

## ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH SKILLS AMONG GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING UNDERGRADUATE IN DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA

<sup>1</sup>Freedom OKAGBARE and <sup>2</sup>Anthony E. AJAINO

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of Guidance and Counselling,  
Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State

### Abstract

*The study explored the research skills among Guidance and Counselling undergraduate in Delta State University, Abraka. Five research questions guided the study. The entire population was used as the sample size. Data for this study was collected through the use of structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of twenty (20) statements on research skills (problem identification, literature review, research design and conclusion). The researcher employed the mean ( $\mu$ ) to answer the stated research questions. The research findings among others showed that problem identification, literature, research design and conclusion are the research skills possess by guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students in Delta State University, that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess problem identification skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent. Based on the findings it was recommended that Universities should introduce a compulsory research skill development from 100 to 400 level students, universities should always organise compulsory workshops and seminars for all undergraduate students to handle these low research skills among guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students and universities should make the theoretical session of research methods practical before allowing students to take research project*

**Key words:** Problem identification, Literature, Research design and Conclusion, Students

### Introduction

Guidance and Counselling is a specialized field within education and psychology that focuses on facilitating the personal, social, academic, and career development of individuals, particularly students and youths, through structured and professional interventions (Corey, 2017). Its primary aim is to help individuals understand themselves better, make informed decisions, cope effectively with challenges, and optimize their potential. Research indicates that well-implemented guidance and counselling programs contribute significantly to reducing anxiety, enhancing academic performance, improving social relationships, and fostering self-efficacy among students (Amundson, 2018).

Guidance and counselling services play a preventative role by identifying at-risk students early, addressing issues such as truancy, substance abuse, and bullying, and providing timely interventions that foster resilience (Whiston, 2016). Guidance and counselling is

both a science and an art that requires specialized knowledge, practical skills, and ethical commitment to facilitate personal growth, academic achievement, career readiness, and psychosocial well-being across diverse populations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Corey, 2017). As society continues to confront complex social, educational, and psychological challenges, the demand for competent counsellors and robust counselling programs is expected to grow, underscoring the indispensable role of guidance and counselling in shaping resilient, informed, and adaptable individuals who can contribute meaningfully to their communities and society at large. Despite its critical role, research reveals that challenges such as inadequate staffing, insufficient training, limited resources, and research skills can constrain the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programs in many educational institutions (Amundson, 2018).

Research skills are the know-how required by undergraduate or student to systematically identify a purpose and or a problem, gather

valid data and draw findings through analysis of the data to generate new knowledge. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined research skills as the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data in order to understand an issue. In other words, every graduate student has to undergo a semester where he/she has to do research work in their related fields. The aim of incorporating a specific semester where the students are made to focus on doing research in their respective fields is to let the students experience the importance of the research (Meerah & Arsad, 2010). According to Ipanaqué-Zapata, Figueroa-Quiñones, and Bazalar-Palacios (2023), students in applied disciplines like counselling must develop both technical research skills (data collection, analysis) and transferable skills (critical thinking, problem-solving, communication) to conduct independent research projects effectively. Despite this, research shows that many undergraduate students struggle with critical research tasks such as formulating researchable problems, conducting literature reviews, selecting appropriate methodologies, analyzing data, and writing academic reports (Visser-Wijnveen et al., 2022; Huddleston et al., 2019). In counselling programs specifically, these skills are crucial because poorly executed research can lead to misguided interventions, ineffective counselling strategies, or incorrect assessment of student needs (Varela & Lutnesky, 2005). There are many systematic methods in research but the study is mainly on problem identification, literature review, research design and conclusion

Problem identification is a technical process of Undergraduates are exposed to learning experiences that foster basic problem identification skills, particularly through coursework, research projects, assignments, and participatory classroom activities. Problem identification is a foundational component of critical thinking and an essential competence for success in academic, professional, and real-life contexts. It involves the ability to recognize, define, and articulate problems clearly before attempting to solve them. Scholars describe problem identification as the first and most crucial stage of problem-solving because it determines the accuracy and relevance of subsequent solutions (Jonassen, 2014; Facione, 2020). Evidence across

institutions suggests that although many undergraduates demonstrate moderate awareness of problem-solving processes, their ability to systematically identify problems remains uneven and sometimes underdeveloped (Paul & Elder, 2019). Corey (2016) revealed that student counsellors often struggle with *conceptualizing clients' problems* because they have not yet mastered the integration of theory, observation, and reflective analysis. Final-year students often demonstrate stronger skills due to thesis and seminar requirements that compel them to detect researchable problems, formulate problem statements, and justify the relevance of the issues being investigated (Kothari, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Such structured academic activities significantly contribute to the development of foundational analytical skills among university students.

