

INSTITUTIONAL VARIABLES AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS RESEARCH AMONG COUNSELLING STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine institutional variables and attitude to research among counselling students in universities in Cross River State. This study adopted ex-post facto research design to examine institutional variables and attitude to research among Counselling students in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Sample was selected, using census sampling technique. A questionnaire titled Institutional variables and Attitude to Research Scale (IVTRS) was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validity by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha and the reliability coefficients ranged from 0.74-0.87. Simple linear regression analysis was used for data analysis. The results of the analysis revealed that internal quality assurance practices contribute significantly to attitude to research. Based on the findings, it was concluded that provision of research facilities, mentorship and internal quality assurance practices be considered collectively for it's contribution to explaining the variations in Students' attitude to research. It was recommended among others things, that quality assurance teams in institutions should not just focus on examination supervision but on what happens in research situations in the institutions.

Keywords: Institutional Variables, Attitude, Research, Counselling

Introduction

Research remains the backbone of any scientific development in the world. This is because, it offers opportunity for new inventions, innovations and changes that will drive the society from a traditional setting to a modern setting. It is imperative, therefore, that, students acquire the skills that will not only help them complete a project or thesis writing, but useful in the society. Counselling students are programmed and equipped to help members of the society with different personal-social, educational, and career issues, resolve their problems so that they can function effectively in the society. Such a task requires a lot of knowledge, skills and techniques

that will help them to be relevant in suggesting measures for behavioural problems reconciliation. This is an outcome of research (Stanley, 2020).

Unfortunately, over the years, it has been observed by researchers that, most Counselling students either at graduate or undergraduate level have negative attitude to research. This is evidenced in their disposition to attend research-based classes, passive attitude in research-based classes, feeling of boredom whenever it is time for class as well as dislike for even the research method lecturers. Similarly, most of the students see a disconnect between acquiring knowledge of research methods and the responsibilities of a professional counsellor in the real setting. In most cases, students contract their research work to be written by others in a bid to get the certificate and concentrate on their practices. This situation has become so worrisome among trained Counsellors, Heads of Departments, and research methods lecturers on the negative attitude and perception of trainee Counsellors to research which is important in their professional career (Lwin, & Sann, 2019)

The continuous negative disposition of counselling students towards research has provided opportunity for several questions to be raised on what would have been the causes of this problem. Researchers have stated multiple factors that tend to influence students' attitude to research. These include poor background in research writing, lack of writing skills, poor students-supervisor relationship, poor access to research materials, laziness, limited attention to details, lack of passion for studies, poor understanding of the research problems, misdirected attention, fear of oral defence and lack of self-confidence in what they do, among others (Klen, 2018).

The effect of this negative disposition of students towards research is that, many students have abandoned their project writing to others and even abandoned the programme completely, especially at the postgraduate level. A lot of students have suffered psychological imbalances because of their inability to complete their research work and have held negative perception about the institutions and departments as well as their supervisors. Sureshkumar (2019) conducted a study to find out the level of attitude of master degree students towards research work. The study found that lack of facilities, research interest and research motivation significantly influenced student's attitude to research.

Other studies on students' attitude to research include that of Shafqat (2019) whose analytical descriptive study was to investigate the attitudes of university students towards their research activities. The outcome of the study showed positive attitudes towards research. Incentives played pivotal role in enhancing interest in scholarly activities. Research anxiety did not hamper intellectual activities of the students though significant number of the sample considered research stressful.

Similarly, Zain (2020). Explored the research difficulties faced by MS/M. Phil students in conducting research and its effect on their research attitude. A sample of 165 research students enrolled in MS/ M. Phil programme in University of Sindh. Sample was drawn through simple random sampling technique. The results showed that MS/M. Phil students face a range of difficulties when conducting research. They face more administrative difficulties ($M= 5.20$) than personal difficulties ($M=4.98$). The results also showed that students had positive attitudes in two factors; research usefulness ($M= 5.61$) and general attitude towards research ($M= 5.45$) and they had negative attitude on other factors; research anxiety ($M= 4.98$) and research difficulty ($M= 4.54$) factors. Likewise, a moderate positive correlation was found between the research difficulties and each factor of research attitudes. Regression was also used to estimate the impact of research difficulties on research attitude of students; personal difficulties had a weak impact on student's research attitude ($\beta = .233$, $P < .002$) whereas administrative difficulties had higher impact ($\beta = .348$, $P < .00001$) on student's research attitude.

