2020) opined that educational support services are literally not educational themselves however their specialized function is aimed at improving teaching and learning in the educational system hence schools provide them in order to make teaching and learning effective. They also stressed that educational support services include all material and human resources that provide educational support to teachers, learners and other sectors of educational system.

Educational support services are provided in order to enhance productivity as well as prevention of poor academic performance among students by encouraging positive thinking and creativity towards the attainment of academic pursuit. They are also provided to find out student's problem as well as proffer realistic solutions in order to promote a healthy environment in the school. This environment aids in nurturing the social, emotional, physical, spiritual well-being and cognitive development of the teachers and students (Uchendu, Ekanem & Jonah, 2013). This is because a safer, supportive and healthy school environment is fundamental to the overall performance of a student. The following are educational support services in public secondary schools: well-equipped clinic or sick bay, ICT, internet, sports facilities, counselling and functional library.

According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2014), the aims of educational support services include but not limited to:

- i. Enhancement of teaching as well as improvement of teachers' competence.
- ii. Provision of conducive school environment for learning.
- iii. Making learning realistic and more meaningful to learners.
- iv. Making education more cost effective.
- v. Promotion of in-service education for teacher.

Types of Educational support services in secondary schools

- a. **Counseling Services:** This is the type of service provided to students in order to help them become fully aware of themselves especially as they respond to their immediate environment. Relating it to school environment, it is a process by which a counsellor helps student learn, understand themselves and their environment in order to choose the right type of behaviour, develop, grow, progress and mature

educationally, vocationally and personally (Egbo, 2013). This service is provided in secondary schools in order to evaluate students' academic performance as well as modify behaviours that interfere with school related goals. Thus counseling services provide adequate orientation, information, appraisal, placement, and follow-up as well as referral services in order to ensure that the problems associated with learning are prevented or tackled (Suleiman, Olanrewaju & Suleiman, 2019). School counselling services are provided by counsellors and school psychologist.

- b. School Health Services:** This comprises all activities in the school environment for the promotion of the health and development of the school community. Next to the family, the school is the primary institution responsible for the development of young people all over the world. This is because the school has direct contact with more than 95% of the nation's young people aged 5-17 years for about 6 hours a day up to 13 years of their social, psychological, physical and intellectual development (FME, 2017). Although largely dependent and not considered productive in terms of income generation, the health status of students are one of the indices used in determining a nation's state of development (Olatunya, Oseni, Olaleye, Akani & Oyelami, 2015). When managed effectively, school health services contribute significantly to academic performance through the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, smoking, drug abuse, control of epidemics and malnutrition amongst others. It also leads to increase in school attendance and decrease in school drop-out (Ogundele & Oshopene, 2014). Idehen (2020) also posited that the purpose of school health services is to help students achieve maximum physical and mental health in order to obtain full benefit from education hence it is assessed through pre-entry medical screening, routine health screening, sick bay and referral services amongst others. School health services are provided in schools by medical doctors, nurses, clinicalpsychologist, dieticians and counsellors amongst others.
- c. School Library:** The school library is at the heart of any educational enterprise as well as one of the most important educational support services (FME, 2014). The school library is integral to the teaching and learning process by facilitating the work of the classroom teacher as well as making sure every student has adequate access to educational resources. The library is also a means of knowledge and factual information, a center of self-education and intellectual recreation as well as a beacon of enlightenment which provides preserved knowledge (Oyetola & Adio, 2020). The school library services encourage reading, literary appreciation, intellectual development and information center for school curriculum. It also encourages innovation, curiosity, creative thinking and problem solving as well as a catalyst for literacy, reading, teaching and scaffolding. Secondary school library services is provided by school librarian.
- d. Information and Communication Technology Services:** ICT services are provided through technological tool and communication aid integrated into lesson in order to become more engaged. This is because technology provides different educational opportunities to student thereby making learning and teaching fun and enjoyable (Eniekebi, 2021). This kind of services provided through computers, internet, projectors and audio-visual aids amongst others not only help in lesson preparation and presentation, it enhances feedback from students from different parts of the world thereby making the world a global village. This kind of services is provided by ICT operators and technologists in secondary schools.
- e. Recreational Services:** These are services provided through instructional sports programs which ensures students learn basic skills of sports and extra mural sports program which provides opportunities for talented students in the school to excel in their chosen sports activities through organized sporting competition (Udokanma, Akpu, & Onwunaka, 2016). Recreational services in secondary school are provided by physical education teachers, coaches and game masters/mistress amongst others.

