Guidance and counselling as a tool for economic empowerment and national security in Nigeria

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Abstract
The study is aimed at exploring the role of guidance and counselling as a tool for economic empowerment and national security in Nigeria. The study provides conceptual meanings of guidance and counselling, empowerment, economic empowerment, and national security. The different degrees of economic empowerment which include access, awareness-raising, participation and mobilization, and control are discussed. The elements of national security such as military security, political security, economic security, food security, and environmental security are also highlighted. Similarly, the roles of guidance and counselling in economic empowerment and national security are analysed and discussed in the paper. These are lack of steady economic growth, broad macroeconomic aggregates growth, and high rates of urbanization, stagnant secondary sector and unemployment. Others are increasing government expenditure and domestic debts, high circumscribed macro policy and unsustainable public sector spending, as well as low productivity and competitiveness of the private sector, among others. Suggestions such as empowerment through the public private partnership, judicious allocation and utilization of resources, diversification of the economy, and strengthening of transition and rent-seeking economy by the public sector have been offered.

Keywords: Guidance, counselling, tool, economic empowerment and national security

Introduction
Education is a significant means of achieving economic empowerment and national security. The usefulness of education in assessing opportunities and self-enhancement in terms of career development and national security cannot be over-emphasized. Thus, the growth of any nation depends largely on the nation’s ability to maintain peace and steady interpersonal relationship among its citizenry. Hence, the maintenance of peace and tranquility in a country can be achieved through various means and strategies such as functional education and re-orientation of the citizenry. This paper therefore delved into the role of guidance and counseling as a tool for providing the citizens with useful skills and knowledge necessary to live in peace with one another and contribute positively to the development of the society. The guidance and counselling process remains one of the exclusive ways of sustaining the age-long system of education that has been nurtured to build useful and self-productive citizens that can transfer a nation into an acceptable level of economic development with positive influence on security development of the country (Agbajor & Alordiah, 2014).

Currently, a lot of issues and problems have emerged in the society because of the movement of the world into a small village through the internet (Ordu, 2012 & Uzoeshi, 2005). Problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, broken love affairs, emotional disorders, retirement stress and anxiety, inability to face family, inter-tribal war, inter-religious crises, students’ unrest,
incestant strike actions by labour unions, militancy, Boko Haram insurgency and kidnapping have led to economic meltdown and fragile insecurity which signals that all is not well hence; the need for guidance and counselling services in that direction. The counsellor seeks to guide people towards self-understanding, acquisition of skills and knowledge about the environment and appropriate adjustment mechanism for optimum productive work, social and psychological satisfaction as well as economic growth and security development (Uzoeshi, 2005 & Ordu, 2012). The Nigerian society is facing a lot of national security challenges which are overt in different parts of the country. These security challenges pose some threat to economic empowerment and national development. A nation that is insecure cannot develop effectively no matter its laudable developmental goals and objectives. It is against this background, this paper delves on the role of guidance and counselling as a tool for providing services and solutions to economic empowerment and security challenges being faced today by the nation.

**Conceptual framework**
The word “guidance” refers to the process of directing, piloting, managing, steering, aiding, assisting, leading and interacting while “counseling” is the process by which a person with problems is helped by a professional counsellor to voluntarily change his behaviour, clarify his attitudes, ideas and goals so that his/her problems may be solved (Tambuwal, 2010). From this background, guidance and counselling is a branch of study that provides client with help and solutions in order to come out of such problem. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (2011) stressed that guidance and counselling programmes promotes the personal, social, educational and career development of people and the community at large.

Empowerment, on the other hand, is a multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. Empowerment is described as the process that fosters power in people, their communities and the society (Page & Czuba, 1999). Sako (2018:32) defines empowerment as the process of strengthening the existing capacities and capabilities of the disadvantaged groups in the society. Empowerment therefore involves the provision of enabling environment for realization of productive and intellectual abilities. From the foregoing, empowerment is an aggregate of processes that are designed to expand access to educational opportunities, facilities for skills acquisition, and position of authorities. Economic empowerment, in this text, is the ability to make and act on decision that involves control and allocation of financial resources (Golla, Malhotra, Nauda & Mehra, 2011). Economic empowerment seeks to ensure that people have the appropriate knowledge, skills, capabilities and resources and access to secure a sustainable incomes and livelihoods (Luttrell & Quiroz, 2017).

Many view economic empowerment as both a process and an outcome. Others take only an instrumentalist view of economic empowerment; focusing more narrowly on the importance of process. On the other hand, those who take a transformative approach question the way in which participation alone can be empowering without attention to outcomes. These distinctions have obvious operational implications. An emphasis on process leads to a focus on individual or organizational capacity building or an increased in participation of previously excluded groups in the design, management and evaluation of development activities. An emphasis on outcomes leads to a focus on economic
enhancement and increasing access to economic resources which are all ingredients lead to peaceful coexistence and national security.

