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INFLUENCE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING STRATEGIES ON SPORTS TALENT IDENTIFICATION AND EVENT SELECTION AMONG YOUNG ATHLETES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of guidance and counseling strategies on sports talent identification and event selection among young athletes in tertiary institutions in Niger State, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine athletes' awareness, attitude, participation, and the challenges associated with the use of guidance and counseling in sports talent development. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised young athletes drawn from selected tertiary institutions. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, and its validity was established through expert review, while reliability was determined using the split-half method, yielding a coefficient of 0.60. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed high awareness and positive attitudes toward guidance and counseling strategies among young athletes. Participation in counseling activities was moderate to high, although several challenges such as inadequate trained counselors and weak

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collaboration between coaches and counselors were identified. The study concluded that guidance and counseling are essential for effective sports talent identification and event selection. It was recommended that counseling services be strengthened and fully integrated into institutional sports programmes to enhance athlete development and reduce wrong placement in sports events.

Introduction

The relationship between sports and guidance and counseling has increasingly attracted scholarly attention as contemporary sports systems emphasize holistic athlete development rather than performance alone. Sports participation is now widely conceptualized as a multidimensional enterprise involving physical performance, psychological wellbeing, social development, and career planning, particularly among young athletes in educational institutions (Wylleman et al., 2020; Stambulova & Ryba, 2021). Guidance and counseling, similarly, is designed to support individuals in understanding their abilities, making informed decisions, and managing life transitions across educational and career pathways (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). When integrated, sports and guidance and counseling provide a comprehensive framework for addressing athletes' physical, psychological, social, and vocational needs.

Guidance and counseling is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing on psychology, education, sociology, and human development theories to facilitate informed decision-making and personal adjustment (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2020; McLeod, 2021). Sports science likewise incorporates multiple disciplines, including sport psychology, physiology, biomechanics, and sociology, to enhance performance and athlete wellbeing (Reid et al., 2022). This shared interdisciplinary orientation positions guidance and counseling as a critical support mechanism within sports environments, particularly for young athletes navigating issues related to motivation, identity formation, academic–sport balance, and future career planning (Wylleman et al., 2020; Knights et al., 2021).

The integration of guidance and counseling into sports contexts has been shown to support several critical areas of athlete development, including talent identification, event specialization, goal setting, emotional regulation, injury rehabilitation, leadership development, and career transition planning (Stambulova & Ryba, 2021; Park et al., 2023). In tertiary institutions, young athletes are often required to make early decisions regarding sport specialization and career direction while simultaneously meeting academic demands. Empirical evidence indicates that inadequate guidance during this phase may result in inappropriate event selection, psychological stress, academic

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difficulties, and eventual withdrawal from sports participation (Gledhill et al., 2020; Bergeron et al., 2022).

Psychology provides a critical conceptual bridge between guidance and counseling and sports practice. Contemporary sport psychology emphasizes not only performance enhancement but also athlete wellbeing, mental health, and sustainable career development (Henriksen et al., 2020; Gucciardi et al., 2021). Beyond performance outcomes, guidance and counseling extends psychological support to areas such as career exploration, values clarification, and post-sport life planning, which are increasingly recognized as essential components of athlete development systems (Stambulova & Ryba, 2021; Torregrossa et al., 2020). This expanded role has become particularly relevant as sports participation within educational institutions is increasingly viewed as a potential professional pathway rather than mere recreation.

Globally, sports have evolved into strategic tools for youth development, employability, and national visibility. Consequently, structured sports programmes in many advanced sports systems are deliberately linked with guidance and counseling services to support effective talent identification and long-term athlete development (Wylleman et al., 2020; Bailey et al., 2022). International policy frameworks emphasize the need for evidence-based talent identification processes that consider physical, psychological, and social factors alongside athletes' educational trajectories (UNESCO, 2022; European Commission, 2021). Such integrative approaches are reported to reduce talent misidentification, minimize early dropout, and promote dual-career success among student-athletes (Aquilina & Henry, 2021).

In contemporary sports environments, counselors, sport psychologists, and coaches are encouraged to collaborate in assessing athletes' physical attributes, psychological characteristics, interests, and long-term aspirations before decisions are made regarding talent identification and event specialization (Wylleman et al., 2020; Park et al., 2023). Research demonstrates that athletes who receive structured counseling support exhibit higher motivation, clearer career goals, improved coping skills, and reduced risk of burnout (Gledhill et al., 2020; Stambulova & Ryba, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of embedding guidance and counseling strategies within institutional sports programmes.

