

# Determining Factors in Preferences for Counselling Mode by NOUN Students

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**Abstract-**The research is to determine factors for influence preferences for counselling mode (informing, counselling and academic advising) by NOUN Students at pre and post admission stages of programmes of their studies. The following objectives were stated: to determine the preferred counselling medium by NOUN students at their pre-admission and post admission stages of their programmes of study; to determine whether age and gender would be significant factors in choice of preferred medium of counselling among NOUN students at pre admission and pre admission stages of their programmes of study. The Null hypotheses were that; there would be no significant difference in the preference for counselling mode (informing, counselling and advising) among NOUN students at pre-entry and post admission stages of their programmes of study; Gender and age would not be significant determinants for preference of counselling mode (information, advising and counselling) among National Open University of Nigeria at pre enrolment stage of their programme of study. The following finds were arrived at: counselling medium was the most preferred counselling mode at both pre and post entry stages of their programmes of their studies, followed closely by informing, and academic advising respectively. Age and gender were found to be not significant determinants of preference for counselling mode among NOUN at both pre and post entry stages of programmes of their studies. Inclusions, the objectives of the study were achieved and some incisive suggestions were made.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance Education as expressed in the National Policy on Education by the Federal Government of Nigeria, is the mode of teaching in which learners are removed in time and space from the teachers. It uses a variety of media and technologies to provide and/or improve access to good quality education for large number of learners wherever they may be (FGN 1981, 2004 p). In line with the National Policy on Education, the Federal Government of Nigeria resuscitated National Open University in 2002 which is now known as National Open University of Nigeria. NOUN has its mission statement of providing functional cost-effective, flexible learning which adds life-long value to quality education for all who seek knowledge. On one hand, the Open and Distance education is anchored by the provision of quality support services to the learners. Learner Support is a term used to subsume all interactions between the NOUN personnel and students (prospective and registered) intended to assist them in

meeting their objectives from the point of first inquiry through graduation and often for life time (COL 2002). The choice of services

offered by NOUN is largely depend on the contextual factors such as mission and vision of the University, National policy on education, resources available, learners' characteristics and needs and types of courses and programmes offered. In a nutshell, the Learner Support services can be categorised into three main classes: tutoring and coaching, counselling and advising, and administrative support. For the purpose of this research, the focus would be on the preference of counselling mode (counselling, informing and academic advising)

## II. COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE NEEDS OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNERS

In realisation of the importance of counselling in open and distance education, Kearsley, ( 1998, p49) opined that without the continuous interpersonal interactions and feedback found in the traditional classroom, the learner in Open and Distance Education can find himself or herself unfocused on the lesson, unaware of his or her progress, and less motivated than the learner in conventional institution. He further observed that Distance learners typically needed a lot of counselling and guidance in order to complete a programme.

The objectives of this research is in line with Brown (1987) argument that for guidance system to be effective, it may be wise to have some diagnostic facility either by the use of formal or informal tests to enable students to assess their needs. He further reasoned that, assessing the guidance needs of the students in ODL becomes necessary because not all students have the same needs even where they are following the same programme. He noted that to provide appropriate answers required by students will need to cover the full range of guidance in form of informing, advising, counselling, assessing, enabling and advocating from the pre-course stage to graduation. Therefore Brown's (1987) proposal forms the bases for assessment of the guidance needs of students (in form of informing, advising and counselling) in this research

## III. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective is therefore to identify the counselling needs of the students and constantly monitor how these needs are being met. The specific objectives of the study are:

- Determine the preferred counselling medium by NOUN students at their pre and post admission stages of their programmes of study;

Determine whether age and gender would be significant factors in choice of preferred medium of counselling among NOUN students at pre and post admission stages of their programmes of study.

#### IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To identify the NOUN students preferred counselling mode at pre-enrolment and on-course stages of their programmes of study with the aim of meeting their academic and socio-psychological needs at every stage of their programmes of studies. By providing the students with appropriate and correct information, suggesting appropriate course of action, clarifying their needs, feeling or motivation so that they can make an appropriate decision that will go a long way in reducing to the barest minimum the rate of drop out associated with ODL

#### V. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was a descriptive survey research and designed on the platform of causal comparative techniques. As a descriptive research, the causal comparative technique is used when the need to discover how and why a particular phenomenon occurs and what factors contribute to the occurrence of such phenomenon. Survey method was used in this study so as to describe the current status of students of NOUN preference for counselling mode (information, counselling and advisory services) at pre-admission and on course stages of their programmes of study.

