

Online Counseling Practices and Perceived Female Students' Academic Achievement in Colleges of Education, Sokoto State

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Abstract

The study is meant to examine the Online Counseling Practices and Perceived Female Students' Academic Achievement in Colleges of Education, Sokoto State. Two objectives were set to be achieved through answering of two research questions and two hypotheses. The study is quantitative, using survey research design with a sample size of 301 respondents. The target respondents are the NCE 111 students of Shehu Shagari college of Education, Biga College of Education and Federal College of Education Gidan Madi all in Sokoto state. A stratified random sampling was employed. Structured questionnaires were used for data collection and data analysis was done using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings of the study reveal that, E-learning platforms demonstrated a significant positive effect on academic achievement of female students in Sokoto state. online counseling services showed a strong positive impact on academic achievement in Sokoto state. The findings, therefore, reinforce the need for institutions to prioritize the development and integration of comprehensive online counseling services to cater to the diverse needs of their students.

Keywords: *Online Counseling Practices, Perceived Female Academic Achievement*

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Background to the Study

The integration of Online counseling practices (OCP) in education has gained momentum globally, as it enhances access to educational resources, promotes interactive learning experiences, and develops digital literacy skills (UNESCO, 2013). The academic achievement of students in tertiary institutions is a crucial indicator of their educational success and future prospects (Oguguo, Ajuonuma, Azubuike, Ene, Atta, & Oko, 2020). However, in recent years, Online counseling practices (OCP) has become increasingly integrated into educational settings, offering new opportunities for enhancing guidance and counseling practices (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). Online counseling practices (OCP) offers innovative tools and platforms that can potentially transform the delivery of guidance and counseling services, particularly among female students in tertiary institutions. (Dahiru, 2017).

In Sokoto State, like many other regions, there is a growing emphasis on integrating Online counseling practices (OCP) in educational institutions. However, the focus on the guidance and counselling practice to support female students' Online counseling practices (OCP) usage and its impact on their academic achievement remains limited. Female students may face unique challenges and barriers in accessing and utilizing Online counseling practices (OCP) resources effectively. Gender disparities, socio-cultural factors, and limited access to Online counseling practices (OCP) infrastructure and training can hinder their ability to fully benefit from Online counseling practices (OCP) in their academic pursuits.

One of the importance of Online counseling practices (OCP) integration in guidance and counseling is the utilization of E-Learning platforms. E-Learning platforms provide flexible and interactive learning environments that can enhance engagement and academic performance (Effiom, Amuchi, Ojedor, Ebuka, & Ubi, 2023). These platforms offer online courses, multimedia resources, discussion forums, and virtual collaboration tools, enabling female students to access educational materials and engage in interactive learning experiences outside of traditional classroom settings (Tsagem, 2016). E-Learning platforms have been found to positively impact academic achievement by promoting self-directed learning, facilitating active engagement, and offering flexibility in terms of time and pace of learning (Wells, 2023). Research has shown that female students who engage with E-Learning platforms display increased motivation, improved information retention, and enhanced critical thinking (Okpe, D., Asuquo, Abuo, & Unimna, A. 2018). E-Learning platforms can provide personalized learning experiences, allowing female students to tailor their educational journey according to their specific needs and preferences (Makinde, 2021).

Furthermore, the utilization of online counseling platforms has gained prominence in providing remote counseling services to students (UNESCO, 2013). These platforms offer secure communication channels, such as video conferencing or instant messaging, enabling counselors to conduct counseling sessions with students regardless of their physical location. This flexibility in accessing counseling services can contribute to improved academic achievement among female students in tertiary institutions (Dahiru, 2017). Online counseling platforms have the potential to reach a broader student population, ensuring that

counseling services are accessible to all, regardless of geographical constraints. By providing a safe and confidential space for students to express their concerns and seek guidance, online counseling platforms contribute to students' overall well-being and academic success (Kerr, 2015).