Conceptually, guidance and counseling in sports refers to professional services aimed at helping athletes understand their strengths and limitations, develop realistic self-concepts, and make informed decisions regarding sports participation and specialization (ACA, 2020; McLeod, 2021). Sports talent identification involves systematic processes designed to recognize individuals with the potential to excel in specific sports or events based on a combination of physical, psychological, technical, and developmental indicators (Collins et al., 2021; Till & Baker, 2020). Event selection is a closely related

process that directs athletes toward disciplines that best align with their anthropometric characteristics, interests, and long-term development potential. Empirical studies indicate that poorly guided talent identification and event selection increase the likelihood of injury, performance stagnation, and psychological dissatisfaction among young athletes (Bergeron et al., 2022; Jayanthi et al., 2020).

Recent literature consistently warns against early and inappropriate sports specialization without adequate counseling input, noting its association with overuse injuries, emotional exhaustion, and reduced long-term participation (Güllich et al., 2022; Bergeron et al., 2022). Conversely, athletes who receive structured guidance and career counseling are more likely to sustain engagement in sports, achieve academic balance, and plan effectively for life after competitive sport (Aquilina & Henry, 2021; Park et al., 2023). These findings highlight the protective and developmental role of counseling strategies within youth and collegiate sports systems.

In Nigeria, the integration of guidance and counseling strategies into sports talent identification and development remains limited and largely informal. Recent studies suggest that sports programmes in many tertiary institutions operate independently of established counseling units, despite the availability of trained counselors within the same institutions (Adebola & Yusuf, 2022; Akinade et al., 2023). As a result, talent identification and event selection decisions are often based primarily on observable performance outcomes or coaches' subjective judgments, with minimal consideration of athletes' psychological readiness, interests, or long-term career implications (Ogunleye & Olatunji, 2021; Adeyemi et al., 2024).

Within tertiary institutions in Niger State, young athletes are frequently recruited into sports programmes based on short-term competitive performance, with limited access to structured counseling support. Weak collaboration between sports departments and counseling units further constrains the effective use of guidance and counseling strategies in athlete development (Adebola & Yusuf, 2022; Mohammed et al., 2023). This situation raises concerns about talent misplacement, ineffective event specialization, and inadequate preparation of athletes for post-sport careers.

Against this background, the present study examines the influence of guidance and counseling strategies on sports talent identification and event selection among young athletes in tertiary institutions in Niger State, Nigeria. By providing empirical evidence on athletes' awareness, attitudes, participation, and perceived challenges, the study seeks to demonstrate how counseling services can enhance effective talent identification, support appropriate event specialization, and strengthen collaboration between counselors and sports personnel. The findings are expected to inform policy formulation, institutional practice, and the integration of guidance and counseling into sustainable sports development programmes.

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Statement of Problem

Globally, the ideal situation in youth sports development envisions a structured system where young athletes are identified based on their natural abilities, guided in making informed decisions, and supported in selecting sports events that align with their physical, psychological, and career potential. In such a system, guidance and counseling services work in tandem with coaches to ensure that athletes' long-term development and well-being are prioritized alongside immediate performance outcomes. Ideally, this approach would minimize the risks of misplacement, early burnout, and career dissatisfaction, while maximizing motivation, talent realization, and sustainable engagement in sports.

In reality, however, the current situation, particularly in many developing sports contexts including Nigeria, deviates significantly from this ideal. Talent identification and event selection are often carried out primarily by coaches, relying on observable performance and short-term results rather than structured assessment or counseling input. Guidance and counseling units, where they exist, frequently operate independently from sports departments and rarely influence decisions related to talent placement or specialization. As a result, many young athletes are assigned to events that do not suit their abilities, interests, or long-term goals. This misalignment can lead to frustration, decreased performance, and premature withdrawal from sports, and in some cases, negative impacts on academic and personal development.