Literature review skills are fundamental academic competencies that enable students to locate, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and present scholarly information in a coherent and meaningful way. These skills form the backbone of academic inquiry, as they help students understand existing knowledge before conducting their own research. Literature review skills are developed by students through coursework, reading assignments, and introductory research methods classes. In most universities, students begin to engage with scholarly materials by their second or third year, learning to identify key themes, select credible sources, and summarize major arguments. These experiences help them understand the difference between academic and non-academic sources and introduce them to the importance of referencing and avoiding plagiarism. Scholars note that literature reviewing develops critical thinking, academic writing proficiency, and deeper conceptual understanding (Hart, 2018; Machi & McEvoy, 2022). Booth, Sutton and Papaioannou (2021) opined many undergraduates complete assignments requiring literature review elements, their actual proficiency in conducting comprehensive and analytical reviews remains moderate and sometimes inadequate. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that as students progress, particularly in their final year, they become more familiar with conducting

literature reviews for projects or theses, often under the guidance of supervisors.

One major challenge is difficulty locating credible and relevant sources. Students often rely on easily accessible online content such as blogs, outdated materials, or non-peer-reviewed sources rather than credible academic databases. This reflects a gap in information literacy and an underdeveloped ability to navigate digital repositories effectively (Head, 2020). Many students lack adequate training in using academic databases such as JSTOR, ERIC, EBSCOhost, or Google Scholar, which often leads them to gather insufficient or irrelevant literature. Graff and Birkenstein (2018) opined that such limitations negatively affect the depth and quality of their literature reviews. Yet many undergraduates experience challenges related to paragraph structure, transitions, vocabulary, and consistent referencing (Graff & Birkenstein, 2018). Students often exhibit weaknesses in paraphrasing scholarly texts without plagiarizing, due in part to inadequate training in citation practices and academic integrity. These writing barriers reduce the effectiveness and scholarly value of their literature reviews.

Research design refers to the overall strategy that students adopt to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical manner, thereby ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It includes formulating research questions, selecting appropriate methodologies, determining sampling procedures, designing instruments, and identifying data collection and analysis techniques (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Studies show that undergraduate learners tend to propose broad, ambiguous problems that lack specificity and theoretical grounding (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). This weakness affects the design process because unclear research questions lead to mismatched methodologies and poorly structured studies. However, research-oriented programmes that integrate early exposure to research methods have been found to significantly enhance students' skills in framing researchable questions (Prince, 2020). Evidence suggests that many undergraduates can distinguish between basic paradigms but lack the skill to justify their methodological

choices in alignment with their research problems (Nenty, 2019). For instance, some students select survey designs for exploratory qualitative problems or prefer experimental designs without understanding the strict requirements for causality (Machi & McEvoy, 2022). This mismatch often results from rote teaching methods that emphasize definitions rather than application. Sampling procedures also constitute a major area of challenge. Sampling involves choosing appropriate participants or units of analysis that adequately represent the population of interest (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Although many undergraduates can define sampling techniques such as simple random sampling, purposive sampling, or stratified sampling, they often demonstrate limited ability to apply these techniques appropriately within the context of their studies (Sedgwick, 2019). Research indicates that students frequently select samples based on convenience rather than methodological justification, leading to issues of bias and limited generalizability (Saunders et al., 2019). Undergraduate research design competence is stronger when institutions provide practical field experience that enables students to practice sampling under supervision (Mertler, 2021). A well-designed research requires instruments that are valid, reliable, and aligned with the constructs being investigated (Knekta, Runyon, & Eddy, 2019). Yet many undergraduates struggle to construct valid questionnaires or interview guides, partly due to inadequate understanding of measurement principles (Nenty, 2019). Some students rely heavily on borrowed instruments without assessing their suitability for the local context. Empirical studies reveal that students often fail to align instrument items with research objectives, leading to measurement errors and weakened study outcomes (Kpolovie, 2021). Data collection plans also reflect the extent of students' research design competence. A robust design requires clear procedures regarding when, where, and how data will be collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Undergraduates commonly exhibit planning weaknesses, including unclear timelines, non-standardized procedures, and inadequate attention to ethical considerations (Mertler, 2021). Ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, and avoidance of harm—are particularly

