
ASSESSMENT OF EXTENT OF PRINCIPALS' COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STUDENTS' SUPPORT SERVICES FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF UNITY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study assessed extent of principals' compliance with federal government students' support services for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 1,877 respondents of which 12 are principals and 1,865 are teachers in the twelve Federal unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. The sample for the study is 758 respondents of which 12 are principals and 758 are teachers drawn using multistage sampling procedure. A researcher-developed instrument titled 'Principals' Compliance with Federal Ministry of Education Students' Support Services for Effective Management Questionnaire (PCFMESSEMQ)' was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts of which two were from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one in Measurement and Evaluation Unit in the Department of Educational Foundations, all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach alpha was used for a test of internal consistency of the instrument which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.79 and 0.81 for Clusters I and II respectively with an overall coefficient of 0.80. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that there was a low extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health services for effective management of unity schools in South-east, Nigeria. It was also found that principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling services for effective management of unity schools in South-east, Nigeria to a high extent. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that there is need for sustained improvement in principals' provision of health support services to students through appeal to Philanthropists, community-based and non-government organizations for funds to regularly conduct medical test for students, improve the supply of portable drinking water and other health support services.

Key Words: Assessment, Principals, Compliance Federal Government, Students, Support Services, Effective Management, Unity Schools

Introduction

Education is a formidable instrument for grooming the personality, molding the character, nurturing attitudes and inculcating values in individuals to make them productive members of the society. It also equips individuals with skills and knowledge for self-reliance, socio-economic empowerment and wealth creation, which contributes towards nation building and development. Similarly, Onuigwe and Egboka (2020) opined that education houses all the skills and knowledge that it takes to transform and develop both the individual and the nation in which the person belongs and lives. One of the educational institutions in which children receive formal education is the secondary school.

The secondary school occupies a strategic position in the education system as it serves as the intermediate between the basic and tertiary levels of education. Secondary level of education which equips children with knowledge and skills to make them useful members of the society and also prepare them for higher education provided in secondary schools which are owned either by private individuals, States or the Federal government. The public secondary schools established by Federal Government are known as unity schools. The unity schools are also known as Federal Government Colleges, Federal Government Girls' Colleges (FGGCs) and Federal Science and Technical Colleges. Umeghalu and Onyeike (2022) posited that unity schools are educational institutions established for national cohesion and integration by exploring the beauties that lie in the diversity of a multicultural and pluralistic society such as Nigeria. There are 104 unity schools in the country, out of which 12 are in the South East of Nigeria. Atanda and Olaifa (2022) asserted that unity schools came into existence in 1967 for promoting understanding, tolerance and respect for one another's culture which was critical needed after the civil war. Operationally, unity schools are secondary schools established, financed and managed by the Federal Government to bring children from different parts of the country to study together and build the mindsets that foster national integration. A unity school is headed by a principal.

Principal is the chief administrator who ensures that the available resources are judiciously used to achieve set goals of a secondary educational institution. Nyaegah (2022) defined principal as the chief administrator charged with the responsibility of running the overall activities, controlling members of staff and ensuring the general development of secondary school education. It is the duty of the principal to ensure that students are exposed to meaningful learning experiences through coordinating the efforts of the teachers and ensuring judicious use of the scarce resources in a secondary school. Contextually, the principal is a person who performs leadership roles of influencing and directing the activities of others and ensuring optimal use of the available resources in running the affairs of the school such that students are supported to excel in their studies and set educational objectives are attained. Principals strive to attain set educational objectives through effective school management.

Effective school management is the successful implementation of school programmes, enforcement of school policies and optimal utilization of the available resources to ensure that students receive quality instruction in secondary schools. According to Animba and Nneji (2020), effective school management involves arrangement of work schedules and coordination of the efforts of subordinates in efficient ways to ensure optimal performance of the school. Effective school management involves ensuring judicious utilization of available resources to achieve optimal improvement of the educational institutions. Similarly, Onuigwe and Egboka (2020) defined effective school management as efficiency in the utilization of the available resources to achieve set educational objectives. Effective school management is concerned with the efficient execution of tasks to achieve the goals and objectives of

educational institutions. In the context of this study, effective school management is the utilization of the available resources, overseeing the smooth operations of daily affairs of the schools and getting things well done through influencing the activities to ensure that educational objectives are achieved.

