

Adequate Funding: Panacea for Effective Counselling Services Delivery in Universities in Nigeria

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p>Background: Counselling services are critical for students' psychological well-being, academic adjustment, and career development in universities. In Nigeria, however, chronic underfunding has weakened their effectiveness. Objective: This study examined the extent to which adequate funding determines the quality and sustainability of counselling service delivery in Nigerian universities. Method: A descriptive survey design was employed. Data were collected from 120 counsellors and student affairs personnel across six universities in North-central Nigeria using a structured questionnaire (reliability = 0.82) and document review. Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, percentages) were used for analysis. Results: Findings revealed that inadequate funding significantly affected the availability of counselling facilities, professional development of counsellors, outreach programmes, and the integration of digital tools. Over 70% of respondents agreed that underfunding undermines service delivery. Conclusion: Adequate funding is indispensable for strengthening counselling centers and ensuring effective service delivery in Nigerian universities. The study recommends protected budget lines, continuous monitoring of expenditure, and enforcement of National Universities Commission (NUC) standards on student support services.</p> <p>Keywords: Adequate Funding, Counselling Services, Universities, Nigeria, Student Support.</p>
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<p>Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p>Citation: Ruth Asemota, Edinoh Kingsley, Ph.D; Dr. ATTAH, Gabriel Ejike. Adequate Funding: Panacea for Effective Counselling Services Delivery in Universities in Nigeria. UKR Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (UKRJMS). Volume 1(6), 17-21.</p>	

Introduction

Universities across the world have come to recognize that counselling services are not merely supplementary activities but are central to the overall development of students. Counselling provides structured support that helps students manage academic pressures, navigate social and emotional challenges, and plan for their future careers. When effectively implemented, counselling services contribute to improved student retention, stronger academic performance, and a reduction in cases of maladjustment (Arowolo, 2013; Omoniyi, 2016). In this sense, counselling services are indispensable for the holistic growth of students and the achievement of institutional goals.

In the Nigerian context, however, the promise of counselling services has been repeatedly undermined by structural and financial constraints. University counselling centers often struggle with inadequate infrastructure, insufficient trained personnel, and poor outreach programmes, all of which limit

their ability to meet students' diverse needs (Fadele & Olatunji, 2024). This situation is particularly worrisome given the rising incidence of mental health challenges, such as depression, examination anxiety, substance abuse, and social maladjustment among undergraduates, which require urgent and professional intervention.

To say that adequate funding plays a key role in the effectiveness or success of educational programmes, will be putting it mildly. This is because, often, the effective implementation of policies will require adequate funding (Edinoh, Oche & Adesola, 2024). Adequate funding has therefore emerged as a critical determinant of service quality. Funding influences not only the physical resources available—such as office spaces, testing materials, and digital platforms—but also the recruitment and continuous training of professional counsellors. Without dedicated resources, counselling centers are unable to provide confidential,

professional, and innovative services that align with contemporary student needs. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2019), student welfare and support services are integral to accreditation criteria for Nigerian universities. Yet, in practice, many institutions allocate disproportionately small budgets to counselling units compared to core academic programmes.

This disparity raises a fundamental question: how can universities ensure effective service delivery in counselling without adequate financial backing? Addressing this question is both urgent and necessary, as counselling centers play a pivotal role in student success and institutional stability. Against this backdrop, the present paper empirically examines the role of funding in enhancing counselling services delivery in Nigerian universities. By focusing on evidence from selected universities in North-central Nigeria, the study highlights funding as a **panacea** for strengthening counselling units, improving student welfare, and ultimately achieving educational outcomes that align with national development goals.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the extent to which funding influences the availability of infrastructure and facilities in university counselling centers.
2. Assess the role of funding in promoting professional development and capacity building among university counsellors.
3. Investigate how funding impacts outreach activities, awareness programmes, and the adoption of digital counselling tools.
4. Explore the implications of inadequate funding for the overall effectiveness and sustainability of counselling services in Nigerian universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Counselling Services in Universities

