

## **Guides on Establishment and Management of Privately Owned Counselling Centres**

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### **Abstract**

*Guidance and counselling is an essential educational programme which focuses on human development. In view of its importance, this paper provides guides on establishment and management of privately owned counselling centres. It highlights the concepts of guidance and counselling, factors to be considered in establishing private guidance and counselling centres and the facilities required. The paper also dwells on concerns that are usually handled at the guidance and counselling centres, modes of providing guidance and counselling services, organisation and administration of guidance programme and challenges confronting privately owned counselling centres in Nigeria. It is concluded that Nigeria needs counselling to address its challenges, therefore, counselling should be given more attention through empowerment of private organisations that are interested in establishing counselling centres.*

**Keywords:** Establishment, Guides, Management and Privately owned Counselling Centres

### **Introduction**

The world is confronting numerous challenges due to its dynamic nature. Deviant acts such as cybercrimes, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse and misuse, sex abuse, hooliganism, domestic violence, sex and incestuous relationship are rampant among people especially the youths. There is therefore the need for proper guidance of individuals in order to minimise deviant acts in the society.

Guidance is the provision of relevant information with the aim of guiding individuals to make appropriate decisions. It involves provision of information or pieces of advice with the aim of assisting clients to solve their problems or handle their challenges. Guidance is the process of assisting individual or clients to understand themselves and the worlds; and make appropriate decisions. Guidance is the process promoting the growth of an individual in a scientific way. Through guidance programme many services are provided and counselling forms the core guidance services. Maunganidze and Chigwedere (2002) described counselling as a process of assisting people to achieve greater levels of self-awareness and to achieve

latent potentials. According to American Counselling Association (2020), counselling is a collaborative effort between the counsellor and client through which professional counsellors help clients to identify goals and potential solutions to problems which cause emotional turmoil; seek to improve communication and coping skills, strengthen self-esteem, and promote behaviour change and optimal mental health.

Counselling is an act of talking with a client in a way that helps the client to solve his/her problem or assists to create a condition that will cause the client to understand and improve his/her behaviour, character, values or life circumstances. The service is usually performed in a face to face confidential session between a counsellor and a client or a group of clients. Nowadays, it can be undertaken through telephone, video conference and the internet. Counselling is designed to assist clients to act appropriately and find solutions to their problems. Therefore, counsellors are trained to provide guidance and counselling services to clients in order to assist them to make appropriate decisions and overcome their challenges.

With the growing rate of unemployment among counsellors as a result of limited opportunities in governmental organisations as well as the rampant cases of deviant behaviours especially among youths, there is need for counsellors to acquire knowledge and skills on ways of establishing and managing private guidance and counselling centres. Acquisition of such knowledge and skills would enable counsellors to be job creators rather than job seekers. Thus, the purpose of this presentation is to guide counsellors on ways of establishing and managing privately owned counselling centres.

### **Factors that should be Considered in establishing Privately owned Guidance and Counselling Centres**

Generally, there are two main ways of establishing a counselling centre. These are private and public. A privately owned counselling centre is a business outfit that belongs to sole proprietorships, family or a community. It is a counselling centre that is not owned by government. On the other hand, a publicly owned counselling centre belongs to the government at the federal, state or local level. It is a publicly owned utility.

Establishment of Guidance and Counselling Centres requires proper planning and implementation. Therefore, the following items should be considered in establishing privately owned Guidance and Counselling Centres:

- 1. Feasibility study:** A feasibility study should be conducted to identify the guidance and counselling needs of the people within the locality of the counselling centre. This is essential in order to ensure patronage and sustainability. The aims and objectives of the centre should be based on people's needs, the philosophy as well as the vision and mission of the centre. The purposes of establishing of the centre and

its aims and objectives should be clearly stated.

**2. Location:** The centre should be located in area where clientele, that is potential clients are available in large number. Clientele is made up of individuals and groups of people that seek guidance and counselling services and benefit from the services provided. It should be noted that the viability of any counselling centre largely depends on availability of clientele. The location should be conducive for counselling interactions and thus should be free from noise or air pollution.

**3. Financial Resources:** Any good investment requires capital. Financial resources are sources through which a counselling centre obtains the needed funds concurrent expenditure and finance capital projects. Establishment of a befitting counselling centre therefore requires availability of funds and effective management of financial resources

**4. Logistics:** Provision of efficient and effective guidance and counselling demands some important facilities such as conducive office space, psychological tests, counselling CDs, storage facilities, communication and information facilities (eg. internet), transportation facilities, furniture and stationery among others. Efforts should therefore be made to ensure adequate provision of these facilities in order to enhance the efficiency of counselling centres.