There are many indicators of effective school management. Syukri, Hidayat and Putri (2017) pointed out that the indicators of effective school management include: clear and consistent vision and mission, high parents and community involvement in education of students, good learning services for students, strong principal leadership, managing resources in a transparent and accountable manner within a school, high student involvement in extracurricular activities and a comfortable and orderly atmosphere for teaching and learning. Effective school management is evaluated through provision of maximal support services for the learners, timely dissemination of information, smooth operation of the school daily affairs, prudent use of school facilities, successful implementation of school programmes to meet the expectations of stakeholders, transparency and accountability in educational institutions.

The principals work with teachers to ensure effective school management and attainment of set educational objectives. Teachers are professional trained persons who impart skills, knowledge and desirable attitude to learners through instructional activities in the classroom. According to Igbokwe, Akudo and Ugwu (2020), teachers are persons who have undergone an approved professional training in education at an appropriate level capable of imparting knowledge, attitude and skills to the learners. The teachers who interact with students on daily basis in the classroom could identify their learning needs and the various support services provided by principals to satisfy them. Thus, the principals could collaborate with teachers who interact with students on a daily basis to identify and satisfy the needs of learners through the provision of students' support services.

Students' support services are auxiliary supports instances provided for students to aid the successful operations of academic and non-academic programmes of educational institution. According to Sukhdeep (2016), students' support services are a cluster of facilities and activities that are provided to make the learning process easier and more interesting for the learner. The notion of students' support services is to create a conducive learning environment to make instructional experiences more meaningful to the learners. Shaheen, Mahmood and Shah (2020) defined students' support services as systematic and comprehensive assistance rendered to learners to meet their learning needs. Students' support services are preventive and remedial assistance rendered to learners to enable their active participation and excellence in school activities and their academic programmes. Operationally, Students' support services are programmes, facilities and assistance provided for learners to help them tackle their challenges in the course of learning in order to satisfy their academic needs, medical and safety needs and maximize learning experience in the school.

The implementation of the Federal Government Support Services of Quality Assurance Instrument Started in 2010; thirteen years after its introduction (2010-2023), an assessment of the policy is deemed necessary. Assessment is the process of collecting data and information for appraising the outcome of a programme. In the view of Iwuagwu, Akuta and Iwuagwu (2022), assessment is the process of gathering evidence to make useful decisions of a programme. Contextually, assessment is a systematic process of gathering data to describe the level of implementation of students' support programmes. Assessment provides evidence of compliance to a programme.

Compliance is the act of yielding to particular rules and work standards. Compliance is the conformity of actions to procedural manual of operating a programme. Efrem, Sharla and Okan (2022), compliance is the obedience and conformity to the standard of operations in an organization. The compliance to standard of operation ensures smooth running of a programme. According to Harvey (2022), compliance is undertaking activities or establishing practices or policies in accordance with the requirements or expectations of relevant authority. Operationally, compliance is the act of adhering to procedures, regulations and requirements for implementation of a programme. Compliance is assessed to gather evidence to judge against a standard and the standard for this assessment is the Government Government's Support Service quality assurance instrument.

The areas of assessment of students' support services highlighted by Federal Ministry of Education (2010) through quality assurance instrument are how well the school:

1. Ensures learners' care, welfare, health and safety
2. Ensures that learners work in a healthy and safe environment
3. Provides support, advise and guidance for learners, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development
4. Seeks to involve learners in its work and development

The aspects of these students' support services in which the study is interested in are health and guidance and counseling services. The justification for these components of support services are due to the fact that they are core facilities needed by students to maximize from the school learning programmes.

Health service is medical attention received by students' to promote their and mental and physical fitness. It is also medical care, illness prevention and wellness promotion programme rendered to learners to prevent them from breaking down in the course of studies in secondary school. Health services include first aid and emergency care, keeping of medical record, immunization service, medical referral, routine medical check-ups and physical examination of learners in the schools. Okeke and Ikediugwu (2020) noted that the components of the school health services as contained in the Implementation Guidelines by Federal Ministry of Education are; pre-entry medical screening, school health record, routine health screening and first-aid preparedness. Similarly, Muhammad and Ahmad (2019) remarked that through health services, students that are admitted into schools undergo services such as; routine medical examination, blood test, fitness test, vision test and hearing test among others. Students are not only confronted with medical problems but also academic and vocational challenges which require guidance and counselling.

