



Counselling Strategy to Equip Youths for National Stability and Integration

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined counselling strategies that can equip the youth for national stability and integration. One research question guided the study. The study design was descriptive survey. Two hundred and forty youths served as respondents to the study. A researcher-made instrument named Counselling Strategy to Equip Youths Instrument (CSEYI) was used to collect data which were analyzed using statistics such as percentages based on the frequency of items. Six major strategies that can equip youths for national stability and integration identified include talk on career and course selection, information on study habits and orientation for fresh students. Based on the findings it was recommended and concluded that talks on career and course selection, study habits and leadership be given to youths.

Keywords: Counselling, youths, national stability, Integration

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this study is to identify the counselling strategies that may equip youth for national stability and integration. The youths are known for their strength and dynamism. They constitute about 70% of the total population of Nigeria as observed from 2006 population census (Jega, 2012; Aibangbee, 2015). This population is very significant in the issue of national development. Recent observations in the country shows a lot of youth restiveness ranging from cult related activities, drug dependence, armed robberies, sexual assaults, kidnappings, religious intolerance amongst others. These are mostly perpetrated by young Nigerians. So the youths need to be properly guided and equipped for national stability and integration. For if the youths are not carried along properly, they could misdirect their energy and this is not in the best interest of the nation.

The youths can hinder valuable support for national stability and integration, so they need to be guided and well equipped to be fully integrated into the nation. According to Alabi (2004) they are a vital source of manpower and poses leadership potentials if fully exploited and properly channeled to contribute to national stability and development they will be of immense value. The youths need to be equipped for national stability and integration through counselling, for whatever is good if not properly managed can be a threat to national stability.

Gibble (2010), asserts that almost half of the world's population is under age 25. He added that the size of the population ages 15 to 24 is currently 1.2 billion and is expected to continue growing for at least 20 more years. Youth has been defined by Jega (2012) as a special group of people with strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives and these are the propelling factors for national development and stability. So youths are the engine and actualizers of national development and stability if their mindsets are channelled in the right direction possibly through proper counselling strategies. We can safely infer that their action and inactions are necessary impetus for entrenching and consolidating the vertical and horizontal integrations of a country like Nigeria.

The youths have the character and awareness of the importance of socialisation and building friendship using modern technologies and communication facilities such as mobile phones, i-phones, internet, face book, twitter amongst others. They are serious about life and want to live for some purpose and meaning. Youths possess noble, valuable and positive characteristics, as well as aggressive, violent and negative characteristics that may influence their values in national integration and stability.

National integration describes the togetherness or oneness felt by citizens of a country with regard to citizenship. When individuals are nationally integrated, they may feel a sense of pride or patriotism. It involves a feeling that brings peoples from all areas, dialects and beliefs together in a common endeavour. When national integration occurs, individuals are likely to work together to build systems that enhance the prosperity of a nation and its people. Some things that can get in the way of national integration include religious or political divides as well as communication barriers between citizens who speak different dialects or languages. Such issues can be addressed by proper counselling of individuals affected. National integration therefore creates a mental outlook which promotes and inspires every person to place loyalty to the country above group loyalties and the welfare of the country above narrow sectarian interests. It is believed that adequate counselling of youths should enhance the inculcation of the values of national integration and stability to the Nigerian youths.