Mentoring is expected to help junior faculty socialize in an academic environment, learn various research skills, improve teaching skills and meet institutional tenure requirements with

the guidance of an experienced colleague (Yoder, 2020). In an effort to understand the role of mentoring in nursing faculty, Butler (2019) surveyed 309 women faculties with doctoral degrees who were employed full time at graduate nursing schools. Results showed that mentorship for academic roles occurred in 55.7% of the cases reported by the study participants, and mentoring was significantly related to increased productivity. Length and time of mentorship and type of support also influenced productivity. The longer the mentoring relationship, the more productive the mentee. Mentoring support during the early stages of an academic career increased productivity through sponsoring the mentee's ideas and including the mentee on research teams and publications.

Clark (2019) surveyed 114 male nursing faculty to determine the role of mentoring among male faculty in nursing. Seventy-six mentored men were compared with 38 who were not mentored, in terms of their academic socialization and research productivity. The respondents valued mentorship for academic socialization but mentored men did not differ significantly from non-mentored men in their scholarly productivity rate. The author suggested that the type of mentoring that occurred in the study was social mentoring, which did not directly influence research productivity. Only research-oriented mentoring tasks such as collaborating with the mentee on research projects, publications and grantsmanship (understanding the grant process and writing successful grant proposals) were found to be effective in improving the productivity of junior faculty (Clark, 2019).

Also, Uduak (2019) investigated the relationship between mentoring practices and students' research effectiveness in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two hundred respondents were drawn from a population of 1149 lecturers and used as the study sample. Results revealed that research mentoring, administrative mentoring and mentor-mentee relationship were significantly related to students' research effectiveness.

Specifically, Onyemaechi, 2020. Examined the effect of mentoring practice on attitude to research among students. The objectives of the study were; to identify the nature of the relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and attitude to research among students and to establish the nature of the relationship between the psychosocial functions of mentoring and attitude to research among students. The results indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between knowledge transfer mentoring and attitude to research among students. It was also found that there is a positive and significant relationship between psychosocial functions of a mentor and attitude to research among students. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that mentoring practice has an effect on attitude to research among students.

Asuquo and Chuktu (2020) examined internal school quality assurance practices and undergraduate students' attitude towards academic activities in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three null hypotheses and the design adopted was ex-post facto research design. The population of the study was made up of all the regular undergraduate students in their third year of study in the two public universities (University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology) in Cross River State, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed significant relationship between school quality assurance approaches (maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation, examinations administration) and students' attitude towards academic activities.

In another study, Bassey, Owan and Agunwa (2018) assessed quality assurance practices and students' performance evaluation in universities of South-South Nigeria using an SEM approach. Three null hypotheses guided the study. Based on factorial research design, and using a stratified random sampling technique, a sample of 878 academic staff were drawn from a sampling frame of 15 universities in South-South Nigeria. Quality Assurance Practices Students' Performance Evaluation Scale (QAPSPES) with split-half reliability estimates ranging from .86–.92, was used as the instruments for data collection. Multiple regression and Confirmatory

Factor Analyses (CFA) were used for the analysis of data, model building, and testing of the hypotheses at .05 alpha level. Findings showed a significant composite and relative influence ($F=48.19$, $P<.05$) of school management, staff, and students' quality assurance practices on students' performance evaluation. The results also indicated that there were positive and significant covariance between the four variables of this study, with the CFI, RMSEA, TLI, and SRMR values indicating a good model fit. It was recommended, based on the findings of this study that, each school should organize quality assurance orientation campaigns for new students and set up quality assurance committees at the school, faculty and departmental levels for optimal performance in schools.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine institutional variables and attitude to research among counselling students in universities in Cross River State. Specifically, the researcher sought to find out whether:

- i. Provision of research facilities relates with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities.
- ii. Mentorship practices relates with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities.
- iii. Internal quality assurance practices relates with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. To what extent does provision of research facilities relate with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities?
- ii. What is the relationship between mentorship practices and attitude to research among Counselling students in universities?
- iii. How does internal quality assurance practices relate with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between provision of research facilities with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between mentorship practices with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between internal quality assurance practices with attitude to research among Counselling students in universities.

