

## The Role of Counsellors in Sustainable Constitutional Democracy in Enugu State

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**ABSTRACT:** This study focused on the role of counsellors in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu state. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. The population for the study consisted of 291 school counsellors in the urban and rural areas in the 291 secondary schools. A questionnaire designed on a 4 likert type scale was used in the study. The research made use of 6-items questionnaire, which was face validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was determined by using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability index was .81 and it showed that the instrument was reliable. The data were analysed using mean with standard deviation while t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis. The findings of the study among others showed that the roles of school counsellors in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu state are to advise students to enroll for civic education, to advise the curriculum developers to include necessary topics for sustainable constitutional democracy, to establish or improve curriculum programs, which foster an understanding of constitutional democracy among others. One of the recommendations made was that, there should be constant and continuous staff training, retraining and development programmes in order to build the capacity of counsellors towards government process. However, counsellors should be exposed to political systems, rule of law, constitutional development among others so as to equip the students on the necessary skills, aptitude and attitude towards political powers and good governance.

**KEY WORDS:** Guidance and Counselling, Counsellors, Constitutional Democracy

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### INTRODUCTION

Democracy is not conceivable without a strong and generally accepted constitution. Democracy is a form of government where the people elect their representatives in government. According to Naaman (2003), democracy is “ideally a manifestation of legitimacy that should ensure a reasonable measure of political stability, security and the pursuit of common aspirations”. Democracy is synonymous to human rights. One cannot be practiced without the other.

The implication of the above content shows that any form of government that fails to derive its legitimacy from the people cannot lay claims to be democratic (Aluko, 2021). Thus, for democracy to attain its objective the constitution has to be sustained for the poor masses to enjoy the benefits. Sustainability of constitutional democracy addresses the following principal concerns. First, they protect the right to choose political representatives; secondly, they restrain the state from unduly interfering with individual liberties and prosperity and thirdly, they place a duty on the state to assist the individual or group to realize their potential through the opportunity to pursue economic, social, and cultural rights (Solomon, 2018).

Building a sustainable constitutional democracy, therefore, requires citizens and political power-holders over time to act in conformity with democratic principles, not out of fear of sanction or because of persuasion but because they respect principles of democracy, which has become part of their understanding of proper political conduct. The constitution will be more than words on paper, it is a set of values that have permeated into public consciousness (Solomon, 2018). Constitution is an aggregate of fundamental principles or established precedents that constitute the legal basis of a polity, organization or other type of entity and commonly determine how that entity is to be governed (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2003).

Constitutional democracy in the Lincolnian submission is a government of the people, by the people and for the people, which is based on the supremacy of the constitution. It is a form of democracy founded, operated and controlled by the provisions of the constitution. Constitutional democracy entails popular sovereignty, majority rule, minority right, rule of law, periodic election, equal access to political opportunities and independent judiciary (Stoplearn.com). When constitutional democracy is not sustained it may pave way to conflict in the process of elections; fundamental human right will be violated, it will demote popular

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participation of peoples through voting and contesting for political post, it leads to bad governance; it brings about poor socio-economic development and leads to poor standard of living. This is why Mahagan (2013) argues that without political parties, it will be impossible to run a democratic government. Therefore, there is dire need to establish the sustainability of constitutional democracy by ascertaining the roles of counsellors to that affect.

Counsellors in this context are professionally trained people and therapists who are well equipped with the knowledge of governmental principles and ethics in other to sustain constitutional democracy. A counsellor is a person whose vocation inclines towards building the reputation, inspiration, aspiration, personality and skills of students through counselling (Chigbu, Nwobi, Ngwaka & Mokwelu, 2021).