Psychological Implications of Educational support services

1. Comprehensive and coordinated educational support services are very important for the psychological, social, emotional and character development of students in order to improve academic performance of students.
2. They foster positive relationship among teachers and students thereby increasing student's attachment to school with decrease in frustration.

3. Educational support services are proven way to raise retention in learning hence increase in graduation rate. This is because it integrates class work into educational environment thereby increasing student's attention to curricular, residential and social lives.
4. It supports teacher's effort to tap student academic potential and creativity.
5. It reduces frustration in learning which leads to educational wastage while impacting greatly on the overall quality of the educational system.

Academic performance or academic achievement is the extent to which a student has attained a short or long term educational goal (Animba & Obika, 2020). Academic performance is important because it is strongly linked to the positive outcomes we value. Students who are academically successful with high level of socio-emotional intelligence are more likely to be employed, have stable employment than those with less education. Academic performance is also very important for the successful physical, social, psychological, mental and mental development of students as well as better integration into the society. In Nigeria, academic excellence, qualifications and high performance attainment are major parameters for recruitment, placement and advancement in both public and private sector. Most important, these parameters are highly adopted in selection of candidate for admission into tertiary institutions and colleges too. This is because grades serve as medium of communication to students, teachers and parents about a student's mastery of the object, strength, weakness and criteria for graduation because it gives adequate information about a student for possible admission into higher school of learning. Academic instruction is arguably the primary business of education and measurement of academic performance occurring at multiple levels for different purposes. For example, classroom teachers often conduct formative and summative test in order to evaluate student's mastery while some test are designed primarily to measure progress at a school level. Each of these kinds of assessment engender significant questions related to test design, types of decision supported by the result, alternative assessment and accommodations. Thus the interconnectivity between subjects studied in secondary schools makes it possible for students to acquire life skill for better integration into the society. These connections are evident in educational services provided in schools like recreational, counselling, library, school health services amongst others.

Theoretical Framework

The essence of theoretical framework in a study of this nature is to establish scientific justifications why certain phenomenon occur as it were with possibility of empirical verification hence the theoretical framework of this study was based on the following theory: Connectivism Learning theory postulated by George Siemens & Stephen Downes (2005). This theory posited that students learn through the combination of thought, theories and general information in a useful manner. It also opines that student constant connectedness to different support services give them opportunities to make choices about learning, promotes group collaboration and discussion which allows different viewpoint when making decisions and problem solving. According to this theory, students are seen as a node in a network which are connected to other objects like book, internet amongst others for better academic performance. Hence connectivism learning theory posits that students learn when they make connections or links between various nodes of information in order to form knowledge. Therefore since learning is a process of connection through diversity of opinions, there is need to support learning with educational services in order to expose learners to healthy environment, superior information, multiple skill and solution to academic problems.

Research Question

1. What are the available educational support services in public secondary schools of Enugu State?
2. What are the condition of educational support services in public secondary schools of Enugu State?
3. What are the available educational support services personnel in public secondary schools of Enugu State?
4. What is the level of utilization of support services in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis guided the study at $P < 0.05$

H₀₁: There are no significant differences between mean ratings of male and female student on available educational support services and academic performance of public secondary school students in Enugu State.

H₀₂: There is no significant differences between mean ratings of male and female student on conditions of educational support services and academic performance of public secondary school students in Enugu State.

H₀₃: There is no significant differences between mean ratings of male and female student on available educational support personnel and academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State.

