

School Counselling Programme and Students' Academic Development

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Received: February 28, 2022

Revised: March 12, 2022

Accepted: April 5, 2022

Abstract

From the perspectives of various stakeholders, this study examined the Namibian School Counselling Program, including its goals, services provided, school resources available for its implementation and beneficiaries, as well as overall effectiveness and customer satisfaction. The study also looked at how the program was perceived by students and teachers. As a result, there were insufficient counseling rooms for individual counseling for teacher-counsellors, there was no separate budget for school counseling, there were no file cabinets or display boards, there were insufficient counselors, and there was insufficient knowledge about counseling activities, according to the findings of the study. A distinct or special budget be made aside for the school counseling program, as well as assignments of teacher-counselors to schools where positions have not yet been filled, and frequent awareness-raising activities are proposed as a consequence of this.

Keywords: School, Counselling, Programme

Introduction

The previous study on school counseling programs is discussed in further detail in the next section. The emotional, social, and behavioral well-being of kids, as well as their sense of purpose and direction in life, have all been shown to be improved by school counseling programs, according to a number of studies (Clark & Breman, 2009).

A questionnaire was sent to school counselors and district administrators to solicit their opinions on the formation of a statewide guidance and counseling program for 150 Washington State schools. Students may learn a range of key life skills and attitudes via school counseling, according to the findings of the study. These skills and attitudes include empathy and respect for others, as well as the capacity to communicate successfully with others. It also has the potential to assist pupils in learning how to be safe and healthy in the real world, which are all vital skills for becoming contributing members of society (Tugtekin & Koc, 2020).

The researchers discovered that the school counseling program's objectives were to assist students in improving their personal and social well-being via the use of an online survey. The program's academic and professional development goals were also identified via the research (Lowery et al., 2018).

The evaluation of Macao's school-based mental health services was carried out using qualitative data in order to understand more about the existing state of things and the areas that still need development for the region's young people and their parents. The participants were chosen using a non-probability purposive selection method. Researchers in Macao employed verbal (interviews) and nonverbal (written) reports to analyze and communicate the

meaning of three teachers and seven school counselors who participated in the study. According to the conclusions of the study, school counseling is beneficial to both students and teenagers. According to a program evaluation, the goals of the Utah school counseling program include the development of students in the areas of academics, personal/social development, and vocational development. In addition, counseling has been found to have a favorable influence on students' educational experiences, participation, and academic success. In studies conducted by Webb et al. (2005) and O'Hara et al. (2021), students who got counseling had improved reading comprehension, reduced suspension and disciplinary rates, and higher graduation rates.

School counseling programs should strive to provide all students with the chance to attain their full potential in academics, jobs, personal and social life, according to a number of different studies. Furthermore, they should help students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and coping abilities, in addition to developing self-awareness and developing interpersonal interactions with others. School counseling programs have been shown to be more effective in assisting students in making better career decisions, learning more about their own abilities, and developing more positive self-concepts about their futures, preventing dropouts, and improving academic performance, self-esteem, and classroom behavior for at-risk students (Rodriguez, 2021).

Services or Activities of the School Counselling Programme

Most professionals believe that school counseling programs provide both direct and indirect services, with counseling and classroom guidance being considered a direct service and consulting and coordination being considered an indirect service; however, some professionals believe that school counseling programs provide both direct and indirect services (indirect services). According to the findings of the research, these programs are generally approved by counselors, students, instructors, and administrators, as well as by their respective parents.

School counselors in the state have been entrusted by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) with implementing the national model for comprehensive school counseling in the state. Approximately 753 public school teacher-counselors took part in the campaign in its whole. Those who responded were invited to fill out an online survey on their professional growth as a school counselor. In accordance with the American School Counselor Association's guidelines, it was determined that teachers in the role of counselors were in responsibility of creating, implementing, and providing accountability measures to students (ASCA). Most school counselors believed they were involved in two fundamental duties linked to the core components of a comprehensive program: frequent consultations with parents, teachers, and administrators and one-on-one counseling with students experiencing personal-social difficulties by teacher-counselors, according to the survey results.

All school administrators in a rural Midwestern state in the United States were asked about the activities and/or services given by school counseling programs using an online questionnaire. The findings revealed that elements classified as Responsive Services were evaluated as most or very important, with the most significant being those connected to Guidance Curriculum Support System and individual student planning, among other things. Additionally, crisis intervention and small group and individual counseling are included in responsive services, as is the referral of students from school help to community-based alternatives. Among the topics covered in the School Guidance Curriculum area were organizational, study, and test-taking abilities, as well as coping strategies and effective social skills. Advice, cooperation, and

teamwork, as well as the administration and management of school counseling programs, were all provided as part of the System Support services. In the poll findings, there was no mention of professional development or advancement. Each student should have a plan for their future: All responders to the study said that self-awareness, including an appreciation of one's own specific abilities and flaws, and academic preparation were either extremely important or very important (Spratley, S. 2020).