A framework developed by Longwe cited in Luttrell and Quiroz (2017) provides some useful distinctions between different degrees of economic empowerment (with the list below moving up towards increased empowerment):

1. The welfare: where basic needs are satisfied. This does not necessarily require structural causes to be addressed and tends to view those involved as passive recipients.
2. The access: where equal access to education, land and credit is assured.
3. The conscientiously and awareness-raising: where structural and institutional discrimination is addressed.
4. The participation and mobilization: where the equal taking of decisions is enabled.
5. The control: where individuals can make decisions and these are fully recognized.

Guidance and counselling and economic empowerment
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The term security refers to protection from any harm or danger. Mijah in Ordu and Owhonda (2019) stated that security can be seen as freedom from risk and danger, doubt, anxiety or fear. According to the Free Dictionary in Ordu, and Owhonda (2019) security may also be defined as the quality or state of being secured as a freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, prospect of being laid of (Merrian Webster Dictionary in Ordu & Owhonda, 2019). National security is a strategy put in place by a state or country to maintain peace and harmony as well as the national sovereignty. Therefore, national security is a method which is usually put in place by the society to maintain peace and harmony within the territories and sovereignty of a country. National security may be defined as the action and policies taken by a nation against all internal and external threats to its borders', economy and stability.

National security, in this context, is not limited to the use of police or the military to maintain peace and order. It revolves around the idea of protection of the nation and its interest which comprised of food security, economic security, energy security, and environmental security. Yahaya (2012) identified six elements of national security which include:

1. Military security, which he stated as the earliest form of national security meaning the capacity of a nation to defend itself and/or deter military aggression.
2. Political security which he said, involves the stability of social order and the ability to maintain political stability and its sovereignty.
3. Economic security which is the ability of a nation to maintain, sustain and protect its economic interests.
4. Food security which implied the ability of a nation to feed its citizens without relying on importation of foods.
5. Environmental security which involves the ability of a state to address environmental challenges which threaten the security of a nation for example; earthquake, food drought and hazardous climates condition.

Guidance and counselling and economic empowerment
In a developing country such as Nigeria, moving forward towards economic
development and expansion with rapid population growth becomes a security threat if not addressed properly. The citizens are faced with many serious challenges from all aspects of human endeavour, which calls for concerted efforts via guidance and counselling to ameliorate them. There can be no economic growth without human resources. This is because human empowerment is the channel with which the economy works. Therefore, no matter how well polished, robust and articulated an economic policy is, it cannot be implemented without an effective human resources. Productivity stems from well-articulated, dynamic, skilled and well-focused human resources (Denga in Sanni 2018). Thus, guidance and counselling train and retrain personnel of organizations whether governmental or non-governmental for maximum potentialities and productivity.

The economic development of any nation of the world centres on the level of production, and in economics, there are basically four factors of production which include land, labour, capital and entrepreneur. The first three factors become dormant and insignificant if the human factor (entrepreneur) is absent. It is the human factor that guidance and counselling enhances in its development in what is known as personal counselling in human resource department of an organization. On this note, Akinboye in Sanni (2018) outlined the functions of personnel counselling to include:

1. Personnel counselling develops and maintain effective counselling skills that help clients to grow towards personal goals and strengthen their capacity to cope with life situations.
2. Personnel counselling serves as resource person with reference to the guidance and counseling needs and concern of individuals.
3. Personnel counselling coordinates the various aspects of the total programmes in the organization.
4. Personnel counselling assists in developing healthy attitudes towards work among employees.
5. Personnel counselling identifies and assesses employees’ occupational and educational placement, needs and aspirations.
6. Personnel counselling assists in referral services as well as handling research related issues in an organization.

Furthermore, guidance and counselling provides services and techniques for career and vocational development through teaching and trainings. Studies such as career guidance, vocational studies, job search and job descriptions, skill acquisitions and rehabilitation are all geared toward economic empowerment of the citizens.

**Guidance and counselling and national security**

Guidance and counselling is a strong aspect of security building in the society. The guidance and counselling services help to provide security education which turns people to be sure footed and bold enough to adhere strictly to the rules and regulations for peaceful living and coexistence in the society. In support of this view, Juvonen (2016) posited that violence preventive efforts rely on guidance and counselling services through solving disciplinary problems and mediating specific incidents of conflicts and deployment of appropriate resolution strategies.