problematic for inexperienced researchers (Resnik, 2020). Although universities increasingly include research ethics training in their curricula, many students view ethics as a formal requirement rather than an integral component of design (Resnik & Shamoo, 2021). Another important aspect of research design skill is the ability to plan for appropriate data analysis. Evidence shows that many undergraduates possess superficial knowledge of analysis methods but struggle to match them with the type of data they intend to collect (Knekta et al., 2019). This misalignment suggests a gap between theoretical classroom learning and practical research planning (Machi & McEvoy, 2022). When students receive guided practice in using statistical software and qualitative analysis tools, their capacity to design coherent and methodologically sound studies improves significantly (Wilson, 2020).

Conclusion skills refer to students' ability to synthesize ideas, summarize arguments, highlight key points, and construct coherent final statements that logically derive from presented information. Conclusion skills are critical for academic writing, research reports, seminar presentations, problem-solving, critical thinking, and professional communication. The extent to which undergraduates possess these skills varies widely and is shaped by factors such as academic exposure, instructional methodology, cognitive development, discipline-based writing requirements, and students' engagement with academic literacy practices. Contemporary research in higher education also emphasizes that conclusion skills are strongly tied to critical reasoning, reflective thinking, and metacognitive capacity (Cottrell, 2019). However, while basic understanding is common, the depth and quality of conclusion skills among undergraduates remain inconsistent. Many students struggle with crafting conclusions that go beyond mere repetition of earlier points. Rather than synthesizing information, some undergraduates tend to restate their introduction or summarize content superficially without demonstrating higher-order reflection. Research by Lea and Street (2014) notes that this problem stems from the limited emphasis placed on academic literacy development in many institutions, leading to a gap between expected writing

competencies and actual student performance. As a result, many undergraduates are able to end a paper but are unable to produce a strong, analytical, or insightful conclusion. A well-developed conclusion requires analytical reasoning, an ability to identify overarching patterns, evaluate information, and draw logical inferences. Many undergraduates still operate at the level of descriptive writing, lacking the reflective depth necessary to craft insightful conclusions. Studies by Facione (2020) demonstrate that students with weak critical thinking skills often struggle to draw meaningful insights from research findings, leading to inadequately developed concluding sections. Conversely, students with strong analytical abilities are more capable of producing conclusions that demonstrate synthesis, originality, and sound judgment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

While research is a mandatory component of Guidance and Counselling undergraduate programs, final-year students often display insufficient research competence. Empirical studies reveal that students often fail to align instrument items with research objectives, leading to measurement errors and weakened study outcomes (Kpolovie, 2021). Delta State University supervisors report that students struggle with problem identification, literature review, research design, data analysis, and academic writing, which are essential for producing quality research that informs counselling practice. Inadequate ICT literacy, limited access to journals, insufficient mentoring, and anxiety about research methods exacerbate the problem. For guidance and counselling students, this deficiency has direct professional implications. Without strong research skills, graduates may be ill-prepared to design interventions, evaluate counselling programs, or contribute to policy decisions in educational and community settings. Therefore, it is critical to investigate the research skills of guidance and counselling final-year undergraduates to identify areas needing support and improvement.

### **Research Questions**

1. What research skills do final-year guidance and counselling undergraduate

- final of Delta State University, Abraka possess?
2. To what extent do they possess problem identification skills?
  3. To what extent do they possess literature review skills?
  4. To what extent do they possess research design skills?
  5. To what extent do they possess conclusion-writing skills?

### Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted by the researchers. The descriptive survey enables a structured questionnaire to answer the questions. The descriptive design was used to measure the research skills students possess and to what extent they possess problem identification, literature review, research design and conclusion skills. The population of the study comprised a total of 78 final-year undergraduate students in the Department of Guidance & Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka. The entire population of the study (census) was used as the sample size for the study, hence no sampling techniques. Timi (2022) posited that census is employed when the population is well defined and small. In this study the sample is 78 final-year undergraduate students of Department of Guidance & Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka. Data for this study was collected through the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire which was designed by the researchers consists of twenty (20) statements on research skills (problem identification, literature review, research design and conclusion). The respondents were to tick any

options based on response of the participant in line with the statement on the questionnaire with assigned rating of four-point scale (1 to 4) for the entire items. The face validity of the instrument was established by three (3) measurement and evaluation experts. The experts assessed the instrument's items for suggestions and correction to be effected. To ensure that the instrument measured consistently, it was subjected to a split-half reliability test using 30 final year undergraduate students from science education. The instrument was administered to the respondents after which the items were divided into halves of odd and even numbers. The scores were computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained showing high reliability coefficient. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers without research assistant. The researcher employed the mean ( $\mu$ ) to answer the stated research questions. Nworgu (2015) posited that, when census is employed in a study such population characteristics are called parameters which are symbolized with the Greek letters of  $\mu$  for the mean. The benchmark was based on a mean score of 2.50 on a four (4) point scale. Any item with mean ( $\mu$ ) score between 2.5 - 4.00 was considered "skilled", while any mean ( $\mu$ ) score below 2.50 was considered "unskilled".

### Results

**Research Questions 1:** What research skills do final-year guidance and counselling undergraduate final of Delta State University, Abraka possess?

**Table 1: Mean Rating of Responses on the research skills that final-year guidance and counselling undergraduate final of Delta State University, Abraka possess**

I	Statement	N	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std. Deviation	Decision
<b>A. Problem Identification Skills</b>					
1.	A clear and researchable problem	78	2.32	.46	
2.	Research questions	78	3.87	1.31	
3.	Significance of a research problem	78	3.85	1.39	
4.	Operational definitions of terms	78	3.31	.46	
5.	Feasible objectives for a research problem	78	2.88	1.44	
	<b>Mean for Problem Identification Skills</b>	78	3.24	1.01	Agreed
<b>B. Literature Skill</b>					
6.	References	78	3.29	.45	
7.	Highlights of differences between various studies	78	3.01	1.34	
8.	Go deeper to show how studies conflict with various opinions	78	3.14	1.29	
9.	Linked literature to research questions	78	3.29	.45	
10.	APA citations		3.23	1.41	
	<b>Mean for Literature Skill</b>		3.19	0.93	Agreed
<b>C. Research Design skill</b>					
11.	Sampling techniques	78	2.55	1.27	
12.	Validation of data	78	3.01	1.33	
13.	Justify choice of methodology	78	3.38	.89	
14.	Understand ethical considerations	78	3.30	.46	
15.	Unsure how to choose statistical tests that match a study	78	2.87	1.50	
	<b>Mean for Research Design Skill</b>		3.02	1.09	Agreed
<b>D. Conclusion Skills</b>					
16.	Make claims in conclusions that are not fully supported by the data	78	2.85	1.10	
17.	Suggest realistic implications	78	3.30	1.31	
18.	Summarization	78	2.88	1.13	
19.	Recommend future research directions based on findings	78	3.30	1.31	
20.	Draw conclusions logically from results	78	2.47	1.07	
	<b>Mean for Conclusion Skills</b>		2.96	1.12	Agreed
	<b>Grand Mean (<math>\mu</math>)for Research Skills</b>		2.85	0.78	

**Bench mark mean: 2.50**

Table 1 clearly highlighted the grand mean of the research skills that final-year guidance and counselling undergraduate final of Delta State University, Abraka possess. From the table above problem identification skill had a mean ( $\mu$ ) = 3.24, literature skill had a mean ( $\mu$ ) = 3.23, research design skill had a mean ( $\mu$ ) = 3.02 and conclusion skill had a mean ( $\mu$ ) = 2.96. The mean of each variable has grand mean greater than the bench mark mean

of 2.50. This implies that Problem Identification Skills, Literature Skill, Research Design skill and Conclusion skills are the research skills possess by guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students in Delta State University.