Counselling as a process has been defined as a two way professional and humane interaction between a trained therapist and one or more individuals who cannot resolve on their own certain everyday problems on any of the educational, vocational and social personal aspects of their lives (Akinade 2011). The definition shows that different counselling strategies can be discovered which can help equip the youth for national stability and integration. Counselling strategies ranges from assessment of diagnostic strategy, information giving strategy and different types of placement service strategies. They are skills and techniques used in counselling processes. Guidance and counselling personnel are very important in providing the necessary counselling strategies; hence their training cannot be underplayed as reiterated by Egbochukwu (2008). The need to counsel the youths for national stability and integration is one of the objectives of guidance and counselling which states that it is to, 'equip students with problem-solving and decision-making skills; encourage students to develop good interpersonal relationships' (Federal Ministry of Education, 2001). It is against this backdrop that the paper examined the counselling strategies for equipping youth for national stability and integration.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design is descriptive survey. The research was guided by one research question- 'What are the counselling strategies that can equip the youth for national stability and integration?' The population is all the pre-degree students of 2015/2016 session of University of Agriculture, Makurdi. Two hundred and forty youths were selected through purposive sampling to constitute the sample size for the study. A researcher designed instrument named Counselling Strategy to Equip Youths Instrument (CSEYI) was used for data collection. The respondents were instructed to indicate the counselling strategies they accepted were necessary to equip youths for national stability and integration. The instrument was made of two sections A and B. Section A was the personal data while B was about the counselling strategies necessary to equip youths for national stability and integration. It is an instrument made up of 10 items. The instrument was validated by a professional counsellor. The reliability of 0.70 was got through test-retest method. The research question was answered using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS

Research Question -What are the counselling strategies that can equip the youth for national stability and integration?

The results obtained in response items to the research question are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage Scores of Counselling Strategies for National Integration and Stability

S/N Rank	Items	N	F	%	Remarks
1 st	Career and course selection	240	236	98	Accepted
1 st	Group counselling of youth	240	236	98	Accepted
3 rd	Information about scholarship	240	230	96	Accepted
4 th	Information on study habits	240	220	92	Accepted
4 th	Orientation for fresh students	240	220	92	Accepted
6 th	Workshop for youth on leadership	240	180	75	Accepted
7 th	Career tour to work environment	240	60	25	Not Accepted
8 th	Adequate practical experience by youth	240	50	21	Not Accepted
9 th	Individual counselling approach	240	20	8	Not Accepted
10 th	Provision of information about employment opportunities	240	20	8	Not Accepted

Table 1 shows that six out of the ten strategies examined were accepted by the youths as effective counselling strategies for enhancing national integration and stability. The accepted strategies were those that more than 50% of youths agreed and strongly agreed. These strategies which ranked between 1st and 6th are - Career and course selection, Group counselling of youth, Information about scholarship, Information on study habits, Orientation for fresh students and Workshop for youth on leadership.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of data are presented in Table 1. The results from the data analysis shows that six out of the ten strategies examined were identified as effective counselling strategies for enhancing national integration and stability.

Table 1 shows the percentage scores of counselling strategies that were accepted are those that more than 50% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed. These are the strategies which ranked between 1st and 6th, and which the scores by the respondents are between 75% and 98%. That means these items were accepted as counselling strategies necessary for equipping youths for national stability and integration. The respondents agreed that Career and course selection, Group counselling of youth, Information about scholarship, Information on study habits, Orientation for fresh students and Workshop for youth on leadership were acceptable counselling strategies that could equip the youth. This is in line with Akinade, (2011) that asserts counselling is a two way professional and humane interaction between a trained therapist and one or more individuals who can help them resolve on their own certain everyday problems on any of the educational, vocational and social personal aspects of their lives. Counselling strategies ranges from assessment of diagnostic strategy, information giving strategy and different types of placement service strategies, so this also agrees with the findings. The study is in agreement with the views of Egbochukwu (2008) who emphasized the importance of well trained counsellors in the application of counselling strategies to achieve counselling goals such as equipping youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following counselling strategies are recommended for use to equip youth for national stability and integration.

- i) talks on career and course selection should be given to youths from time to time before they select their course, for example, to pre-degree students after completion of their remedial/preliminary studies and the like.
- ii) Information on study habits
- iii) Information about scholarships

- iv) Orientation for fresh students
- v) Workshops for youth on leadership
- vi) Group counselling for youths.

CONCLUSION

Youths need counselling for national stability and integration because they are vital source of manpower. The youth constitutes about 70% of population of Nigeria so if they are guided and well equipped they will constitute immensely to nation development through their stability and integration. Therefore, the counselling strategies identified should be applied by counsellors to help equip youths for national stability and integration.

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