The academic achievement of female students in tertiary institutions remains a matter of concern due to the unique challenges they face. Limited access to counseling resources, gender-related biases, and societal expectations are among the factors that hinder their academic success (Dahiru, 2017). To address these challenges, the integration of online counseling practices (OCP) in guidance and counseling practice has gained attention as a potential solution.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the contribution of e-learning platforms to female students' academic success in tertiary institutions, Sokoto State.
2. To examine how online counseling services, influence academic achievement of female students in tertiary institutions, Sokoto State.

Research Questions

In line with this problem, the research tends to answer the following questions

1. How do e-learning platforms contribute to the academic achievement of female Students in tertiary institutions, Sokoto State?
2. What is the influence of online counseling services on the academic achievement of female students in tertiary institutions, Sokoto State?

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant influence of e-learning platforms on the academic achievement of female students in Sokoto State.

Ho₂: There is no significant influence of online counseling platforms on the academic achievement of female students in Sokoto State

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach using survey research to examine the online counseling practices (ICTCP) on the academic achievement of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The population for this study comprises final year female students from Shehu Shagari College of Education, Biga College of Education, and Federal College of Education Gidan Madi in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The total population of interest consists of 1,215 final year female students. A stratified random sampling technique was employed. This technique involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups or strata based on relevant characteristics, and then selecting participants randomly from each stratum (Gurbuz, 2017).

The strata in this study will be defined based on the three educational institutions under investigation: Shehu Shagari College of Education, Biga College of Education, and Federal College of Education Gidan Madi, Sokoto State. Each stratum will represent the final year female students from the respective institution. Within each stratum, participants will be selected using a random sampling technique. This means that each individual within the stratum will have an equal chance of being selected for the sample. Table one describes the distribution of the sample size for the study. To determine the sample size, the Taro Yamane formula was employed. By applying the appropriate mathematical approach, the study calculated that a sample size of approximately 301 is necessary. This sample size is deemed sufficient to ensure that the results will accurately reflect the broader population of final year female students. The study administered a total of 331 copies of the research instrument in order to reduce a sampling error, minimize case of non-return of questionnaire and nonresponse bias. This is in line with the study of Israel (1992) as cited by Naing (2003) suggested that 10% or 30% can be added to the sample size to compensate non-return of questionnaire and nonresponse bias. This study adopted 10% increase of the sample size.

Table 1: Sample of the Study

S/N	School Name	Level	Population	Sample Size
1	Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto State	NCE III	723	$723/1,215 \times 301 = 179$
2	Biga College of Education, Sokoto State	NCE III	412	$412/1,215 \times 301 = 102$
3	Gidan Madi Federal College of Education, Sokoto state	400 level	80	$80/1,215 \times 301 = 20$
Total			1,215	301

The instrument used for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled "Investigating the Relationship between online counseling practices and Academic Achievement: A Student Questionnaire on Counseling practice" (OCPAAQ). The questionnaire was administered to the selected samples. The participants have the option to complete the questionnaire either through face-to-face administration or an online survey platform, depending on their preferences and convenience. The questionnaire includes a close-ended section comprising questions with pre-determined response options. The questionnaires were administered in a classroom setting during a designated time agreed upon with the school authorities.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Options	Respondents	Percentage %
Gender		
Female	297	100
Total	297	100%
Age		
18-24 years	242	81.5
25-34 years	41	13.8
35-44 years	14	4.7
Total	297	100%
Frequency of ICT Usage		
Daily	0	0
Several Times a Week	5	1.7
Once a Week	7	2.4
Several Times a Month	46	15.5
Rarely	239	80.5
Total	297	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals that the study engaged female students, with a total of 297 (100%) participants. The majority of respondents fall within the age of 18 to 20 years. The study also indicates that respondent percentage on the frequent use of online counseling resources is too low.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 3 reports the results of hypothesis testing, presenting path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, R² values, and variance inflation factor (VIF) results. The table provides a detailed account of the findings obtained from the hypothesis testing process.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing (Path Coefficients)