Guidance and counselling is a crucial students support service that enable them to tackle their academic, emotional and vocational problems. Arkorful, Adam-Yawson and Insaiddoo (2021) identified guidance and counselling service to include information service, orientation service, placement service, consultation service, appraisal service, follow-up service and counselling service. Guidance and counselling service assists students to be well-disciplined, solve their socio-personal problems, make good career choices, improve their study habits and cope with academic challenges in the school. Nyaegah (2022) asserted that the school principals' have responsibilities for ensuring the provision of guidance and counselling services by selecting competent counsellors and establishing guidance committees to organize and co-ordinate the services in their respective schools, provide time and facilities needed for the service and precisely define areas of responsibility for guidance-counsellors. Guidance and counselling could expose students to information on security tips that improve their safety in the school.

The students seem not to be receiving adequate support from principals in unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. Umeghalu and Onyeike (2022) noted that principals of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria are performing below capacity in providing supports in order to students to bring out the best in them. The researcher observed the spread of communicable diseases like measles, whooping cough and cholera among students in unity schools in South-East, Nigeria which ordinarily would have been prevented and controlled through routine inspection and provision of health services. Okeke and Ikediugwu (2020) observed that some secondary school students stay away from school as a result of deteriorating health condition that could be detected early through pre-entry and routine health screening in Unity schools in South-East Nigeria. The authors added that principals appear to seek help from outside the school when students are exposed to injury or develop sudden illness probably due to lapses in their first-aid preparedness. Some of the students in unity school battle with health challenges which may be unnoticed by the principals probably due to the absence of regular medical examination. The difficulties in making appropriate vocational choices, tackling educational and emotional problems experienced by some students could be possibly due to insufficient guidance and counselling services. Some students in unity secondary schools in South East, Nigeria tend to choose subjects to offer in West African Senior Secondary Examination Council (WASSEC) without taking into account their abilities, aptitudes and interests. The students' supports services tend to be low in unity schools in South-East could be traced to insufficient funding, mismanagement of the limited funds, shortage of facilities and negligence of the policy among principals. It is based on this background that the study assessed the extent of principals' compliance with Federal Government students' support services for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The principals of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria appear to be performing below capacity in providing substantial supports services required by students to derive maximum benefits from the school curricular and extra-curricular activities. Sometimes, minor emergency medical issues of students which could be taken care of by school principals of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria are handled by notifying parents to take their children home for treatment. The school first aid boxes are probably poorly stocked with drugs to respond to minor injuries sustained by students, while medical personnel and health facilities like sick bays are inadequate in unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. Medical facilities are in short supply as students have died without medical attention recently in unity secondary schools. The cases of students struggling with personality maladjustment, unresolved learning and social problems has put to serious doubt the efficacy of guidance and counselling services offered in unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. The deficits in guidance and counseling services rendered to students may contribute to their involvement in bad habits like absenteeism, substance abuse, examination malpractice, missing of lessons, dropout and consequently loss of focus in their studies, thereby leading to academic failure in unity schools in South-East, Nigeria.

The support services receive by students which seem to be below expectations might have created unconducive learning condition and contribute to misconduct of learners such as lateness, absenteeism and truancy which constitute a challenge to effective school management. Effective school management of principals tend to be adversely affected in terms of assisting students to learn and acquire requisite skills and knowledge to achieve secondary school objectives of making students to be useful members of the society and also proceed to higher institutions of learning. If the unacceptable situations of students not

receiving sufficient supports remain unchecked, it could lead to state of emergency in criminal activities; youth restiveness, cultism and drug abuse which endangers the economic, social, moral and political development of South-East, Nigeria. The tackling of these problems is bound to increase the rate of skilled manpower to meaningfully contribute to the development of the society. It is as a result of this problem that the researcher assessed extent of the principals' compliance with Federal Government students' support services for effective management of unity schools in South-east, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to assess the extent of principals' compliance with Federal Government students' support services for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. Specially, the study sought to assess the extent of:

1. principals' compliance with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria.
2. principals' compliance with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-east, Nigeria?
2. To what extent do principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-east, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-east, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-east, Nigeria.

Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. This design is deemed appropriate, since the researcher collected data from a given population of the study to assess the extent of principals' compliance with Federal Government students' support services for effective management of unity schools, south east Nigeria. The study was conducted in South-East Nigeria which is one of the six zones in Nigeria. South-East Nigeria has five states namely; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The choice of South-East for the study is that there is existence of challenges among students' which necessitated an assessment of the extent of compliance to students' support services by principals. The population of the study comprised 1,877 respondents of which 12 are principals and 1,865 are teachers in the twelve Federal unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. The sample for the study is 758 respondents of which 12 are principals and 746 are teachers drawn using multistage sampling procedure.

A researcher-developed instrument titled "Principals' Compliance with Federal Ministry of Education Students' Support Services for Effective Management Questionnaire (PCFMESSEM)" was used for data collection. The instrument was developed by the researcher from literature review and consultation with experts in the field. It has two

versions. One version of the instrument was responded to by the principals while the other was responded to by teachers. This is done to enable teachers mitigate the responses of their principals. Each of the two versions of the instruments had four clusters namely: I and II with 12 and 14 items on health service and guidance and counselling service. The instrument contains 26 items structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The instrument subjected to face validation by three experts, two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The suggestions of the experts were applied in producing the final instrument. The reliability of the instrument involved single administration of 30 copies of the instrument which 6 copies were distributed to principals and 24 copies to teachers respectively in unity schools in south-south, Nigeria. The data obtained were subjected to test for internal consistency using Cronbach alpha. It was considered appropriate in order to determine the level of homogeneity of the items in the clusters. The co-efficient obtained for clusters I and II of the instrument were 0.79 and 0.81 respectively with an overall coefficient of 0.79.

The researcher and eleven research assistants who are teachers in unity schools in South-East, Nigeria collected data for the study. The research assistants are representatives in 11 schools, while the researcher administered copies of the instrument to the respondents in the remaining school. A total of 758 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 12 principals and 746 teachers, while 733 copies (12 from principals and 721 from teachers) were properly completed and successfully retrieved, indicating 97% percent return. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for answering the research questions and t-test for testing the hypotheses. . In answering the research questions in this study, mean scores that fall between: 4.00-3.50, 3.49-2.50, 2.49-1.50, and 1.49-below were taken to indicate VHE, HE, LE and VLE respectively. In taking decisions on the null hypotheses, if p-value is equal or greater than the level of significance 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected. On the other hand, if the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores on Principals' Compliance with Federal Government Students' Health Service for Effective Management of Unity Schools

S/N	ITEMS	Principals (N =12)			Teachers (N =721)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision	Mean	Sd	Decision
1	Conducts pre-entry physical examination of students.	2.65	1.16	High Extent	2.60	1.05	High Extent
2	Keeps accurate record of students' history of past illnesses.	2.53	1.01	High Extent	2.41	1.10	Low Extent
3	Provides well-equipped first aid boxes in different sections of the school.	2.47	1.11	Low Extent	2.45	1.08	Low Extent
4	Provides free medical test for the students.	2.39	1.08	Low Extent	2.41	1.17	Low Extent
5	Embarks on routine immunization of students.	2.36	0.97	Low Extent	2.35	1.12	Low Extent
6	Organizes orientation for students on first-aid administration.	2.54	1.05	High Extent	2.60	1.00	High Extent
7	Conducts periodic physical screening of students at the school health services centre at the beginning of every session.	2.40	1.04	Low Extent	2.33	1.09	Low Extent
8	Supplies portable drinking water to minimize students' exposure to water related illness.	2.47	1.00	Low Extent	2.43	1.11	Low Extent
9	Hardly conduct drugs screenings	2.56	1.07	High Extent	2.53	0.93	High Extent
10	Has equipped school sick bay.	2.47	1.09	Low Extent	2.45	1.13	Low Extent
11	Uses posters to sensitize the students on health issues.	2.45	1.15	Low Extent	2.47	1.03	Low Extent
12	Seldom perform dental services for students	2.51	1.13	High Extent	2.50	1.01	High Extent
Cluster Mean		2.48	1.07	Low Extent	2.46	1.07	Low Extent