Elementary teacher-counsellors prioritized direct contact with students, teachers, and parents in order to foster an optimal learning environment in the classroom, whereas secondary teacher-counsellors prioritized direct contact with students, often on a one-to-one basis, in order to facilitate a better learning experience for students in the secondary school setting. In contrast to secondary school counselors, who placed less emphasis on collaborating with instructors or parents, elementary school counselors were more likely to interact with kids' primary social groups. (Parents, instructors, students)

Approximately 2,000 students, parents, and instructors participated in a survey as part of a research project on Missouri's comprehensive school counseling program. A total of 280 high school students, 150 instructors, and 125 parents took part in the investigation. A questionnaire was used to gather data in a cross-sectional design because of the limited amount of time the researchers had to finish the study given the time constraints on their hands. Students said that their schools provided services such as job exploration and preparation, according to the statistics.

The opinions of high school pupils on five counselor jobs and the essential tasks associated with them were investigated. According to the findings of the study, the most significant roles for counselors are to establish an environment in which learners can speak, to demonstrate empathy, to assist instructors in responding to crises, and to assist learners in transitioning. Registration, assessment, record-keeping, discipline, and support with special education are just a few of the non-counselling responsibilities of teacher-counselors to mention. The researchers observed that primary school administrators considered providing cognitive, aptitude, and achievement exams, as well as monitoring students' records and scheduling new students, to be the most suitable counseling tasks to be performed in their schools. The vast majority of secondary school administrators polled ranked school counselor responsibilities as low on their priority list, including but not limited to the following: registering new students, administering cognitive tests (such as aptitude and achievement tests), and maintaining student records (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018).

Course selection and scheduling in high school, as well as post-secondary education admission and selection, were found to be the two services that guidance counselors spent the majority of their time on in a study of pre-professional counselors and principals' perspectives on the role of guidance counselor in public schools. Besides attendance and disciplinary issues, counselors also assisted students with academic assessment, vocational choices, career planning, and a variety of other personal and school-related difficulties. In a study, it was shown that counselors were more realistic about their tasks and obligations than principals, who believed that counselors should be treated as administrative staff and hired at the discretion of school administrators. In contrast to their principal counterparts, counselor participants' perspectives were more divergent, suggesting that all applicants in both disciplines need to be more thoroughly taught about the need of preserving counsellor integrity. These findings were consistent with those of a previous study, which found that school counselors frequently expressed concern about the impact of non-counselling administrative activities on their ability

to provide valuable services to their students, and that they frequently criticized school administrators for their actions.

The implementation of the School Counselling Programme

In order for any program to survive, it is essential that it has access to a diverse range of resources, including human, financial, and political resources. Each of these three categories of resources is critical to the success of any program. In terms of resource kinds, sufficiency, and adequacy, human resources are a main emphasis of the school counseling program's human resource development efforts. Teacher-counsellors, teachers (or educators), and school administrators, as well as counseling paraprofessionals and community volunteers, are among the human resources available to the school counseling program. Representatives from the business community, parents or community members who are members of the Parents Teacher Association (PTA), and representatives from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (who frequently provide a variety of material and financial resources) are just a few of the members of the community who give of their time and resources (Munyaradzi et al., 2021).

Non-human resources, such as money and materials, are required for the effective execution of the school counseling program. To execute a job, financial resources such as a budget, supplies, equipment, and facilities may all be utilized to help the work be done. It is necessary to have a dedicated budget, adequate materials such as books, videotape, record folders, cabinet files; counseling manuals; career flyers and pamphlets; and facilities such as a counseling room, development guidance classroom, or guidance information or career center in order for a guidance and counseling program to be successful. According to research, school counseling centers should not be positioned near administration offices; rather, the center should be located in a manner that ensures accessibility as well as privacy.

During times of fiscal crisis, the marginalization and/or demoralization of school counseling programs is compounded even more, leading to a downward spiral. Because of funding constraints, advisory services in the United Kingdom have been more sidelined. The service, on the other hand, should look for financial assistance for supplies and equipment (Rashid & McGrath, 2020).