However, if counsellors proffer solutions in sustaining constitutional democracy, it will give a solid foundation to our secondary school students on their basic human right and also deepens the spirit of nationalism in their character formation. In the light of the above, Obi & Oguzie (2019) pointed out that one of the main goals of counselling is to enable clients gain proper insight into their own thoughts, behaviour and problems, in order to think in the right direction, make rational and informed decisions and choices so as to be able to proffer solutions to their problems and thrive properly as productive members of the society. Chigbu, Oguzie & Obi (2021) propose that professional counselling services be made available to all African youths, parents, caregivers and political leaders at various levels of governance in the continent.

However, counsellors should work towards constitutional democratic sustenance for peaceful change of government, good governance, protection of fundamental human rights of people, promotion of popular participation and development.

Considering the need for sustainable constitutional democracy, there is exigent to examine the counsellors' role in fostering sustainability of constitutional democracy for peace and harmony in governance and exercise of fundamental human right among citizens. All said and done, there will be political, social and economic rebirth in the country.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Recently, there have been lots of abuses and neglect in support for constitutional democracy. The people who are the ultimate source of the authority of the government are been neglected, the fundamental rights of individuals are abused and government exercises unlimited power.

The powers of government are limited by law and a written or unwritten constitution which should be obeyed by those in authority but the reverse is the case as they do not obey the rule of law, due process of law, leadership succession through free and fair elections among others. However, these negatively affect the fundamental values of constitutional democracy, which reflect on a paramount concern with human dignity and the worth and value of individuals. It hinders the protection of individual freedoms (personal freedom, political freedom and economic freedom) legal and judicial protections among others.

The current national crises, violence, recession, inflation, welfare inadequacies, corruption, ethnicity, negative political/electoral tendencies and poor standard of living emerge as a result of poor sustainability of constitutional democracy. The introduction of guidance and counselling services into schools may help to build into learners (students) as well as the staff of various approaches and means of sustaining constitutional democracy. Thus, there is need to identify the roles of counsellors in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu state.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the roles of guidance and counsellors in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu state. Specifically, the study sought to;

Ascertain the roles of school counsellors in sustainable constitutional democracy in urban and rural secondary schools in Enugu state.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

This research question was raised to guide the study.

What are the roles of the school counsellor in sustainable constitutional democracy in urban and rural secondary schools in Enugu state?

### **HYPOTHESIS**

This null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of school counsellors serving in urban and rural secondary schools on their roles in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu state.

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## METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was survey research design. The area of the study was Enugu State. Survey research design is the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses (Check & Schutt, 2012). The population for the study was made up of the 291 counsellors in the 291 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher made structured questionnaire titled “Roles of Counsellors in Sustainable Constitutional Democracy Questionnaire” (RCSCDQ). The instrument was face validated by three experts, two from Guidance and Counselling Department and one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science and Computer Education in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was made up 6 items in the research questions. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate, which stood at .81. 291 copies of the questionnaire were administered to all the school counsellors with the help of two research assistants. The researcher was able to retrieve 267 completely filled questionnaires from the counsellors making it 91.75% return rate. Mean with standard deviation was the statistical tool used to answer the research question while the hypothesis was tested using t-test at .05 level of significance.

A 4 point likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4,3,2 and 1 respectively was used in determining the mean scores of each item on the questionnaire after the respondents must have ticked from one of the four. The decision rule for the interpretation of the results was based on the values of the calculated mean. Responses on each of the research questions were considered high and interpreted as “Agree” when the mean was 2.50 and above, and low and interpreted as “Disagree” when it was less than 2.50. Where t-test calculated value was less than the t-test table value, the null hypothesis was termed not significant, where the t-test calculated value was greater than or equal to the t-test table value, the null hypothesis was termed significant.

1. **Research Question:** What are the roles of the school counsellor in sustainable constitutional democracy in urban and rural secondary schools in Enugu state?