**Research Questions 2:** To what extent do they possess problem identification skills?

**Table 2: Mean Responses of problem identification skills possess by guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students in Delta State University, Abraka**

Statement	N	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std. Deviation	Decision
1 I can identify a clear and researchable problem	78	1.30	.46	Not Skilled
2 I can formulate research questions logically	78	1.87	1.10	Not Skilled
3 I can justify the significance of a research problem	78	1.84	1.09	Not Skilled
4 I sometimes struggle to convert observed issues into specific researchable problems	78	1.30	.46	Not Skilled
5 I can propose feasible objectives for a research problem	78	1.88	1.13	Not Skilled
<b>Grand Mean (<math>\mu</math>)</b>	78	1.64	0.85	

Table 2 clearly highlight the mean extent to which guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess problem identification skills in Delta State University, Abraka. According to the data gather in Table 2 guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students cannot identify a clear and researchable problem ( $\mu = 1.30$ ), students said that they cannot formulate research questions logically ( $\mu = 1.87$ ). Students said they cannot justify the significance of a research problem ( $\mu = 1.87$ ), the students also said that they struggle to convert observed issues into specific

researchable problems ( $\mu = 1.84$ ). The students further said that they cannot propose feasible objectives for a research problem ( $\mu = 1.88$ ). Comparing the grand means of 1.64 with the bench mark means of 2.50, the grand means of 1.64 is lesser than the bench mark means of 2.50. This implies that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess problem identification skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent.

**Research Questions 3:** To what extent do they possess literature review skills?

**Table 3: Mean Responses of Literature skills possess by guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students in Delta State University, Abraka**

Statement	N	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std. Deviation	Decision
1 I can reference the key authors in any work that was used	78	1.29	.46	Not Skilled
2 I can highlights the differences between various studies	78	2.01	1.14	Not Skilled
3 I can go deeper to show how studies conflict with various opinions	78	2.14	1.19	Not Skilled
4 I can linked literature to research questions	78	1.29	.45	Not Skilled
5 I can use APA referencing style correctly	78	2.23	1.22	Not Skilled
<b>Grand Mean</b>	78	1.79	0.89	

Table 3 clearly highlight the mean extent to which guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess literature skills in Delta State University, Abraka. According to the data gather in Table 3 guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students cannot reference the key authors in any work that was used ( $\mu = 1.29$ ), students

said that they cannot highlights the differences between various studies ( $\mu = 2.01$ ). Students said they cannot go deeper to show how studies conflict with various opinions ( $\mu = 2.14$ ), the students also said cannot link literature to research questions ( $\mu = 1.29$ ). The students further said that they cannot use APA referencing style correctly ( $\mu = 2.23$ ).

Comparing the grand means of 1.79 with the bench mark means of 2.50, the grand means of 1.79 is lesser than the bench mark means of 2.50. This implies that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students

possess literature skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent.

**Research Questions 4:** To what extent do they possess research design skills?

**Table 4: Mean Responses of Literature skills possess by guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students in Delta State University, Abraka**

Statement	N	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std. Deviation	Decision
1 I can apply sampling techniques very well	78	2.55	1.26	Skilled
2 I can validate data collection	78	2.01	1.33	Not Skilled
3 I can justify choice of methodology	78	1.38	.88	Not Skilled
4 I understand ethical considerations	78	1.30	.46	Not Skilled
5 I can choose statistical tests that match a study	78	1.87	1.10	Not Skilled
<b>Grand Mean</b>		1.82	1.01	

Table 4 clearly highlight the mean extent to which guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess research design skills in Delta State University, Abraka. According to the data gather in Table 4 guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students can apply sampling techniques very well ( $\mu = 2.55$ ) while statements 2-5 students said that they cannot validate data collection, justify choice of methodology, do not understand ethical considerations and

cannot choose statistical tests that match a study. Comparing the grand means of 1.82 with the bench mark means of 2.50, the grand means of 1.82 is lesser than the bench mark means of 2.50. This implies that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess research design skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent.