H₀₄: There is no significant differences between mean ratings of male and female student on level of utilization of educational support services and academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A survey design is one in which generalizations are made over the entire population from a sample population (Uzoagulu, 2013). The design was used because descriptive survey design allows for the description of condition and situation as they exist in their natural setting. The study was delimited to Enugu Education zone of Enugu State Nigeria because of its heterogeneous nature which allow the researcher sample opinions from rural and urban settings though location was not a major variable. A sample of 240 students made up of 90 male and 150 female students was selected using purposive sampling method from a population of 12, 848 students as managed by Post Primary Secondary School Management Board (PPSMB), 2021). A researcher designed instrument titled “Educational Support Services and Academic Performance of Secondary Schools (ESSSAP)” was used to elicit required response from the respondents. The instrument was face validated by three experts; two in Educational Psychology and one from Measurement and Evaluation respectively from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Reliability coefficient was determined using test re-test with coefficient of 0.73 obtained. 250 copies of questionnaire were given out with 245 properly filled and returned through the assistance of two researcher trained personnel. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to analyze the differences between male and female mean ratings. Where the mean is equal or greater than 2.5, the decision is strongly agreed and agreed respectively for research questions 1-3 and very high extent and high extent for research question 4. Similarly when the cal (t) is greater than crit (t), the null hypothesis was significant and accepted otherwise the null hypothesis is rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the available educational support services in public secondary schools of Enugu State?

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1	Counselling services are provided in my school	2.06	0.53	Agreed
2	My school provides library service to students	1.71	0.64	Strongly Disagreed
3	There is a sick bay in my school	3.39	0.68	Strongly Agreed
4	My school has sports and recreational facilities	3.55	0.58	Strongly Agreed
5	There is an ICT laboratory in my school	2.68	0.88	Strongly Agreed

Grand mean: 2.70

Table 1a showed the results of the first research question answered. It revealed the values of mean, standard deviation and decisions of the respondents. The values indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that there are available support services in secondary schools.

Hypothesis 1: There are no significant differences between male and female student ratings on available educational support services and academic performance of public secondary school students in Enugu State.

Table 1a: t-test analysis of male and female student ratings on available educational services and academic performance.

Group	N	\bar{X}	Df	t(cal)	t-critical	Dec
Male student	90	15.45	238	-2.674	0.008	Accepted
Female student	150	16.10				

Table 1b showed results of the first null hypothesis analyzed. The values appeared in negative figures and indicated lower ratings between available educational services and academic performance. The null hypothesis was rejected and its alternative accepted.

Research Question 2: What are the conditions of educational support services in public secondary schools of Enugu State?

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1	There is a well-equipped counselling services for students in my school	2.05	0.70	Agreed
2	The sick bay in my school has all the necessary medical kits for emergency	1.98	0.69	Strongly Disagreed
3	My school library is well equipped with relevant books	2.20	0.59	Agreed
4	Computer classes are taken in ICT laboratory	1.20	0.61	Strongly Disagreed
5	Sports and recreational facilities in my school are well-equipped	2.22	0.86	Agreed

Grand mean: 2.50

Table 1a showed the results of the second research question answered. It revealed the values of mean, standard deviation and decisions of the respondents. The values indicated that the respondents agreed strongly on the conditions of the available support services in public secondary schools in Enugu education zone.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant differences between male and female student ratings on conditions of educational support services and academic performance of public secondary school students in Enugu education zone.

Table 2b: t-test analysis of male and female student ratings on conditions of available educational services and academic performance.

Group	N	\bar{X}	Df	t(cal)	t-critical	Dec
Male student	90	14.34	238	-20.573	.000	Accepted
Female student	150	17.28				

Table 2b showed results of the second null hypothesis analyzed. The values appeared in negative figures and indicated lower ratings between conditions of available educational support services and academic performance. The null hypothesis was rejected and its alternative accepted.

Research Question 3: What are the available educational support services personnel in public secondary schools of Enugu State?