Methodology

The study adopted ex-post facto research design. This design is suitable because the phenomena under study has already occurred and cannot be manipulated by the researcher. The population for this study consisted of 531 third and fourth year undergraduate students of the 2022/2023 academic session of Guidance and Counselling in the public universities in Cross River State. Census sampling technique was used for this study. The sample that was used for the study was made up of 531 students from university of Calabar and University of Cross River State which represents 100% of the population.

A questionnaire titled "Institutional variables and Attitude to Research Scale (IVARS)" was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by two Measurement and Evaluation experts in the Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar. Cronbach Alpha Reliability technique was used for estimating the degree of consistency of the

sub scales and the coefficient ranged from 0.74 to 0.87; the instrument was adjudged as reliable. The instrument was divided into three sections, A, B and C. Section A was concerned with obtaining information on demographic data of the respondents. The section 'B' and 'C' were made up of 15 items. Section 'B' and 'C' were designed to measure the sub-variables of the independent variable (institutional variables) with a total of 25 items which includes the dependent variable (attitude to research) with a total of 10 items. The scale was structured using a 4-point Likert type modified response scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) and Highly accessible (HA), Accessible (A), Rarely (R), and Not accessible (NA). Data collected were analyzed using Simple linear regression analysis.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between provision of research facilities and attitude to research among Counselling students in universities in Cross River State.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is provision of research facilities while the dependent variable is attitude to research, both measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was used.

Table 1: Simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between provision of research facilities on attitude to research

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6908.658	1	6908.658	1124.13*	.000 ^b
Residual	3115.892	507	6.146		
Total	10024.550	508			

$$a=54.195, \beta=.830, t=33.528, r=.830, r^2=.609, \text{Adj.}r^2=.689, \text{Std Error}=2.47906$$

The result as presented in Table 1 showed that $r=.830$ which implies that a positive relationship exists between provision of research facilities and attitude to research among counselling students. That is, the higher the provision of research facilities the better attitude students have towards research. Similarly, the result produced an $\text{Adj. } r^2 = .689$ which implies that the total variance in students' attitude to research could be explained by 68.9% contribution of provision of research facilities among staff in the universities. To test the statistical significance of the hypothesis, a cursory look at the analysis of variance results showed that ($f=1124.13^*$, $p=.000$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, provision of research facilities significantly contribute to counselling students' attitude to research. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis upheld.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between mentorship practices and attitude to research among Counselling students in universities in Cross River State.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is mentorship practices, while the dependent variable is attitude to research, both measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was used.

Table 2: Simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between mentorship practices and attitude to research

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1966.629	1	1966.629	123.739*	.000 ^b
Residual	8057.921	507	15.893		
Total	10024.550	508			

$$a=32.378, \beta=.443, t=11.124, r=.443, r^2=.196, \text{Adj.}r^2=.195, \text{Std Error}=3.98664$$

The result as presented in Table 2 showed that $r = .443$ which implies that a positive relationship exists between mentorship practices and attitude to research among counselling students. That is, the more the mentorship practices, the better attitude students have towards research. Similarly, the result produced an $\text{Adj. } r^2 = .195$ which implies that the total variance in students' attitude to research could be explained by the contribution of 19.5% of mentorship practices among staff in the school. To test the statistical significance of the hypothesis, a cursory look at the analysis of variance results showed that ($f=123.739^*$, $p=.000$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, mentorship practices significantly contribute to counselling students' attitude to research. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis upheld.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between internal quality assurance practices and attitude to research among Counselling students in universities in Cross River State.

There is no significant relationship between internal quality assurance practices and attitude to research among counselling students in universities. The independent variable in this hypothesis is internal quality assurance practices while the dependent variable is attitude to research, both measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was used.