**Research Questions 5:** To what extent do they possess conclusion-writing skills?

**Table 5: Mean Responses of Literature skills possess by guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students in Delta State University, Abraka**

Statement	N	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Std. Deviation	Decision
1 I can make claims in conclusions that are not fully supported by the data	78	1.85	1.10	Not Skilled
2 I can suggest realistic implications	78	1.30	.46	Not Skilled
3 I can discuss limitations of study transparently	78	1.88	1.14	Not Skilled
4 I can recommend future research directions based on findings	78	2.31	1.31	Not Skilled
5 I can draw conclusions logically from results	78	1.47	1.08	Not Skilled
<b>Grand Mean</b>		1.76	1.02	

Table 5 clearly highlight the mean extent to which guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess conclusion skills in Delta State University,

Abraka. According to the data gather in Table 5 guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students are not skilled in all the statement that covered conclusion skill. Comparing the

grand means of 1.76 with the bench mark means of 2.50, the grand means of 1.76 is lesser than the bench mark means of 2.50. This implies that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess conclusion skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent.

### Discussion of Results

The first finding revealed that problem identification, literature, research design and conclusion are the research skills possess by guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students in Delta State University. This finding suggests that final year undergraduate students are aware of the various skills in experimental and non-experimental research due to the compel nature of the course and programme. This finding agrees with Okorodudu (2012) who found that postgraduate and undergraduate students undergo research studies and acquire relevant skills in research that prepare them for future challenges

The second finding revealed that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess problem identification skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent. This finding suggests that final year undergraduate students are not interested in applying the possessed skills in their daily activities and profession. This finding agrees with Corey (2016) notes that student counsellors often struggle with *conceptualizing clients' problems* because they have not yet mastered the integration of theory, observation, and reflective analysis.

The third finding revealed that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess literature skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent. This finding suggests that students are over dependent on internet sources and the fear of paraphrasing. This finding agrees with Booth, Sutton and Papaioannou (2021) whose study found that many undergraduates actual proficiency in conducting comprehensive and analytical reviews is moderate and inadequate

The fourth finding revealed that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess research design skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent. This finding suggests that student discourages experimentation which reduces confidants that

leads to avoidance of independent design development. This finding agrees with Nenty (2019) who show that many undergraduates can distinguish between basic paradigms but lack the skill to justify their methodological choices in alignment with their research problems. The findings also agreed with the study of Sedgwick (2019) who show that many undergraduates can define sampling techniques such as simple random sampling, purposive sampling, or stratified sampling but often demonstrate limited ability to apply these techniques appropriately within the context of their studies

The fifth finding revealed that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possess conclusion skills in Delta State University, Abraka to a low extent. This finding suggests that students often have low conclusion-writing skills because they do not clearly understand the purpose of a conclusion, struggle with critical thinking, and lack strong writing skills with difficulty in summarizing and synthesizing ideas. This finding agrees with Facione (2020) who demonstrated that students with weak critical thinking skills often struggle to draw meaningful insights from research findings, leading to inadequately developed concluding sections.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students possesses research skills (problem identification, literature review, research design and conclusion) but cannot apply the skills in an effective research process.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Universities should introduce a compulsory research skill development from 100 to 400 level students.
2. Universities should always organise compulsory workshops and seminars for all undergraduate students to handle these low research skills among guidance and counselling undergraduate final year students.
3. Universities should make the theoretical session of research methods practical