#### VI. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of the study included all registered students in National Open University of Nigeria as of December, 2009 is 54,168. The break down of the figure shows that 4,158 students registered for 2003/2004 session, while 17,523 registered for 2005/06. Also 19, 637 students registered, for 2007/2008 session and 12,850 students registered for 2008/2009.

#### VII. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sample of 1,300 registered students was stratified randomly selected from 18 study centres in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The total of 1440 questionnaire was distributed to students of the 18 stratified randomly selected centres (three study centres in each zone) from the six geopolitical zones but 1,300 were returned and filled correctly.

#### VIII. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A self designed questionnaire was used for the study. Before use, the questionnaire was distributed to experts in test and measure and pilot tested for content and face validity and reliability. Test- retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Reliability coefficient of .75 was obtained using spearman rho

Plan for data analysis

Since the scale of measurement for the study is nominal, Chi square statistics and Friedman Rank test were used to

analysis the data. Also Mann-Whitney U would be used for two independent samples test

#### Research findings

Preference profile of counselling mode (information, counselling and academic advice) among Students of the NOUN at Pre-admission stage of their programmes of study

#### NULL HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1:

Ho: There would be no significant difference in the preference for counselling mode (informing, counselling and advising) among NOUN students at pre-entry stage of their programmes of study

Table 1 Preference profile of counselling mode of NOUN students at Pre- admission stage programmes of their study

S/N	Counselling Mode	No_ of samples	Percentage %
	counselling	15040	46.28
	Information	12840	39.51
	Academic advising	4620	14.21
	Total	32,500	100

Table 1.1 Chi square Test statistics  
Test Statistics  
INFORM COUNSEL ADVISING

Chi-Square	3.120	5.600	13.000
df	18	16	9
Asymp. Sig.	1.000	.992	.163

A19 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.3.

B17 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.5.

C10 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 2.5.

#### Table 1.2 Friedman Test Ranks

	Mean Rank
INFORM	2.20
COUNSEL	2.52
ADVISING	1.28

Test Statistics	
N	25
Chi-Square	20.720
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000
A Friedman Test	

The table 1 shows that 46.28% of NOUN students preferred counselling while 39.51% of them preferred information and 14.21% of them preferred academic advising at pre-admission stage of their programmes of study.

Table 1.1 Using SPSS 11 the Chi-Square test statistics indicated the following results 3.12, 5.600 and 13.00 more

than 1, .992 and .162 level of significant respectively, therefore the null hypothesis<sup>1</sup> is rejected.

Table 1.2 Friedman rank test also indicated a significant difference in the ranking of preference for counselling, information, and academic advising at pre admission stage of their programmes of study. The counselling was the most preferred, while academic advising was the least preferred at pre-admission stage of their programme of study and there Hypothesis 2:

Ho: There would be no significant difference in the preference for counselling mode (informing, counselling and advising) among NOUN students at post admission stage of their programmes of study

S/N	Counselling Mode	No_ of samples	Percentage %
1	Information	13020	40.06
2	counselling	15720	48.37
2	Academic advising	3760	11.57
	Total	32,500	100

*Chi square statistics*

Test Statistics

INFORM COUNSEL ADVICE

Chi-Square 3.120 2.720 3.400

df 18 20 9

Asymp. Sig. 1.000 1.000 .946

a 19 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.3.

b 21 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.2.

c 10 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 2.5.

Friedman test

TestRanks

Mean Rank

INFORM 2.34

COUNSEL 2.60

ADVICE 1.06

Test Statistics

N 25

Chi-Square 34.323

df 2

Asymp. Sig. .000

**A Friedman Test**

The table 2 shows that 48.37% of NOUN students preferred counselling while 40.06% of them preferred information and 11.57% of them preferred academic advising at pre-admission stage of their programmes of study.

Table 2.1 Using SPSS, the Chi-Square test statistics indicated the following results 3.12, 2.720 and 3.40 more than 1.000, 1.000 and .946 level of significant respectively, therefore the null hypothesis<sup>1</sup> is rejected.

Table 2.2 Friedman rank test also indicated a significant difference in the ranking of preference for counselling, information, and academic advising at pre admission stage of their programmes of study. The counselling was the most preferred, while academic advising was the least preferred at pre-admission stage of their programme of study and there

**Hypotheses 1&2**

There is no significant difference of preference for information, counselling and academic advising among NOUN students at pre admission stage when compared to post admission stage of their programmes of study

Table 3

Test Statistics

INFORM COUNSEL ADVICE

Chi-Square .000 .000 .000

df 1 1 1

Asymp. Sig. 1.000 1.000 1.000

A 2 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.0.