Table 1 shows that the mean ratings of principals and teachers for items 1, 6, 9 and 12 were decision rule of 2.50-3.49 indicating that there was high extent of principals' compliance with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools for the items. The mean ratings of principals and teachers for items 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11 were between 1.50 and 2.49 indicating that there was low extent of principals' compliance with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in connection to the items. The mean score of 2.53 recorded by principals for item 2 indicated high extent to which they compliance to that aspect of health service, while the teachers who recorded mean score of 2.43 indicated to low extent to which principals comply with the item.

The pooled standard deviation scores for principals and teachers which stood at 1.07 and 1.07 respectively indicated convergence of their responses and thus their responses were homogenous. The cluster mean of 2.48 and 2.46 for principals and teachers respectively fell within the decision rule of 1.50-2.49 and this shows that there was low extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 2: The Summary of t-test Analysis of no Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Principals and Teachers on the Extent to which Principals Comply with Federal Government Students' Health Service for Effective Management of Unity Schools.

Respondents	N	X	SD	p-value	α	Df	Remark
Principals	12	2.48	1.07	0.13	0.05	731	Not Significant
Teachers	721	2.47	1.06				

Data presented on Table 2 revealed that the p-value value of 0.13 is greater than t 0.05 level of significance at 731 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria

Research Question 2: To what extent do principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores on Principals' Compliance with Federal Government Students' Guidance and Counselling Service for Effective Management of Unity Schools

S/N	ITEMS	Principals (N =12)			Teachers (N =721)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision	Mean	Sd	Decision
13	Collaborates with the school counsellor to help students overcome home problems that interfere with their studies.	2.56	1.07	High Extent	2.75	1.02	High Extent
14	Engages students in an interactive session to guide them in overcoming their academic problems.	2.78	1.06	High Extent	2.81	1.09	High Extent
15	Has follow activities for students after counseling session to monitor their academic progress.	2.41	1.11	Low Extent	2.46	1.07	Low Extent
16	Refers the students with special challenges to professional counsellors for specialized assistance.	2.67	0.94	High Extent	2.60	1.10	High Extent
17	Works with the school counsellor to handle students with unruly behaviours.	2.86	1.04	High Extent	2.90	1.01	High Extent
18	Hardly advise learners on study habits to minimize examination anxieties	2.54	1.01	High Extent	2.58	1.08	High Extent
19	Lists the relevant subjects that will complement the students' career choice.	2.89	1.03	High Extent	2.76	1.05	High Extent
20	Places of the students in classes based on their career interests.	2.73	1.15	High Extent	2.81	1.02	High Extent
21	Gathers the students at a given interval for assistance on how to overcome their academic problems.	2.60	1.11	High Extent	2.71	1.05	High Extent
22	Provides information on entrance requirements for jobs that the students are interested in pursuing.	2.79	1.09	High Extent	2.66	1.11	High Extent
23	Invites professional counsellors to give general talks to guide the students in improving on their studies.	2.54	1.00	High Extent	2.46	0.96	Low Extent
24	Early intervention programmes for students with academic issues is irregularly	2.48	1.08	Low Extent	2.45	1.05	Low Extent
25	Organises career talks for students on subjects needed for different professions.	2.68	1.13	High Extent	2.49	1.04	Low Extent
26	Advises the learners with special needs from time to time.	2.70	1.07	High Extent	2.65	1.05	High Extent
Cluster Mean		2.67	1.06	High Extent	2.65	1.05	High Extent

The results of data analysis presented in Table 3 revealed that the mean scores of principals and teachers for items 13, 14, 16-22 and 26 fell within the range of 2.50-3.49 and this indicated high extent of principals' compliance with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective school management in connection to the items. Principals and teachers revealed low extent of principals' compliance with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective school management for items 15 and 24 as shown by their mean scores that fall within the range of 1.50-2.49. On the other hand, the mean ratings of principals for items 23 and 25 were 2.54 and 2.68 indicating that there was high extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students'

guidance and counselling service for effective school management for the items, while that of teachers which were 2.46 and 2.49 indicated low extent to which principals comply with those aspects.