**5. Entrepreneurship:** Acquisition of entrepreneurship skills is essential for successful running of counselling centres. Entrepreneurial skills consist of a range of both soft and hard skills such as business management skills, teamwork and leadership skills, communication and listening skills, customer care skills, financial management skills, critical thinking skills, analytical and problem solving skills, strategic thinking and planning skills, branding, technical skills and management and organisational skills (Indeed Career Guide, 2020).

**6. Governmental Policies:** In Nigeria, like many other countries in the world, corporate organisations are required to register with appropriate authorities such as Ministries, Corporate Affairs Commission and professional organisations. This factor is crucial in establishing formal and recognised counselling centres in Nigeria.

**7. Staffing:** A standard counselling centre needs a minimum of eight staff comprising one Director or Coordinator of the centre with specialisation in counselling, two counsellors, one psychologist, one social worker, one secretary/clerk, one messenger/cleaner and one security personnel. The staff should be competent in their areas of jurisdictions.

### **Facilities Required for Establishing Guidance and Counselling Centres**

Some essential facilities are needed for the establishment of a durable Guidance and counselling centre. Table 1 presents the minimum facilities required for such a centre.

**Table 1: Minimum Facilities Required for the Establishment of Guidance and Counselling Centre**

S/N	Facilities	Uses
1.	Building: A structure located on at least 1 or 2 hectares of land	To house the counselling centre
2.	Offices: At least 4-6 offices	To provide spaces to staff and clients
3.	Counselling Laboratory: At least 1	For counselling interactions
4.	Functional Library/ Resource Centre	For acquisition of knowledge and skills in counselling and other areas of human endeavours.
5.	Conference/ Seminar room	To create avenue for clients to meet and discuss topics of interest or to train clients on some skills
6.	Other facilities: store, rest -room, office equipment, electricity supply, water supply, internet service and other essential needs	For convenience and effective delivery of service

Source: Field Survey, 2021

### Organisations involved in the Establishment of Counselling Centres

Guidance and Counselling Centres are usually established by different organizations to achieve different objectives. Table indicates such situation:

**Table 2: Public and Private Organisations involved in the Establishment of Counselling Centres and their Objectives**

S/N	Organisations	Objectives
1.	Governments	To provide guidance and counselling services to students.
2.	Religious organisations	To promote propagation of religious faiths, marital stability, moral values and complement governmental efforts.
3.	Communities	To promote the mental health and career advancement of the members of the community and complement governmental efforts.
4.	Entrepreneurs	To generate income, assist members of the society and immortalise their names.
5.	Philanthropists	To assist the members of the society, complement governmental efforts and immortalise their names

Source: Field Survey, 2021

### Management of Guidance and Counselling Centres

Management can be defined as a process of achieving organisational goals or objectives through planning, organising, leading and controlling of human, physical, financial and information resources of an organisation in an effective and efficient manner (Kaehler & Grundei, 2018). Personnel in-charge of managing the counselling centres are therefore required to possess the necessary managerial skills in order to effectively run the centres.



**Fig 1: Organogram of Guidance and Counselling Centre**

Figure 1 indicates an organisational chart of personnel required for effective delivery of services at a formal private Counselling centre. The Director tops the group, supported by other members of the team. The success of guidance and counselling programme depends largely on the extent to which guidance personnel see it as a collective responsibility. Neither the Director nor the Counsellor can function effectively without the support of the entire guidance team or personnel which includes the psychologist, social worker, account officer, secretariat staff and clients. Therefore, all stakeholders are essential in achieving organisational aims and objectives.

### Concerns that are usually handled at Guidance and Counselling Centres

Availability of Guidance and counselling programmes in the society offers opportunities for the provision of some essential services to clients. The following concerns of clients are usually handled through such services:

- a.) Education / Academic concerns.
- b.) Career choice.
- c.) Marriage / sex and family life concerns.
- d.) Financial concerns.
- e.) Adjustment to life challenges.
- f.) Stress and anxiety.
- g.) Body image concerns
- h.) Poor self esteem or poor self concept.
- i.) Depression and trauma.
- j.) Grief or Bereavement.
- k.) Relationship concerns.
- l.) Addiction or Substance abuse.
- m.) Domestic violence.
- n.) Learning disability.
- o.) Self care/ Wellness/Health concerns
- p.) Anger Management.
- q.) Diversity acceptance
- r.) Eating Disorder
- s.) Personal development/ Social skills and
- p.) Special needs.