Similarly, guidance and counselling offers motivational services which enhance environment with maximum potentials for
welfare and protection of people, fighting against vices, and engagements for quality learning in schools as well as providing tips for parental monitoring and supervision of their children. These services help to provide lasting peace and harmony among members of the society. The orientation services is also a tool that keeps members of the society acquainted to develop foresights, independence, social networks, intellectual skills and moral habits that promote good values, norms, and moral reasoning which serve as ingredients for love, peace and national security.

**Challenges of economic empowerment and national security**

According to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (2004) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2016), the challenges of economic empowerment that have effects on national security of Nigeria are:

1. Lack of high growth persistence has been a defining feature of the economy such that in over 40 years it has never had a growth rate of 7% or more for more than three consecutive years. Nigeria is not only poor; it also experiences some forms of de-capitalization (human and financial). Because of perceptions of risks and high costs of doing business, private agents have chosen to keep the bulk of their assets abroad (with independent estimates of the stock of capital flight abroad quite significant), and over two million Nigerians (mostly highly educated) have emigrated to Europe and the U.S. (brain drain).

2. Broad macroeconomic aggregates growth, terms of trade, real exchange rates, and government revenues and spending have proved over the 1975-2009 period, to be most volatile in comparison to over 100 developing countries. Over the last three decades, high macro volatility has become a key determinant as well as consequence of poor economic management (Sanni, 2018). Overall, the economy has been characterized by low savings-investment equilibrium (at less than 20%) and low growth trap (NEEDS, 2004). The economy remains at very low levels of industrialization and exporting which affect empowerment.

3. At about 5.3% annual growth rate, urbanization rate is one of the fastest in the world and with a stagnant secondary sector. The urban unemployment rate is acute with the attendant high level of crimes and socio-political tensions.

4. Government finance is also characterized by pension crisis, arrears of salaries of civil servants, huge debts to government contractors and suppliers of goods and services, a boom and burst cycle of revenue and expenditure, misallocation and mismanagement of resources. In many states, debts are accumulating at unsustainable levels and weak institutions and economic governance are very acute at detriment of economic empowerment and national security.

5. Macro policy has been highly circumscribed by the high/inefficient but highly volatile and unsustainable public sector spending, and atypically high volatility of major macroeconomic aggregates. Fiscal decentralization has proved an enduring challenge to effective macroeconomic stabilization and efficient public
finance management in Nigeria. There is also the lack of policy coherence between the states and the Federal government, and even among the various agencies of the Federal government. The traditional instruments of economic management, the National Plan and Budgeting processes had been rendered ineffective; resulting into inflation and food insufficiency.

6. The very low productivity/un-competitiveness of the private sector and the lack of diversification of the economy are due mainly to the hostile business environment. The constraints to businesses include infrastructure deficiencies, poor security of lives and property, corruption and rent-seeking, low access and high cost of finance, weak institutions, ill-defined property rights and enforcement of contracts, and unstable macro-economic policies especially fiscal and trade policy. Although these conditions have begun to improve, there are significant obstacles to be addressed which posed threats to national security.

7. Despite efforts to promote private sector-led, competitive market economy framework, there is still the fundamental challenge of transition from statism and rent-seeking in an economy dominated by the public sector. The perception of an over-bloated and inefficient public service has become one of the key problems that require redress to surmount economic woos and security upsurge.

### Suggestions for promoting economic empowerment and national security

The following suggestions have been put forward to promote economic empowerment and national security in Nigeria:

1. Functional education should be inculcated into our education through guidance and counselling services.
2. Ethical reorientation and re-branding policies should be inculcated into school programmes through guidance and counselling services departments or centres.
3. Vocational and technical education should be emphasized to provide trainings on skill and trades for empowerment of the citizenry.
4. There is need for growing the private sector as the engine of growth for wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction.
5. Both government and private sectors should address vigorous savings-investment policy so as to improve economic empowerment of the country.
6. Since government cannot provide job for its entire citizens, people should be empowered through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) to reduce crime in the society.
7. Proper measure of public enlightenment and reorientation through guidance and counseling should be taken to avoid issue of misallocation and mismanagement of resources in the country.
8. There should be policy coherence between the states and the federal government, and even among the various agencies of the federal government so as to bring positive change in the society.
9. The productivity/competitiveness of the private sector and diversification
of the economy should be prioritized so as to have enabling business environment in our society.

10. Transition and rent-seeking in an economy dominated by the public sector should be strengthening.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper has analysed the role of guidance and counselling in providing the full potentials in the area of educational, social, emotional, economic, and vocational, developments as a tool for national security. The challenges of economic empowerment that have effect on the national security have been highlighted. Thus, teaching love and peace through guidance and counselling would build the universal values and behaviours on which a culture of national is predicated, including the development of non-violent conflict resolution skills and a commitment to working together to realize a shared and preferred future of a nation.

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