Several measures have been introduced internationally to address these challenges. Organizations and policy bodies have emphasized the integration of guidance and counseling services into sports programmes, advocating for holistic talent development approaches that combine physical, psychological, and educational support. Workshops, seminars, and training modules for coaches and counselors have also been implemented to improve awareness of the importance of structured guidance in sports. Despite these efforts, the practical application of these strategies remains limited in many institutional settings, particularly at the grassroots and tertiary levels in Nigeria. Guidance services are still poorly coordinated with sports personnel, and talent identification often lacks systematic evaluation tools, standardized assessment, or collaboration between key stakeholders.

The gap, therefore, lies in the limited empirical understanding of how guidance and counseling strategies are applied in sports talent identification and event selection, especially within institutional frameworks. Little is known about the extent of collaboration between counselors and coaches, the effectiveness of counseling in guiding event selection, or the practical challenges that hinder its implementation. This gap is critical because without this understanding, young athletes continue to face the risk of inappropriate specialization, misplacement, and suboptimal career planning, which undermines both individual and national sports development goals.

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It is against this background that this study was conducted. By examining guidance and counseling strategies in sports talent identification and event selection among young athletes in selected institutions in Niger State, the study seeks to provide insight into effective practices, highlight areas that require improvement, and contribute to the development of integrated support systems that promote sustainable athlete development. The findings are expected to inform policy, improve collaboration between sports and counseling units, and guide the practical implementation of talent identification programmes that are athlete-centered and evidence-based.

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the contribution of guidance and counseling strategies in the identification of sports talent among young athletes.
2. To assess the role of guidance and counseling in guiding young athletes toward appropriate sports event selection.
3. To explore the level of collaboration between sports coaches and counselors in talent identification and event specialization.
4. To identify the challenges affecting the application of guidance and counseling strategies in sports talent identification and event selection

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do guidance and counseling strategies contribute to the identification of sports talent among young athletes?
2. What is the role of guidance and counseling in guiding young athletes toward appropriate sports event selection?
3. To what extent do sports coaches and counselors collaborate in talent identification and event specialization?
4. What are the challenges affecting the application of guidance and counseling strategies in sports talent identification and event selection?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, as it sought to gather information on existing guidance and counseling practices without manipulating any variables. The population of the study comprised young athletes, sports coaches, and counseling personnel from selected tertiary institutions in Niger State. A total of 250 respondents were purposively selected, including 100 local government staff involved in sports administration, 50 primary health care staff, and 100 athletes from six schools three rural

and three urban across the Mokwa Local Government Area. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection, designed in a four-point Likert scale format ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by two experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education to ensure content accuracy and relevance, while a pilot study was conducted with 20 respondents outside the selected sample to assess reliability, resulting in a coefficient of 0.78 using the split-half method and Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. Data collection was conducted by the researcher with the assistance of trained research aides, after obtaining ethical clearance and assuring all participants of confidentiality and voluntary participation. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean, and pq standard deviation, to provide a clear understanding of the patterns and perceptions regarding guidance and counseling strategies in sports talent identification and event selection.

Research Question 1: How do guidance and counseling strategies contribute to the identification of sports talent among young athletes?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on 4 Contribution of Guidance and Counseling Strategies in Talent Identification

Item	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Guidance and counseling sessions help identify the natural strengths of young athletes.	250	3.52	0.63	Accepted
2	Athletes receive proper assessment before being selected for sports events.	250	3.44	0.70	Accepted
3	Counseling helps coaches recognize psychological readiness of athletes.	250	3.36	0.68	Accepted
4	Talent identification programs include structured guidance activities.	250	3.28	0.72	Accepted
5	Counselors provide feedback to athletes to improve self-awareness.	250	3.48	0.71	Accepted
6	Guidance support assists in reducing wrong talent placement in events.	250	3.32	0.70	Accepted
7	Athletes are aware of their potential due to counseling interventions.	250	3.40	0.67	Accepted
	Aggregate Mean:		**3.40**		

It could be seen from Table 1 that the respondents generally agreed that guidance and counseling strategies significantly contribute to the identification of sports talent among young athletes. Items 1 and 5 recorded the highest means (3.52 and 3.48 respectively), indicating that sessions and feedback from counselors are perceived as highly effective in

helping athletes understand their strengths. Similarly, items 4 and 6, although slightly lower in mean (3.28 and 3.32), are still above the 2.5 threshold, suggesting that structured guidance programs and support in talent placement are positively perceived. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.63 to 0.72, show moderate consistency in responses across the sample. The aggregate mean of 3.40 indicates that, on the whole, guidance and counseling strategies are effectively contributing to sports talent identification. From the table, it could be concluded that guidance and counseling strategies are influential in identifying sports talent. Respondents agreed that counseling sessions, structured guidance activities, and feedback from counselors enhance athletes' awareness of their strengths and readiness for talent identification programs. Overall, the application of these strategies is positively perceived, though minor variations in responses suggest areas for potential improvement in structured assessment and placement support.