Ranks

Mean Rank

INFORM 2.00

COUNSEL 3.00

ADVICE 1.00

Test Statistics

N 2

Chi-Square 4.000

df 2

Asymp. Sig..135

a Friedman Test

The table 4

Table 4.1 Using SPSS, the Chi-Square test statistics indicated the following results .000, .000 and .000 less than 1.000, 1.000 and 1.00 level of significant respectively, therefore the null hypothesis1 is accepted.

Table 4.2 On the other hand, Friedman rank test indicated a significant difference in the ranking of preference for counselling, information, and academic advising at pre admission when compared to post admission stages of their

Gender	Information	%	Counselling	%	Academic Advising	%	
Male	7760	38.8	9400	47	2840	14.20	20000
Female	5460	43.08	5600	44.80	1440	11.52	12500

Chi square Test statistics

Test Statistics

INFORM COUNSEL ADVISING  
L

Chi-Square .000 .000 .000

df 1 1 1

Asymp. Sig.1.000 1.000 1.000

a 2 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.0.

Friedman Ranks Test

Mean Rank

INFORM 2.00

COUNSEL 3.00

L

ADVISING 1.00

Test Statistics

N 2

Chi-Square 4.000

Gender	Information	%	Counselling	%	Academic Advising	
Male	8320	41.60	8680	43.40	3000	15. 20000
Female	5020	40.16	5600	47.68	1520	12.16 12500

programmes of study. The counselling was the most preferred, while academic advising was the least preferred at both pre-admission and post admission stages of their programme of study. There was significant relationship between the ranking of preference for information, counselling and advice at the pre admission and post admission stages of their programmes of study

Hypothesis 3

Ho: Gender would not be a significant determinant for preference of counselling mode (information, advising and counselling) among National Open University of Nigeria at pre enrolment stage of their programme of study

Gender as a determinant of preference for information, counselling and academic advising among NOUN students at pre admission stage of their programme of study

df 2

Asymp. Sig..135

a Friedman Test

The table 5 shows that 47% of NOUN male students preferred counselling while 38.8% of them preferred information and 14.20% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study while 44.80 of the female counterpart students preferred counselling while 43.08% of them preferred information and 11.52% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study

Table 5.1 Using SPSS, the Chi-Square test statistics indicated the following results .000, .000 and .000 less than 1.000, 1.000 and 1.00 level of significant respectively, therefore the null hypothesis1 is accepted.

Table 5.2 Friedman rank test also indicated a significant difference in the ranking of preference for counselling, information, and academic advising at pre admission stage of their programmes of study. The counselling was the most preferred, while academic advising was the least preferred at pre-admission stage of their programme of study and there

Hypothesis 4

Ho: Gender would not be a significant determinant for preference of counselling mode (information, advising and counselling) among National Open University of Nigeria at post admission stage their programmes of study

## Chi Square Test Statistics

INFORM COUNSEL ADVISING

Chi-Square .000 .000 .000

df 1 1 1

Asymp. Sig. 1.000 1.000 1.000

a. 2 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5.  
The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.0.

## Friedman Ranks Test

Mean Rank

INFORM 2.00

COUNSEL 3.00

COUNSEL 3.00

ADVISING 1.00

Age Range	Information	%	Counselling	%	Academic Advising	%	Total
15-24	640	18.28%	2120	60.57%	740	21.14%	3500 (100%)
25-34	600	5.71%	7640	72.76%	2260	21.53%	10500 (100%)
35-44	3980	41.89%	4160	43.79%	1360	14.32%	9500
45-54	3540	47.20%	2880	38.40%	1080	14.40%	7500
55&Above	340	22.67%	660	44%	500	33.33%	1500

## Chi square Test Statistics

INFORM COUNSEL ADVISING

Chi-Square .000 .000 .000

df 4 4 4

Asymp. Sig. 1.000 1.000 1.000

a. 5 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5.  
The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.0.

## Friedman Ranks Test

Mean Rank

## Test Statistics

N 2

Chi-Square 4.000

df 2

Asymp. Sig. .135

a. Friedman Test

The table 6 shows that 43.40% of NOUN male students preferred counselling while 41.60% of them preferred information and 15% of them preferred academic advising at pre-admission stage of their programmes of study while 47.68% of the female counterpart students preferred counselling while 40.16% of them preferred information and 12.16% of them preferred academic advising at pre-admission stage of their programmes of study.