### Modes of Providing Guidance and Counselling Services

There are at least three modes of providing guidance and counselling to clients.

They are:

- a.) Individual Counselling:** It is a procedure through which a counsellor interacts with one client at a time with a view of assisting him/her to overcome his/her challenges. The Counsellor assists the client to explore, understand and work through his/her problems or concerns on an individual basis.
- b.) Group Counselling:** This consists of a small number of clients usually about ten and one or two trained counsellors. Group counselling provides clients with a unique opportunity of forming a small group of clients who have common concerns. Through this medium, clients become aware that they are not the only one having the problem and they have opportunity to share their experiences and benefit from the experiences of one another.
- c.) Online Counselling:** This is a mode of counselling through which counsellors communicate or interact with clients on phone or through the internet. The process is usually carried out through messaging (text or email), live chat, phone calls, video chat and video conferencing. It provides opportunity to both counsellor and client(s) to interact online without physical contact.

### **Organisation and Administration of Guidance Programme**

Generally, there are three stages of organising and administering Guidance and counselling programme. These are planning, implementation and evaluation stages.

The planning stage involves assessment of the needs of potential clients and putting the necessary facilities and manpower in place to provide efficient services to clients. This is an important aspect of organisation which requires diligent and adequate preparation. Effective planning provides solid foundation for success.

During the implementation stage, the Director and the Counsellors outline the responsibilities of every staff based on the outcome of the needs assessment and the aims and objectives of the centre. The Director should be at the apex of the administration of guidance programme at the implementation stage, therefore the Counsellors should let him/her to take a lead on the execution of the programme. Also at this stage, effective management team should be put in place to facilitate prompt and efficient delivery of services.

The evaluation stage is the appraisal stage during which the service delivery is assessed. Relevant data are obtained through interview, rating scale, questionnaires, observation and psychological tests to determine the effectiveness of the centre. This is with a view of improving on organisational performance.

### **Challenges confronting privately owned Guidance and Counselling centres**

In Nigeria, only few privately owned counselling centres are in operation due to numerous challenges among which are:

- a. Inadequate Funds:** Establishment of a standard counselling centre requires significant amount of capital to put up or rent a building, provide appropriate facilities and pay staff regularly. Access to loans from banks is also difficult without collateral or viable guarantors (Yahaya, 2020).
- b. Inadequate governmental support:** There is little or no support for the establishment of privately owned counselling centres. Just like private school proprietors, private owners of counselling centres enjoy no support from Nigerian governments despite the importance of their services to youth development and promotion of good values.
- c. Inadequate Facilities:** Due to paucity of funds many privately owned counselling centres lack necessary facilities such as internet, counselling videos, office spaces and other essentials (Rupande & Tapfumaneyi, 2013).
- d. Low patronage:** As a result of poor awareness, many prefer patronising “miracle centres” in handling their challenges to seeking counselling. Thus, inadequate awareness of the importance of counselling in promoting mental health is largely responsible for low patronage of privately owned counselling centres in Nigeria.
- e. Cultural Barriers:** There are many cultural barriers hindering effective delivery of guidance and counselling services in Nigeria. These include language barrier, stereotype, religious beliefs, gender differences and lack of trust.



**f. Paucity of Competent Manpower:** Although there are millions of unemployed graduates in Nigeria, many of them lack employability skills such as good communication skill, leadership skill, management skill, team work spirit, entrepreneurial skill, resilience, trustworthiness, adaptability, initiative and discipline. These inadequacies make it difficult for owners of private Counselling centres to find suitable and capable hands to employ for efficient delivery of services.

### Conclusion

The numerous challenges being faced by Nigeria are indicative of the need to give more attention to the provision of counselling at public and private levels. The challenges include high rate of academic failure, rampant cases of deviant behaviour among youths, dropout of schools, hooliganism, kidnapping for ransom, insecurity, loss of moral values and threat to national instability. The three tiers of government in Nigeria should encourage professional counsellors to establish private counselling centres to complement the ones in schools. Guidance and counselling services should be made available in every community and attention should not be limited to career guidance and academic support but also be focussed on promotion of moral values, which are urgently needed in Nigeria.

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