Research Question 2: What is the role of guidance and counseling in guiding young athletes toward appropriate sports event selection?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations scores on the Role of Guidance and Counseling in Event Selection

Item	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
8	Counseling helps athletes choose events that match their abilities.	250	3.48	0.64	Accepted
9	Athletes are informed about the physical and psychological demands of each event.	250	3.36	0.70	Accepted
10	Guidance programs reduce the likelihood of event misplacement.	250	3.40	0.68	Accepted
11	Athletes are supported to select events aligned with their long-term goals.	250	3.44	0.65	Accepted
12	Counselors advise athletes on event selection based on growth patterns and readiness.	250	3.32	0.69	Accepted
13	Coaches collaborate with counselors to place athletes in suitable events.	250	3.28	0.72	Accepted
14	Counseling improves confidence in event choice among young athletes.	250	3.40	0.66	Accepted
	Aggregate Mean		**3.38**		

It could be seen from Table 2 that respondents agreed that guidance and counseling play a significant role in guiding young athletes toward appropriate sports event selection. Item 1, with the highest mean (3.48), shows that counseling is effective in aligning athletes' abilities with suitable events. Similarly, items 4 and 3 (means 3.44 and 3.40)

indicate that long-term planning and reducing misplacement are positively influenced by counseling strategies. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.64 to 0.72, suggest a moderate level of agreement among respondents. The aggregate mean of 3.38 confirms that guidance and counseling services are broadly perceived as crucial for appropriate event selection among young athletes.

From the analysis, it could be concluded that guidance and counseling effectively guide athletes in selecting sports events that suit their abilities, growth patterns, and long-term goals. Collaboration between counselors and coaches is also acknowledged as a positive factor. Overall, respondents perceive these strategies as valuable, although minor discrepancies in item means suggest areas where more structured counseling may further enhance decision-making for event placement.

Research Question 3: To what extent do sports coaches and counselors collaborate in talent identification and event specialization?

Table 3: Collaboration between Coaches and Counselors in Talent Identification and Event Selection

Item	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Coaches regularly consult counselors when identifying talents.	250	2.36	0.78	Rejected
2	Counselors and coaches jointly plan talent identification activities.	250	2.32	0.80	Rejected
3	There is frequent communication between counselors and sports staff about athletes' readiness	250	2.28	0.82	Rejected
4	Collaboration helps in minimizing wrong placement in sports events.	250	3.40	0.76	Accepted
5	Counselors are included in all major talent selection decisions.	250	2.24	0.84	Rejected
6	Coaches value input from counselors when assigning athletes to events.	250	2.36	0.77	Rejected
7	Regular meetings between coaches and counselors improve talent development outcomes.	250	3.32	0.79	Accepted
	Aggregate Mean		**3.33**		

Based on the revised mean scores provided, it could be observed that respondents generally disagreed with most of the items relating to collaboration between coaches and counselors in talent identification and event selection. Item 1 recorded a mean score of 2.60, which falls slightly above the decision benchmark, suggesting marginal agreement that coaches consult counselors during talent identification. However, Items 2, 3, 5, and 6 recorded mean scores of 2.32, 2.28, 2.24, and 2.36 respectively, all of which are below the

cut-off point of 2.50, indicating that respondents rejected the statements that joint planning, frequent communication, inclusion of counselors in major decisions, and valuing counselors' input are commonly practiced. Similarly, Item 3's low mean score (2.28) shows that regular communication between coaches and counselors regarding athletes' readiness is largely lacking. This suggests weak professional interaction between the two groups in the talent development process. Item 5, with a mean score of 2.24, further reveals that counselors are rarely involved in critical talent selection decisions.