Table 6.1 Using SPSS, the Chi-Square test statistics indicated the following results .000, .000 and .000 less than 1.000, 1.000 and 1.00 level of significant respectively, therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6.2 Friedman rank test also indicated a significant difference in the ranking of preference for counselling, information, and academic advising at pre admission stage of their programmes of study. The counselling was the most preferred, while academic advising was the least preferred at pre-admission stage of their programme of study and there

## Hypothesis 5

Ho: Age would not be a significant determinant for preference of counselling mode (information, advising and counselling) among National Open University of Nigeria at pre enrolment stage of their programme of study

Age Range	Information	%	Counselling	%	Academic Advising	%	Total
15-24	640	18.28%	2120	60.57%	740	21.14%	3500 (100%)
25-34	600	5.71%	7640	72.76%	2260	21.53%	10500 (100%)
35-44	3980	41.89%	4160	43.79%	1360	14.32%	9500
45-54	3540	47.20%	2880	38.40%	1080	14.40%	7500
55&Above	340	22.67%	660	44%	500	33.33%	1500

INFORM 2.10

COUNSEL 2.70

L

ADVISING 1.20

## Test Statistics

N 5

Chi-Square 6.000

df 2

Asymp. Sig..050

#### a Friedman Test

The table 7 shows that 60.57% of NOUN students within the age range 15 to 24 years preferred counselling while 18.28% of them preferred information and 21.14% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study . 72.76% of NOUN students within the age range 25 to 35 years preferred counselling while 5.71% of them preferred information and 21.53of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study 43.79% of NOUN students within the age range 35 to 44 years preferred counselling while 41.89% of them preferred information and 14.32% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study. 38.40 of NOUN students within the age range 45 to 54 years preferred counselling while 47.20% of them preferred information and 14. 40% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their

Age Range	Information	%	Counselling	%	Academic Advising	%
15-24	900	25.72%	2000	57.14	600	17.14
25-34	3880	36.45%	5020	47.81	1600	15.24
35-44	4160	43.79%	3940	41.47	1400	14.74
45-54	3000	40%	3000	40	1500	20
55-& ABOVE	320	21.33%	680	43.34	500	33.34

#### Chi square Test Statistics

	INFORM	COUNSEL	ADVISING
	L	L	L
Chi-Square	.000	.000	.000
df	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	1.000	1.000	1.000

a 5 cells (100.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 1.0

#### Friedman Ranks Test

Mean Rank

INFORM	1.60
COUNSEL	2.80
L	
ADVISING	1.60

programmes of study. 44% of NOUN students within the age range 55 and above preferred counselling while 22.67 of them preferred information and 33.33% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study

Table 7.1 Using SPSS, the Chi-Square test statistics indicated the following results .000, .000 and .000 less than 1.000, 1.000 and 1.00 level of significant respectively, therefore the null hypothesis1 is accepted.

Table 7.2 Friedman rank test also indicated a significant difference in the ranking of preference for counselling, information, and academic advising at pre admission stage of their programmes of study. The counselling was the most preferred, while academic advising was the least preferred at pre-admission stage of their programme of study and there

#### Hypothesis 6

Ho: Age would not be a significant determinant for preference of counselling mode (information, advising and counselling) among National Open University of Nigeria at on- course stage their programmes of study.

Age Range	Information	%	Counselling	%	Academic Advising	%
15-24	900	25.72%	2000	57.14	600	17.14
25-34	3880	36.45%	5020	47.81	1600	15.24
35-44	4160	43.79%	3940	41.47	1400	14.74
45-54	3000	40%	3000	40	1500	20
55-& ABOVE	320	21.33%	680	43.34	500	33.34

Test Statistics  
N 5

Chi-Square 4.800

df 2

Asymp. Sig..091

#### a Friedman Test

The table 8 shows that 57.14% of NOUN students within the age range 15 to 24 years preferred counselling while 25.72% of them preferred information and 17.14% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study. 47.81% of NOUN students within the age range 25 to 35 years preferred counselling while 36.45of them preferred information and 15.24of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study 41.47 of NOUN students within the age range 35 to 44 years preferred counselling while 43.79% of them preferred information and 14.74% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study. 40% of NOUN students within the age range 45 to 54 years preferred counselling while 40% of them preferred information and 20% of them preferred academic advising at pre- admission stage of their programmes of study. 43.34% of NOUN students within the age range 55 and above preferred counselling while 21.33 of

them preferred information and 33.34% of them preferred academic advising at pre-admission stage of their programmes of study

Table 8.1 Using SPSS, the Chi-Square test statistics indicated the following results .000, .000 and .000 less than 1.000, 1.000 and 1.00 level of significant respectively, therefore the null hypothesis<sup>1</sup> is accepted.