before allowing students to take research project

## References

- Amundson, N. E. (2018). *Active engagement in career development: Theory and practice*. CERIC.
- Barak, A. (2020). *Digital tools in counselling: Innovations and applications*. Routledge.
- Booth, A., Sutton, A., & Papaioannou, D. (2021). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2017). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Chireshe, R., & Mapfumo, J. (2013). Challenges in the implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in Zimbabwean secondary schools. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 4(4), 63–68.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Corey, G. (2016). *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Cottrell, S. (2019). *The study skills handbook* (5th ed.). Macmillan.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE.
- Eseré, M. O. (2020). Historical development and current challenges of guidance and counselling in Nigerian schools. *Tawarikh Journal of Educational Research*, 5(1), 45–60.
- Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and sampling methods. *Biostatistics International Journal*, 5(6), 215–217.
- Facione, P. A. (2020). *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts*. Insight Assessment.
- Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (50th anniversary ed.). Bloomsbury.
- Garba, A., Tanko, M., & Is-Haq, I. (2021). Influence of guidance services on academic achievement of secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Practice and Research*, 12(2), 88–97.
- Gibson, R. L., & Mitchell, M. H. (2012). *Introduction to guidance and counselling* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Graff, G., & Birkenstein, C. (2018). *They say/I say: The moves that matter in academic writing* (4th ed.). W.W. Norton.
- Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2012). *Developing and managing your school guidance and counselling program* (5th ed.). American Counseling Association.
- Hart, C. (2018). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the research imagination* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Head, A. (2020). Information literacy in the age of algorithms. Project Information Literacy Research Report.
- Hmelo-Silver, C. E. (2017). Problem-based learning: What and how do students learn? *Educational Psychology Review*, 29(2), 233–252.
- Ipanaqué-Zapata, E., Figueroa-Quñones, J., & Bazalar-Palacios, J. (2023). Research skills in higher education students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 14(3), 45–55.
- Jonassen, D. H. (2014). *Learning to solve complex scientific problems*. Routledge.
- Knekta, E., Runyon, C., & Eddy, S. (2019). Measuring constructs in education: Assessment tools for research and practice. *Life Sciences Education*, 18(1), 1–13.

- Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson.
- Kothari, C. R. (2018). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (3rd ed.). New Age International.
- Kpolovie, P. J. (2021). *Quantitative and qualitative research methods in education*. Springfield Publishers.
- Lea, M., & Street, B. (2014). Understanding academic writing: Literacy in context. *Journal of Academic Literacy Studies*, 7(1), 15–32.
- Luckin, R., Holmes, W., Griffiths, M., & Forcier, L. B. (2018). *Intelligence unleashed: An argument for in education*. Pearson.
- Machi, L. A., & McEvoy, B. T. (2022). *The literature review: Six steps to success* (4th ed.). Corwin Press.
- Meerah, T. S., & Arsad, N. M. (2010). Developing research skills in higher education. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 107–111.
- Mertler, C. A. (2021). *Introduction to educational research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Mogbana, A., Ekwenze, N., & Chiemela, E. (2021). Role of guidance and counselling services in improving learning environments in Nigerian secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Research and Development*, 7(1), 55–65.
- Nenty, H. J. (2019). Educational measurement and evaluation: Psychological basis. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research*, 14(2), 45–60.
- Neukrug, E. (2017). *The world of the counsellor: An introduction to the counselling profession* (5th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Omoniyi, T. (2016). Integrating guidance and counselling services into Nigerian educational system. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 6(11), 45–53.
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2019). *The miniature guide to critical thinking concepts and tools*. Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Prince, M. (2020). Does active learning improve student outcomes? A review of research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3), 223–231.
- Resnik, D. B. (2020). Ethical principles in human subjects research. *Accountability in Research*, 27(1), 1–17.
- Resnik, D. B., & Shamoo, A. E. (2021). *Responsible conduct of research* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Santrock, J. W. (2021). *Educational psychology* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Sedgwick, P. (2019). *Convenience sampling*. *BMJ*, 364, 1–2.
- Shehu, B., Bandi, D., Danyaya, L., & Aliyu, F. (2021). Students' perception of guidance and counselling services in Sokoto Metropolis. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 9(2), 34–42.
- Sheriff, T., Tune, I., Agbomakha, M., Abdulrasheed, R., & Dandare, S. (2020). Availability and utilization of guidance and counselling services among secondary school students in Sokoto State, Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 10(5), 6–13.
- Siemens, G. (2015). *Learning analytics: The emergence of a discipline*. In *Handbook of Learning Analytics* (pp. 1–23). SOLAR.
- Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2016). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Wiley.

Tolin, T. (2019). Teaching critical thinking through questioning. *Journal of Educational Strategies*, 12(4), 45–53.

Whiston, S. C. (2016). *Principles and applications of career counselling* (6th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Wilson, G. (2020). Teaching research methods through practice: Improving students' research design skills. *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(4), 780–795.