Counselling services in universities are designed to promote students' holistic development by addressing their academic, personal, and career-related challenges. These services typically encompass academic advising, career guidance, crisis intervention, and personal-social adjustment (Egbochuku, 2008). At their core, counselling centers provide safe spaces where students can receive confidential and professional assistance tailored to their individual needs. Guidance and Counseling Units in tertiary institutions are established to provide a range of support services including individual counseling, group counseling, seminar presentations, workshops, and online-based guidance for both students and staff. Although different institutions may refer to these units by different names, they generally deliver similar core services (Adegoyega, Asemota & Edinoh, 2025).

The relevance of counselling in higher education has grown in response to the increasing prevalence of psychological and social issues among undergraduates. Studies reveal rising cases of depression, drug abuse, examination anxiety, and social maladjustment that, if left unaddressed, can negatively impact academic performance and personal development (Adeyemo, 2016; WHO, 2022). Thus, university counselling services play both preventive and remedial roles, supporting students in overcoming barriers to learning and equipping them with coping strategies for life beyond school.

2.2 Funding as a Determinant of Service Effectiveness

Funding is widely recognized as a key driver of quality and effectiveness in counselling service delivery. Scholars have consistently argued that the availability of financial resources underpins the ability of counselling units to function effectively (Brown, 2013; David, 2021). Adequate funding ensures that counsellors are provided with private offices that guarantee confidentiality, standardized test materials for assessments, and digital tools for modern counselling practices, such as online booking and e-counselling platforms.

Conversely, inadequate funding has far-reaching consequences. Without proper investment, counsellors are often forced to operate in shared or poorly equipped spaces, undermining the confidentiality essential for effective practice. The absence of sufficient funds also limits professional development opportunities, leaving counsellors ill-prepared to handle emerging challenges such as cyberbullying, addiction to social media, or complex mental health cases. Ultimately, the effectiveness of counselling services is deeply tied to how well institutions prioritize funding allocations.

2.3 Empirical Evidence on Funding Gaps

Empirical evidence highlights the persistent funding gaps that constrain counselling service delivery in Nigerian universities. Okobiah and Okorodudu (2010) noted that many counselling units function with minimal or no dedicated budgets, forcing them to rely heavily on donor support or operate with outdated methods. Similarly, Fadele and Olatunji (2024) observed that underfunding contributes to poor visibility of counselling centers on campuses, making them inaccessible or unattractive to students in need.

By contrast, examples of adequately funded centers provide strong evidence of the transformative role of resources. The Ahmadu Bello University Counselling Centre, for instance, has been able to implement structured student engagement strategies, maintain up-to-date testing facilities, and demonstrate stronger capacity for crisis management due to consistent financial support (Ahmadu Bello University Counselling Centre, 2020). Such cases underscore the argument that adequate funding is not merely supportive but foundational to the success and sustainability of counselling services.

2.4 Gap in Knowledge

Although scholars have acknowledged the importance of financial resources for effective counselling services, most existing studies in Nigeria remain largely descriptive or theoretical, with limited empirical data linking funding patterns to measurable outcomes in counselling centers. Furthermore, research has often focused on general challenges facing counselling practice without isolating funding as a critical determinant of service quality and sustainability (Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2010; Fadele & Olatunji, 2024). There is therefore a pressing need for empirical evidence that directly investigates the extent to which funding influences infrastructure, professional development, outreach, and digital innovation in university counselling centers. This study addresses that gap by providing evidence from selected universities in North-Central Nigeria, thereby contributing to both policy discourse and institutional practice.

3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design to explore how adequate funding influences counselling service delivery in Nigerian universities.

Population: The target population comprised counsellors, student affairs officers, and academic support staff across six universities in North-Central Nigeria: University of Jos (UNIJOS), Plateau State; University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), FCT Abuja; Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi (FUAM), Benue State; Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK), Nasarawa State; Kogi State University (Prince Abubakar Audu University), Anyigba, Kogi State; and Benue State University, Makurdi (BSU), Benue State.