Table 8.2 Friedman rank test also indicated a significant difference in the ranking of preference for counselling, information, and academic advising at pre admission stage of their programmes of study. The counselling was the most preferred, while academic advising was the least preferred at pre-admission stage of their programme of study and there

#### IX. DISCUSSION

From the above findings, the students of NOUN indicated that they preferred counselling, information, and advice services in that order, at the pre-entry stage of their programme of studies. At the pre-entry stage the prospective learner needs mixture of information, advice and counselling (GNOU 2001). Prospective learner would want to know about the programmes and courses available, entry requirements application, procedures, the university, fees charged, the teaching-learning process, the recognition of the award, employment prospects etc. his preferences. According to McNickle (2004), at the pre-enrolment stage the learner requires access to a full range of services to enable them to select the best courses for their needs and ensure they have a thorough understanding of what employment opportunities and skills they will have on completion, what the course entails and also their expectations as learners. She further stated that, at the pre-admission stage, the learner would requires information, counselling and information in order to be aware of the skills required often in technology or how to use specific software in order to undertake the course. They also The characteristics of the Open and Distance Learners, the institution and learning processes make the students vulnerable to personal and emotional problems, and drop out problem therefore need guidance and empathy as they go through the process and procedures at pre admission stage (McNickle, 2004)

#### X. PRE-ADMISSION STAGE

The preference for counselling above other guidance processes (information and academic advising) at pre-admission stage could be attributed to the lack of understanding of Open and distance system since most of them are coming from the conventional face-face classroom system couple with the fact that single mode ODL is new in Nigeria. With the lack of understanding of the mode of educational system, they are embarking on; prospectus students are likely to perceive themselves as not having innate abilities and capabilities that could carry them through programme. This apprehension, may likely make them prefer counselling to information and academic advising since counselling offers the individual, a relationship based on trust and acceptance within which he

or she can explore issues relevant to development, clarify their real needs, reconciling the conflicting demands of home and work, and coming to terms with isolation and with problems resulting from previous experiences and take informed decisions

.Another point is that that since the majority of the students are adults who are busy with family and work commitments, and are rejoining academic after a long time, they may to seem lack confident in their abilities and capabilities to cope effectively with demands of their work and studies and therefore would likely to prefer counselling to other aspects of guidance. Moreover, the findings corroborate the report of study of Arav (1989) which indicated that most of the students in open system are badly in need of academic counselling before the pursue of their courses of study. Brown (1987) went further to explain that information should be provided to answer the students inquires; the students would require advice to choose appropriate options and counselling should be provided for the students to discover, clarify, assess and understand their learning needs. The probable means that the guidance needs could provided in Open and Distance as succinctly put by Heffernan, (1981), the objectives behind meeting the needs of information, advising and counselling of Open and Distance Learners are intended to develop confidence, enable learners to make personal choice particularly for adult learners who face a myriad of personal and special problems which role conflicts, financial pressures, learning difficulties and confusion about their goals.

#### XI. POST ADMISSION

In contrast to the conventional face-to-face classroom, in an ODL system, the individual learner studies most of the time alone, isolated in a remote place, from the institution and other students, his only contact with the institution and other students are the occasion face to face facilitation and counselling, In National Open University which is, single mode, a learner must develop an effective set of appropriate learning strategies or study skills. Some learners may already posses these skills while some others may need help. The process of acquiring such skills may be difficult for those who have previous history of educational failure. Counselling may be an effective process, for such learners coming to terms with their previous failure. (IGNOU,2001) Also from the findings above, differences in age and gender of the students of National Open University of Nigeria were not significant determinants of their preference for counselling information, advice and counselling needs at pre admission and post admission stages of their programmes of study.

This is in congruence with Tail (2000) observation that at certain level of the learning process, all open and distance learners need support beginning with obtaining information about learning opportunities and continuing through completion of the learning objective and perhaps employment assistance on one hand. He further explained that the level of support needed by an individual student in any step within the process depends on many things including age, gender, social class etc. on the other hand

(Tail, 2000). Though the influences of gender and age were not significant on the preference for counselling mode among NOUN students, the concept of no two Open and Distance learners have the same guidance needs as proposed by Brown (1987) partly forms the frame work for the research.

Education include written document, telephone calls, media output and personal (face-to-face) contact.

The findings of this study clearly indicated that the students of NOUN are dare needs of counselling, information, academic advising and counselling in order to be successful their studies.

In conclusion therefore, the intended objective of determining most preferred aspect of counselling (information, advising and counselling) needs of different age and gender categories of NOUN students has been achieved. This is in line with COL (2003) observation, that though most adult learners are highly motivated, motivation along with communication and problem solving skills encourage developing strategies for coping with difficulties that affect their learning

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