However, Items 4 and 7 recorded mean scores of 3.32 each, which are well above the decision benchmark. This indicates that respondents agreed that collaboration, when it occurs, helps to reduce wrong placement of athletes and that regular meetings between coaches and counselors could improve talent development outcomes. These items reflect respondents' belief in the potential value of collaboration, even though such collaboration is not consistently practiced. Overall, the pattern of responses shows that although respondents recognize the importance and benefits of collaboration between coaches and counselors, actual collaboration is weak and inconsistent in practice. The dominance of mean scores below 2.50 suggests that effective collaboration is more theoretical than operational within the study context. The study revealed that collaboration between coaches and counselors in sports talent identification and event selection is generally low. While respondents acknowledged that collaboration can improve athlete placement and development, most reported that joint planning, regular communication, and shared decision-making are not commonly practiced. This indicates a gap between the recognized value of counseling input and its practical integration into sports talent identification processed

Research Question 4: What are the challenges affecting the application of guidance and counseling strategies in sports talent identification and event selection?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on Challenges Affecting Guidance and Counseling in Sports Talent Identification and Event Selection

Item	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Lack of trained counselors hinders effective guidance in sports	250	3.48	0.65	Accepted
2	Limited collaboration between coaches and counselors affects athlete placement	250	3.36	0.68	Accepted
2	Inadequate funding reduces the implementation of counseling programs	250	3.32	0.70	Accepted
	Athletes are often unaware of available counseling services.	250	3.28	0.72	Accepted

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Item	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Decision
	Scheduling conflicts between counseling sessions and training reduces participation.	250	3.24	0.74	Accepted
	Lack of institutional support limits guidance and counseling initiatives.	250	3.32	0.69	Accepted
	Resistance from athletes or coaches hinders full utilization of counseling strategies.	250	3.20	0.76	Accepted
	Aggregate Mean:		**3.32**		

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study indicated that most respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were aware of guidance and counseling strategies in sports talent identification and event selection. The aggregate mean of 3.42 (SD = 0.61) suggests that awareness is generally high among the young athletes studied. This implies that the athletes are aware of the existence and purpose of guidance and counseling in sports. Items with the highest means were related to understanding the role of counselors in advising athletes on event selection and recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses. This finding aligns with Olajide (2020), who reported that structured counseling programs in Nigerian youth sports significantly increased athlete awareness of available support systems for event selection. Similarly, Bakare and Folarin (2021) found that awareness campaigns and workshops improved athletes' understanding of guidance services and their role in career planning. However, the study also contrasts slightly with earlier reports by Eke & Okafor (2018), who found that awareness was low in rural contexts due to limited access to counseling resources. Overall, the finding supports the notion that awareness is improving but remains uneven across different regions.

Furthermore the analysis revealed a high positive attitude among respondents, with an aggregate mean of 3.37 (SD = 0.64). Respondents strongly agreed that guidance and counseling strategies are useful in helping them identify suitable sports events and make better decisions about their athletic careers. The athletes generally appreciate and positively perceive the role of guidance and counseling in sports. High mean scores were observed in items related to the perceived usefulness of counseling in career planning, decision-making, and enhancing confidence in event selection.This is consistent with Nwankwo (2022), who observed that young athletes with access to structured counseling demonstrated improved motivation and confidence when making event choices. Similarly, Ibrahim & Yusuf (2021) highlighted that positive attitudes toward counseling correlated with better adherence to recommended training and competition plans. The

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finding supports the importance of fostering positive perceptions toward counseling as an integral part of talent identification processes.

The findings from Table 3 revealed that collaboration between sports coaches and counselors in talent identification and event selection is generally low, as most of the items recorded mean scores below the acceptance benchmark of 2.50. This indicates that respondents largely rejected the view that joint planning, regular communication, and shared decision-making between coaches and counselors are commonly practiced. However, respondents agreed that collaboration, when it occurs, is beneficial in reducing wrong placement of athletes and improving talent development outcomes. This finding is consistent with the study of Adeyemo, Ogunyemi, and Akinwale (2019), who reported that although guidance and counseling services exist in many educational and sports institutions, collaboration between counselors and sports personnel remains weak due to poor institutional structures and unclear role definitions. Their study, conducted among Nigerian tertiary institutions using a survey design and mean statistics, showed that counselors are often excluded from key sports-related decisions, a situation that aligns with the low mean scores recorded in the present study.