Table 3: Simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between internal quality assurance practices and attitude to research

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	X	F	Sig.
Regression	2343.615	1	2343.615	154.696*	.000 ^b
Residual	7680.935	507	15.150		
Total	10024.550	508			

$a=93.231$, $\beta=4.84$, $t=12.438$, $r=.434$, $r^2=.234$, $\text{Adj. } r^2=.232$, $\text{Std Error}=3.8923$

The result as presented in Table 3 showed that $r=.434$ which implies that a positive relationship exists between internal quality assurance practices and attitude to research among counselling students. That is, the higher the internal measures for quality assurance practices the better attitude students have towards research. Similarly, the result produced an $\text{Adj. } r^2 = .232$ which implies that the total variance in students' attitude to research could be explained by 23.2% contribution of internal quality assurance practices among staff in the school. To test the statistical significance of the hypothesis, a cursory look at the analysis of variance results showed that ($f=154.696^*$, $p=.000$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, internal quality assurance practices significantly contribute to counselling students' attitude to research. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis upheld.

Discussion of findings

The results of this study in relation to the three research questions and hypotheses are discussed as follows:

Hypothesis one that stated that provision of research facilities does not relate significantly with attitude to research among counselling students was rejected. This implies that 68.9% total variance in the attitude exhibited by students to research is a product of the provision of research facilities. The explanation to this result could be that research facilities are important vehicles that drive the interest of the students to research. The findings align with that of Shafqat (2019) analytical descriptive study that investigated the attitudes of university students towards their research activities. Results revealed that University students showed positive attitudes towards research. Incentives and research facilities played pivotal role in enhancing interest in scholarly activities. Research anxiety did not hamper intellectual activities of the students though significant number of the sample considered research stressful.

Hypothesis two that stated that mentorship practices do not relate significantly with attitude to research among counselling students was rejected. This implies that 19.5% total variance in the attitude exhibited by students to research is a product of the mentorship practices. The explanation to this result could be that research is a collaborative effort. Most of the students need help that will facilitate their knowledge of research to have a better disposition of it. Where there are mentors ready to help the students in their exploration, it will go a long way in helping them to understand what they do in research as well as develop positive and better attitude to research. The study findings were in line with that of Uduak (2019) that investigated the relationship between mentoring practices and students' research effectiveness in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Results of data analysis revealed that research mentoring, administrative mentoring and mentor-mentee relationship were significantly related to students' research effectiveness. This finding also corroborate with Butler (2019) surveyed 309 women faculty with doctoral degrees who were employed full time at graduate nursing schools. Results showed that mentorship for academic roles occurred in 55.7% of the cases reported by the study participants, and mentoring was significantly related to increased productivity. Length and time of mentorship and type of support also influenced productivity. The longer the mentoring relationship, the more productive the mentee.

Hypothesis three that stated that internal quality assurance practices do not relate significantly with attitude to research among counselling students was rejected. This implies that 23.2% total variance in the attitude exhibited by students to research is a product of the internal quality practices. The explanation to this result could be since where quality assurance practices are carried out efficiently and in line with best global practices, the tendencies for most supervisors and examiners that most deliberately make students feel that they cannot make it in the course will be reduced. The non-academic display by most teachers and examiners that scare students most times facilitate their non-disposition to quality research. The findings of the study are in line with those of Asuquo & Chuktu (2020) that examined internal school quality assurance practices and undergraduate students' attitude towards academic activities in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed significant relationship between school quality assurance approaches (maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation, examinations administration) and students' attitude towards academic activities. However, in a related study, Olalekan and Isaac-Philips (2020) had contrary a finding. Their finding showed that there is no significant relationship between quality assurance and attendance of teachers in school. This difference in findings could be due to the fact that their study was not based on exactly the same variables and subjects in this present study.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that, research facilities, mentorship practices and internal quality assurance practices when taken individually or relatively and collectively, contributed in explaining the variation in students' attitude to research. That is, provision of research facilities was the strongest predictor, followed by mentorship practices and internal quality assurance practices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it was recommended that:

- Facilities that are modern with the capacity to influence students' attitude to research should be provided in all Faculties and Departments to instil in them a better attitude to research.

- Mentorship in the University system should be encouraged to develop a team of researchers that can maintain integrity and develop positive attitude to research.
- Quality assurance teams in institutions should not just focus on examination supervision but on what happens in research situations in the institutions.

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