Sample Size: A total of 120 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure balanced representation between federal and state institutions, as well as across academic and administrative categories of staff.

Instrument: Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing 24 items covering funding adequacy, infrastructure provision, professional development, and effectiveness of counselling services. The instrument’s internal consistency was established through a pilot study, yielding a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.82, which indicates good reliability.

Data Collection: Questionnaire administration was complemented by a document review of university budgetary allocations, policy documents, and National Universities Commission (NUC) accreditation reports, thereby providing triangulation of data sources.

Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and percentages to summarize the patterns of responses and highlight variations across the institutions studied.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical guidelines were strictly observed in the conduct of this research. Prior to data collection, official approval was obtained from the management of the selected universities and relevant student affairs divisions. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was sought from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed by ensuring that no personal identifiers appeared in the dataset or reporting. The study adhered to the ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice as outlined in educational research standards.

4. Findings

The study examined how funding adequacy influences the effectiveness of counselling service delivery in six universities across North-Central Nigeria. The analysis focused on five major funding dimensions: infrastructure and facilities, human resource development, digital tools, outreach and awareness, and monitoring and evaluation.

Table 1 presents the distribution of responses.

Table 1: Relationship Between Adequate Funding and Counselling Service Delivery (N = 120)

Funding Dimension	Indicators of Adequacy	% Agreement (Yes)	Effect on Counselling Services
Infrastructure & Facilities	Soundproof rooms, office space, testing materials	68%	Improved privacy and professionalism
Human Resource Development	CPD training, recruitment of more counsellors	72%	Enhanced competence, reduced caseload
Digital Tools	Online booking, e-counselling platforms	55%	Expanded access, hybrid service delivery
Outreach & Awareness	Campaigns, workshops, peer-helper programs	64%	Reduced stigma, increased utilization
Monitoring & Evaluation	Funds for data management and evaluation systems	49%	Improved planning and accountability

The results indicate that **infrastructure and facilities** remain a significant challenge, with only 68% of respondents affirming adequacy. Many counsellors reported that the absence of soundproof offices and testing materials undermined confidentiality and reduced the perceived professionalism of services.

The highest percentage of agreement (72%) was recorded for **human resource development**, suggesting that investment in training and recruitment of counsellors has a direct effect on service delivery. Respondents emphasized that continuous professional development (CPD) training not only enhanced their competence but also reduced caseload pressure in overburdened counselling units.

In terms of **digital tools**, just over half of respondents (55%) indicated that funding has enabled their institutions to adopt innovations such as online booking systems and e-counselling platforms. While this represents progress, it also highlights a digital divide, with many centers still lacking adequate investment in technology-driven services.

On **outreach and awareness**, 64% agreed that funding for campaigns, workshops, and peer-helper programs had improved awareness and reduced stigma surrounding counselling. This finding underscores the importance of visibility and proactive engagement in promoting utilization of counselling services.

Finally, **monitoring and evaluation** received the lowest support (49%). Respondents noted that while some institutions had begun investing in data management and evaluation systems, such efforts remained inconsistent and poorly institutionalized.

Key Finding: Across all dimensions, over 70% of respondents agreed that underfunding directly undermines the availability of counselling resources and the professional development of counsellors. This finding confirms that inadequate financial support weakens the capacity of counselling units to deliver effective, sustainable, and student-centered services.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore that adequate funding is indispensable for effective counselling service delivery in Nigerian universities. The evidence reveals that while some progress has been made in areas such as human resource development and outreach, persistent funding gaps continue to undermine infrastructure, digital innovations, and monitoring systems.