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1	My school has a professional counsellor for students	2.26	0.57	Agreed
2	There are health professionals in my school	2.17	0.74	Strongly Disagreed
3	My school has professional librarians	2.17	0.74	Strongly Disagreed
4	There are sports instructors and coaches in my school	2.20	0.78	Strongly Disagreed
5	My school has ICT technologist	2.20	0.78	Strongly Disagreed

Grand mean: 2.45

Table 3a showed the results of the third research question answered. It revealed the values of mean, standard deviation and decisions of the respondents. The values indicated that the respondents disagreed on available educational support services personnel in public secondary schools in Enugu education zone.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant differences between male and female student ratings on available educational support services personnel and academic performance of public secondary school students in Enugu education zone.

Table 3b: t-test analysis of male and female student ratings on available educational services and academic performance.

Group	N	\bar{X}	Df	t(cal)	t-critical	Dec
Male student	90	9.75	238	-285	.0776	Accepted
Female student	150	9.82				

Table 3b showed results of the third null hypothesis analyzed. The values appeared in negative figures and indicated lower ratings between available educational support services and academic performance. The null hypothesis was rejected and its alternative accepted.

Research Question 4: What is the extent of utilization of support services in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1	I love visiting my school counsellor whenever I have academic problem	2.05	0.80	Low Extent

2	The sick bay in my school provides medical treatment to me whenever I am sick	1.95	0.85	Very Low Extent
3	I visit my school library regularly in order to read and collect books.	2.08	0.84	Low Extent
4	I use computers for learning in my school	2.09	0.83	Low Extent
5	My school has ICT technologist	2.12	0.89	Low Extent

Grand mean: 2.09

Table 4a showed the results of the fourth research question answered. It revealed the values of mean, standard deviation and decisions of the respondents. The values indicated that the respondents agreed that the level of utilization of available educational support services in public secondary schools in Enugu education zone is on a low extent.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant differences between mean ratings of male and female student on level of utilization of educational support services and academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State.

Group	N	\bar{X}	Df	t(cal)	t-critical	Dec
Male student	90	13.56	238	3.818	0.001	Accepted
Female student	150	11.90				

Table 4b showed results of the fourth null hypothesis analyzed. The values appeared in positive figure as well as lower ratings between level of utilization of available educational support services and academic performance. The null hypothesis was rejected and its alternative accepted.

Discussions of findings

The result from table 1 shows that there is a significant difference between available educational support services and academic performances of secondary school hence null hypothesis was rejected. This view is supported by Okon, Okpa & Okoi (2020) who stated that there is a high level of performance by students taught using educational support services. The result from table 2 reflected the fact that significant differences exist between conditions of educational support services and academic performance. The result is consistent with Owan (2018) who maintained that effective management of educational support services increases the level of academic performance of students. Results from table three shows that there is a significant difference between educational support services personnel and academic performance. This is in agreement with the work of Fakandu & Abdullahi (2018) that support services personnel are needed if educational goals will be achieved. Table 4 indicated a significant difference between the extent of utilization of educational support services and academic performances. This is in line with the study of Neji (2016) that extent of utilization determines academic performance of students.

Conclusion

To an average student, a good library, recreation, counselling, computers, internet and health services are integral and essential ingredients necessary for improvement of academic performances. Due to the interconnectivity between school subject and social and academic life of students, there is need to equip schools in the zone with necessary support services and personnel in order to make learning effective. By implication

therefore, educational support services is indeed very important to the academic performance of students. Therefore to minimize low academic performance in secondary schools, there is need to provide functional and efficient educational support services. This study therefore concludes that there is need for a well-coordinated educational support service in order to enhance high academic performance at all times.

Recommendation

- 1:** Government should provide more support services like library, sick bays, computers and sports centers amongst others in order to help students think outside the box.
- 2:** More counsellors, psychologist, librarians, technologist and sports masters and mistresses should be employed and integrated into teaching and learning for efficient education of students. A state of emergency should be declared by Enugu State government in education sector.
- 3:** Workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized for counsellors, school health practitioners, librarians and sports professionals amongst others regularly on the effective and efficient management of educational support services.
- 4:** Counselling centers should be established in all schools for adequate career choice for students as well as adequate integration of information and computer technology in schools.
- 5:** There should be a partnership between the government and the communities in provision of educational support services in public secondary schools of the state.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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