Material resources include things like books and stationery, to name a few. Infrastructural facilities include things like equipment and physical space. In order to provide confidential counseling and consulting services to students, workers, and their families, the school must have appropriate space. A welcome area, a private office, and conference rooms for group sessions are all recommended for school counseling facilities in the United States, according to the report. Counseling centers often maintain and display information about prospective career routes and educational opportunities that is available to students. Additional informational materials or equipment include college catalogs, test preparation materials, and informational materials (booklets or fliers) that assist learners with developmental needs such as adjusting to physical changes, dealing with peer pressure, and preventing substance abuse (newsletters, brochures, and pamphlets). The school's organization, physical facilities, administrative structure, as well as curricular and extracurricular opportunities, should all be documented in handbooks available to students, parents, and members of the community. In order to evaluate learners' requirements effectively, resources such as psychometric evaluation tools are considered to be required. Without these tools, the assessment of learners' needs may be severely constrained. Referral services are emphasized, and the need of school counseling resources is emphasized as a necessity. The importance of political

resources in ensuring that the school counseling program is implemented effectively is underlined. Policy pronouncements, management, and administrative support are all examples of political resources in action. As a consequence, the capacity to organize political resources becomes more important. Significant individuals in leadership positions, regional administration, and the school board of education must all support and promote the school counseling program. Legislation, policy decisions, political party declarations, and media and editorial criticism on the expectations of the school counseling program are all examples of what may be expected.

According to a recent survey, students say that a lack of current expert publications and a lack of adequate material resources are the most significant hurdles to counselors' ability to provide effective school counseling services in their schools. According to a study of counseling services in Romania, there are no stringent constraints on the subject matter of counseling training courses, which is in line with international standards. It has been discovered that there is a shortage of teacher-counselors, as well as a scarcity of counseling rooms for all of the students. As a result of a scarcity of resources, counseling services were only made accessible to a small number of individuals at any one time.

Effectiveness of the School Counselling Programme

A rising number of educational professionals, including school counselors, are being pressed to show their capacity to assist children in achieving academic success in the classroom. They must be able to show how they are assisting pupils in improving their academic achievement. School counseling programs have been demonstrated to enhance students' academic achievement as well as their conduct in the classroom in research after study. Included in the study were 185 randomly selected children from schools that adopted counsellor-led interventions and another 185 randomly selected students from schools that did not implement counsellor-led interventions, respectively.

The performance of the children was evaluated based on their results on the state's norm-referenced achievement test. According to the results of the covariance analysis, there was a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control groups in both readings for the treatment group. Students who get school counseling services demonstrate considerable gains in their academic performance, according to the findings. According to a study that showed the same results, pupils who got treatment had much higher math and behavioral improvement scores than those who did not get therapy. According to a study, there were several positive links discovered between students and schools that offered substantial guidance and counseling services. The findings included improvements in self-reported grades, higher student opinions of being better prepared for their futures, and enhanced learner perceptions of their schools providing more information about post-secondary opportunities, to name a few outcomes. Consequently, school counseling services help children succeed academically, minimize disruptions in the classroom, and handle mental health difficulties in the school environment.

Academic/Educational Development Objective

One of the most essential tasks of the Namibian school counseling program, according to the participants, is to assist kids in developing healthy and positive attitudes about their academics in order to enhance their academic accomplishment. The academic or educational growth of participants in the Namibian school counseling program was characterized in a variety of ways by the participants. There were many objectives, including establishing study habits, enhancing

students' listening abilities in class, developing note-taking skills, organizing study groups to assist one another, and improving students' time management and test preparation skills.

Personal/Social Development Objective

Personal and social development components of the Namibian school counseling program, according to participants, have the primary goal of assisting students in becoming more self-aware by assisting them in understanding their personality characteristics, such as how they perceive their strengths and weaknesses, what drives and motivates them. The Namibian school counseling program, according to another widespread view given by people who took part in the survey, has assisted children in developing the skills to live healthy lives in a range of settings, while also teaching them to respect themselves and others. Personal and social development are the goals of the Namibian school counseling program, and among other things, the development of strong communication skills and interpersonal interactions, especially friendship skills, are among the goals of the program.

Career Development Objective

There are numerous ways in which students can describe the goal of the Namibian school counseling program, which is to assist students in planning and preparing for their future careers. For example, students can say that the program helps students understand which subjects are relevant to various careers so that they can choose the appropriate subjects for their matriculation in order to be prepared for their future careers, or that it helps students understand which subjects are relevant to various careers so that they can choose the appropriate subjects for their matriculation in order to be prepared for their future careers. In addition, according to participants, Namibian school counseling assisted students in preparing for life after school by teaching them how to identify their professional interests and talents for a variety of occupations, conduct a job search, write a curriculum vitae, and prepare for an interview.