**Table 1. Mean ratings on the Roles of the School Counsellor in Sustainable Constitutional Democracy in Urban and Rural Secondary Schools in Enugu State.**

Items		Urban			Rural		
S/N	Roles of counsellors in constitutional democracy are:	Counsellors =118			Counsellors =149		
	X	SD	Dec		SD	Dec	
1.	To advise students to enroll for civic education as this deepens the spirit of nationalism in their character formation.	3.71	0.88	A	3.70	0.88	A
2.	To advise the curriculum developers to include necessary topics for constitutional democratic sustenance.	3.23	0.91	A	3.23	0.90	A
3.	To establish or improve curriculum programs which foster an understanding of a support for constitutional democracy.	3.19	0.99	A	3.20	0.98	A
4.	To educate the students on how to support and defend the constitution through participation in the democratic process.	3.51	0.98	A	3.55	1.00	A
5.	To shun electoral violence, ballot snatching, thuggery and all indices of election irregularities.	3.73	1.08	A	3.74	1.09	A
6.	To help students gain the self awareness needed for empowerment and positive social change.	2.50	0.98	A	2.45	0.97	D
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>A</b>

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Data presented in Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed with 6 of the items listed under urban secondary schools and 5 items from rural secondary schools. Rural counsellors disagreed with item 6 with recorded mean score of 2.45. However, the urban counsellors' mean ranged from 2.50 to 3.73 while the rural counsellors' mean ranged from 2.45 to 3.74. In addition, they were cluster means of 3.31 and 3.31 and grand standard deviations of 0.97 and 0.97 for urban and rural counsellors respectively. Thus, the respondents agreed on the roles of counsellors in sustaining constitutional democracy in Enugu state.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of school counsellors serving in urban and rural secondary schools on their roles in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu State.

**Table 2. T-test on the mean ratings of urban and rural counsellors on their roles in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu state.**

Group	n	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Urban Counsellors	118	3.31	0.97	265	0.00	±1.96	Not Significant
Rural Counsellors	149	3.31	0.97				

Table 2 showed that the calculated t-value is 0.00 at 0.05 level of significance and 265 degree of freedom while the critical t-value is 1.96. Since the calculated t-value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis is, therefore, not significant. Thus, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of urban and rural counsellors on their roles in sustaining constitutional democracy in Enugu state.

### DISCUSSION

The results from the research question revealed that the roles of school counsellors in sustainable constitutional democracy in Enugu state are to advise students to enroll for civic education, to advise the curriculum developers to include necessary topics for constitutional democratic sustenance, to establish or improve curriculum programs, which foster an understanding of a support for constitutional democracy, to shun electoral violence, ballot snatching, thuggery and all indices of election irregularities, to educate the students on how to support and defend the constitution through participation in the democratic process and among others. The hypothesis also showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of school counsellors serving in urban and rural areas on their roles in sustaining constitutional democracy in Enugu State. The findings of this study is in line with Kavin (2021) who highlighted that through guidance and counselling roles that everyone in society has equal access to opportunities, rights and freedoms. This is done by counsellors advocating for social justice through reversing individual and community biases and prejudices.

### CONCLUSION

In contemporary political systems democracy and constitutional democracy at that is perceived and accepted as the most acceptable form of government. In the light of the above, the position of this study clearly depicts that imperative, thus bringing to the fore the exigency of constitutional democratic sustenance by harnessing the roles of guidance counsellors.

It is therefore the enlightened submission of this study that guidance counsellors in both urban and rural secondary schools in Enugu State have significant roles to play in equipping and educating the citizens on the appropriate and acceptable skills, aptitude and attitude necessary for building sustainable democratic system in Enugu State.

This study and its findings and recommendations are expected to challenge the audacity of the public as well as political office holders in the quest to ensuring good governance, rule of law and protection of fundamental human rights in an emergent democratic society like Nigeria.

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following recommendations were made:

There should be constant and continuous staff training, retraining and development programmes in order to build the capacity of counsellors towards government process. However, counsellors should be exposed to political systems, rules of democracy, rules of law, constitutional development among others so as to equip the students on the necessary skills, aptitude and attitude towards political powers and good governance.

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School administrators should effectively support counsellors' activities in the school and also ensure that adequate time is being allocated to counsellors and students for personal and group counselling.

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