Variables	Coefficient	T statistics	P values
ELP -> FAA	0.308	3.857	0.000
OCS -> FAA	0.623	13.560	0.000
R ² = 0.963, Adjusted R ² = 0.963			

Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of e-learning platforms on the academic achievement of female students in Sokoto State. The findings presented in Table 3, in the hypothesis testing reveal a significant positive relationship between e-learning platforms (ELP) and female academic achievement (FAA). This is supported by the R-squared value of 0.963, indicating a substantial amount of variance explained. The coefficient for the path connecting ELP and FAA is estimated at 0.308. The t-statistics value associated with this coefficient is 3.857, and

the p-value is 0.000. Consequently, the study rejects the null hypothesis (H_{03}) in favor of the alternative hypothesis. These findings provide strong evidence that e-learning platforms significantly influence academic achievement among female students in Sokoto State.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of online counseling services on the academic achievement of female students in Sokoto State. The results in table 3. indicate a significant positive relationship between online counseling services (OCS) and female academic achievement (FAA). This is corroborated by the high R-squared value of 0.963, which signifies a substantial amount of the variance explained by the model. The coefficient for the path connecting OCS and FAA is estimated at 0.623. The t-statistics value associated with this coefficient is 13.560, with a p-value of 0.000. Given that the p-value (0.000) falls below the predetermined significance level (e.g., $\alpha = 0.05$), the study rejects the null hypothesis (H_{04}) in favor of the alternative hypothesis. These outcomes underscore the significant and positive impact of online counseling services on the academic achievement of female students in Sokoto State.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings is based on the formulated hypotheses and how they are in the study.

There is no significant influence of e-learning platforms on the academic achievement of female students in Sokoto State. The analysis of the collected data led to significant findings that demonstrated a significant positive effect e-learning platform on academic achievement, highlighting their potential as valuable educational tools that provide flexible and diverse learning opportunities for female students. Educational institutions should continue to invest in and promote the use of e-learning platforms to enhance student engagement and performance. The key findings are as follows

1. E-learning platforms demonstrated a significant positive effect on academic achievement female students in Sokoto state.
2. online counseling services showed a strong positive impact on academic achievement in Sokoto state.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to explore the influence of online counseling practices on the academic achievement of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of two key factors: e-learning platforms and online counseling services. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, the study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the relationships between these factors and the outcome of academic achievement. The analysis of the data yielded notable and statistically significant findings, which carry practical implications for educators, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of online counseling practices on the academic achievement of female students in tertiary institutions in Sokoto State. First,

e-learning platforms demonstrated a significant positive effect on academic achievement, highlighting their potential as valuable educational tools that provide flexible and diverse learning opportunities for female students. Second, online counseling services showed a strong positive impact on academic achievement, emphasizing their critical role in providing emotional and psychological support to female students. The findings reinforce the need for institutions to prioritize the development and integration of comprehensive online counseling services to cater to the diverse needs of their students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, summary, and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in Sokoto State:

1. **Promotion of E-Learning Platforms:** The positive relationship between e-learning platforms and academic achievement underscores the importance of promoting these tools within educational institutions. It is recommended that schools and universities provide training for both students and educators on how to effectively utilize e-learning resources. Additionally, institutions should regularly update e-learning content to ensure it remains engaging and aligned with current academic standards.
2. **Integration of Online Counseling Services:** The strong positive impact of online counseling services on academic achievement suggests that these services should be integrated more fully into the academic framework of institutions. This includes providing regular workshops and seminars that address common challenges faced by female students, as well as ensuring that online counseling services are widely promoted and accessible to all students.
3. **Continuous Research and Development:** Ongoing research into the effectiveness of various online counseling tools is essential. Institutions should consider establishing partnerships with researchers to study the evolving needs of female students and the impact of online counseling tools on their academic success. This research can inform future improvements and innovations in the support services offered.

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