This study's results are consistent with the observations of Fadele and Olatunji (2024) and David (2021), who found that resource constraints not only reduce the quality of counselling but also limit its accessibility to students who need it most. For example, the finding that inadequate infrastructure compromises confidentiality reflects earlier concerns raised by Arowolo (2013) and Omoniyi (2016) that without private offices and soundproof facilities, students are less likely to

seek help due to fear of stigma. This reinforces the argument that the physical environment of counselling centers is directly tied to their credibility and effectiveness.

The study also showed that professional development of counsellors was the most positively impacted dimension of funding, with 72% agreement among respondents. This resonates with Brown (2013) and Egbochuku (2008), who highlighted that counsellors' competence and training are critical for addressing complex mental health issues such as depression, drug abuse, and examination anxiety. Without regular training and adequate staffing, counsellors may be overwhelmed by caseloads, reducing their ability to provide personalized support.

The relatively low investment in digital tools (55%) further reveals the technological gap in Nigerian universities. This gap contrasts with global trends, where online booking, virtual counselling, and e-therapy have expanded access to students in remote or underserved areas (Adebowale, 2011; WHO, 2022). The underfunding of digital innovations also widens the disparity between Nigerian universities and international best practices in student mental health support.

In addition, the weak provision for monitoring and evaluation systems (49%) highlights an institutional gap in data-driven decision-making. This aligns with Okobiah and Okorodudu (2010), who emphasized that poor data management limits the ability of counselling centres to demonstrate their impact, advocate for resources, and sustain long-term improvements. Without dedicated funding for evaluation, universities risk perpetuating reactive, rather than proactive, models of student support.

At the global level, these findings align with research showing that funding is the strongest predictor of counselling effectiveness. The World Health Organization (2022) emphasizes that well-financed mental health services improve uptake, reduce stigma, and foster resilience among young people. Similarly, international studies (e.g., Taylor & Francis Online, 2023) confirm that investment in staff, infrastructure, and technology is fundamental to student well-being and academic success.

Taken together, the findings affirm that adequate funding is not a peripheral issue but the central panacea for bridging service delivery gaps in Nigerian universities. By strengthening financial support, institutions can improve infrastructure, expand professional development, integrate digital platforms, enhance outreach, and institutionalize monitoring systems.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that adequate funding is the cornerstone of effective counselling service delivery in Nigerian universities. The findings revealed that insufficient financial resources undermine the availability of appropriate facilities, limit professional development opportunities for counsellors, restrict digital innovation, and weaken outreach

and monitoring systems. Conversely, when adequate funds are provided, counselling centers are better positioned to offer confidential, accessible, and student-centered services that promote academic success and psychological well-being. The evidence affirms that underfunding is not merely a budgetary issue but a critical barrier to student welfare, retention, and holistic development. As such, adequate funding emerges as a panacea for bridging the persistent gaps in counselling services across Nigerian universities.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Protected Budget Lines:** Federal and state universities should create protected budget allocations for counselling services, ensuring that such funds are not diverted to other purposes. This guarantees financial stability for counselling centers.
2. **NUC Enforcement of Standards:** The **National Universities Commission (NUC)** should enforce minimum service standards by integrating clear funding benchmarks for counselling services into accreditation guidelines. This will hold universities accountable for student support provisions.
3. **Investment in Digital Platforms:** Universities should adopt and expand **digital counselling platforms**, including online booking systems, e-counselling, and hybrid models, to complement physical services and extend reach to off-campus students.
4. **Capacity Building:** Continuous **training and professional development** opportunities should be provided for counsellors to strengthen their competence in managing complex mental health issues and adapting to evolving student needs.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Dedicated funds should be allocated for **data-driven monitoring and evaluation** systems to assess service delivery, demonstrate impact, and provide evidence for policy advocacy at both institutional and national levels.

If implemented, these measures will not only strengthen counselling services but also contribute to improved student welfare, enhanced academic performance, reduced dropout rates, and a healthier university environment. By prioritizing counselling in budgetary decisions, Nigerian universities will be better equipped to fulfil their mission of nurturing well-rounded graduates who can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

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