Services

As reported by the study's participants, school counselors in Namibia often interact with children, parents, and teachers one-on-one or in small groups in order to address a variety of concerns. While at their office, students might meet with a teacher-counselor to discuss urgent personal issues or concerns. They could also get information on different educational and employment opportunities during these visits.

In spite of this, the participants' evaluations of Namibian school counseling services did not place a strong focus on one-on-one therapy or individual counseling sessions. In the past, counseling in schools has been provided via workshops, talk shows, and seminars presented by school counselors and health care professionals, in addition to by community-based organizations. The counseling service provides information on projects such as "Window of Hope" and "My Future Is My Choice," which are not centered in schools but rather in the community. Learners get instruction on a variety of topics, including HIV/AIDS and health education, drug/substance misuse prevention, and general advice on how to maintain healthy lives via rule-based behaviour and adherence to rules.

Collaboration between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Namibia's school counseling program resulted in a wide range of educational services being made available (informational and skill-based). These services are made accessible to students at educational institutions in order to assist them in improving their decision-making abilities, exploring career

alternatives, and planning for or creating their futures. Career fairs and field trips are two examples of educational activities and/or services that are designed to help students learn about careers and further education options, as well as to help students develop skills in selecting appropriate school subjects, searching for jobs, writing a resume, and attending a job interview.

As far as school counseling is concerned, Namibian schools have developed a distinctive method that places a strong emphasis on teaching or information-based services that are intended to assist pupils in developing practical life skills. School themes that are specifically designed to educate students about diverse environmental possibilities and opportunities as well as stimulate their acquisition of information, attitudes, and values are therefore available. As part of these programs, students acquire life skills as well as health and wellness information. The dissemination of information and the acquisition of life skills may take place in a variety of settings, including workshops, seminars, club meetings, and even school assemblies. According to reports, some of these programs are also provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at schools, but they are under the supervision of instructors who function as counselors or who teach life skills to students.

According to the participants, the primary purpose of Namibia's school counseling program is to help students improve their academic performance. Academic assistance programs designed to assist students in developing study skills, taking notes, managing their time, and preparing for examinations were acknowledged by the participants, as were programs that encourage kids to attend school on a regular basis and avoid academic failure. The Namibian school counseling program, on the other hand, organizes all of these activities so that they may take place in schools and teach students how to work together in study groups to assist one another.

When it comes to health and social welfare concerns, participants said that teacher-counselors consult with other service providers such as nurses and social workers (such as grants and financial support for low income families). Because of the high prevalence of violence in schools, teacher-counsellors collaborate with police officers to visit schools and speak with students about the dangers of alcohol and drugs. According to the participants, this is the case. Parents are invited to attend seminars led by school counselors to learn how they may better engage with their children at home. Trainers-counsellors work alongside classroom instructors, providing direction and support on how to enhance communication with students as well as establish effective interventions and teaching approaches that are beneficial to the students. School counselors also work with community-based groups such as the RED CROSS to assist supply schools with First Aid Kits and teach students about health-related concerns and living a healthy lifestyle, according to the report's findings.

According to the participants, the effectiveness of the Namibian school counseling program is reliant on the use of community resources. When teachers-counselors and the school as a whole are unable or unwilling to offer some school-based services, students are referred to community-based organizations (CBOs). In response to the enormous range of social problems and concerns that are now impacting society, teacher-counsellors claim that they are unable to cope with all of the challenges they face on a daily basis. Therefore, they seek assistance from community groups and professionals in the areas where the school or kids want assistance. Participants' input also suggested that in order to accomplish their duties effectively, teacher-counsellors need a solid referral network of other professionals, such as social workers and nurses, as well as other members of the community agencies. According to

participants, people from low-income families and orphans are often referred to social welfare organizations for non-educational services such as financial assistance and other services to address the fundamental needs of learners. A number of participants have also said that the Women and Child Protection Unit at the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare has been informed about the mistreatment of students.

Conclusion

Stakeholders' views on the Namibian School Counselling Programme were examined, with a focus on the program's goals, services offered, resources available for execution, and recipients. The study's participants received a copy of the results in the form of a report. Lack of resources is a significant barrier to effectively establishing school counseling programs in underdeveloped nations like Namibia. All participants stated that a lack of funding to pay school counseling program services has hindered the successful implementation of counseling services in Namibian schools as the most important hindrance to the efficient implementation of the school counseling program. The government should set aside money specifically for school counseling as a result of this. Namibia has a chronic shortage of teacher-counselors, who are the primary human resources for conducting school counseling in the nation, according to this report. In Namibia's school counseling program, the paucity of teacher-counselors and their lack of training is a cause for concern. More beneficiaries were discovered than could be accommodated by the programs, since it was discovered that there was a shortage of instructors and counselors in the field.

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