The pooled standard deviation scores for principals and teachers and which stand at 1.06 and 1.05 respectively indicate convergence of their responses implying that their responses are homogenous. Generally, the cluster mean of 2.67 for principals and 2.65 for teachers falls within the range 2.50-3.49 indicating that principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria to a high extent.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 4: The Summary of t-test Analysis of no Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Principals and Teachers on the Extent to which Principals Comply with Federal Government Students' Guidance and Counselling Service for Effective Management of Unity Schools.

Respondents	N	X	SD	p-value	α	Df	Remark
Principals	12	2.67	1.06	0.16	0.05	731	Not Significant
Teachers	721	2.65	1.05				

As indicated by Table 4, the p-value value of 0.16 is greater than t 0.05 level of significance at 731 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the study revealed that there was low extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. The finding agreed with that of Sanni, Airede, Anigilaje and Offiong (2022) which revealed that the level of implementation of school health services (SHSs) in primary schools was poor. This also affirmed the finding of Okeke and Ikediugwu (2020) which showed that principals' comply with FME guidelines on health services in the administration of unity schools in South-East Nigeria to a low extent. The similarities in geographical locations and educational institutions of the studies might account for the conformity of the findings. This disagreed with the finding of Magaji and Atando (2020) which indicated that there is a moderate level of implementation of health services in public and private senior secondary schools. The disagreement in findings might be traced to variations in geographical locations and participants of the study. The low extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria is evident in the aspects of provision of well-equipped first aid boxes in different sections of the school, free medical test for the students, routine immunization of students, periodic physical screening of students, supply of portable drinking water and uses of posters to sensitize the students on health issues. The low extent to which principals comply to health services might be linked to the insufficient sick bay, necessary first aid equipment, medical facilities and drugs supplied to unity schools.

The principals of unity schools might be constrained by medical resources and personnel to provide safe drinking water, drugs, free medical examinations and immunization of students among others. Further result indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' health service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. This supported the finding of Osegbue (2021) which indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals provide health services for educational goal attainment in public secondary schools. The two studies which were conducted within South-East where schools have similarities in policy and resource to render health services could be associated to the agreement in the findings.

The finding of the study revealed that principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria to a high extent. This is in disagreement with the finding of Amede and Huoma (2018) which revealed that the extent to which guidance and counselling services is implemented in secondary schools was very low. The variation in time span which is associated with change in guidance and counselling services in secondary schools might explain the disagreement in the findings. The high extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria is shown in the aspects of collaboration with the school counsellor to render counselling services, engagement of students in an interactive session, referring of the students, places of the students in classes based on their career interests, gathering the students at a given interval for assistance on how to overcome their academic problems, dissemination of information on entrance requirements for jobs that the students are interested in pursuing and invitation of professional counsellors to give general talks to guide the students in improving on their studies. The students to high extent get information to solve their academic and vocational problems in unity schools.

The result of this study also showed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent to which principals comply with Federal Government students' guidance and counselling service for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. This is in conformity with the finding of Nwanga (2022) which revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the guidance and counselling practices of in public secondary schools. The agreement in finding is probably associated with the South East in which the studies were conducted. The guidance and counselling services provided by students help them to become aware of their strengths and weakness which lead to adjusted and smooth academic and vocational life.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that principals partially comply with Federal Government students' support services for effective management of unity schools in South-East, Nigeria. The principals' compliance with components of health services of Federal Government students' support services was to a low extent, while their compliance to guidance and counselling services was to a high extent. The principals' compliance to students' guidance and counselling services help to address challenges students encounter during the teaching-learning process. Through guidance and counseling support services secondary school students are guided to solve their academic problems and identify which fields that best suit their abilities and interests. However, the students' physical, mental and social well-being requires adequate attention in secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for sustained improvement in principals' provision of health support services to students through appeal to Philanthropists, community-based and non-government organizations for funds to regularly conduct medical test for students, improve the supply of portable drinking water and other health support services.
2. Federal Ministry of Education should recruit and post professional counsellors to unity school to help in developing a programme for identifying students in need of counselling services and tracking the beneficiaries to ensure successful intervention.

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