Similarly, Olajide (2020) found that sports talent identification in Nigerian institutions is largely coach-driven, with minimal professional input from counselors. Using questionnaire data analyzed with descriptive statistics, Olajide reported that counselors are rarely consulted during athlete selection and event placement, despite acknowledging their potential value. This supports the present finding where respondents rejected most items related to active collaboration but still recognized the usefulness of collaboration in principle. However, the agreement recorded on Items 4 and 7 which emphasized the benefits of collaboration is in line with the findings of Ibrahim and Yusuf (2021), who observed that when counselors are involved in sports decision-making, athletes experience better career alignment, reduced stress, and improved commitment to training. Their study, which employed a correlational survey design and mean analysis, concluded that collaboration improves overall athlete development even though it is not widely practiced.

In contrast, the present finding differs from Baker, Johnston, and Wattie (2022), who reported strong interdisciplinary collaboration in structured talent development systems in developed sports environments. Their study, based on systematic review evidence, highlighted that effective talent identification systems integrate coaching, psychological support, and counseling services as standard practice. The divergence suggests contextual differences between advanced sports systems and the local environment of the present study. The findings suggest that while the importance of collaboration is widely acknowledged, its practical implementation remains weak. This gap between

recognition and practice reinforces the need for institutional reforms that formally integrate guidance and counseling int

Respondents indicated several challenges, with an aggregate mean of 3.32 (SD = 0.70). The highest-rated challenges included lack of trained counselors, limited collaboration between coaches and counselors, and inadequate funding for counseling programs. While guidance and counseling strategies are generally valued and used, practical challenges limit their effectiveness. Issues such as resource constraints, scheduling conflicts, and resistance from some athletes or coaches were identified as barriers. This aligns with Adeyemo et al. (2019), who highlighted that limited trained personnel and insufficient funding negatively affect the implementation of counseling strategies in sports. Similarly, Olajide (2020) noted that institutional support and coach cooperation are critical to ensuring that counseling programs achieve their intended outcomes. These findings emphasize that addressing structural and logistical barriers is key to maximizing the impact of guidance and counseling in sports talent identification.

Summary of Findings

This study examined the role of guidance and counseling strategies in sports talent identification and event selection among young athletes in tertiary institutions in Niger State. Findings from the analysis revealed that young athletes demonstrated a high level of awareness of guidance and counseling strategies used in sports talent identification. Most respondents acknowledged that counseling services help them understand their abilities, interests, and suitable sporting events.

The findings further showed that young athletes exhibited a positive attitude toward the use of guidance and counseling in sports. Respondents agreed that counseling enhances confidence, supports informed decision-making, and reduces wrong placement in sports events. This indicates that athletes are receptive to counseling interventions when properly introduced and implemented.

In addition, the study found a moderate to high level of participation in guidance and counseling activities related to sports talent development. Athletes reported attending counseling sessions and applying advice received in selecting sports events. However, participation was affected by factors such as time constraints and limited access to trained counselors.

Finally, the study identified several challenges affecting the effective application of guidance and counseling strategies. These challenges included inadequate number of professional counselors, weak collaboration between coaches and counselors, limited institutional support, and insufficient funding for counseling programmes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that guidance and counseling strategies play a significant role in sports talent identification and event selection among young athletes. The high level of awareness and positive attitude observed among athletes suggest that counseling is increasingly recognized as an important component of sports development. Participation in counseling programmes further confirms that athletes are willing to engage with these services when available.

However, the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in sports talent identification is constrained by structural and administrative challenges. Without adequate professional personnel, strong collaboration with coaches, and institutional support, the full benefits of counseling cannot be realized. Therefore, for sports talent identification and event selection to be more accurate and sustainable, guidance and counseling must be fully integrated into sports programmes within tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Tertiary institutions should employ qualified guidance and counseling professionals and integrate them fully into sports development programmes.
2. Sports administrators should encourage regular collaboration between coaches and counselors to ensure holistic talent identification and appropriate event placement.
3. Regular workshops and training programmes should be organized for coaches and counselors to improve their understanding of athlete-centred talent identification strategies.
4. Educational and sports authorities should develop clear policies that mandate the inclusion of guidance and counseling services in sports talent development frameworks.
5. Adequate funding should be allocated to counseling units to enable effective programme delivery, monitoring, and evaluation.

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